# ‘Training the Mind of Many’: The *North & South Shields Gazette* and the Repeal of the ‘Taxes on Knowledge’

**by**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a case study of a newspaper during a defining period in the history of UK journalism. It focuses on the *North & South Shields Gazette* between 1849 and 1865 and looks at how it navigated the repeal of the newspaper taxes known as the "taxes on knowledge". It is the first in-depth study of an individual newspaper during this period.

As will be discussed, the repeal of the taxes on knowledge had a profound influence on the newspaper industry in this country. The *North & South Shields Gazette* is significant because it responded to the repeal of the central of those taxes, the stamp duty, in a particularly enterprising manner.

The Repeal Act came into force on Friday, June 29, 1855 and on Monday, July 2 the weekly *Gazette* launched its *Daily Telegraphic Edition*. The forerunner of today's *Shields Gazette*, it has a claim to be Britain's oldest provincial halfpenny evening newspaper. It has, however, been largely dismissed or ignored by historians. This thesis is the first academic study to show why the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* deserves its place in newspaper history.

It considers the *Gazette's* attitude and response to repeal in the light of existing theories and reveals that, with this newspaper at least, the response was more nuanced than those theories suggest. It demonstrates that the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* pioneered modern methods of news writing and presentation in a direct attempt to target a working-class audience but as part of a newspaper package that, initially, also sought to modify the behaviour of that audience.

In the process it sheds light – partly through the first academic access to the proprietor's diary – on the day-to-day work and lives of the men who ran the newspaper and argues that the way they approached tax repeal needs to be seen within a wider societal context.

A key finding of this thesis is that those men, who had links to the national repeal campaign and to a wide range of working-class charities, managed to combine hegemonic and philanthropic impulses with hard-headed commercial concerns in their response to the repeal of the stamp duty. Such a response has never before been identified.

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## Abbreviations

*N&SSG: North & South Shields Gazette*
*DTE: Daily Telegraphic Edition*
*N&SSG&DT: North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph*
*SDG&ST Shields Daily Gazette & Shipping Telegraph*
APRTOK: Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge
*GAPRTOK*: The *Gazette of the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge*

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

The repeal of the "taxes on knowledge" between 1853 and 1861 is considered a pivotal event in the history of UK journalism. Francis Williams, talking of the consequences of the 1855 repeal of the central of those taxes, the newspaper stamp duty, says: 'Never in history has there been so sudden and tremendous a flowering of the press' (1957: 105). At the very least, 134 newspapers were launched in 1855, including the *Daily Telegraph* and many of today's provincial titles 134 (Muddiman and Austin 1920: 239). Between 1855 and 1861, 492 newspapers were established, 137 of them in English towns that had never previously had a local newspaper (Jones, 1996). Lucy Brown refers to stamp duty repeal as one of the "few landmarks and turning points" in the history of journalism, resulting in a "great leap forward" for newspaper production in the following decade (1985: 4). Jean Chalaby sees 1855 as the "*annus mirabilis* of the British press" (1998: 35); Martin Hewitt calls it a "watershed moment in the history of the British press" (2014: 175). For Maurice Milne, stamp duty repeal was "the turning point in the history of the provincial press and a major landmark in metropolitan journalism" and paper duty repeal in 1861 "marked the end of the fiscal burdens which had weighed upon the press since the early eighteenth century" (1971: 15). In a turn-of-the century collection of essays assessing the key events of the previous 100 years, the removal of the last tax in 1861 was recognised as marking the birth of the "modern press" (Gilzean-Reid and Macdonell, 1896: 276).[1] Karl Marx, in an article for the *Neue Oder-Zeitung* in the month that stamp duty was repealed. wrote of a "revolution in the provincial press" caused by the duty's abolition (June 21, 1855, cited in Hobbs 2018: 4).

The taxes had first been imposed in 1712. Each copy of a newspaper and every advertisement it carried was subject to a tax; there was also an excise duty on paper.[2] The effect, and to a large extent the intention, of these taxes had been to inflate cover prices and restrict readership and ownership of newspapers. They were known as the taxes on knowledge because, through limiting access to newspapers and other publications, they were popularly believed to act as a barrier to education.

The weekly *North & South Shields Gazette and Durham and Northumberland Advertiser* – to give it its full title – was launched in 1849 to serve the two towns at the mouth of the River Tyne and their surrounding villages. The forerunner of today's *Shields Gazette*, it is a significant subject in relation to the taxes on knowledge because it responded to the

[1] Gilzean-Reid and Macdonell accord equal significance to the 1861 outbreak of the American Civil War, which saw the arrival of truly effective transmission of foreign dispatches via the telegraph.

[2] The tax on the importation of foreign books and the regulations for registration and securities, introduced in 1836, which required newspaper proprietors to lay down a sum of money for indemnification against blasphemy and libel actions, are also sometimes included in the taxes on knowledge but it is the advertisement, stamp and paper duties that are considered the most significant. See Chapter 4 for a full account of the imposition of the taxes.

repeal of the newspaper stamp duty in a bold fashion. On July 2, 1855, within two working days of repeal, it launched its *Daily Telegraphic Edition*. "So began the oldest evening paper in the provinces," its centenary pamphlet declared (*Shields Gazette*, 1949).[3] A Liverpool newspaper, the *Events*, founded in May 1855, is now recognised as the first provincial halfpenny evening newspaper in Britain, but it ceased publication in 1857.[4] The centenary pamphlet referred to the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* as "an evening newspaper in every sense" (*Shields Gazette*, 1949). However, Milne in his *Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham* (1971), hints at some dispute over whether it can be considered a true newspaper. A better claim, to be the oldest provincial halfpenny evening in England at least, might be made for the *North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph*, which the *Gazette* company launched in January 1864, but a Scottish halfpenny evening newspaper, the *Greenock Telegraph,* had beaten that version of the *Gazette* to the press, having been launched in August 1863.

This thesis is a case study of the *North & South Shields Gazette* during this defining period in the history of UK journalism. It aims to answer the following questions:

- How did the *North & South Shields Gazette* navigate this decade of rapid change?
- What was its attitude to the taxes on knowledge?
- How did it respond to repeal?
- What was the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*? Can it truly be regarded as a newspaper - and therefore Britain's oldest provincial halfpenny evening title?
- What does the response of the *North & South Shields Gazette* to the repeal of the taxes on knowledge tell us about that repeal?
- How does that response relate to existing theory ?

In his chapter on the provincial press in the *Routledge Handbook to Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals and Newspapers,* Andrew Hobbs identifies a gap in our knowledge about newspapers such as the *North & South Shields Gazette*. A metropolitan bias has led to provincial newspapers and periodicals receiving "little scholarly attention" (2016: 221). Although he prioritises a "big-picture narrative", encompassing periods, genres and geographical sectors that "overcome the "limitations of single-title studies" he states, encouragingly, "there is scope for further work in almost every part of this field". With reference to the economics of provincial periodical publishing, he adds: "We know something about provincial morning papers and weekly news miscellanies, but more work is needed on other publication types" (ibid 233). My thesis

[3] The *Edinburgh Evening Courant* had been running since 1715 but was selling for 4½d by 1856 and was a thrice-weekly, albeit with a free sheet distributed on the days when the paid-for was not published (if the price is spread out across the week, that would work out as 0.75d per edition). It could also be argued that Edinburgh, being a capital city, was not in the provinces. See chapter 9.

[4] It was formerly thought that there were only two issues of the *Events* – May 19 and June 4, 1855 – but others have been discovered and show that it lasted until 1857. (Liverpool Newspaper Heritage 2016)

concerns itself with the operation of a single newspaper operation but it is one which straddles two publication types, a provincial weekly and a pioneering evening newspaper, both of which might be considered neglected areas of research – and it would not be entirely flippant to say it is far from being a single-title study, given the various shifts in nomenclature of the publications concerned. He advises scholars not to assume a specific title is "typical of its genre". My contention with the subject of my research is that its *atypicality* is its chief interest; it can be used as a prism to view general processes and theories but I do stress elsewhere in this work that the scope for extrapolation is limited. He urges researchers to compare publications with others in the same area or "earlier and later issues of the same title" (ibid 232) and, as I explain in my methodology, I have followed his advice in this respect. Ultimately, I took inspiration from his concluding assertion:

> This vast field offers marvellous opportunities. Its low status requires that future work be of a high standard to gain acceptance, but its relative neglect promises new insights and the toppling of many narratives and theories drawn from the minority of periodicals published in London. (ibid: 233)

I hope to offer "new insights" and at least examine "narratives and theories" in the light of empirical research.

My literature review will map out the state of current research in this area, looking further at where there are local gaps in national surveys. It will also set out the key theories on the repeal of the taxes and consider how the *North & South Shields Gazette* and its *Telegraphic Edition* have previously been viewed.

My methodology will detail my sources and explain my methods, assessing the latter in the light of theory and practice, looking in some depth at the strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research – particularly in the context of the digitisation of historical newspapers – and similarly considering the strengths and limitations of the historian's view.

Chapter 4 will provide the context for my research into the *North & South Shields Gazette* and its *Daily Telegraphic Edition,* outlining the history of the taxes on knowledge – presenting new evidence for the first use of the term – and the campaign to repeal them. Much of the focus will be on Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge (APRTOK) in the 1850s in terms of its commercial and societal objectives but also to look at links between it and the *Gazette.* My contention is that how the men who ran the *Gazette* approached repeal, how they responded to repeal and how they viewed the working-class readership that repeal potentially opened up cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of that historical context.

Chapter 5 will focus on the birth and early years of the *North & South Shields Gazette* in the context of what it considered to be its societal and educational role and give a sense of the newspaper's editorial direction and operation. The decisions and actions of the *Gazette's* proprietor, managers and leading journalists were conditioned not just by what had gone before, or by national politics, but by their social class and their role within the community. The chapter will further trace the *Gazette's* relationship with the APRTOK and also look at links between the paper and the local societies which sought to educate the working class. Part of this chapter will be based on the diary of the newspaper's proprietor, JC Stevenson, which has never before received academic attention.

Three of the chapters of this thesis focus on the *Gazette's* attitude towards the taxes on knowledge – how it framed the repeal debate and covered the campaign for the removal of the taxes – but also how it wrote about the working class. The first of these, chapter 6, covers the period 1849 to 1853.

Chapter 7 will detail how the *Gazette* responded to the 1853 repeal of the advertisement duty and consider the significance of that repeal, which has typically been underplayed. Chapter 8 will look at the *Gazette's* coverage, between 1853 and 1855, of the campaign to abolish the stamp duty.

Chapters 9, 10 and 11 will focus on the *Gazette's* response to stamp duty repeal, giving the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* and the newspaper package of which it formed a part their first scholarly study. They will look in detail at the content of the newspapers in the commercial and societal contexts for reform. The final part of this chapter will consider the paper's response in relation to Victorian philanthropy.

In Chapter 12 the focus will switch to the *Gazette's* coverage of the campaign to repeal the excise duty on paper. It will consider the paper's attitude and response to the 1861 repeal of that duty. Chapter 13 will consider the *Gazette's* response in the context of wider social movements of the period and will look in further depth at its changing relationship to its working-class readership.

Chapter 14 is concerned with the 1864 launch of the four-page daily, the *North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph.* It will consider that development in relation to the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, considering in particular the link between local news, commerce and audience.

Chapter 15 will draw my findings together in a formal conclusion, consider the limitations of my research and point to areas of further study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review will follow the structure recommended by Ridley (2008), by setting out the historical background to the debate; moving on to the contemporary context; explaining relevant theories, concepts and terminology; giving a preliminary assessment of existing literature and identifying the limitations of previous research; before finally stating the significance of the issue under research. Such a review conforms to the "dedicated" approach to setting out a literature review. Ridley points out, however, that when research is based on "the analysis of texts and documents, as is the case in the fields of history, English literature or biblical studies" (2008: 7), as this thesis is, a "recursive" approach is often necessary, in which the researcher chooses to "use the related literature in a more integrated way throughout the thesis". Some of the related literature will be introduced and considered as the thesis progresses.

A century after the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, two popular histories set out the conventional view of that repeal. In *Dangerous Estate, The Anatomy of Newspapers*, written in 1957, Francis Williams, a former editor of the *Daily Herald*, described it – and in particular the 1855 repeal of the stamp duty – as a moment of liberation, both for the press and its readers: newspapers could cut their cover prices, increase their advertising revenue and push for an expanded readership; the public, in particular the working class, could now far more readily have access to the full range of publications. For him, repeal was a sign that the working class was finally being trusted to read whatever it wanted. Harold Herd, in *The March of Journalism*, written in 1952, refers to the relaxation of the newspaper taxes in the mid-1830s as "typifying the growth of a more tolerant and understanding attitude on the part of the government" (1952: 150). This view, of a beneficent government, an unfettered press and a fortunate, expanded readership persisted in some academic works. David Chaney wrote in 1972 that "The British press is generally agreed to have attained its freedom around the middle of the nineteenth century" (1972: 71). James Curran points out that even a socialist academic such as Raymond Williams initially saw repeal in generally optimistic terms, although he revised this judgement in a later work (2018: 4)[5] More recently, Dennis Griffiths, writing of the outcome of the 1855 repeal, stated: "… the Press was finally free" (2006: 94). Such accounts conform to the "Whig" view of press history, according to which:

> Newspapers are portrayed as locked into a political struggle with the State to gain their independence and right to freedom of expression. The fight for liberty, freedom from censorship and the right to report without restriction is seen as a long drawn-out conflict which was

[5] In the Pelican edition of his *The Long Revolution* (1965: 218), Williams said: "most newspapers were able to drop their frantic pamphleteering" after 1855, meaning they switched from a political impulse to a more commercial one of simply presenting the news. This was revised in G Boyce, J.Curran, P.Wingate (eds) *Newspaper History* (London, Constable, 1978) in which he referred to "poor men's reading matter" being kept in "rich men's hands", but he still saw the newspaper of the second half of the 19th Century as a "capitalised market product for a separated mass readership" (1978: 48-49), which accords significantly with the views of Chalaby and Habermas (see below).

> eventually won in the middle of the nineteenth century when the 'taxes' on the press were finally revoked. (Williams, 2010: 13).

Some academic historians over the last half century have been less celebratory in their analysis of the purpose and effects of repeal. James Curran, in particular, has paid closer attention to the words of the middle-class repeal campaigners who were concerned with the educational and moral function of the press, and has turned the view of Francis Williams on its head; for Curran, repeal was a way for the middle class to exert "social control"[6] over the working class (1978). And certainly, some of the press historians who had lived through the repeal saw it in terms of morality – and used language that echoed the tone and sentiment of those middle-class campaigners. Alexander Andrews, writing 15 years after stamp duty repeal, was extremely sanguine about the state of the press. "Untaxed and unfettered, except by the laws which bind society together, experience seems to show us that we need apprehend no evil from this great intellectual reform, whilst its power for good is unlimited," he wrote (1870: 348). He conceded that it might be possible for "bad or designing men to use this great engine as a tool for working mischief or raising discord". But, he added with a flourish that concluded his book: "worked with skill and judgement it is capable of making a great country greater, and a people incalculably happier. AND SO GOD SPEED THE BRITISH PRESS!" James Grant, in another of the great histories of journalism in the second half of the century, likewise pointed to its moral benefits: "the Newspaper Press with its marvellous circulation, is characterised, with scarcely an exception, by a highly elevated tone, and therefore cannot fail to promote morality, as well as spread intelligence, among all classes of the community" (1871: 322).

The current debate is situated at the intersection of hegemony, philanthropy and commerce. Hegemony is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication* as:

> … dominance or control, especially of one state or social group. For [Marxist philosopher] Gramsci, the cultural and ideological dominance of the ruling class, which exercises control by apparent consensus rather than coercion using its influence in the major institutions (such as education and the mass media) to engineer consent through projecting its own ideology as common sense while excluding, or absorbing and transforming, alternatives. The status quo is thus accepted as in their own best interests by those who are subordinated by it. (2020: 401)

Hegemony is central to the approach of Curran. In dismantling the Whig theory of history, he stresses the irony that the repeal of the taxes, rather than ushering in a new era of press freedom, resulted in a "system of censorship more effective than anything that had gone before" (2018: 5). The MPs who campaigned for repeal had the hegemonic impulse of "indoctrinating the masses" rather than "planting the tree of freedom"(ibid). He first

[6] Mark Hampton refers to the phrase "social control" having "fallen out of favour with historians" (2004: 53).

outlined this theory in his 1977 essay *Capitalism and Control of the Press, 1800-1875*), in which he wrote that one of the main purposes of the taxes, which, as he saw it, was to stifle radical working-class voices, was "attained only by their repeal" (1977: 212). This was a theme he developed in his 1978 essay, *The Press as an Agent of Social Control: an Historical Perspective*, in which he wrote: "The freedom conferred by the free market was the freedom of capital to indoctrinate labour" (1978: 60). Colin Lacey and David Longman, in *The Press as Public Educator*, follow a similar argument, that the middle-class reforming MPs "were under no illusions but that it was they who would stand at the reins of a liberated press bringing enlightenment to the masses" (1997: 28). Kevin Williams in his interpretation of the MPs' motives for repeal, also follows Curran's line:

> They were not struggling to establish diversity of expression in the press. James Curran has shown that their main objective was to ensure that the press played an effective role in engineering consent from the lower classes for the social order being established by capitalism. … For middle-class reformers, a free press, unencumbered by taxation, would be a better instrument of social control than State coercion (Williams, 2009: 43)

RJ Morris sees, in the early and mid-19th century, "increasing middle-class efforts to influence working-class culture and values" (1979:60). In Chapter 3 this thesis will look in detail at the charitable and social organisations in the *Gazette's* circulation area that Morris sees as central to these efforts. Morris does, however, identify other motives at work – "guilt, humanitarianism, religious feeling – in addition to a well calculated and enlightened self-interest" (ibid).

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, the working class is defined as that which "must sell its labour-power in order to survive" (2014: 807). The idea of a generic proletariat, as perceived in the classical Marxist sense, has long been questioned by social historians. The dictionary identifies several distinct groups within that class, one of which relates to degrees of skill: a skilled "aristocracy of labour" whose members have learned a trade and an unskilled pool of semi-skilled or unskilled workers (2012: 808). John Foster (1974: 76), in his study of three industrial towns, Oldham, Northampton and South Shields, in the 1850s, similarly makes a division along skills lines, between "craft", "semi-skilled" and "unskilled/pauper" (see chapter 10). Geoffrey Best, meanwhile, distinguishes between "respectable" and "non-respectable" sections of the working class in the mid-19th century (1979: 15)[7]. Patrick Joyce refers to the "great array of skills and statuses so clearly evident in what, in the singular, is clearly a distinctly tenuous 'working class'" (1991: 3). The *Gazette*, however – certainly in the early part of the period covered by this thesis – and in articles which dealt with society as a whole, tended to view this section of the population in broad terms, referring either to "working class" or labouring class" (or

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[7] See page 114

in the plural – "working classes"/ "labouring classes"); and usually meant by this term those who were employed rather than unemployed since such people – usually men – might have the resources and inclination to buy a newspaper or join a mechanics' institute, or might need their behaviour "modified" so that they would spend their wages and leisure time wisely. It is along these lines that Ludlow and Jones in their *Progress of the Working Class* of 1867 differentiate between the "working class" who work, "chiefly with their muscles, for wages, and maintain themselves thereby" and "the poor", who "may work, but cannot habitually maintain themselves"(quoted in Royle, 1987: 85). The way in which the newspaper addressed the working class is dealt with throughout this thesis but chapters 10 and 13 look specifically at the issue.

The *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* identifies a pre-20th century middle class as "… generally … the "*petite bourgeoisie* and independent professionals" (2014: 471); if we look at the social categories for South Shields listed in Slater's *Royal National Commercial Directory of the Northern Counties* of 1855, the ranks above the working class conform largely to that description – a short list of "gentry and clergy" (some of whom might be considered *haute bourgeoisie*) followed by rather more extensive lists of petite bourgeoisie, or lower middle class: accountants, schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, auctioneers, bankers, notaries, skilled tradesmen, and shopkeepers. Henry Mayhew in his *London Labour and the London Poor,* published in 1851, did not see a divide between employer and employed, between middle and working class; they were both included in the second of his four classes, which comprised "a broad mass of respectable people who had to work for a living" (quoted in Royle 1989: 84). However, until the late 1850s at least, the *Gazette* was wont to differentiate between the two, sometimes in a blatant "them and us" manner, as evidenced in chapter 10 of this thesis. It had a clear sense of who the middle class were. In an excerpt from the *Englishman's Journal* published as a leader in August 1858, the middle classes are referred to as "the bulwarks of the country" (*N&SSG* 12 August 1858). The newspaper also differentiated between the middle class and the upper class; in July of that year an excerpt from the *Press* explained: "By middle class we mean those persons, gentlemen or otherwise, who are not fortunate enough to belong to the Upper Ten Thousand" (*N&SSG* 1 July 1858). The *Gazette* clearly saw itself as a representative voice of society's central bulwark: in its opening editorial it positioned itself as a balance between the excesses of the upper and lower classes (see chapter 4).

Stuart Hall (1980) refers to three degrees of hegemony: dominant, negotiated and oppositional. There is always the assumption when looking at newspaper texts such as the *Gazette* of the 1850s that it is operating within a "dominant hegemonic code", one in which the decoder (the reader) simply goes along with what is said (Carah and Louw, 2015: 29). However, as evidenced in Chapter 10, "the reader of a newspaper may resist, subtly counter or directly misunderstand the encoded meaning of a report" (Storey, 2006: 41); the efficacy of "social control" through the press is a contested notion:

> …although it [cultural studies] recognises that the culture industries are a major site of ideological production, constructing powerful images, descriptions, definitions, frames of reference for understanding the world, cultural studies rejects the view that 'ordinary' people who consume these productions are cultural dupes, victims of an 'updated form of the opium of the people' (2006: 20)

Roger Fowler writes: "There is every reason to propose that being a reader is an active, creative practice" (1991: 43). As this thesis will show, we could categorise the reaction of some *Gazette* readers at least as operating within a negotiated hegemonic process, in which the reader understands and acknowledges what is being said but does not necessarily consent to it, or possibly even an oppositional exchange where a reader rejects a message (Carah and Louw, ibid). Morris also sees the working-class reader as being "not as helpless in the grip of hegemonic power as the theory might suggest" (1979: 60) and gives examples of radical journalists and working-class readers actively opposing the newspaper taxes, an activity which will be examined in chapter 4. A more subtle way of viewing the balance of power between the classes comes in Patrick Joyce's work, in which he follows the lead of the French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault attacked the notion that power was the preserve of one element of society: "Power must be analysed as something which circulates … It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands …" (1980 cited in Gunn 2006: 709). As Simon Gunn summarises it: "power itself was not to be regarded solely as an instrument of repression or domination, but as an omnipresent force, neither good nor evil" (2006: 710). In Joyce's view of civic society in this period, there had to be "persuasion" and "consent" rather than domination and acceptance (2006: 270). But in that arrangement, it is difficult not to catch glimpse elements of hegemony: "the actual creation of consent" required the "governed" to regard key elements of the system to "appear *inevitable*" (2006: 270). Joyce sees the municipal and moral "improvement" work of the middle class involving "complicity with the 'respectable' poor or working class against the 'rough'" and a "projection of a desired working class"(2006: 270). In chapter 10 I consider examples of just such a projection.

Just as Morris can identify elements of humanitarianism as well as hegemony in the actions of the middle class, Mark Hampton (2001; 2004) believes it was possible for the newspaper proprietors and journalists of the time to be philanthropic as well as hegemonic. He says Curran's view is "rare" among historians (2004: 48). For Hampton, the cheaper newspapers that emerged following the 1855 repeal were "… both inclusive and optimistic in welcoming the common reader into a government by public discussion, and at the same time proselytizing in trying to encourage the working classes to hold the 'proper' opinions" (2001: 214).

> They [middle-class reformers] had a definite doctrinal end in mind; certain ideas were acceptable, while others were beyond the pale. At the same time, they did not envision this "education" in a manipulative or

> heavy-handed sense, as captured in the twentieth century concept of 'indoctrination'. Instead, they assumed the truth of their own ideals, such as political economy and constitutional monarchy, and assumed that only workers' ignorance could prevent them from reaching the same conclusions" (2004: 51).

Hampton points to newspaper proprietors' belief that they were acting disinterestedly, for the good of society and not merely for their own ends. He cites, in this context, the social reformer James Kay, for whom education was part of a philanthropic drive to inculcate habits of "thrift and morality". At the same time though, it was also directed at making "insubordination" less likely (2004: 52). Hampton sees the "idea of the press as an educational agent as being "broadly predominant between 1850 and 1880" (2004: 69), that is before and after stamp duty repeal in 1855. While Alan Lee considers the "educational value" as being the "main item in the credo of the 'golden age'" after the repeal of the newspaper taxes, he sees the hegemonic element of it eventually being toned down: "the accent on order and control, however, was weakened after the 1860s" (1976: 28).[8] This thesis will look in depth at the extent to which philanthropy – as well as hegemony and commercial concerns – relate to newspaper content and editorial direction during the period of newspaper tax repeal. Joyce writes of the "elite" in Victorian cities combining to "reform the manners and the culture of the city populations …[they] combined to pioneer an enormous range of educational, philanthropic and religious institutions and activities in the first half of the century …" (2003: 207). In his classic 1936 essay on the Victorian era, *Portrait of an Age*, GM Young refers to the "enormous apparatus of early Victorian philanthropy" (1936: 22) and provides a long list of clubs and societies working to impose notions of "respectability" with "censorious vigilance" (1936: 21). To these indefatigable organisations might be added, as we shall see, a socially active newspaper such as the *North and South Shields Gazette.* In chapter 5 this thesis will look at the educational role of the newspaper in the context of this philanthropic onslaught.

Young goes on to quote the social reformer Lord Shaftesbury[9] who happily attributed self-interest to such ostensibly philanthropic behaviour: "… the safety of their lives and property depends upon their having round them a peaceful, happy and moral population" (1936: 22). This returns us to the territory of hegemony. According to Jean Chalaby, in *The Invention of Journalism*, published in 1998, many of the men running newspapers prior to 1855 did not in fact act as journalists but rather as "publicists", who promoted

[8] See Chapter 13 for an examination of this point.

[9] James Walvin in his *Victorian Values* (1988) refers to Shaftesbury, who is best known today for his work on behalf of child chimney sweeps, as the "very model of Victorian charity; he inspired and attracted to his service not only the obvious and major organisations, but also charities like the Pure Literature Fund, the Cabman's Shelter Fund, the Flower Girls' Mission, and the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain Association. To these and others, Victorians gave millions of pounds, often in their wills." Walvin adds: "There was no denying the extent of Victorian philanthropy or the energy and idealism behind it … Victorian philanthropy resembled an army, eager, energetic and vast but at times ill-led, ill-disciplined and often purposeless" (1988:97)

the "political interests of the social class on whose behalf they speak" and through their editorials help other members of that social class to see the world as they do (1998: 16), while at the same time explaining to readers of all classes that this is the only possible way of seeing the world, even to the extent of "transcending" their "immediate experience of life"(1998: 29). Although he uses the radical working-class press of the period to illustrate his point, he acknowledges that this relationship between politically motivated writer/proprietor and reader was also demonstrated by the mainstream press of the dominant middle-class – in particular in the north of England; it might therefore be said to be hegemonic.

However, for Chalaby, the "immediate effect" of the 1855 repeal of the Newspaper Stamp Duty, by allowing newspapers to be sold at a lower price, was commercial in its nature: to create "a market of readers, as opposed to a public" (1998: 35). He sees the repeal having epochal significance, contributing to the decline of what Jurgen Habermas has famously referred to as the "public sphere"[10]: "The transition from a public of readers to a market of readers was the single most important historical event in the history of the British press in the last two hundred years" (1998: 185). Newspapermen were now acting as "journalists", striving to meet "market tastes" and achieve "customer satisfaction". Michael Schudson, reviewing *The Invention of Journalism* in a 2002 essay, *News, Public, Nation,* in the *American Historical Review* refers to Chalaby's "broad generalisations about journalism" and "oversimplified view of a remarkable moment in British working-class history". And certainly, Chalaby's work, in common with that of Habermas, does not offer primary evidence from newspapers to back up its claims; Chalaby says he paints "an ideal-typical portrait of the publicist", in Weber's words, an '"analytical construct' which cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality' (1949, cited in Chalaby 1998: 15). Schudson attacks Chalaby's contention that tax repeal was the immediate turning point: "in Chalaby's account, this just happens, an uncaused cause". He also challenges another key contention of Chalaby, that there was more political content in newspapers pre-1855. But he does concede that Chalaby's work has "begun to influence others in media history broadly" and "despite his "nostalgia and knee-jerk opposition to the marketplace, he still authors a strikingly new formulation in specifying some of the features that define the discourse of journalism". Among those who have been influenced is Martin Conboy who refers to Chalaby's contention that, with the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, journalism "began to take shape as a commodified form of public address" (2011: 2). Moreover, there is some similarity between Chalaby's account of the development of news as the primary component of newspapers and that of Schudson himself, who in his 1978 book *Discovering the News* wrote of the American press at a slightly earlier point in history: "Until the 1830s, a newspaper provided a service to political parties and men of

[10] Habermas, J. (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.* Cambridge: Polity Press. Habermas proposed that the rise of capitalism enabled there to be a sphere of, potentially critical, public discussion and debate away from the traditional strongholds of church and state, but that, paradoxically, capitalism eventually stifled that sphere.

commerce; with the penny press a newspaper sold a product to a general readership and sold the relationship to advertisers" (1978: 25).

In assessing the relevance of hegemony, something of a battle has developed between James Curran and Martin Hewitt. In his 2014 book, *The Dawn of the Cheap Press in Victorian Britain: The End of the 'Taxes on Knowledge' 1849-1869*, while conceding that Curran's work "has been enormously influential and widely cited", Hewitt criticises it for its over-reliance on the parliamentary statements of the middle-class campaigners, saying that he "takes at face value" their "rhetorical performances" (2014: 3). Curran, on the other hand, while applauding Hewitt for his "innovative scholarship", attacks him for not paying enough attention to what was said in parliament. He sees Hewitt's work as echoing some of the optimism of the Whig view of history and being "blind to the way in which press capitalism gave rise to a new form of censorship" (2018: 22). The most recent general history, Jeremy Black's *The English Press, A History*, refers to an "established critique from a modern political perspective" that sees middle-class "respectable" newspapers, seeking, in Steele's words "to socialize the working classes into a passive acceptance of laissez-faire economic principles"[11], but concludes: "however interesting, such analyses are frequently challenged by a difficulty in linking them to a pattern of press content" (2019: 89). This thesis will examine the evidence to see if such analyses can be linked to press content. Another recent general history, Mick Temple's *The Rise and Fall of the British Press* focuses on the commercial aims of the campaigning MPs and like-minded businessmen outside Parliament to "spread the principles of free trade" (2017: 9). In terms of repeal being aimed at providing competition for the working-class radical newspapers, he sees it largely as the untaxed mainstream press offering a more engaging alternative to the "predominantly serious" radical press and thus diverting readers from joining trade unions, which the radicals were espousing. This thesis will, in chapter 9, give examples of the radical press providing much engaging material alongside its political content.

Whatever differences media historians have as to the nature of newspaper tax repeal, they are at one in acknowledging that repeal was a significant turning point. However, there have been only two monographs, more than a century apart, that have dealt exclusively with the subject: Collet's *History of the Taxes on Knowledge*, written in 1899 by one of the repeal campaigners, and Hewitt's 2014 book. Several works deal with the subject in some depth but as part of wider surveys of press history; in addition to the works of Curran, Chalaby and Hampton mentioned above, Alan Lee's *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1815-1914*, published in 1976 , Kevin Williams' *Read All About It!* (2010) and *Get Me A Murder A Day!* (2009), and Martin Conboy's *Journalism A Critical History* (2003) might be mentioned. The focus of all these works is national and in all of them except Collet and Hewitt the timescale is wide. There has been nothing that focuses in detail on individual newspapers or the newspapers of individual regions of the UK specifically during the period of the repeal of the taxes. Andrew Hobbs writes: "A focus on the higher-status but lower-circulation London press has

[11] J. Steel, 'The "Radical" Narrative, Political Thought and Praxis', *Media History,* 15 (2009), p.232.

produced many theories that do not adequately describe or explain local and regional newspapers, the mainstream of the Victorian press" (2018: 23). He adds that Chalaby, Hampton and Curran all "focus on metropolitan publications" (ibid: 24). Andrews touched on the effects of stamp duty repeal on the "local and district press " in London but, beyond the suburbs of the metropolis, was vague about the implications for the provincial press. "In the provinces several new penny papers, some daily, sprang up on the repeal of the stamp duty, principally in the manufacturing towns: but only two or three, we believe, survive" (1870: 341). A century later Lee asked: "What were the effects of the repeal of the taxes on knowledge on the structure of the English press?' and answered: 'Without adequate checklists of the newspapers published, including details of changes of titles and price, it is not possible to say precisely what happened" (1976: 67). Similarly, Joel Wiener wrote: "the series of steps by which these financial restraints [the taxes on knowledge] were removed has never been adequately studied" (1969; xi).

More than 40 years later Rachel Matthews, in her *The History of the Provincial Press in England*, refers to the *Liverpool Daily Post* as "one of the few regional papers to be subjected to academic scrutiny" (2017: 20). Her own book relies heavily on secondary sources. Andrew Hobbs, in his 2010 doctoral thesis *Reading the local paper: Social and cultural functions of the local press in Preston, Lancashire, 1855-1900,* writes: "The provincial press is side-lined in two of the best recent surveys of British press history (2010: 3), M. Conboy, *Journalism: a Critical History* (London: Sage, 2004) and M. Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004)." Eight years later he acknowledged that interest in, and readership of, the 19th Century local press by the general public and to some extent academics had increased as a result of digitisation of publications by the British Library's British Newspaper Archive but still refers to that press as the "marginalised majority" and points to academe's lingering snobbery about it (Hobbs 2018). Altick in his *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public*, although acknowledging the extraordinary rise in local newspapers following the repeal of the stamp duty, concludes that repeal had little effect on the content of newspapers, which "made no great effort to attract lower-class readers" (1963: 354), but this statement is based on evidence from London newspapers alone. This thesis will examine Altick's view in Chapter 7. Hewitt writes: "the campaigns and the consequences of repeal in the 1850s and early 1860s remain largely invisible". He adds: "In the press histories of the later nineteenth century, the [repeal] campaigns were largely passed over in silence.[12] Modern histories have scarcely done better" (2014: 1); he, however, does go some way towards addressing this deficiency.

If the *North & South Shields Gazette* is ever mentioned in newspaper histories those mentions tend to be cursory. National surveys cannot be expected to cover every newspaper in the country individually but, as will be shown in this thesis, the response of the *North & South*

[12] Charles Pebody in his *English Journalism and The Men who have Made it*, published in 1882, makes no mention of stamp tax repeal; he does look at the repeal of the paper duties but only in relation to the *Times* and its competitors.

*Shields Gazette* was significant and therefore worthy of attention. The *Encyclopedia of the British Press* (Griffiths: 1992), in an entry based on the *Gazette's* centenary pamphlet, does describe it as the "country's oldest provincial evening paper". Hewitt, however, mentions only the *Gazette's* adoption of steam printing (2014: 113). Curran refers to the "*South Shields Gazette*" but only in the context of post-1855 newspapers that were owned by industrialists, and then erroneously states it was "acquired by Stevenson, a member of a local chemical manufacturing company"(2018: 37). The *North and South Shields Gazette* (it has never been known as the *South Shields Gazette*) was founded, rather than acquired by a member of the Stevenson family. Four other academic works: Hobbs' *A Fleet Street in Every Town* (2018) – which also refers to it as the *South Shields Gazette*; Milne's *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham* (1971); Lee's *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1815-1914* (1976); and *Newspapers in the North East* (Manders, 1999) mention the *Gazette's Daily Telegraphic Edition* but all suggest it was something less than a newspaper, a claim that will be challenged in Chapter 9.

This thesis will look in detail at the *North & South Shields Gazette* in the context of existing research, assessing the extent to which its proprietors and leading journalists were, in their response to repeal, motivated by hegemony, philanthropy or commerce – or by a combination of all three. It will examine whether its *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was a "real newspaper" and therefore worthy of its claim to be Britain's oldest halfpenny evening title.

This chapter has outlined the historical background to the debate over the repeal of the taxes on knowledge; given an account of the current state of research into the subject; explained the key theory of hegemony and shown how it intersects in the period under discussion with notions of philanthropy and commerce; identified the limitations of current research; and finally stated the significance of the issue under research.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will detail the sources used in this thesis, the rationale for using them, the process of accessing them, the research standpoint taken, the research methods used and the strengths and limitations of those methods (Fox and Jennings 2014).

In a special edition of the journal *Journalism Studies* focusing on newspaper history David A Copeland quoted his mentor, Professor Margaret Blanchard, whose advice to him, when researching America's first newspapers, was: "What do the sources say?" (2006: 462). Her first response was always to go the primary documents. In assessing the relationship between the *North & South Shields Gazette* and the taxes on knowledge, what are the primary sources? Historians sometimes divide primary sources into "records" and "relics" (Brennen 2013: 100). Records are "primary source material about a topic that was intentionally produced and was intended to be seen" (ibid). Relics might be relevant to the research but were "created for some other reason". The former includes newspaper articles, autobiographies and diaries; the latter includes "business financial records, treaties … and some government records". The primary sources in this study fall into both categories. The chief newspaper source is the *North & South Shields Gazette* and its *Daily Telegraphic Edition*, copies of which are housed at The Word, the National Centre for the Printed Word, in South Shields; and at the British Library – either in print or on microfiche.[13] Editions of both publications have been digitised for the British Library's online British Newspaper Archive. Other records considered in this research include the *Gazette's* rival publications; newspapers from other areas of the country; national newspapers and magazines; publications produced as campaign resources by proponents and opponents of newspaper tax repeal; newspaper advertisements; histories of journalism written by men who lived through the period of the repeal of the taxes on knowledge; accounts of Parliamentary debates; memoirs of journalists; a song published by a contemporary entertainer; letters written by the newspaper's directors and managers; and the diary of the *Gazette's* proprietor.

In the use of such sources, Brennan writes: "historians draw on unpublished papers … to help them understand people's motivations and intentions for their actions" (2013: 101). The proprietor's diary will be used in this context. She goes on to state the rationale of using a source such as the song listed above and outlines the particular approach of the cultural historian: "while traditional historians remain wary of using poems, novels, songs and other fictional materials as primary sources of evidence, cultural historians, who see history as a creative endeavour, reject distinctions between history and fiction … Instead they focus on the relevance of the evidence to their specific research projects" (ibid.) This thesis is written from the viewpoint of cultural history. "Cultural history is not concerned

[13] For further details of the newspaper archive held in South Shields, see Manders (1982) *Bibliography of British Newspapers, Northumberland and Durham.* London: The British Library

merely with events but with the thoughts within them" (Carey, 1997: 88). "Cultural historians see evidence not merely as facts but also as cultural practices, created by people at a distinct place and time, that may provide insight into the values, beliefs and experiences of society ... cultural historians go beyond surface evaluations to consider the style, language, structure and absences and other latent means of the evidence" (Brennan 2013: 103). This approach is relevant because this study is to a large degree about discerning motive, reason and attitude: identifying the way the men who produced the *Gazette* viewed their role in society and, accordingly, responded to the taxes on knowledge.

Within the sphere of cultural history, this thesis is a case study, defined as an investigation into "people's lives, experiences, and how they understood the social and cultural context of their world, with the aim of gaining insight into how individuals interpreted and attributed meaning to their experiences and constructed their worlds" (Johannsson, 2003: Simons, 2009, cited in Birks, Franklin and Mills, 2017). This case study investigates – as far as is possible – how the men who produced the *Gazette* thought, how they lived, what they considered to be the structure of society, how they fitted into that structure, and what they perceived to be the role of a newspaper within that society.

Such an approach is from the perspective of qualitative research: research that is "primarily based on description rather than on measurement (Bertrand and Hughes: 2005: 260). The chief focus of this thesis is the text of the *Gazette*. When it came to analysing that text, close reading and the critical discourse approach of Richardson, Fairclough, van Dijk and others was used. Conboy explains that "discourse" is used in the context of newspaper articles to indicate the "coexistence of text and context" (2010: 9); we cannot fully understand a text unless we consider the context in which it is written. For Chalaby, "the key concept in the argument about journalism emerging in the course of the 19th Century is that of discourse" (1996: 57). As for critical discourse analysis (CDA) Richardson states: "Discourse analysis involves an analysis of texts as they are embedded within, and relate to, social conditions of production and consumption" (2007: 39). In parts of this study, CDA was used to analyse through close reading the "syntactic" form of sentences rather than a content analytical approach to quantify the usage of particular words, which would have been practicable with the British Newspaper Archive's digital search facility (Fairclough, 2000). It was crucial to consider the relationship between, on the one hand, the proprietors and writers of the *Gazette*, and, on the other, the paper's readers – in an attempt to determine the extent to which hegemony, or philanthropy, or purely commercial concerns were at play. As Richardson puts it: "CDA approaches discourse as a circular process in which social practices influence texts, via shaping the context and mode in which they are produced, and in turn texts help influence society via shaping the viewpoints of those who read or otherwise consume them (2007: 37). Language as "an instrument of control as well as communication" is explained by Hodge and Kress:

> Linguistic forms allow significance to be conveyed and to be distorted. In this way hearers allow significance to be conveyed and to be distorted. In this way hearers can be both manipulated and informed, preferably manipulated while they suppose they are being informed. Language is ideological in another, more political, sense of that word: it involves systematic distortion in the interests of class interest. (1979: 6)

As stated in this thesis's literature review, however, there are limits to the efficacy of such hegemonic use of language.

Philo (2007: 185), meanwhile, points to the limitations of text-based discourse analysis, among which is the question of "what the text actually means to different parts of the audience". As outlined above, the intention of the writers of *Gazette* articles is crucial to this investigation. Philo suggests further investigation – beyond the text in question – is necessary. In his journal article he accuses van Djik of making assumptions about coverage of race-related subjects in the British tabloid the *Sun*, and not taking into account, among other things, "professional ideologies" and professional practice. Philo attempts to provide a deeper reading of *Sun* texts by interviewing a journalist from the newspaper and concludes there were "apparent contradictions" in the *Sun's* coverage which ideally would require further research into the production process to fully understand the numerous factors – or "conflicting interests", as Conboy (2010: 9) refers to them – involved in the construction of a newspaper text. Conboy advises:

> … we must always keep in mind the multiple relationships of journalism with society, within the economy, with politics and also as a relatively autonomous cultural practice in its own right with its own traditions. (2010: 6)

But he concludes: "Journalism can be viewed as an intersection of many conflicting interests, some of which, at some points in history, have clearer priority than others" (2010: 9). Perhaps the period of newspaper tax repeal was one of those points in history: that it is possible to speak with some degree of certainty about the intention of *Gazette* writers when they are addressing working-class readers. This thesis examines those intentions towards the working class as a market and as a class. Clearly, it has not been possible to interview journalists of the period. However, I have gone as far as reasonably possible in analysing their motives: by looking at how the *Gazette's* proprietor wrote about the working class in his diary and how he acted towards that class, since – unlike his journalists – he is mentioned in some detail in the columns of his newspaper, either as a speaker at public events or as an active citizen. With his journalists, references to their activities away from the newspaper were tracked down to build a fuller picture of them within their community and thus gain some idea of their concerns and motives. The question of what *Gazette* texts meant to readers is also crucial, but there are limits to what we can know about the reaction of an audience in the mid-19th Century. As with the

problems of assessing journalists' motives, it has not been possible to carry out interviews with readers as one might do today to assess "media effects" (McCombs and Reynolds, 2002; Perse, 2002; Jeffres, 1997). One way that has been used to tackle this is in looking at letters to the editor. However, as discussed in chapter 7, there are always questions about the legitimacy of such texts.

A final element to the question of "what the text actually means to different parts of the audience" is that the historical researcher would have to include him or herself in that audience. Am I coming to these texts with certain presuppositions? Holmes, citing Dubois (2015)[14] maintains "We can never objectively describe reality." He adds, citing von-Glaserfield (1988)[15]:

> It must also be borne in mind that language is a human social construct. Experiences and interpretations of language are individually constructed, and the meaning of words is individually and subjectively constructed … there will always still be some form of bias or subjectivity (2020: 4)

This extends to the use of the key term hegemony: it too could be influenced by the standpoint of the writer. Cerny writes:

> … any analyst's use of the term will inevitably be value-loaded in terms of both a choice of definition and the methodological implications of applying it to particular empirical phenomena. It is made up of a range of component parts, and any hypothetical synthesis with predictable implications or real-world behaviour is historically educated guesswork. (2006: 67)

In examining the role of the analyst, Holmes pays particular attention to the "insider-outsider" axis.

> In its simplest articulation, the insider perspective essentially questions the ability of outsider scholars to competently understand the experiences of those inside the culture, while the outsider perspective questions the ability of the insider scholar to sufficiently detach

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[14] Dubois, M. (2015) 'Ideology, Sociology of.' *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences* 2nd ed., edited by Wright, J.D., Elsevier, pp. 573-587.

[15] Von-Glaserfield, E. (1988) 'Why Constructivism must be Radical.' *Constructivism and Education*, edited by Larochelle, M., et al., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

themselves from the culture to be able to study it without bias (Kusow, 2003)[16].

Holmes is concerned here largely with research that involves interviewing people, which is something – as mentioned above – that has not been possible for me. My insider perspective is that I am a former journalist and so perhaps, unlike van Djik in the instance mentioned above, am able to bring a certain knowledge of journalistic processes to my research. That has helped me in looking at the structure of articles and comparing reports of a subject in a *Daily Telegraphic Edition* and the *North and South Shields Gazette.* Holmes concludes that all researchers move between insider and outsider positions, which would seem to be the case in my work.

This thesis also makes use of quantitative research: research that is "primarily based on measurement rather than on description" (Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 260). Inaccurate conclusions can be drawn about "trends in content and in newspaper readership without some form of quantitative examination" (Berridge, 1986: 218). Similarly, James Mussell acknowledges, in referring to historical periodicals "that there are things to learn about nineteenth-century serials that cannot be discovered from reading them alone" (2016:27). The quantitative method employed in this thesis was content analysis. Content analysis is "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952, cited in Hansen Cottle, Negrine and Newbold). In the initial research for this study it was used to count the number of advertisements in print copies of the *North & South Shields Gazette* immediately before and after the 1853 repeal of the advertisement duty. It was also used to analyse and categorise the content in the first year of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition.* The Word library has a bound copy of that publication from July 1855 to June 1856. In the appendix to this thesis, the content chart I compiled from that research can be viewed.

As Pykett put it in Brake, Jones and Madden's pioneering study *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, empirical work in researching newspaper content needs to be exhaustive and is usually exhausting (1990). However, this was written before the advent of the British Library's online British Newspaper Archive; after this became available my aim was still to carry out exhaustive research but the work itself was less exhausting – and in some respects more precise. When seeking evidence on specific subjects, digital searches could be carried out for such terms as "stamp duty", "advertisement duty" and "paper duty". It was also possible to search for such subjects in other newspapers, including other North East titles listed in the digital archive and to research the first use of the term "taxes on knowledge"; this was not a tool available to key researchers, such as Wiener, who had

[16] Kusow, A. M. (2003) 'Beyond Indigenous Authenticity: Reflections on the Insider/Outsider Debate in Immigration Research.' *Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 591-599.

looked at this question in the late 1960s and had come to an understandably imperfect conclusion.

The benefits of digital archive research have been recognised by Mussell:

> Even though only a fraction of what was printed in the nineteenth century has survived, there remains far too much to read in the print archive, and what has survived appears in a perplexing diversity of forms. By transforming periodicals into something else, something digital, we create news ways that they can be interrogated, which, in turn, helps us to understand both the surviving printed periodicals and the culture that produced them. (2016: 17)

To assess the extent to which the weekly *Gazette* and its daily edition were aimed at the working class, it was possible, using the archive, to search for and count recruitment advertisements for apprentices, servants, errand boys and workmen; it was also used to quantify advertisements aimed at working men as consumers. Such advertisements were counted across a range of years to compare changes over time; for further comparison, they were also quantified in rival publications. When looking at the response of the *Gazette* to the repeal of the paper duty in 1861, the search facility was used to compare it with that of newspapers in the whole of Britain and Ireland. It also enabled a comparison of *Gazette* content across a range of significant years: for instance, in looking at how the working class was addressed in the immediate aftermath of stamp duty repeal and in 1861, the year of paper duty repeal. The online archive was similarly useful in giving access to the 50th anniversary edition of the *Gazette* from 1899, and so allowing the harvesting of reminiscences. Hiller (1978) recommends such editions as a useful research tool.

But Hobbs points to the limits of web-based computational methods: "online searching is invaluable, but browsing is still essential" (2016: 232), particularly when it comes to assessing the status given to an article by its positioning on a page. In comparing the *Gazette*'s approach to local news between the halfpenny daily of 1864 and in the weekly, which ran alongside the daily for a year after the former's launch, it was necessary to look at where such articles were placed within the newspaper, rather than simply counting numbers of articles. Another limitation of using the online archive was that copies of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* for 1858, 1860, 1861, 1862 and 1863 were not available in the British Newspaper Archive. When it came to researching changes in size, pagination and layout in the *Telegraphic Edition* over the period 1858 to 1863, it was necessary to return to library editions on microfiche. In the build-up to the June 1855 repeal of the newspaper stamp duty, microfiche copies were also used to research references to the taxes on knowledge in the *Gazette's* short-lived rival, the *Shields Advocate*, which has previously received scant academic attention, but which, by its very presence, as Milne points out (1971), influenced the response of the *Gazette* to stamp duty repeal. It is not included in

the British Newspaper Archive. Moreover, reading rather than counting was also used to analyse the structure of articles, through a comparison of reports in the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* with the coverage of the same events in the weekly *Gazette*. Regardless of method used, it is crucial for researchers, in Hobbs' words, to "immerse themselves in publications they study (digital, microfilm, or paper) to discern their form and content, rather than trusting digital metadata or other scholars' fleeting impressions" (2016: 222) and that is certainly something I strove to do.

Through another digital archive, that of the Hansard Parliamentary reports, it was possible to read the words of the MPs in the 1830s and 1850s who campaigned for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge. As outlined in my literature review, these words have considerable relevance in the debate over the motives for the repeal campaign. Access to the digital archive allowed me to read every Parliamentary debate on the subject of the taxes on knowledge. A comparison could then be made of subjects and language between the pronouncements of the repeal MPs and *Gazette* articles of the period and also between both and the language and concerns of those members of the middle-class on Tyneside, among whom some of the leading light at the *Gazette* were prominent, who had established organisations, such as mechanics' and working men's institutes, for the working class.

Brown refers to there being no shortage of accounts about the life of Victorian journalists and newspaper offices. As she points out though, these tend to be either reminiscences written in later life or portraits in the London review publications and were "usually of very poor quality, rambling, and anecdotal (1985: 75). She adds: "journalism was nearly always anonymous … and memoirs are inaccurate" (1985: 3). *Gazette* reports in the 1850s and '60s were anonymised but, using the few names taken from the centenary pamphlet published by the newspaper in 1949 and from reading copies of a newspaper issued by the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge in the JSTOR online archive, which named the organisation's South Shields agent, it was possible to search for every reference to them in the British Newspaper Archive. It was also possible to build up a picture of their work by searching for general references to reporters, journalists and editors. This information was used to supplement personal testimony from journalists' memoirs, including those of Sir Thomas Wemyss Reid, who began as a reporter in Newcastle during the period under research.

A key source of information was the diary of JC Stevenson, the *Gazette's* proprietor, obtained in PDF form from his descendent, Hew Stevenson, who had written a family history, *Jobs for the Boys* (2009). A historian at Newcastle University had shown some interest in the diary several decades ago but had not followed this up. This is therefore the first academic study to make use of it. The diary contains references to its editors and the recruitment process Stevenson carried out and also insight into Stevenson's social life and his social concerns in relation to the working class, which was directly relevant to the research.

John Tosh (2006: 174) quotes the historian Theodore Zeldin who held that "all he (or any historian) can offer his readers is his personal vision of the past, and the materials out of which they can fashion a personal vision that corresponds to their aspirations and sympathies."[17] Tosh does, however, suggest a perspective of the world and knowledge of work beyond the academy is useful for the historian "so that the range of imaginative possibilities in the historian's mind bears some relation to the range of conditions and mentalities in the past" (2006: 166). He also points to the dangers of getting *too* close to the historical sources: "unremitting primary research, with its necessary but obsessive attention to detail, can lead to a certain intellectual blinkering" (2006: 160). Moreover, there are limits to what the sources can tell us:

> 'Be true to your sources' is less straightforward than it looks … First, the primary sources available to the historian are an incomplete record, not only because so much has perished by accident or design but in a more fundamental sense because a great deal that happened left no material trace whatever. This is particularly true of mental processes, both conscious and unconscious. No historical character, however prominent and articulate, has ever set down more than a tiny proportion of his or her thoughts and assumptions; and often some of the most influential beliefs are those that are taken for granted and therefore are not discussed in the documents. In the second place, the sources are *tainted* [author's italics] by the less than pure intentions of their authors and – more insidiously – by their confinement within the assumptions of men and women in that time and place. (Tosh, 2006: 178)

There is also the problem of the historian's confinement within the assumptions of his or her time and place, which would need to be considered, and this leads back to the positionality of the author and the limits of his or her objectivity. Tosh's view on this is:

> … historical knowledge is not, and cannot be 'objective' (that is empirically derived in its entirety from the object of that enquiry) … the assumptions and attitudes of historians themselves have to be carefully assessed before we can come to any conclusion about the real status of historical knowledge. (2006: 187)

We have the benefit of hindsight, and this could be considered a useful prism of the "outsider" – in that it does at least allow us to "make sense of the past (2006: 193). From a postmodernist perspective though, Tosh (2006:198) quotes Jenkins' statement that history becomes "a discursive practice that enables present-minded people(s) to go the past, there to delve around and reorganise it appropriately to their need."[18] Tosh

[17] Zeldin, T. 'Ourselves as we see us'. *Times Literary Supplement*, 31 December 1982.
[18] Jenkins, K. (1991), *Rethinking History.* Abingdon: Routledge.

recommends that historians constantly be alert to the possibility of imposing anachronistic conclusions.

Historical research is ultimately about the accumulation of evidence, the analysis of the facts and the judgement that might be drawn, however imperfectly. As Tosh states: “Formal proof may be beyond their [the historians’]reach; what matters is the validity of their inference” (2006: 180).

This chapter has detailed the primary source material – the records and relics – at the heart of this thesis; it has looked at the cultural history approach to the research; it has identified the thesis as a case study; it has defined and set out the research methods, indicating where qualitative and quantitative methods will be used; it has considered the strengths and limitations of those research methods and has assessed the issue of positionality – the possibility of subjective intrusion by the writer.

# Chapter 4: The *North & South Shields Gazette* in Context

A useful way of looking at historical explanation is to consider any point in time as the intersection of two "planes": the diachronic and the synchronic (Tosh 2006: 152). The first of these might be seen as a vertical plane that extends across a period leading up to the historical moment under analysis and takes in significant events that influence that moment; the second might be seen as a horizontal plane that comprises contemporaneous factors that also influence that moment. This contextual chapter will begin by focusing on the diachronic, looking at the decades preceding the main focus of my study – the 1850s and early 1860s – to consider events of that time which led up to the period under analysis. It will then move to the synchronous by looking at the repeal campaign of the 1850s, which flourished during the first decade of the *North & South Shields Gazette's* life. The *Gazette* was born in a period when the purpose and content of newspapers was a matter of national debate, one which had been fomenting for the first 50 years of the 19th Century and had, at its height, broken out into something more akin to warfare over access to, or possibly control of, the minds of the working class; the roots of that conflict stretched back to the early years of the previous century. The attitude and response of the *North & South Shields Gazette* to the taxes on knowledge has to be viewed in that context.

## 4.1 The Taxes on Knowledge

On the evening of Tuesday, April 20, 1830, members of the City of London Literary and Scientific Institution gathered for a "highly respectable" meeting in the institution's theatre. In his address from the chair, Dr Thomas Southwood Smith, the eminent physician and sanitary reformer, directed his audience's attention to the remarkable work that was at that moment being carried out between Liverpool and Manchester in constructing "a road adapted for steam-carriages" (*Sun*, April 23, 1830). The eminent doctor might not have envisaged the full extent of the railway revolution but he had an idea of its potential. He invited his audience to imagine a network of similar "roads" branching out all over the country, allowing people to travel cheaply across considerable distances at previously unimaginable speeds. With this image fresh in the mind of the august gentleman, Dr Southwood Smith prevailed upon them to embark on a further leap of the imagination – to envisage a comparable system for the transmission of information "between mind and mind". And then, after a dramatic pause, he pointed out that this system already existed.

> … the machinery of making this mental intercourse perfect we actually do possess. Our grand mechanic was Caxton – our steam-carriage is the Press. Give us but the full and unfettered use of this machine, and the distance between ignorance and knowledge, between prejudice and

> reason, between error and truth, we shall see rapidly passed by the mental traveller, even in our own day. (*Sun*, 23 April 1830)

The reason Dr Southwood Smith and his confreres – who, under the auspices of their institution, were anxious to bring about the widespread dissemination of literary and scientific knowledge – did not have "full and unfettered" use of this machine, was that the press was constrained to pay taxes that inflated the price of newspapers and other publications and put them out of reach of the poor, a section of the community that, in the eyes of the City of London Literary and Scientific Institution and many gentleman in other walks of life, needed literary and scientific enlightenment more than any other. Returning to his analogy, Dr Southwood Smith asked his audience to imagine a day in the near future when the steam-carriage roads had reached all parts of the country but the Government had brought in an Act that imposed certain restrictions: weights fastened to each steam-carriage wheel, granite blocks placed along the steam-carriage roads, strong barriers at regular intervals that had to be removed before the steam-carriages could proceed, requirements that the carriages had to wait at each barrier for a fixed period. And yet, he pointed out, an even greater set of obstacles had been placed in the way of "cheap … and easy and sure communication of ideas between the different portions of the community" (*Sun*, April 23, 1830). As the applause rang out, Southwood Smith got to the nub of his argument:

> The tax upon paper, the stamp duty upon newspapers, the tax upon advertisements, the tax upon the importation of foreign books, these are all contrivances admirably adapted to retard the progress of the Press; the mighty machine by which alone the human mind can be conveyed over every part of the vast field of knowledge; and by which it is destined to enlarge the field itself, far beyond the horizon, expansive as it is, which now bounds it. (*Sun*, 23 April 1830)

By April 1830 these taxes had come to be known collectively as the taxes on knowledge. Wiener (1969) records that on November 12, 1830, the Sunday newspaper the *Examiner* used the phrase *Taxes on Knowledge* on its front page for the first time and that it was used again in January 1831, by a Manchester newspaper, the *Voice of the People*, on the front page of its first issue. Based on this evidence, Wiener stated: "A new phrase had entered the political consciousness of England" (1969: 1), certainly implying that these were its first recorded use. However, by November 1830, the phrase was already in circulation – and indeed Wiener is mistaken about the first use on the *Examiner's* front page. The weekly newspaper, founded by Leigh and John Hunt in 1808, first used it alongside its masthead on Sunday, November 21. In addition to carrying its price on its front page, it broke that price down as follows: "Paper, Print & …[sic] 3d; Taxes on Knowledge, 4d". There was no edition of the publication on November 12, it being a Friday. Wiener also states erroneously that the price of 7d was broken down into 3½d

for paper and print and 3½ for Taxes on Knowledge. The paper had in fact first used the phrase on May 16, 1830, in which it stated, significantly:

> …the *Sun* was the only paper which gave a full report of the proceedings of the interesting meeting held at the City of London Literary and Scientific Institution; the first time, perhaps, in which the subject of the Taxes on Knowledge has ever been publicly discussed as a matter relating to the progress of civilization. ( *Examiner*, 16 May 1830)

The phrase had been used by other London and provincial papers in Great Britain and Ireland earlier that year. The online British Newspaper Archive records 38 mentions in newspapers in 1830.The earliest surviving recorded use of the phrase in the archive is in the Dublin newspaper *Saunders's News-Letter* of February 28, 1786 which, in a report of a House of Lords debate on the subject of postal franking, Lord Mountmorres is quoted as saying that the postage charge was in effect a tax and that if it were to be increased, "other taxes that are unjust and partial may be remitted; and one in particular, the worst that could be devised in such a rising country, most unjust and impolitical – a tax upon knowledge – upon newspapers and advertisements" (*Saunders's News-Lette*r, 28 February 1786). *The Sun* itself had first used it in 1815, in a short article that claimed the Chancellor the Exchequer had decided to abandon a proposed "additional Tax on Newspapers" since it would amount to a "Tax upon Knowledge, Morals, and the British Constitution" (*Sun*, 5 June 1815).

In his address, Southwood Smith did not use the term, but another of the speakers at the meeting, Mr JH Elliot, did. Although Southwood Smith was referring to the press in the general sense, to include book printing as well as newspaper and magazine production, Elliot drew the meeting's attention to what he referred to as the "most important part of the taxes on knowledge, imposed in the shape of a stamp duty on Newspapers, and a duty on Advertisements".

> There was a large portion of society who had neither the will nor the capacity either of head or of pocket, to read or study books; all the literary knowledge they could obtain was what the newspapers could afford; and that source was restricted by the tax on knowledge. (*Sun*, 23 April 1830).

The taxes on knowledge were first imposed in 1712 by a Tory ministry led by Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford. They were in response to a message sent on January 19 of that year by Queen Anne to the House of Commons, in which she referred to the "great licence" that was being taken in "publishing false and scandalous libels". The royal message continued: "This evil seems to be grown too strong for the laws now in force; it is, therefore recommended to you to find a remedy equal to the mischief". Thomas Milner Gibson, the Radical Manchester MP who fronted the 1850s campaign for the repeal of the

taxes, quoted, in a Parliamentary debate in 1852, the Queen's words and went on to quote the 1712 response of the House:

> We are very sensible how much the liberty of the press is abused, by turning it into such licentiousness as is a reproach to the nation, since not only false and scandalous libels are printed and published against your Majesty's Government, but the most horrid blasphemies against God and religion; and we beg leave humbly to assure your Majesty that we will do our utmost to find out a remedy equal to the mischief, and that may effectually cure it. (HC Deb 22 April 1852 vol c1009-14)

It is significant that Milner Gibson quoted the legislation in such detail; this act of 1712 continued to be a bone of contention 140 years later.

In considering a "remedy equal to the mischief" Harley's government briefly considered imposing a registration system which would require all publications to bear the author's, printer's and publisher's name and address, but settled for the system of taxation. Under the Stamp Act of 1712, pamphlets were taxed at two shillings for every sheet of paper they used, newspapers were taxed at 1d for each full sheet of paper – and had to bear a stamp prior to printing – and there was a tax of one shilling for every advertisement published. Hewitt (2014) describes how newspaper proprietors would order a quantity of paper from a manufacturer and then send it to the stamping office, where it would be stamped with the name of the newspaper, and only then would it be ready for printing. James Cochrane Stevenson, son of the *North & South Shields Gazette* founder, James Stevenson, and who was to take over the running of the publication, wrote in a letter to his brother, Alexander, on February 10, 1849, a fortnight before the first edition was printed, that he had been to their paper dealers in London and ordered 1,000 sheets which he was "going to send to Somerset House to get stamped" (Stevenson correspondence). The third tax was an excise duty on paper, which covered almost every kind of paper product and was tied up with a host of associated customs charges, raw material duties and potential financial penalties surrounding paper manufacture. By the 1850s, paper duties accounted for about a fifth of the purchase price of paper (Hewitt 2014). Taxes were also imposed on imported linen and soap. Downie (1979: 158) says the 1712 stamp act was "primarily a revenue-raising device" and points out that while direct proceeds from the taxes were comparatively small, they funded a lottery which in turn helped the Government fund its participation in the War of Spanish Succession. Conboy sees the act as "a pragmatic combination of control and fiscal opportunism rather than simply an attempt to introduce another explicitly censorious measure" (2004:68). While listing a number of publications that, because their production costs were raised to unsustainable levels, went out of business as a result of the taxes' imposition, Downie states: "there was no absolute decline in the circulation of newspapers" (1979: 159). However, the 1850s campaigners regarded the newspaper stamp act as originating and

persisting primarily as a means of controlling the press, not as a producer of revenue.[19] They were to use what they saw as its ultimate failure in this regard as a reason for its removal.

Some newspapers – chiefly the weekly and thrice-weekly ones – survived the taxes by raising their cover prices; the result was to restrict readership and ownership to the monied classes (Curran 1979, Morris 1979, Curran and Seaton 2010; Williams 2019, Williams 2010, Conboy 2004); the taxes also made some of those publications more susceptible to political bribe and subsidy as alternative sources of revenue. In so far as they were conceived at all as a means of controlling the press, the taxes were designed to quieten critical anti-government voices – chiefly exercised in pamphlets – rather than specifically radical ones from, or on behalf of, the working-class. Despite periodic rises in stamp and advertising duty throughout the second half of the 18th Century, discordant voices were not, in the long term, stifled. In the aftermath of the 1789 French Revolution and the first stirrings of the Industrial Revolution a press grew up to specifically address the concerns of, and provide a voice for, the new working class. Many of these "radical", "pauper" publications were distributed illegally – untaxed.

### 4.2 The "Battle for the Mind"

Beginning in the early 1790s a "stream of news-pamphlets and news-sheets, handbills and embryonic newspapers" began to flow; it was to "grow into a torrent over the next half-century" (Harrison, 1974: 28), reaching a peak in the 1830s when more than 560 unstamped periodicals appeared (James, 1976). After the Napoleonic Wars, when the labour market was flooded by demobbed soldiers and there was mass unemployment and economic depression, radical newspapers emerged in response to social unrest. In 1815 the stamp duty was increased to 4d and in 1819, in the aftermath of the Peterloo Massacre that year, at which 15 were killed and 650 injured when militia charged a parliamentary reform meeting in Manchester, essay and opinion papers were brought within its remit. By this time newspaper taxation came to be seen explicitly by radicals as a means of controlling a working-class press, rather than simply a critical one, and an attempt to exclude working-class readers. The radical journalist George Jacob Holyoake, a member, from 1849, of the Newspaper Stamp Abolition Committee (NSAC) and, from 1851, of its successor, the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge (APRTOK), referred to the working-class publications that sprang up in this period as being "exactly the kind of paper the suppression of which was intended by the 10th of Anne and the 60th of George III" (1892: 276). Fellow campaigner Francis Place, in *The Taxes on Knowledge,* one of J.A. Roebuck's *Pamphlets for the People*, printed in 1835, quoted the

[19] On April 22, 1852, Milner Gibson told the House: "…this was not a revenue question at all … it had never been proposed by the Legislature, or continued by the Legislature, speaking through the preamble of their Act of Parliament, as a revenue question" (HC Deb 22 April 1852 vol 120, c1000)

wording of the "60th of George III" – the 1819 Newspaper Stamp Duties Act – to show how the Stamp Tax was, in his view, framed to keep knowledge away from the poor.

> 'Observations upon public events and occurrences, public news, intelligence, and remarks thereon, and all matters relating to Church and State' were now interdicted to those who could not afford to purchase a stamped newspaper; the knowledge acquired by the People was to be obliterated, from the want of access to information to continue it. (Place, 1835: 4)

That might have been the aim of Government action but it was not quite the effect in the long term. The enlarged scope of the tax and other repressive legislation introduced as part of the notorious Six Acts – a series of draconian civil obedience measures brought in by Lord Liverpool's Government in the wake of Peterloo – did succeed to a large degree in stifling the radical press in the 1820s but by the following decade, a new wave of radical publications grew up, demanding universal suffrage, critiquing the social structure, fostering working-class community and supporting the setting up of trades unions (Curran 1978). The vehement language, rhetorical force and extensive distribution of a medium that so comprehensively challenged the status quo was genuinely disturbing to those sections of society – chiefly the middle classes and above – who viewed the preservation of that status quo as a matter of self-preservation.[20] As we shall see, among those people might be included the proprietors and leading journalists of the *North & South Shields Gazette.*

Several of the radical newspapers had a national circulation and went to imaginative lengths to defy the authorities, including being smuggled out in coffins. Grant, in his 1871 history, takes some relish in recounting how Henry Hetherington, publisher of the *Poor Man's Guardian,* would make up "dummy parcels", labelled with the newspaper's name, which would attract the interest of the police who had been posted outside the publisher's offices to "seize the seditious publications". However, when opened by police, the parcels would contain "old newspapers duly stamped, or quantities of brown paper suited only to a grocer's shop." Meanwhile genuine copies of the *Guardian* would be sneaked out of a back entrance (1871: 301-2). Posting police at the *Guardian* offices was part of the Government's efforts to suppress the unstamped papers. Newspaper sellers were prosecuted; Government informants were planted among the writers and distributors of the banned newspapers. Between 1830 and 1836 at least 1130 cases of selling unstamped papers came before the London magistrates; by 1836 more than 700 vendors had been imprisoned (Hollis: 1970: 173). The imprisoned – who included young boys and women

[20] A typical example of how members of that class viewed the radical press can be seen in the testimony of the Hon. Arthur Kinnaird, Liberal MP for Perth, who spoke in a debate on the taxes on knowledge in the House of Commons, on May 16, 1854. He said:" the large manufacturing towns were inundated with a class of low, immoral publications, which the people would read. (HC Deb 16 May 1854 vol 133)

– were treated as martyrs in the pages of the unstamped. A victim fund was set up by the Association of Working Men to Procure a Cheap and Honest Press. Repression did not halt the presses. At its peak in the early 1830s, *The Poor Man's Guardian* sold between 12,000 and 16,000 copies per issue (Williams, 2010). Grant, while expressing his outrage at the content of the unstamped press, observed that Government persecution merely stimulated their production.

Kevin Williams (2010: 80) refers to reading in the first half of the 19th Century as a "political battleground"; Louis James (1976: 28) refers to "the battle for the mind". That battle scarred the minds of the respectable middle-class long into the mid years of the century; it coloured their view of the working class and to a large degree inspired their initiatives to "modify the behaviour" of that class; it established the discourse of the debate over the taxes on knowledge and set in place some of its most persistent tropes – tropes that were to be repeatedly employed by middle-class reformers in subsequent decades, including those who ran and worked for the *North & South Shields Gazette*. On the front-page editorial of the *Poor Man's Guardian* first edition*,* Hetherington urges his readers to metaphorical battle: "We are prepared for the fight …. We buckle on the armour of patience and perseverance … we draw forth our sword of reason and we will brave the whole host of tyranny!" (*Poor Man's Guardian,* 9 July, 1831). On the other side of the war to the radical papers were such publications as *The Penny Magazine* (1832-45), set up by Charles Knight, a member of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), founded in 1826. The magazine was undoubtedly intended to improve the general knowledge of the working class, but there was often in its articles about history or zoology, geography or geology, a moral for the members of that class to absorb and some of its articles were more pointedly admonitory.

### 4.3 The 1830s Repeal Campaign

It was only in the 1830s, more than 100 years after the imposition of the taxes on knowledge, that a "sustained effort was made to remove them" (Weiner, 1969: xii). The Radical MP Joseph Hume made parliamentary bids in 1825, 1826 and 1827 to have the stamp tax relaxed but there was not an organised opposition to the legislation and even when the Whigs, who had spoken against anti-press measures of 1819, came to power as part of a coalition government in 1827, there was no effort to repeal it (Curran, 1978). George Jacob Holyoake maintained that prior to 1832 "there was little objection to the [newspaper] stamp by Englishmen in general; they rather thought it an inevitable arrangement' (1893: 275). Grant confessed to being surprised that "no organised movement had been made, many years before" to seek the reduction or repeal of the taxes (1871: 299). As we have seen, it was only at this time that the newspaper taxes began to be specifically and more widely characterised as taxes on *knowledge*. The term was part of the rhetoric of the anti-tax campaigners, the taxes' "skilful propagandist opponents", in the words of Lee (1976: 117). Jones sees the term as a "succinct and brilliantly

evocative description" that put the proponents of newspaper taxation at a "rhetorical disadvantage". He writes:

> The tactic of designating newspaper taxes as 'taxes on knowledge', which undermined 'the liberty of the press' and prevented the freedom to publicise, was itself a devastatingly effective publicity device. (1996: 20)

Hollis (1970) identifies middle-class and working-class groupings among the London radicals who waged the 1830s repeal campaigns. Among the former were Hume; the polemical pamphleteer and independent MP for Bath, John Arthur Roebuck, who was to become a famously belligerent parliamentarian; George Grote, a historian and a co-founder of University College London, who in 1831 was elected as an MP for the City of London; Dr George Birkbeck, an academic and physician, who had been a co-founder of the London Mechanics' Institute, later Birkbeck College; the novelist and, at that time, Radical politician Edward Bulwer Lytton; Thomas Wakley, a surgeon who had co-founded *The Lancet* and who became Radical MP for Finsbury in 1835; and Henry Warburton, the Radical MP for Bridport. Such campaigners were, like successive pro-tax governments, anxious to stifle radical working-class voices but they believed the taxes were almost laughably counterproductive when it came to fulfilling this function. These campaigners were also to question the efficacy of such publications as the *Penny Magazine.* The journalist William Hickson told the House of Commons Select Committee on the Newspaper Stamp in 1851: "I never did know of a poor man taking in the *Penny Magazine*" and, as far as he was aware, *Chambers,* another publication of "useful knowledge", was more popular among small shopkeepers (quoted in Hollis, 1970: 139). Leitch Ritchie, a Scottish journalist and novelist who served for a manager at *Chambers*, said, in a letter to the monthly *Gazette* of the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge (APRTOK) in January 1854: "… *Chamber's Journal* has never been able to penetrate far into the lower classes, although for very many years the most strenuous exertions were made to effect that object." In an accompanying editorial, the *Gazette* commented:

> That the poorest classes of readers do not take in the works of Messrs. Chambers, we are well aware; these works appeal to persons of education—the instruction they contain would be found tedious by the uneducated, and their tales of fiction are rather framed to instruct the understanding than to excite the imagination … (APRTOK *Gazette*, January 1854: 2-3)

Bulwer Lytton referred to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge as the Society for the Diffusion of General Stupefaction (Mitchell, 2003).

The campaigners clearly felt it was a better tactic to get the taxes on knowledge repealed. Those campaigners saw repeal and, in particular, repeal of the stamp duty, not only as a

means to influence the working class – by allowing the "respectable" classes to bring out cheap newspapers that would inculcate the "right" opinions and thereby restore society to a peaceable, well-ordered condition – but as a means, through competition from those respectable cheap papers, to silence the radical newspapers such as *The Poor Man's Guardian*, which, as they perceived it, were influencing the working class along the wrong lines.

*Poor Man's Guardian* editor Henry Hetherington was himself campaigning for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge. Lining up alongside him in a working-class grouping were such stalwarts as political pamphleteer William Carpenter and John Cleave, who had worked with Hetherington at the *Guardian* and who between 1834 and 1836 ran the *Weekly Police Gazette,* which combined crime reporting with radical politics. These men were opposed to the taxes because they prevented the legal dissemination of cheap publications among the working class. Both the middle-class and working-class groups used the term *taxes on knowledge* and could identify an educational benefit to repeal, but they had wildly opposing visions of the educational direction of post-repeal newspapers. On one side we had Hume and friends who saw a future in which cheap newspapers would enlighten the working classes as to the benefits of a sober, well-ordered life and explain the finer points of political economy, so that they would be less inclined to go on strike or question their position in the social hierarchy, at the same time as encouraging them to respect the property of their betters and to obey the laws of the land. Conversely, the working-class radicals wanted there to be affordable newspapers that would encourage working men to stand up for their rights, know their worth in the industrial process, recognise their stake in national prosperity and question the legitimacy of laws and property rights, while at the same time encouraging them to unite in trade unions and in opposition to repressive legislation (Hollis 1970). Hollis identifies a third strand of public opinion in relation to the taxes: the Tory party which simply wanted the taxes to be retained. It did not believe a free press would bring about social peace; repeal would, on the contrary, "undermine the aristocratic grip on government" (1970: 11), something the middle-class and working-class radicals were aiming to achieve. There were also voices in the press of the1830s who were opposed to repeal. In 1836 Charles Molloy Westmacott, editor of the Sunday newspaper *The Age*, wrote a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Thomas Spring Rice, in which he characterised the repeal campaigners as a "restless band of desperate adventurers, who, from motives partly political and partly mercenary, seek to advance their ambitions schemes and fortunes …" Repealing the taxes would "… throw open the press to the unbridled fury of democratical ambition", "completely destroy the balance of power" and "given an ascendancy to that Faction who have long been seeking to elevate themselves upon the destruction of the social order" (Westmacott, 1836: 6).

The advertisement tax was reduced from 3s 6d to 1s 6d in 1833 and the stamp tax on pamphlets was repealed in 1834. The campaigners then focused their attention on the stamp duty. Bulwer Lytton addressed the question of newspaper taxation in the House of

Commons in May 1834. The terms he uses and the sentiments he expresses were to be echoed by middle-class campaigners in the second phase of repeal in the 1850s and to a large extent chime with those of the *North & South Shields Gazette* in that period (as well as echoing the "cure" and "remedy" of queen and parliament in 1712). There is the theme of poison, medicine and antidote; that the taxation allows the poison – the cheap, unstamped radical newspapers – to circulate, but does not allow cheap, respectable newspapers to supply the medicinal corrective. Jones refers to this as the "key metaphor in the cultural debate … Depending on the perspective, newspapers were described as means whereby the individual or social body might either be nourished or poisoned" (1996: 99). There is also the image of the mature and rational man of the middle or upper classes – a man who could happily read any kind of newspaper, no matter how extreme and not be seduced by it – and the childlike man of the lower classes who is susceptible to any untruth and who not only needs to be instructed but, through exposure to the facts, be pacified so that he will not threaten his social superiors.

> You either forbid to the poor by this tax, in a great measure, all political knowledge, or else you give to them, unanswered and unpurified, doctrines of the most dangerous kind —you put the medicine under lock and key, and you leave the poison on the shelf; you do not create one monopoly only, you create two monopolies—one monopoly of dear newspapers, and another monopoly of smuggled newspapers; you create two publics; to the one public of educated men, in the upper and middle ranks, whom no newspaper could, on moral points, very dangerously mislead, you give the safe and rational papers; to the other public, the public of men far more easily influenced—poor, ignorant, distressed—men from whom all the convulsions and disorders of society arise, (for the crimes of the poor are the punishment of the rich,)—to the other public, whom you ought to be most careful to soothe, to guide, and to enlighten, you give the heated invectives of demagogues and fanatics. (HC Deb 22 May 1834 vol 23 cc1196-1197)

Persuasive as such arguments might have been, rather more so was the fact that owners of the stamped press began to threaten to stop paying the tax themselves. In June 1836, Spring Rice, chancellor in Lord Melbourne's Whig Government, reduced the stamp duty from 4d to 1d, informing the House that, having "resorted to all the means afforded by the existing law for preventing the publication of unstamped newspapers … the law-officers of the Crown stated that the existing law was altogether ineffectual to the purpose of putting an end to the unstamped papers" (HC Deb 20 June 1836, Vol 34. c.629). The excise duty on paper was also reduced. Hume and his supporters in Parliament, accepting that this was perhaps the best they could hope for, did not vote against the third reading of the bill (Curran 1978).

Hewitt (2014: 5) sees the reduction as "a skilful attempt to appease moderate radicalism but retain and in some respects strengthen controls on the popular press." Although the stamp duty was reduced, the penalties for anyone being found with an unstamped newspaper were strengthened, the Government had stronger powers to confiscate printing presses and there was an increase in the securities newspaper proprietors had to pay. Moreover, tracts and periodical pamphlets were brought within the definition of a newspaper. Curran highlights the rise in securities – the sum of money that a prospective proprietor had to set aside in order to register a new publication – as a measure to "rig newspaper publishing in favour of men of capital" (1978: 56). The tax reduction made it more conducive, financially, for new mainstream local newspapers – such as the *North and South Shields Gazette* – to be founded and the circulation of existing papers of this sort to increase. Meanwhile, within a year of the reduction, faced with this new competition and the increased repression, the "clandestine radical press had disappeared" (Curran, 2010: 9). Grant enjoyed pointing out the irony of this, that "when left alone they [the unstamped newspapers] died, one after the other, until not one was left." He added: "This was a great blessing to the working class, to whom they were addressed; for their teaching was of the most pestilential kind" (1871: 311). However, stamped, altogether more professional, papers of a radical disposition flourished, not least the *Northern Star* and *Reynolds News*, both of which vied with the *Times* as the best-selling newspaper in the country (Curran and Seaton, 2009:9). In 1853, when advocating complete repeal of the stamp duty, Thomas Milner Gibson referred to the 1836 reduction, commenting on its shortcomings:

> The lowering of the stamp from 4d. to ld. I really can hardly regard as a benefit at all, if it was a sacrifice of revenue; for it only relieved two classes who required no relief—it put considerable sums into the pockets of newspaper proprietors, and it saved you and me a few pounds a year, to whom this was but of little importance. It did not enable us to help general education at all. (HC Deb 20 June 1853 Vol 125. c.1136)

Hewitt asserts that working-class radicals were outraged by the continued impositions on the press, but "moderate radicals were unwilling to resist and radical energies were soon diverted into Chartism" (2014: 5). He adds: "Resentment to the taxes on knowledge persisted throughout the Chartist period" (2014: 15). The radical press continued to push for full repeal but there was, says Hewitt, an "uneasy" relationship between Chartist leader Feargus O'Connor on the one hand and Hetherington and another longstanding campaigner against the taxes, William Lovett, on the other. For much of the next decade repeal of the taxes was "marginal to both working-class and middle-class radicalism" (2014: 15).

## 4.4 The 1850s Repeal Campaign

The *North & South Shields Gazette's* first issue was published on February 24, 1849 and it was in the late 1840s that the second campaign emerged for the abolition of the taxes. Hewitt (2014) sees several factors leading to this renewed interest. In 1846 the repeal of the Corn Laws had been a milestone in establishing the principle of free trade; the same year had seen the removal of the duty on glass. In 1847 the closure of *Chamber's Miscellany* had highlighted the difficulties of making the "right" kind of cheap periodical a profitable venture. The following year, with revolutions across the continent, there were moves to repeal newspaper taxes in France. This inspired British radicals – working-class and middle-class groupings alike. The People's Charter Union (PCU) "invoked the repeal of the 'taxes on knowledge as a basis for cross-class alliance" (2014: 5). On March 7, 1849, the PCU became the Newspaper Stamp Abolition Committee (NSAC) with Hetherington and Place among its members. The *North & South Shields Gazette* reported on August 17, 1849 that "several of the artisans" whose campaign had led to the reduction of the newspaper stamp duty in 1836 had formed a committee, the Newspaper Stamp Abolition Committee (NSAC) on March 7, 1849 with the aim of bringing about the repeal of the taxes on knowledge. It mentioned that "the veteran Francis Place" had been appointed secretary and they had opened an office (*N&SSG*, 17 August, 1849).

Hetherington died a few months after the NSAC was formed and thereafter the appeal campaign centred on a group of MPs and became dominated by their hegemonic approach rather than the inclusive one of the working-class radicals. In 1851 the NSAC became the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge (APRTOK), with a band of parliamentary radicals and "progressive" thinkers at its heart. Alongside Joseph Hume and Place were the great anti-Corn Law generals John Bright and Richard Cobden, Manchester MP Thomas Milner Gibson and a group of journalists: George Henry Lewes, Thornton Hunt and William Hickson. Thornton Hunt and Joseph Hume were to have direct links with the *North & South Shields Gazette*, as will be outlined in my next chapter.

Curran writes that the APRTOK was established "not as a national pressure group with branches and grassroots membership, but as a centralised lobbying organisation" (2018: 23). While it is true that much of its focus was on parliament, the association also had a network of district secretaries around the country. From March 1853 it published a newspaper, its *Gazette*, and in the August to November edition of 1853 and the December 1854 edition one Robert Sutherland is listed as the South Shields district secretary with his address being "the *Gazette* office" (GAPRTOK Aug to Sept 1853, p11; December 1854, p 20). The APRTOK, inside and outside Parliament, kept the newspaper debate on the national agenda – even at the height of the Crimean War, which began in 1853, just as the campaign against the advertising and stamp taxes was reaching a peak. An article in the first issue of the *Northern Tribune*, a pro-repeal periodical launched by the future Radical MP and *Newcastle Chronicle* owner Joseph Cowen jnr in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1854,

declared, albeit with a rhetorical flourish: “For several years past a regular siege has been going on in the country and in Parliament …against all the Taxes on Knowledge.” (*Northern Tribune* December 1854: 269). In its final edition, on June 16, 1855, to demonstrate public interest in the stamp duty repeal, the APRTOK *Gazette* published a list of parliamentary petitions. The stamp duty question had inspired 307 petitions comprising 36,553 signatures; it did not quite top the list, but it appeared on this evidence to exercise the public more than the abolition of church rates (35,731 signatures) or the ban on opening places of amusement on Sundays (12, 234 signatures) (*GAPRTOK* Aug to Sept, p11). Moreover, the *North & South Shields Gazette* and the other Tyneside newspapers often mentioned during this period the presentation of petitions to Parliament by northern town councils and mechanics’ institutes, including councils in Sunderland, Leeds, Gateshead, Newcastle, South Shields and North Shields, as well as there being meetings in Newcastle called by the APRTOK, usually chaired by Collet with help from local like-minded gentlemen, among them Joseph Cowen jnr. On January 26, 1853 Cowen and colleagues formed a Newcastle committee to press for the repeal of the taxes (*Gateshead Observer,* January 29, 1853).

From 1849 Milner Gibson moved resolutions in Parliament for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge.[21] He and his fellow APRTOK MPs also had a powerful voice in the House of Commons Select Committee on the Newspaper Stamp which was convened in April 1851. Lee describes the committee as “a markedly successful propaganda exercise initiated by Cobden and Milner and that some of its witnesses were members of the APRTOK but weren’t disclosed as such” (1976: 45). The committee met 15 times between April 14 and July 11, 1851; its minutes show it was chaired on each occasion by Milner Gibson and Cobden attended every session, along with a number of repeal-supporting MPs, including William Ewart, Sir Joshua Walmsley and Robert Shafto Adair among a membership that never numbered more than 11 (*Select Committee on Newspaper Stamp*).

The APRTOK MPs raised commercial and practical objections to the taxes that were consistent with their free-trade views on other areas of the economy and highlighted a mess of inconsistencies in the application of the tax law, which prevented mainstream newspapers from operating to their full commercial potential. They alleged that the Board of Inland Revenue, which had responsibility for collecting the tax, struggled to define what actually constituted “news”, since only publications that contained news were liable to the tax. “Class” publications – what we might call today trade papers or business-to-business publications – could, with impunity, report on matters relating to their specialism, but were not allowed – without paying the stamp – to report on anything

[21] George Jacob Holyoake, in his memoir, *Sixty Years of Agitation*, describes Milner Gibson thus: “He was tall, handsome, with a pleasant, winning expression, and a singular softness and persuasiveness of speech. There was, as the *Daily News* said, ‘a sparkle in his brisk talk and light comedy manner,’ and adversaries were oblivious of the rapier of his argument until they felt the point” (1893: 280).

outside it. (*Select Committee on Newspaper Stamp*, Q407, Q469). Milner Gibson and his colleagues pointed out what appeared to be some bizarre anomalies: newspapers did not have to pay the duty if they announced the arrival of ships, but they did if they announced the departure of ships. Sporting papers could advertise forthcoming matches, dog fights, prize fights, horse races and "ratting sports" without having to pay the tax but a newspaper would have to if it wanted to announce "matters of public benefit and importance" such as religious and charitable events. (HC Deb 22 April 1852 vol 120 c998). The 1851 Select Committee found that stamped publications' entitlement to free postage was open to abuse. Letters, parcels and unstamped publications would be hidden within rolls of stamped newspapers (as we have seen in the case of the *Poor Man's Guardian*), thereby evading the postal charge. Sometimes the post office simply didn't spot unstamped publications – even when they had not been hidden (*Select Committee on the Newspaper Stamp*, p9). In a House of Commons debate of 1850, Milner Gibson referred to 53 publications, among them *Punch* and the *Builder,* that simply used the stamping system as an aid to postage, since the one commercial benefit to stamping was that stamped copies were entitled to free postage. Any reader could go to the offices of such a publication, he said, and buy either a stamped or unstamped copy, depending on whether or not they wanted to send it through the post. This was not an arrangement allowed to newspapers – they could not decide to be stamped or unstamped (HC Deb 16 April 1850 vol 110 c373-380).[22]In attacking the advertising duty, Milner Gibson, said advertisements were a "legitimate fund for supporting a newspaper." The duty lessened the number of newspaper advertisements, reduced the number of newspaper advertisers and therefore readers; it amounted to "the most direct means possible for injuring and lessening the independence of the newspaper press" (HC Deb 22 April 1852 vol 120 c996).

At the same time the MPs were vigorous in once again pointing out the role an untaxed "respectable" press could have in educating the working class. Fox Bourne's *English Newspapers, Chapters in the History of Journalism*, one of the press histories of the late 19th Century written by men who had lived through the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, covers the parliamentary campaign in some detail. It sets out the Cobdenites' view that the taxes were an obstacle to working-class education but does not explain why they felt the working class needed educating (1887). A more thorough reading of the debates shows that, as had been the case in the 1830s, the campaigners were less concerned with the intrinsic value of education than with the idea that an educated working class, no longer absorbing dangerously radical notions from an unstamped press, would be a docile, law-abiding section of society that might one day be trusted to play a more prominent role in the electoral process; the true beneficiaries of educating the working class would not be the working class itself, but the rest of society. The idea that an educated working class would be a more quiescent one, less likely to commit crime, go

[22] Only the *Times* had been granted the privilege of stamping its own paper (Hewitt, 2014).

on strike or question the social hierarchy, was, as we shall see, to be the subject of articles in the *North & South Shields Gazette.*

Milner Gibson repeatedly channelled Bulwer Lytton when he referred to unstamped newspapers as the "poison" and a cheap respectable press as the "antidote". With the taxes on knowledge in force, the unstamped newspapers were the only publications that had "access to the minds of the working classes". They had this access because the Government would not let "the cheap newspaper go into the field and compete with them." "It was, therefore, most important to give to men of capital and respectability the power of gaining access by newspapers, by faithful records of facts, to the minds of the great body of the working classes" (HC Deb 16 April 1850 vol 110 c378). In a House of Commons debate on April 14, 1853 he said the taxes on knowledge were a case of not only legislating against the poison but also "legislating against the "antidote" – that is the "respectable press", the newspapers that would present the public with the "facts". (HC Deb 14 April 1853 vol 110 c1136)

Much of the APRTOK's case against the taxes concerned this issue of "facts". The campaigners' approach was hegemonic in that they considered that only newspapers owned by "men of capital and respectability" were in possession of the facts; however, they were unable to get those facts to the people who needed them most, the working class, because that class could not afford such newspapers. In the debate of April 16 1850, Milner Gibson attacked the notion that the newspaper stamp "prevented political theories of a dangerous character being circulated among the working classes." The Newspaper Stamp Act, he reminded the House, stipulated "…that any man who published any public intelligence, news, or facts, or occurrences, or any remarks or observations thereon, should be liable to the stamp duty." But he could provide examples of many publications which "gave their 'remarks and observations' and their political theories without let or hindrance" (HC Deb 16 April 1850 vol 110 c375). There was an implication in Milner Gibson's comments that such publications were stating facts but they were not the right ones. There was also a concern that because they could not afford to buy the right kind of newspaper, working-class men and women were frittering away what little money they had on other kinds of unsuitable literature as well as the wrong kind of news. In addition to reading dangerously radical publications, the poor were wont to buy "penny bloods" – later to be known as "penny dreadfuls" (Schneider 2016) – , such titles as those listed by Milner Gibson in April 1850: *The Terrific Record, The Life of a Countess, The History of Lola Montes.* These publications circulated "… extensively among the labouring population," he said, "solely because they were not allowed to have cheap newspapers… The people, if they could not have useful information and valuable records of facts, must have something to stimulate and excite the imagination and the passions—to rouse their nervous system. (HC Deb 16 April 1850 vol 110 c378). He had been told that "an eminent bookseller in Manchester" sold between 80,000 and 90,000 of these publications each week but "If there were also upon the counter, by the side of these penny publications, a penny newspaper, which gave a true account of the leading

events of the day, there is not one in fifty of the customers who would not prefer it. The poor could not buy newspapers at their present price." (HC Deb 16 April 1850 vol 110 c379). In the spring of 1853, Cobden reeled off another list of colourful titles, among them "the Black Monk … the Blighted Heart … the Bridal Ring … and the Hangman's Daughter (HC Deb 14 April 1853 vol 110 c1181).[23] Cobden said the House might laugh at such titles but "…this kind of literature was, in a manner, forced by them on the people, because, from their excise and stamp laws, they would not permit them to have publications of a superior class—they would not allow them to publish matters of fact, such as the current events of the day." (HC Deb 14 April 1853 vol 110 c1182).

Facts rather than fiction were the nourishment the common folk required, particularly if they were to be allowed a political voice. It was for the sake of the country at large that the people needed to be supplied with news, said Milner Gibson, the implication being that the people did not necessarily need arguments to counter those of the unstamped press, they simply needed to be exposed to the news of the day to see the world as it truly was. However, there was also the notion that if they were to have their opinions formed it ought to be formed by "men of capital and respectability" who had everyone's best interests at heart. In the April 1850 debate he quoted at length Lord Brougham, Lord Chancellor in Earl Grey's reforming Whig administration, who had campaigned in the 1830s for the repeal of the Newspaper Stamp. There is implicit in his words the hegemonic notion that there is such a thing as an incontrovertible truth and an impartial newspaper:

> I am of the opinion that a sound system of government requires the people to read and inform themselves upon political subjects, else they are the prey of every quack, every impostor, and every agitator who may practise his trade in the country. If they do not read, if they do not learn, if they do not digest by discussion and reflection, what they have read and learnt, if they do not thus qualify themselves to form opinions for themselves, other men will form opinions for them, not according to truth and to the interests of the people, but according to their own individual and selfish interests, which may, and most probably will be,

[23] An article entitled *The Cheap Press,* published in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* on the eve of repeal in 1855, gives a similarly colourful inventory of such publications: "…. the success of the 'Pickwick Papers' gave small publishers a new idea, and the town was forthwith flooded with stories continued from week to week in penny numbers, with indescribably, unutterably, almost inconceivably, vile illustrations on wood, of which we have some specimens, collected by us for the fun of the thing. 'Bertrand the Brutal; or, the Bloody Bandit of the Black Forest,' with which are given away Nos. 1, 2, and 3, of ' Selina the Sanguinary; or, Love and Devotion'. 'Harold the Dauntless ; or, the Foundling of the Glen', and the 'Mysterious Stranger of the Threepair Back,' with which are presented, gratis (!), Nos. 1, 2, and 3, of 'The String of Pearls; or, the Fatal Secret,' by the author of ' The Miser of Cow-cross ; or, Gold and Madness', 'Manfred the Malevolent; or, the 'Witch of the Alps', by the author of 'The Spectre of the Castle on the Crag,' with which is given away a splendid engraving of Hogarth's ' March to Finchley,' and No. 1 of 'Dutiful Dora; or, a Father's Curse and a Husband's Love,' …(v22, 1855 p 227)

> contrary to those of the people at large. (HC Deb 16 April 1850 vol 110 c379-80)

Hume also spoke in the April 1850 debate and also focused on the social benefits of repealing the taxes. He declared that these “obnoxious imposts ought immediately to be removed, relief ought to be given, and means ought to be supplied for imparting instruction and knowledge, and thereby removing pauperism and ignorance and crime” (HC Deb 16 April 1850 vol 110 c401). The link between crime, poverty and lack of education was to be made many times in the *North & South Shields Gazette.*

When John Arthur Roebuck came to address the House in that 1850 debate, he referred to education expressly as a means of “moral control” at a time when the people “were no longer to be controlled by bayonets or soldiers”. He warned of the imminent threat to society if, for a mere question of taxation, moral control via the educational medium of the newspaper were not exerted. He had long supported an extension of the franchise and it was inevitable that it would come to pass, but the House was preventing those potential new voters from getting the “right education” and leaving the field to the “Socialists and Economists” and “communists” who had recently fomented revolution on the continent. “There was nothing pleasant to contemplate in the spectacle of an uneducated, excited, and ignorant multitude possessing the power of this vast empire,” he declared (HC Deb 16 April 1850 vol 110 c407-409).

Milner Gibson pointed out the value and cost of news. If a publication included news, then it had to pay the stamp duty, so that a newspaper that might have cost 1d would now cost 2d and so be put out of the range of the poorer sections of society. But it was news – local news or news that was relevant to the working-class readerships – that was needed if the working class were to absorb “sound information”; in this argument, it was not the news itself that was the important consideration but the fact that such news might act as a kind of palatable packaging for content of greater import: “by wrapping up good information of a lasting value in news.” (HC Deb 14 April 1853 vol 110 c1136). As this thesis will demonstrate, the *North & South Shields Gazette* came up with a plan to do just that – to use colourful, local items of news as part of a package of newspapers that would also contain information of educational and moral worth.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has described a struggle to control the narrative: the narrative of the social order. Cheap, radical, mostly untaxed newspapers posited an alternative to the status quo; when outright repression of those newspapers had only limited success, a threatened middle-class sought to counter the radicals’ vision of free speech and universal male suffrage with one which protected their own interests. Middle-class MPs presented themselves, however, as acting in the interests of the working class. The founders of the *North & South Shields Gazette*, as will be set out in the next chapter, were members of that

middle-class; they had grown up during this period of narrative struggle; they set up their newspaper while that struggle was at its most visible. This chapter has looked at the language of the struggle, the rhetorical thrust and counterthrust, the text and context of the discourse and the tropes that were to find such currency with the *North & South Shields Gazett*e in its attitude to the taxes on knowledge and in its coverage of the repeal campaign*.* Moreover, it has shown that the APROTK was, contrary to Curran's view, more than simply a Parliamentary campaign body; it had a regional presence, including a South Shields secretary, Robert Sutherland, who worked at the *Gazette.* The next chapter, focusing on the birth and early years of that newspaper, will demonstrate the degree to which the paper's attitude to the taxes needs to be seen as part of a wider middle-class initiative to influence the working class.

## Chapter 5: The Birth of the *North & South Shields Gazette*

This chapter will move from the national to the local. Having established the context for the birth of the *North & South Shields Gazette*, this thesis will now look at that birth and the paper's early years. It will establish who was running the paper and see what kind of people they were, in particular investigating their views on social and educational issues. As already established, there was a link between the national APRTOK through the person of Robert Sutherland. This chapter will say more about Sutherland and also the proprietors and editors of the *Gazette.* It will show that not only was there a link with the national repeal campaign but there was also one between the paper's most prominent players and a range of middle-class societies that were aiming to affect working class behaviour. In doing so, it will also give a sense of how a local newspaper of this time operated, as this – as pointed out in the introduction to this thesis – is a neglected area of research.

### 5.1 A Paper and its Principles

When the *North & South Shields Gazette and Northumberland and Durham Advertiser* was founded in South Shields on February 24 1849, the town had been without a newspaper for seven years. The monthly *Tyne Courier* had begun on February 4, 1842, but, according to the standard history of the town, written by George Hodgson, himself a former editor of the *Gazette*, it "didn't last long." 1842 had also seen the demise of the *Port of Tyne Pilot and Durham and Northumberland Courier*, which had first rolled off the press on April 19, 1839. Prior to that there had been two newspapers: the short-lived *Shields Monthly Mirror*, first published on August 4, 1819 and the even more fleeting *Shields Albion*, the first and only issue of which came out on April 19, 1839 (Hodgson, 1903: 407).

The originator of the *Gazette* was Dr George John Craig Duncan, a clergyman from Kirkcudbrightshire, who in 1844 had become minister of the Howard Street Presbyterian Church in North Shields.[24] Dr Duncan came up with the idea for the *Gazette*, but the money was provided by another Scotsman, James Stevenson, who was to be the paper's sole proprietor for its first six years. Stevenson, also a Presbyterian, had left his native Glasgow – where he made his money in the cotton spinning and broking businesses – to come to South Shields in 1843, to take possession of a chemical works on the riverside at Templetown, midway between South Shields and Jarrow. His Jarrow Chemical Works (sometimes referred to as Jarrow Alkali Works), which was to become the biggest of its

[24] In 1843 Duncan had been one of the 121 ministers of the Church of Scotland who had quit to establish the Free Church of Scotland. As a result of which, he had been required to leave his living in the village of Kirkpatrick-Durham, near Dumfries. By the time of his death, in 1869, Duncan had become general secretary of the English Presbyterian Church (Ecclegen.com). In 1860, the year after Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species*, Duncan's wife, Isabelle Wight Duncan, published a book that sought to reconcile the biblical account of Genesis with scientific discoveries about the origins of the Earth and humankind.

kind in England, produced ingredients for the production of textiles, glass, soap and paper. Stevenson quickly established himself as one of South Shields' leading citizens. In addition to founding its newspaper, he built the town's Presbyterian church and opened a school at his works (Stevenson, 2009).

The *Gazette* was run from an office in Dean Street, near South Shields market place and riverside, and printed on a hand-operated Albion press. According to the *Gazette's* fiftieth anniversary edition, this Albion hand press had previously been used to print the *Port of Tyne Pilot.* The first copy was "pulled" by Augustine Yorke, the paper's publisher. He was assisted in the process by a compositor, Alex Pollock, "the son of a respected Shields printer of the old school" (*SDG&ST,* 24 February, 1899). [25] At first the *Gazette* got along without a full-time editor. According to Stevenson (2009), Rev Duncan appears to have edited it in his spare time for the first few months before William Brockie, a Scotsman who had trained as a solicitor in Edinburgh and had edited and later owned the *Border Watch*, later renamed the *Border Advertiser,* in Kelso, was appointed. Brockie, who was later to find a degree of fame as poet and historian, was working as a schoolteacher in East Linton, near Dunbar, in January 1849 when Alexander Stevenson, James Stevenson's second son, wrote to him offering him the editorship (Stevenson correspondence). In the *Gazette's* 50th anniversary edition, Brockie is described as a "shrewd, long-headed Borderer." As for his journalistic skills, the fiftieth anniversary edition opined: "His leaders were always witty and logical, but also somewhat pedantic and Johnsonese [sic] in style" (*SDG&ST*, February 24, 1899).

At first, leading articles in the *Gazette* were written by Rev Duncan and, according to the newspaper's centenary pamphlet, a Dr Leitch, who was a campaigner for the rights of North and South Shields to have their fair share of the river's revenues, then being monopolised by Newcastle, but it would appear that Leitch joined the paper a few years later. Nevertheless, in its opening editorial the *Gazette* stated in no uncertain terms that it would campaign for those rights and tap into a feeling of local resurgence:

> We commence our grateful labours at a time when these Boroughs are reviving from a long slumber, and putting on the vigour of a renewed existence. Wherever we turn, the marks of youthful energy are apparent. Shields [it often referred to the two Shields as one Shields] demands and must have its local chronicle. (*N&SSG*, 24 February 1849)

[25] The anniversary edition reported that Pollock later emigrated to Australia during the gold rush and worked on the *Melbourne Argus.* After about a year on that paper he set off to visit some fellow Brits from the North of England living about 50 miles north. He never made it back to Melbourne. A skeleton was subsequently found in the bush near to the track he would have taken and was identified as Pollock's. (*Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph,* 24 February, 1899).

And it pointed out, in picturesque terms, the advantage the *Gazette* would bring to an area that had mostly been without a newspaper:

> For years a stranger's eye has been struck with the liberal employment of our walls, palings, gates, and stations, for the purpose of public announcement, but ... the dead wall has become not only an advertising board, it is a newspaper, instinct with the life of a dozen newly awakened interests, which in the absence of a local journal thus claim the notice of the public, who with correct desire for information crowd round the singular broad-sheet which the public necessity has thus created. (*N&SSG* 24 February, 1849)

In previous accounts of the *Gazette's* birth (Hodgson 1903; Shields Gazette 1949; Stevenson, 2009) the focus has been on the paper's role in fostering the growth – in terms of municipal and commercial importance – of North and South Shields. As the paper's centenary history put it:

> In the matter of The Shields Gazette, altruism, rather than commercialism, was his [Stevenson's] object. Public spirited, he believed the virile and industrious communities growing rapidly on both banks of the mouth of the Tyne needed a newspaper to advance their interests and help them fight their battle of progress. (Shields Gazette 1949)

In such accounts, the *Gazette's* relationship with, and attitude towards, its readers has not been considered. However, from the outset the paper also stated its educational intentions. In one of its first editions (16 March 1849), it published an excerpt from an article by Edward Miall, a Liberal MP, journalist, and member of the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge (APRTOK). It had been taken from Miall's weekly *Nonconformist* newspaper and appeared under the heading 'Importance of The Press'. In it Miall talks of newspapers as instruments to cut through the confusion of life and explain the true nature of events and ideas, specifically for the "lowly", a class in which the *Gazette* was to take a paternal interest. "It [the press] uses not its power to produce fusion of mind," wrote Miall, "but finding mind in a state of fusion, brought about by the excitement of constant daily occurrences, it puts upon the mind in that state the stamp and impress of truth." The article quotes an unnamed eminent journalist who had referred to the press as the "priesthood of letters". The press were "not *priests* but *prophets*", countered Miall. He proceeded to establish what he considered the role of the newspaper in the relationship between the classes – a relationship the *Gazette* was to return to many times in the years leading up to 1855 repeal of the stamp duty and beyond. The press, he said, had a duty to educate the less fortunate but chiefly so that they would not be antagonistic to their betters.

> We don't mediate, but we teach. Our business is, not to intercede between the lowest and the highest; but, rather, to raise the lowly by instruction, that they may be capable of understanding and appreciating the highest. (*N&SSG*, 16 March, 1849).

This was, to use the title of Asa Briggs' history of the period, an "age of improvement"; educational reforms, civic improvement, the liberalisation of trade, the growth of a provincial newspaper press, were all part of it. When John Arthur Roebuck, the radical MP and APRTOK campaigner, came to open North Shields Mechanics' Institute in August 1858, he observed: 'The age in which we live has been marked by greater improvements than any age in man's history' (N&SG, 12 August 1858). The *Gazette's* first editorial, written by Rev Duncan,[26] refers to 'an impulse – communicated doubtless by sovereign wisdom' that was 'rapidly accomplishing results in every portion of the globe of which Shields, like its neighbours, demands and must have its chronicle.' 'The dissolution of old systems, and the dissappearance [sic] of obsolete errors [but clearly not in the matter of spelling], mark an age of progress,' it went on. It talks in quasi-religious terms about the role of the journalist in speeding the arrival of this great new world; there is no mention of the *Gazette* simply keeping North and South Shields up to date with the latest news.[27]

> To promote this result is the high calling of the faithful Journalist, and whenever a field is yet open for his labours, every patriot will welcome his appearance and encourage his exertions. Such a field we now enter, claiming from an intelligent public, an indulgent hearing.

Once again, the educational function of the press is mentioned:

> The busy multitudes of these large towns, long unaided and unrepresented by any Newspaper, cannot longer remain without the healthy action of a Local Press, to give its weekly stimulus to the intellectual and political appetite, to foster rising energies, to encourage generous efforts for the public good, and to rebuke with firmness and with faithfulness the unwelcome appearance of corruption, abuse, and immorality, to administer, in return, the lessons of wisdom, which it must laboriously gather for them from the fields of Politics, Literature, Science, Art, and – with reverence, above all – of Religion. (*N&SSG* 24 February, 1849)

The Stevenson family was to supply the town's Liberal MP but the *Gazette's* opening editorial declared the paper would owe no allegiance to any party or indeed to any class.

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[26] The *Gazette's* jubilee edition of February 24, 1899, attributes the first editorial to Rev Duncan.

[27] The jubilee edition, looking back at the first edition, commented that the "news columns contained a fair variety of matters of interest, but the contents would be counted dry and uninteresting besides what is expected in a modern newspaper".

Its opening salvo did though express the confidence of the prosperous shipowners and industrialists such as Stevenson from whose ranks it had sprung, and implied that the upper and lower classes were the ones most likely to cause trouble. It would "vigorously oppose" class legislation, it vowed, placing itself against radical movement from below and aristocratic self-interest from above. It would, nevertheless, have the freedom to promote any 'measure or course of legislation' (N&SSG 24 February, 1849) which it believed to be in the public interest, thus allowing itself to be factional while cloaking itself in impartiality.

In setting out its politics, the *Gazette* is squarely in the Liberal tradition identified by Lee (1976): a modernising, improving force liberating society from ignorance – as those Liberals would see it – as well as from political, economic and, in some cases, religious bondage. He writes: "…for a considerable time in the mid-nineteenth century the successful cultivation of a newspaper was associated with the political power of emerging Liberalism" (1976: 22). As we have seen, for MPs such John Arthur Roebuck, extending the franchise was central to this movement and if the franchise were to be extended, then the expanded electorate needed to be educated – along the lines he and his colleagues would approve – and newspapers had a central role in that process.

James Stevenson's son, James Cochrane Stevenson, known as JC, took over the running of the newspaper in 1854 when he was 29. He became its owner in 1865, buying it from his father for £9,000.[28] He was to be its dominant personality for most of its first half century. His descendant, Hew Stevenson, writes of him: "A 'holier than thou' trait and his readiness to lecture others gave an aloof and humourless impression. Political opponents commented behind his back that he had 'never been known to smile'" (2009: 109). When, as a young man visiting Brighton, he found a shop open on Sunday he stormed in and lectured the shopkeeper. When he stood for Parliament in 1867 his opponents referred to him as the kind of MP who would "… prevent you from enjoying the privilege of having your glass of ale to dinner on a Sunday, or obtaining any refreshment should you leave home on that day" (2009: 115). During his 27 years as the Liberal MP for South Shields, he made almost annual attempts to bring in a law to close English pubs on Sundays (2009: 118). In 1852, when he was 27, JC began a diary. At this stage in his life he comes across not so much as "aloof and humourless" but serious and earnest. He was a devout churchgoer and someone – as we shall see – who took a keen interest in working-class education and morality. He kept a close eye on the family newspaper and notwithstanding his youth, had the confidence to pronounce upon its contents and take the lead in the selection and dismissal of its editors, even before he was officially running it. A picture emerges from the diary of a newspaper that also took itself seriously; that aimed to lead the debate – lead all the debates – in the town. When it did not take itself sufficiently seriously, JC was wont to intervene. In common with other provincial

[28] On July 11, 1865, JC wrote to his father: "What would you say to £9000 as the sum at which I should take it over as on 1st July?" And on the back of the letter, James wrote: "Jas C Stevenson 11 July 1865 offer £9000 for Gazette which I accepted." (Stevenson correspondence)

proprietors of the time, he believed that the editor of his newspaper should be a man of some literary weight and that its reporters should also, ideally, be men of some standing.

## 5.2. Peopling the Past

It is difficult to build up a clear picture of the staffing of the *Gazette* at this period. The *Gazette's* centenary pamphlet refers to the newspaper's first account book in which were listed some of the employees. "R Sutherland", who the pamphlet says was previously South Shields reporter for the *Port of Tyne Pilot*, joined the paper on £52 per annum. It states that in 1852 "a junior reporter had appeared at £10 8s a year – and was reckoned upon to do a bit of type-setting as well – while G Aitchinson, presumably a reporter, earned £46 16s" (Shields Gazette 1949).

Reports in the *Gazette* were always anonymous; the only time reporters are mentioned in its pages – and only very rarely by name – is when they become players in a story (and have to mention themselves), but it is possible by reading their reports to get a sense of the range of their work. In August 1850 a reporter is sent to Newcastle to observe Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, the Prince of Wales and The Princess Royal, stopping off at the Central Station on their rail journey from Castle Howard in Yorkshire to Edinburgh and is present when a son of one of the local dignitaries falls from a viewing platform and is knocked unconscious ("When our reporter left very little hopes were entertained of his recovery"). In July 1852 we see reporters having to sit in a protected area of the election hustings in Saville Street, North Shields ("sunk in a sort of well with a lot of boards knocked up before them") because a *Newcastle Journal* reporter had received death threats. In July that year there is an accusation that a *Newcastle Observer* reporter had plagiarised the work of a *Gazette* reporter. That September we have a *Gazette* reporter struggling to report a speech by the retiring South Shields MP in a room in which the waiters had extinguished the candles. The following month we see reporters being allowed to sit on the bench during a busy session of North Shields County Court, and a journalist in the North Shields office receiving a message from a member of the public about a collision between a keelboat and a fishing coble. In 1855 there were a number of articles which queried a reporter's account of events in an embezzlement case involving the town's police superintendent and a subsequent dispute over his right to report proceedings. There followed a robust defence of the reporter and of the rights of the press by the editor. Also that year, there were protestations from the editor that a *Gazette* reporter had been denied access to a meeting of South Shields Watch Committee. In 1856 there was a dispute over the right of reporters to have access to the "Occurrence Book", which detailed forthcoming cases at North Shields police court, and we catch sight of a reporter at a court hearing in Gateshead following a riot in Felling (once again he refers to himself having to leave while events were still unfolding). In April 1857, there is a delightful glimpse of a reporter having to slip away early from a "successful little ball" in Tynemouth Castle. That year, a dispute flared up between the paper and the

superintendent of North Shields police about reporters not being allowed access to the police court from the police station, and there is unrest between the paper and the organisers of a dinner for the South Shields MP – the reporters do not receive invites and then a succession of folk from the event, including a waiter ("with *orders* for the immediate attendance of our reporter") and couple of committee members, turn up at the *Gazette* office to ask why important speeches are not being covered. The editor writes: "Of course, all these orders and entreaties met with a point-blank refusal." (*DTE* 15 April, 1857) As we can see, reporters usually appear out of the darkness of history when they are in some sort of dispute. On two occasions, a reporter plays such a part in the drama that they are mentioned by name. In the embezzlement and the "occurrence book" cases, Robert Sanderson is that reporter (and includes himself in his own report!). His name and profession are also included in two birth announcements – when his daughter is born in 1858 and his son in 1861. His address is given as Dean Street, South Shields. Another who is mentioned by name in the *Gazette* is the above-mentioned Robert Sutherland. He also crops up in Stevenson's diary.

One of the few descriptions of a typical newspaper operation of the period comes in the memoirs of Sir Thomas Wemyss Reid, who began a distinguished career in journalism as a reporter on a Newcastle morning newspaper, the *Northern Daily Express*, which was launched in 1855. The paper was produced in a couple of rooms and cellars in West Clayton Street. During the day the compositors were in one room, the advertising and sales staff were in the other. At night the journalists – reporters, sub-editor (who doubled as a reporter) and editor – took over the clerks' desks. The printing press and the blank paper were housed in the cellar (Wemyss Reid 1905). An article in the *Gazette's* short-lived rival, the *Shields Advocate*[29] in November 1855 gave a detailed description of the tumult of activity – and the tensions – in the offices of a provincial weekly newspaper such as the *Gazette* or the *Advocate* as the day of publication drew near. There is tension between the editor who has a clear idea of what he wants his paper to look like and the printer who just wants to fill the pages. While the editor has been working on such strategic matters, the reporter has been at the police court, or the county court, or a meeting of the parish vestry or the town council, "or with flying fingers following the local orators through a maze of language at a public demonstration". The editor is also trying to find time to think about his leading article for the week, but "his mind is distracted … his strength often fagged before he begins". All the while he has a constant stream of visitors, some to "correct him", some to "instruct him". He is hassled by some "Constant Reader" for neglecting to print his letter, or by a subscriber threatening to stop buying the paper if whatever he has sent for publication doesn't see the light of day soon. Nevertheless, he has to carry out the sub-editing duties of rewriting and correcting "infamous grammar, hideous syntax, execrable spelling" and "get through the compiling and collating" of articles. "He gets so bothered and worried that his powers become quite paralysed. He can't think, he can't write; for his mind wanders from the thing he is about

[29] See Chapter 8

to the next thing that is to be done." When the publishing day arrives, it is "a regular scramble", with the editor in a "continual worry, "having to do two men's work with one pair of hands. He is continually writing and rewriting; arranging and re-arranging, curtailing and recurtailing. The overseer is vexed and irritated by the work and growls at the compositors; while they become ill-tempered through fatigue … Lights are flaring, doors are banging …"(*Shields Advo*cate, 2 November, 1855).

In its first decade, the *Gazette* had at least four editors who doubtless had to suffer such tribulations. In addition, they had the proprietor's pernickety son turning up unannounced. William Brockie lasted until 1852. JC Stevenson's diary details repeated visits to the *Gazette* office, where he finds Brockie's contributions deficient on a number of counts: his leading articles lacked vigour, there was a want of "good taste" in the newspaper generally and the paper was losing money and subscribers, a problem which JC put down to the "editorship" (Stevenson diary, page 25). Brockie was unwell and it was agreed that he should leave for the good of his own and the paper's health (Stevenson diary, page 44). In JC's account of his final meeting with Brockie before the latter's departure, Robert Sutherland is mentioned. Sutherland, who, as we have seen, was listed as the South Shields district secretary for the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge, is also mentioned in the *Gazette's* jubilee edition of February 24, 1899. Acknowledging the amount of local news reporting that had become the norm by the 1890s, it said in relation to Sutherland's pre-*Gazette* employment: "Reporting work, of course, was practically non-existent in those days, at all events in the sense which we use the term now, but Sutherland's appetite for literary work was stimulated by the existence of the *Port of Tyne Pilot*, with the result that on the establishment of the *Gazette* Mr Sutherland commenced his professional career as a reporter on its staff"(*N&SSG* 24 February 1899). However, according to Brockie, as reported by JC, Sutherland, "though very industrious and decidedly improving, did not and would not ever have sufficient weight in town, that indeed the paper suffered in that way. At the same time he was an honest, deserving sort of man" (Stevenson Diary, 9 July 1852).

Despite this less than glowing assessment from his editor, Sutherland survived. On November 29, 1855, the *Gazette* carried a notice of his marriage, to Sarah Blyton in North Shields, and his profession is stated as reporter. Moreover, he had certainly been taking steps to acquire "sufficient weight". As early as November 1849 he was listed as one of the secretaries of South Shields Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association (*N&SSG* 23 November 1849) and in January 1850 was one of the "gentlemen" who attended a meeting at Reed's Temperance Hotel in the Market Place, South Shields, to form a society "for the protection of females and the suppression of private brothels". Along with his brother, Solomon, he was elected as an office-bearer for the society (*N&SSG* 11 January 1850). In 1856, the *Gazette* reported a speech he made at North Shields Mechanics' Institute (*N&SSG* 10 April 1856), the following year it listed him as one of the committee members of Tynemouth Mechanics' Institute (*N&SSG* 21 May 1857) and in 1859 he was

one of the Tynemouth Delegates at the Northern Union of Mechanics' Institutes at the Neville Hotel in Newcastle (*N&SSG* 1 December 1859).[30]

### 5.3 The Gazette and the Community

The range of Sutherland's work beyond the *Gazette* is part of a bigger picture: the founding of the *Gazette* has to be seen against a relentless middle-class drive to carry out "improvement" work in the harbour towns; indeed, in many respects it is, through the content of many of its articles, a part of that work. The Gazette was not merely concerned with improving the docks and port facilities of the towns, or the state of their roads, or establishing sound local government, it was concerned with the improvement of the morals of the working class. Meanwhile, the middle class which it served was engaged in an enormous amount of what it would consider charitable work, but which to modern eyes seems blatantly hegemonic. And there is a link between the Parliamentary pronouncements of the MPs campaigning for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, the leading articles of the *Gazette* and the societal activities of that middle class. Robert Sutherland, as we have seen, is the most obvious link, but it also there in the stated aims of the numerous organisations the middle class set up to improve working class morals and it is there in the roll call of local worthies who ran those organisations. Chief among these were the mechanics' institutes, which were regarded as a civilising influence, bringing education to the working class but also inculcating respectable values. There were mechanics' institutes throughout the *Gazette's* circulation area: in South Shields, North Shields, Tynemouth, Tyne Dock, Templetown, Jarrow, Seaton Delaval, Blyth, Cramlington, West Hartley, Willington Quay and Morpeth and slightly further afield in Gateshead, Winlaton, Blaydon, Windy Nook, Swallwell, Dunston, Stella, Walker, Bedlington, Newcastle, Alnwick, Crook, Durham and Sunderland. Mechanics' institute notices and reports were a staple of the *Gazette*. In the early 1850s the paper also took a keen interest in the activities of mechanics' institutes in other parts of the country: in Darlington, Hartlepool, Bishop Auckland, Leeds, Huddersfield, Sheffield, Lancashire and Cheshire, for instance. There was even a reference in the *Gazette* of October 12, 1849, to the mechanics' institute of Berlin.

A *Gazette* editorial of November 9, 1849, entitled *The Moral Effects of Mechanics' Institutes*, spelt out the rationale for such establishments. It began by stating their apparently altruistic aim of freeing up the talent that was going to waste in the community. Mechanics' institutes would be able to tap that talent and allow it come to fruition. The article moved on to the mystical: the members of such institutes would thus

[30] The *Gazette's* jubilee edition states that when Robert Sutherland left the paper, he became the Shields representative of the *Newcastle Chronicle* and as such reported on the Hartley Colliery disaster of 1862 for the *Times.* It added: "Incidentally, he claimed that a remark in one of his reports to the *Times* was the means of bringing that letter from the Queen, the reading of which forms the subject of one of the late JJ Emmerson's famous pictures" (*Shields Daily News & Shipping Telegraph,* 24 February, 1899).

be “nearer to that point when their lives shall be in harmony with the whole of the universe.” Their talents would be “exerted in a legitimate manner under the supreme control of reason or conscience” to a “moral” end. The author then shifts even more clearly to the realm of hegemony, in suggesting that such moral mechanics would be suffused with the “profound knowledge” that would allow them to see the “truth” of the world in the full light of reason. It was true there were people who believed a “liberal education” of the sort on offer would “make the workingman unsatisfied with, or unfit for, the condition in which Providence has placed him”. Yes, the critics had a point when they said that a little bit of knowledge gained at such institutions might “distract the industrious classes from their proper business” and “make them discontented with their condition” but this was not the kind of knowledge they would obtain. It was when such men had only “superficial knowledge” and were “mere dabblers in science” that they were likely to be a danger to society – by swelling the ranks of the “presumptuous braggards”, the “grumblers and “fault-finders”, in short, the “dangerous and discreditable quirks” who were the “pest of the age”. Worst of all, a man armed with mere superficial knowledge might become a socialist. “A socialist is a dangerous person in any class”, declared the writer. Mechanics’ institutes could not “perform a worse service to society” if they churned out socialists. “Since this superficial knowledge is so dangerous, the only remedy is to let in more light, and render the knowledge profound. … It is in the darkness more than in the light, in the twilight more than in the full blaze of noon, that error is likely to be mistaken for truth” (*N&SSG,* 9 November, 1849).

An unpublished doctoral thesis on the Mechanics’ Institutes in Northumberland and Durham, 1824-1902, quotes from a circular issued by South Shields Literary, Scientific and Mechanical Institution, to give it its full name, which included its “object and constitution: “its object is to promote the intellectual improvement of its members”. Among the benefits of this would be: “the working -classes … will cease to relish those vices to which … they are too much addicted”, and this would work towards “the wealth and prosperity of the nation” and “the cause of peace, tranquillity and every social enjoyment” (Stockdale 1993: 77). The author concludes: “… there was no doubt that ‘intellectual improvement’ was synonymous with morality”. The similarity of purpose with that espoused by the APRTOK MPs is clear: that the working class need to have the right kind of knowledge so that they might clearly see the world as it is, not as socialists and other such “dangerous and discreditable quirks” would have it.

Mechanics’ institutes were run by people characterised by Richard Cobden (*N&SSG* 10 October 1861) as those belonging to a class above that for which the institutes were intended – middle-class men and women who regarded their activities as philanthropic and public spirited – and the institutes were funded by such people either through donations or fund-raising balls and soirees, sometimes solely attended by themselves, not by the working class. Robert Sutherland was a member of such circles, as was his brother, Solomon. It is significant that, given the *Gazette’s* lofty ambitions, the paper’s proprietor considered civic weight – rather than mere news sense or literary ability – a

necessary requirement for a reporter. By October 1852, Stevenson records in his diary that Solomon Sutherland was writing leaders for the *Gazette*. Solomon was most definitely a man with a certain status in the town. He was a founder in 1850 of South Shields Working Men's Institute. In 1852 the *Gazette* listed him as one the town councillors (*N&SSG* 9 October 1856) and in 1856 it records that he had been appointed as one of the Poor Law guardians for South Shields (*N&SSG* 24 April 1856). *Slater's Commercial Directory* for 1855 lists his occupation as an ironmonger, with premises at 21 Market Place, South Shields (1855: 71). Hodgson, in his history of South Shields describes Solomon as "an excellent linguist" and "sometime editor" of the *Shields Advocate* (1903: 483).[31]

JC Stevenson's brother, Alexander Shannon Stevenson, who lived in Tynemouth, was also involved with Tynemouth Mechanics' Institute and with the one in South Shields. A future deputy lord lieutenant of Northumberland, he had links with the Gazette: as we have seen he helped recruit Brockie as its first full-time editor and was to run the paper's parent company, Northern Press, on JC's retirement from the business in 1883 (Stevenson 2009). There was in fact a mechanics' institute set up at the Stevensons' Jarrow Alkali Works. Alexander Stevenson praised it at the annual meeting of South Shields Mechanics' Institution, of which he was a committee member on December 4, 1849, as reported in the *Gazette* of December 7, describing it as "an active, efficient working society, and one that promises much good". The institution's report that night referred explicitly to the beneficial work of the South Shields institute's library in offering an alternative to the less wholesome publications its members might be attracted to – and which the APRTOK was warning against.

> The steady support it receives … shows that in the midst of the literary dissipation of the day, there is a considerable number of our fellow-townsmen who appreciate the works of science and true genius, and who prefer to seek truth and enjoyment in the good old path, taking advantage of the researches of the foremost men of the world, rather than waste time and money on publications which only minister to a noxious excitement. (*N&SSG*, 7 December 1849)

The founder of the *Gazette*, Rev JGC Duncan, was one of the speakers in South Shields Mechanics' Institute's first series of lectures, talking on the subject of "Friendly Societies and Saving's Banks". Alexander's connection with the mechanics' institute movement extended to North Shields – he was at the opening of the new institute in the town on August 12, 1858 and he spoke at the soiree that night, in the presence of the guest of

[31] In his diary entry for December 17, 1852, JC Stevenson refers to a third Sutherland – William Sutherland – who had "torn up his engagement to write articles for the Gazette. He did not forward as promised the beginning of this week, to have them ready by a certain time and, on being spoken to about it, threw up his engagement, which Carr [by then the editor] accepted and said he had never worked with comfort since he was to be paid for his work" (Stevenson diary page 80)

honour, the APRTOK MP John Arthur Roebuck. JC was often listed in the Gazette as the Mechanics' Institute chairman; for instance, in 1865 for the occasion of narration by the "distinguished Scottish orator" George Roy on 'The Art of Pleasing'. Alex was chairman of North Shields Foresters' Friendly Society, he was a magistrate at North Shields Police Court; he and JC were inevitably among the gentleman pledging money and support to good causes: on October 28, 1865 he pledged £10 (the equivalent of about £1400 in today's money)[32] and JC £20 towards a series of fortnightly concerts and both would vouch for the "respectability" of the entertainment (*N&SSG&DT* 28 October 1865).

South Shields Working Men's Institute had a similar function and rationale as that of the Mechanics' Institute and it too had links with the *Gazette.* William Brockie was another of its founders and was listed in the *Gazette* in as its president that year, although Solomon Sutherland filled that role most years and at the annual meeting in 1857 his portrait was unveiled to be hung on the walls alongside that of the town's MP and the other officials (*N&SSG* 1 January 1857). Sutherland gave the inaugural address to the organisation on subjects that were straight out of the repeal campaigners' playbook: "popular ignorance, its evils, and its remedies"; one of the discussions that followed that night was one that that might have been written by Milner Gibson – on the "duty of the press in regard to education" (*N&SSG* 22 March 1850).[33] Rev Duncan and JC Stevenson gave lectures for the institute, as did Brockie and Sutherland, some of them delivered in the schoolroom at Stevenson's Jarrow Chemical Works. The *Gazette* was so closely linked with the work of the institute that, at a meeting in December 1852, it was thanked for the donation of books and other publications; JC Stevenson and Sutherland were several times listed among those who had also donated books. Both gave £1 (about £150 in today's money) donations each year to the institute. In his annual address in 1856, Sutherland reminded his audience of the purpose of the institute – the "intellectual and moral improvement of the working classes of the town" (*N&SSG* 5 June 1856); a report on June18 1857 urged the working classes to take advantage of all it offered for their "mental and moral improvement"; there was the implication that not as many were doing so as had been hoped (*N&SSG* 18 June 1857).

It was a busy time for the moneyed middle class. JC was also a committee member for South Shields Total Abstinence Society. Like the APRTOK, like the mechanics' institutes, like the Working Men's Institute, it was concerned with the morality of the working class. One EP Hood gave a talk to the society on September 11 1849 on 'The Past History of the People' in which he maintained that part of that moral improvement entailed resisting the attraction of radical politics: "to make progress the people must more and more abstract their minds from political movements and concentrate their energies upon moral

[32] Calculation from CPI Inflation Calendar: https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1859?amount=1
[33] See Chapter 7 for the further thoughts of Mr Sutherland on what might be termed the "evils of popular ignorance".

advancement" (*N&SSG* 14 September 1849).[34] Meanwhile back at work, JC presided over the Jarrow Chemical Works News and Literary Institute, which had a library of more than a thousand books. At a "workmen's soiree", organised by the Institute on December 15, 1860, the institute's chairman, JC's business partner John Williamson, encouraged the men to "appreciate still further the advantages placed before them, so that they might not be behind any for intelligence, morality and respectability." "No employers," he said, "were more anxious for the welfare, physically, mentally and morally of their workmen." Alexander Stevenson spoke at the event, exhorting the members "to renewed exertions for their improvement" (*N&SSG* 20 December 1860).

The *Gazette* ran a series on the *History of Shields* and in its instalment on September 5, 1851 its author (possibly Brockie) gave a sense of the depth of the problem as he and many similarly public-spirited people saw it and the range of middle-class effort striving to solve it:

> …it may be doubted whether what are termed the masses do not still contain too great a mixture of ignorance, improvidence, recklessness, and ranking prejudice to be implicitly trusted with the possession of power… Every day of peaceful progress, however, adds to the strength of the industrial many. Their Mechanics' and Young Men' Institutes, Savings' Banks, Mutual Assurance Clubs, and, above all, Total Abstinence Societies, are symptomatic and productive of great improvement in their material and moral status (*N&SSG* 5 September 1851).

To that list of worthy societies might be added South Shields Debating and Dialectical Society, South Shields Temperance Society, the South Shields branch of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), and its North Shields sister organisation, the South Shields branches of the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Church Missionary Society, North Shields Town Mission, the Young Men's Christian Improvement Society, which met in North Shields, Tynemouth Total Abstinence Society, North Shields Young Men's Christian Association, and South Shields Town and River Mission. An 1862 report in the *Gazette* presents a picture of the indefatigable JC Stevenson as a vigorous member of the Town and River Mission, which aimed to "carry tidings of the Gospel to the seamen on our river, as well as the poor at our own doors … fellow townsmen who were living in ignorance of the blessings of religion" (*N&SSG,* 24 December, 1862).

[34] While the *Gazette* was a supporter of the Total Abstinence Society, it took exception to a woman giving a lecture for it, as was the case on September 28, 1852, when it was addressed by a Mrs Jackson, who inspired the reporter to state: "We wish well to the cause of temperance, and therefore we regret that some of its friends seek to promote it by means which bring it into discredit with those who might otherwise be its influential supporters. Female lecturers are the next worst thing to female preachers. At any rate, their eloquence should be confined to meetings of their own sex. However attractive, because unusual, their appearance at mixed public meetings may be, it is in very bad taste" (*N&SSG* 1 October 1852).

Morris sees all this activity in the context of hegemony. Talking specifically of the period 1790 to 1850, he writes: "Certainly the period saw increasing middle-class efforts to influence working-class culture and values. These efforts intensified from the 1820s onwards. Mechanics' Institutions, Temperance Societies and Savings Banks were all part of a middle-class voluntary effort designed to transform working-class behaviour and ideals" (1979: 60).

### 5.4 JC Stevenson and the Editors

When discussions began about choosing a successor to Brockie as editor, Stevenson records that he had discussions with Henry Carr, the son of James Carr, the vicar of St Hilda's in the town. Carr "strongly advised getting a thoroughly well-educated man if possible, one who has been at the University, a gentleman and fit for society, and who will take the lead among the newspapers of the district for good taste and ability". Carr reckoned such a man might be engaged for about £150 a year, "considering he would have spare time to employ himself on other literary work." Stevenson records that Carr had written to "some London literary men" about identifying a suitable candidate. (Stevenson diary, page 41). One of those London literary men was Tom Taylor, the Sunderland-born journalist and playwright, who had been working for *Punch* and by the summer of 1852 was, said Stevenson, at the General Board of Health. Taylor would go on to acquire fame as the writer of *Our American Cousin*, the play Abraham Lincoln was watching the night he was assassinated. On July 29, 1852, Stevenson wrote in his diary that he had been to London to interview a possible editor, recommended by Taylor. This was Henry Wood, who Stevenson said had been working as a sub-editor for *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper*, set up by the dramatist and celebrated contributor to *Punch.* Here was another link with the national repeal campaign: Jerrold, who was then editing the Sunday newspaper *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper,* was a member of the APRTOK and wrote pro-repeal articles in his newspaper. When Jerrold's paper had folded, Wood had worked for Henry Mayhew on his *London Labour and the London Poor* articles that were originally published in the *Morning Chronicle.* Stevenson had been to take the advice of a barrister in the Temple, by the name of Hans Busk, who knew Wood and considered him "very suitable for the editorship of a provincial paper."(Stevenson diary, page 46-7). In the end, Wood turned down the job.

In his entry for October 1, 1852, Stevenson records that Henry Carr had himself been working as editor since the previous week, that Solomon Sutherland had been writing one of the leaders each week and that one of the paper's managers, Richard Whitecross, had been "doing the south editorial part, such as the extracts of news, etc." (Stevenson diary, page 62). Whitecross had, since 1850, been working alongside the paper's founding printer and manager, Augustine Yorke (Stevenson, 2009: 325). By November 9, 1852, Stevenson noted in his diary that he himself was writing a series of articles for the paper, on the subject of the new Tyne Improvement Act and that Carr was in "good

spirits" about the publication in general, with a circulation of 1,250 for his first week and 1,750 for his second, a rise he put down to interest in an account of some shipwrecks, an event that had led to a second edition of the paper being published. By the end of the month Stevenson reports that Carr had informed him he did not plan to stay long – possibly only until the following summer – because he had ambitions to take up some kind of "literary engagement" in London (Stevenson diary page 72).

In his entry for April 5, 1852 JC talks of Henry Carr making a speech at "the annual soirée". This took place at the Jarrow Chemical Works school but there is no mention of children being present. Here we get an idea of Stevenson's views on working-class education; the talk was mainly of educating and advising the working man. A Mr Allen gave an address on the condition of the working man in European nations and JC himself talked about savings banks and the necessity of young working men "setting before themselves the ambition to acquire the competence for their old ages and not to look forward to die in the poorhouse"(Stevenson diary page 23). On May 6, 1852 JC and Henry Carr "had an interview" with the committee of the Working Men's Institute. From this brief entry it is possible to gain a sense of the 27-year-old's earnestness and his assurance when dealing with what he perceived to be his social inferiors. Despite his young age, there is a patronising tone. There is also another clear indication of his interest in the education of the working class and a direct reference to the quality of publications that the working class could afford and the problem of more "suitable" literature being priced beyond the pocket of that section of society. As we have seen, this was a central point in the argument of the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge.

> I made a good many enquiries and the answers to which I took notice. They were intelligent, probably average for the labouring classes, but they have had very little influential support, notwithstanding which, they have kept up and rather strengthened themselves in the two years of their existence. We are to see them again. They spoke with disfavour of the low cheap publications and said it was unfortunate that the best literature was dearer than the bad, and that the taste of the working man was decidedly rising. (Stevenson diary Page 30)

By the early part of 1854, Carr had clearly proceeded with his intention of pursuing a career in London. On January 25, 1854, JC wrote in his diary that, on a visit to London, he had tea with Carr, who was now writing for the *Globe*, an evening paper set up by a Northumberland industrialist, Christopher Blackett (Stevenson diary page 143), whose son John was at that time the MP for Newcastle and a supporter, as evidenced by his hustings speeches, of the repeal of the taxes on knowledge. Carr was also working for the *Leader*, the radical newspaper set up by George Henry Lewes and Thornton Leigh Hunt who, as we saw in the previous chapter, were among the founder members of the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge. There was another connection with the APRTOK in the person of the Radical MP and veteran repeal

campaigner Joseph Hume. From 1854, Hume became a champion of Stevenson's campaign to improve the administration and navigation of the Tyne. On July 13 of that year, JC visited Hume at his home in Bryanston Square in London, and the two men corresponded, Hume writing to Stevenson the following month (Stevenson diary page 176-7).

In 1853 JC refers in his diary to a Dr Leitch, from Tynemouth, writing articles for the *Gazette.* (Stevenson diary page 141). He describes meeting Leitch and it sounds as though he is recording his first impressions, so it is unlikely that Dr Leitch had, as the *Gazette's* centenary pamphlet claims, been writing leaders for the paper since its inception (Shields Gazette, 1949). On June 17, 1854, he recorded that he had occasion to write "a long letter" to Dr Leitch, advising him on the tenor of certain articles he had written in relation to "Tyne matters and men". JC felt Leitch had been "too severe" and as a result was getting "less sympathy than he otherwise would" (Stevenson diary page 141). It is interesting to note the extent to which Stevenson, who was not yet the owner of the *Gazette* and not yet 30, intervened in editorial matters.

In his entry for October 30, 1857, JC refers to "Kelly, the present Editor of the Gazette" and says he came to the paper "last spring" – 1856 (Stevenson diary page 244). This was Walter Keaton Kelly, whom the *Gazette's* jubilee edition refers to as:

> … a native of the Emerald Isle, also a brilliant writer and clever journalist. He had been trained for the medical profession but forsook that for travel and literature. He had visited many countries, was an accomplished linguist and a friend of Thackeray. One work of permanent value from his pen was "The Russian Aesop", a translation of Russian fables which aroused much interest at the time. (*SDG&ST,* 24 February, 1899).

In his diary entry for August 12 1858, JC explains that Kelly had been appointed on the recommendation of APRTOK member Thornton Hunt. Hunt was by now editor of the *Daily Telegraph*. JC states Hunt himself had contributed "News of the Week" but Stevenson had "discontinued" it and Kelly agreed to take it over. "But no such piece of work has appeared for many weeks." JC therefore, having been dissatisfied with Kelly's stewardship for some time, decided to sack him (Stevenson diary page 254). It would appear therefore that there was no "resident editor" at the *Gazette* from December 1853, when Carr left, until the spring of 1856 when Kelly arrived, a period which included the 1855 repeal of the Stamp Act. The *Gazette's* jubilee edition, refers to there being an "interregnum" between the editorships of Carr and Kelly (*Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph* 24 February 1899). The best guess is that Richard Whitecross, who we saw carrying out some editorial duties in 1852, was responsible for the day-to-day running of the paper during that period. It was he who was to take the key editorial decision in 1855 - in determining how to respond to repeal. JC does not mention an

editor in his diary entry about the launch of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* but he makes it clear that Whitecross was in charge. That diary entry will be looked at in detail in Chapter 9.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the lives and concerns of the *Gazette's* founders and leading journalists, and the statement of the paper's guiding principles, ought to be seen within the context of middle-class efforts to educate the working class. The paper's founders were hugely motivated by civic pride, in establishing the two "harbour towns" as modern municipalities, with customs houses and town halls, efficient sanitary arrangements and safe anchorage – but a quiescent, healthy, respectful working class was a necessary part of that drive for "improvement". The work of the *Gazette* was a key component in that drive, just as were the mechanics' institutes and the working men's clubs.

Today we would tend to see a local newspaper as existing quite separately to the national press, but the Stevensons, and doubtless many other regional newspaper proprietors around the country, saw themselves as part of a whole – even to the extent of confidently touting among the intelligentsia of the capital for a replacement editor. That link with London was also because of a shared politics, and several historians (Lee, 1976; Matthews, 2017) have stressed political allegiances as key organising principle within the press of the period. Stevenson was on good social terms with his fellow Radicals among the Liberal party and in particular, as this chapter has shown, with some of the leaders of the APRTOK, chiefly Joseph Hume and Thornton Leigh Hunt. When it came to their view of the working class, they had a shared language as well as shared concerns. The next chapter in this thesis will show how they expressed themselves in this respect within the columns of the *North & South Shields Gazette.*

## Chapter 6: Reporting Repeal (1849-1853)

This thesis will now focus on how the *North & South Shields Gazette* viewed the taxes on knowledge. It is significant that not all newspapers shared its views on the benefits of repeal. This chapter will show how it covered the parliamentary repeal campaign – at greater length and detail than its political rivals – and how generally it dealt with issues of class and education. The first chapter in this section will focus on the years from 1849 to 1853.

An editorial in the *Gateshead Observer* of May 1, 1852 stated that newspaper proprietors were "mostly hostile" to the repeal of the stamp duty. Having established their publications at great expense and overcome all manner of obstacle, they were hardly disposed to the idea of the market being flooded by "a host of competitors" (*Gateshead Observer,* 1 May 1852). There was also a fear that the new papers would be filled with material "stolen" from London newspapers and that there might indeed be a greater number of radical political newspapers than already existed – exactly the kind of publication the APRTOK campaigners were hoping would be driven out by repeal.

If we jump ahead a few years we can get a sense of the industry's strength of feeling on this subject – by looking at an article in the London weekly the *Examiner* of March 24, 1855. It reported that, three days after the Government had announced its intention to abolish the compulsory newspaper stamp, representatives of the industry – newsagents as well as publishers – had met in St Martin's Hall, London, and voted in favour of a range of anti-repeal motions. The *Examiner* said that the meeting was concerned about the kind of people who would produce newspapers post-repeal and the kind of newspapers they would produce. The chairman of the meeting, a Mr Wild, maintained that the requirement to pay the stamp meant only proprietors of a certain level of wealth and standing could run newspapers and those persons paid a lot of money to obtain "the best intelligence". The cheap post-repeal papers, on the other hand, would be started by "men of straw" who would fill their publications with "pilfered and stolen intelligence" – meaning they would simply rewrite material taken from their existing newspapers (to a large extent this already happened – all regional newspapers took some of their content from the London papers and other titles from around the country). The example of America was proffered: "So far from advancing the interests of the press, it would reduce it to the level of the trashy press of America. It would lead to a vast increase in the number of immoral publications" (*Examiner*, 24 March, 1855).

The meeting raised points that were central to the *Examiner's* opposition to repeal, one of which being the principle of copyright and another being the notion that the Parliamentary campaigners were, as Mr Wild put it, out to "destroy the London press", and in particular the *Times*. An editorial in the *Examiner* of May 5, 1855, stated: "The compulsory stamp though not designed for the security of copyright has proved tolerably efficient for the

purpose. “The penny daily papers now in preparation all over the country will live upon the costlier journals. They will undersell the *Times*, because the *Times* has to pay enormous sums for that intelligence which they will immediately transfer to their columns at no cost at all.” It added, with a flourish: “When the leviathan has provisioned itself at a vast expenditure, a host of animalculae will congregate about it, and grow fat upon its blood.” And in another vivid metaphor: “The *Times*, in short, is to be the fountain to feed the rills which are to irrigate and fertilise the country” (*Examiner*, 5 May, 1855).

Despite this widespread opposition to repeal from newspaper proprietors, the *North & South Shields Gazette* was from its very beginning in favour of it. In its first leading article on the subject, on November 23, 1849, it expressed its opposition to the taxes on commercial and educational grounds:

> On the one hand, Government endeavours to foster popular education by granting endowments to schools; on the other, it lays an embargo on the chief material in the dissemination of knowledge – that is, paper. (*N&SSG* 23 November 1849)

The excise duty on paper greatly impeded the publishing trade and was “particularly injurious” to the production of school books and cheap periodicals, the Gazette said.

> ... it is highly probably that the public loses more through their enhanced price than it gains through the facilities for acquiring knowledge created by the Board of Education … surely some substitute might be found for an impost so burdensome in proportion to its amount, so odious in its principle and so detrimental to the spread of knowledge. (*N&SSG* 23 November 1849)

The advertisement duty, meanwhile, was “a great hardship, not only to commercial and mercantile men, but to all classes of the community.” It was particularly hard on servants looking for employment. No one dared announce “his wares or his wants in the medium of a newspaper, stamped or unstamped, without first tabling his eighteenpence to the Government. What an unaccountable anomaly!” There was another leading article on the subject the following week. It itemised the commercial implications of the taxes. Abolition of the paper duty would:

> … determine whether the proprietor of a newspaper could carry on business with or without a remunerative profit – whether he might afford to obtain more expensive intelligence, or literature, to print on better paper – and it would determine whether some branches of business, now in being, could exist or not. (*N&SSG* 30 November 1849)

Removing all the taxes would have a cumulatively beneficial effect in making a newspaper a viable commercial prospect:

> The augmentation of incomes which would flow into the office of a newspaper consequent on the repeal of the advertisement duty would be a source of power for the literary improvement of that paper to withstand competition, in addition to the profits on larger sales following the absence of the stamps, and the 20 or 25 per cent saved on paper by the repeal of the paper duty. (*N&SSG*, 30 November, 1849)

Moreover, a reduction in the cover prices of newspapers and other literature following a repeal of the taxes would be a boon to society; it would not only allow the working man to find educational sustenance but "moral nourishment" – it would make him a better person, and it would be better for the rest of society, in that he might spend less time in pubs:

> It is worthy of note that, while the working man may give his shilling for beer, which requires the exercise of no thought to drink without an economical scruple, the same man becomes an economist when buying a newspaper, or periodical, or book, to read; he begins to think in the act of buying, because the article is one for the exercise of thought. The more frequently the working man goes to the bookshop, the better for himself and for all society. He goes there now more than he once did. Untax the paper maker and the newspaper, and finding a higher quality of intellectual and moral nourishment at a lower price, he will go to the bookshop more and more, and to the public house less and less. (*N&SSG*, 30 November, 1849)

As for lessening the potency of the London dailies, the *Gazette* was all for it; earlier in 1849 it had included an article from the *Nonconformist* newspaper, which railed against the power of "press-gang", the handful of powerful London daily newspapers.

> Nothing would tend more strongly to break down the power of the press-gang, than the removal of the whole tribe of "taxes on knowledge." The excise duty on paper, the stamp duty on political journals, and above all the tax on advertisements, operate most perniciously to throw the daily press into the hands of a monopoly … (*N&SSG* 31 August 1849)

Two other Tyneside newspapers were in favour of all the taxes being repealed: the *Gateshead Observer*, established in 1837 in the "Whig-Reform" tradition (Milne, 1971: 57)

and the *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury,* founded in 1846, which was, in Milne's words, "the voice of Liberal nonconformity" (1971: 45). They were, in other words, of a similar political hue to the *Gazette*. Like the *Gazette*, both kept up a steady stream of articles on the subject of the taxes: editorials, coverage of reform meetings, mentions of APRTOK members' speeches elsewhere in the country, regular updates on the Parliamentary debates and, eventually, on the passage of repeal measures through the House. This volume of coverage was in some contrast to that of the two Conservative newspapers in Newcastle. The region's oldest newspaper, the *Newcastle Courant*, founded in 1711, and the *Newcastle Journal*, founded in 1832,[35] largely restricted their mentions of the repeal of the taxes on knowledge to a sentence here or a half-sentence there in parliamentary round-ups and news miscellanies.

In addition to its own editorials, the *Gazette* showed its opposition to the taxes by quoting extensively from like-minded newspapers on the subject. On October 19, 1849 it published an article from the *Lincolnshire Times*, which had pointed out the irony that while the British press had been "unceasing in its efforts to emancipate industrial enterprise from financial exactions … [it] should have achieved so little for itself; but such is the fact, and were we asked to point out what article of production suffers most from heavy taxation, we should most assuredly lay our finger on the newspaper, and exclaim: 'Behold it here'." (*N&SSG* 19 October 1849). It went on to itemise the ways in which the broadsheet its reader was currently reading had been required to make a contribution to the "imperial exchequer: 1½d per pound in paper duty; 1d in stamp duty, "without which the publication will be illegal, and its publisher subject to a fine and imprisonment", 1s. 6d for each advertisement. This amounted to about.40 per cent of the newspaper's cover price. If the taxes were removed, the paper could retail for 1½d instead of its current price of 3d. (*N&SSG* 19 October 1849). The article concluded by making the link, so favoured by the APRTOK campaigners, between the supply of cheap newspapers and crime: that if the duties were removed, at least three times the present number of newspapers would be brought into existence, spreading "political and general information", the chief effect of which would be to "lessen ignorance and its concomitant attendants – crime and misery".

That article was followed by one from the *Durham and Stockton Times*, entitled *Influence of Masters on the Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Class*, which points to a quasi-feudal relationship between employer and employee and has, one of its ultimate goals, an improvement in the "morality" of the working class, which, as we have seen, chimes with the ambitions of the APRTOK and many of the charitable bodies such as the mechanics' institutes, as well as the *Gazette* itself. By publishing it, the *Gazette* editor would certainly have had sympathy with its sentiments. It does not address the working class directly in advising them on ways they might improve their lives; rather it is addressed to industrialists – referring to them, as was the practice at the time – as

[35] An earlier newspaper of that name had existed between 1739 and 1788.

"masters" and encourages them to take steps to effect changes in working-class behaviour. Based on the author's observation of the working class in an area of west Durham, it speaks of that class almost as if it were a different species.

It encouraged masters to "get the men to know that want of cleanliness is regarded as a vice" and to take measures against any man who declined to accept this precept. It recommended "hot or tepid baths" for the labouring classes in winter.[36] Masters were advised to take a very dim view of men who wore their working clothes on Sunday. Workmen who lived with women outside of matrimony ought to be "deprived of all employment". Masters should insist that their workers live in "healthy and cleanly" houses, for "an intelligent and moral set of labourers will not be found connected with unwholesome and dirty tenements." Masters were advised to take "measures to instruct the female part of the people employed at the factories in household matters to fit them for becoming wives and mothers" for "few of them possess the qualities necessary for prudent housewives, and the management of a poor man's income." The author had particular concerns about female headwear and jewellery:

> A habit prevails amongst the girls of parading the streets without bonnets, sometimes with the neck exposed, and decked with a brass chain, tawdry beads, and large ear-drops. This habit rapidly leads them into dangerous company, and though they begin it at first without a vicious intention, it speedily generates habits of boldness and indelicacy which pave the way to the loss of virtue, and every evil. (*N&SSG* 19 October 1849)

The author believed that observance of his advice would soon root out many "lamentable social evils" and improve the "mental and moral tone" and physical wellbeing of workers. The article ends on a possibly philanthropic note with the hope that such measures would lead to the "present and further happiness of numbers of their fellow-creatures", although it is not clear if the writer is referring to the working class alone, or those more exalted members of society who had to live alongside such people.

Proponents and opponents of repeal were in agreement that many of such working-class people could read and that there was a market for cheap newspapers. Repeal campaigner Richard Cobden asserted: "There were 2,000,000 of adult males, if not 3,000,000 who now never read a newspaper. Now there was a great mine, which it was the interest of the press to open, thus cultivating a taste for reading in the lower strata of the social system" (*The Times,* February 9, 1854). On the subject of literacy, Lee writes: "the ability to read was inescapably a major premise of the expansion of the cheap press" (1976: 28).

[36] The Gazette included each week a table showing how many people had got washed at the public baths in North Shields. For instance, on April 27, 1855: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000288/18550427/008/0001

Lee cites William Hunt, editor of the *Eastern Morning News* in Hull and ex-President of the Provincial Newspaper Society, who, writing in 1870, said "the increased attention given to education – although still far less than it ought to have been – had *before 1863* [Lee's italics] [the *Eastern Morning News* was founded in 1863] helped greatly to multiply newspaper readership". He also cites a West Country printer and publisher, Henry Fowler, who told the Excise Commission in 1835 that in Bristol only one out of every 20 of the population could not read, and GR Jackson, who set up the *Driffield Times* because there was "almost universal reading and writing" in the area. "In England, after an initial faltering in the 1840s, the trend was steadily upwards, from a mean of about 61 per cent 'literate' in 1850, to 76 per cent in 1868." (ibid: 33). Milne writes: "it has been estimated that in the 1840s, with considerable local variations, between two-thirds and three-quarters of working men could read. If ability to sign the marriage register be taken as the criterion, albeit an imperfect one, then 75 per cent of all men could read in 1861, and eighty per cent in 1871" (1971: 30). As we have seen, James Stevenson had set up a school for the children of his workmen and the *Gazette* was to take a keen interest in working-class education.

As Milner Gibson and his Parliamentary allies put forward motions for the abolition of the taxes on knowledge, the *Gazette* reported on their work. On April 19, 1850 it detailed the first of the decade's votes on the subject, that of April 16, 1850, which resulted in a defeat for the pro-repeal lobby by 190 to 89 votes. On December 27 1850, it carried a long article on the paper duty in its 'Spirit of the Journals' section, which collated material from other publications. It stated: "The paper duty is one of the group of imposts which are aptly designated the Taxes on Knowledge and the continuance of which under a Government, one whose rallying cries has ever been the diffusion of popular education is a blot upon their inconsistency as public men and their honesty as political leaders" (*N&SSG,* 27 December 1850). The article went on to list the social ills associated with the tax. It put "insurmountable barriers in the way of a really cheap and good literature for the masses". It inflated the price and limited the circulation of publications "designed for the poor". It restricted "the reading of the poor man within the narrowest bounds". By "denying the struggling workman the healthful recreation of a cheap press it has driven him to idleness or to the sensual excitements of dissipation in moments he might otherwise have improved for the cultivation of his nobler faculties". It caused all kinds of philanthropic ventures, aimed at spreading "useful knowledge", to fail, among them *Chambers Miscellany* and "so many of the noble enterprises of Mr Charles Knight", founder of the *Penny Magazine*. It impeded "the growth of reading habits amongst the people, and withholds from them the supply of wholesome and mental food." In impeding the growth of the printing industry it "virtually locks up against thousands of our starving people a branch of employment which would be eminently healthful and favourable in all its conditions." The worth of repeal had been demonstrated by the growth of the industry since 1834 when the advertising tax had been reduced.

In an editorial on March 12, 1852, the *Gazette* referred to these "odious and unpopular taxes" and urged the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Benjamin Disraeli, to remove them. Once again, the article outlined the educational function of newspapers:

> Day by day the press is becoming more and more the great teacher and instructor of the nation. The newspaper has ceased to be a luxury, it is now felt as a daily want and necessity; political knowledge and enlightenment – information on the leading topics and events of the day, are things which on every side are eagerly demanded and sought after. The newspaper stamp and the duty on paper keeps this knowledge to a considerable extent, from those whom it most concerns and interests, and is one effective barrier in the way of the spread of that information and enlightenment on social and political matters which forms the best and truest education of a people. The repeal of imposts so offensive and injurious as these would come with peculiar grace from a statesman like Mr D'Israeli who, as has been wittily said, 'has ink in his veins'. (*N&SSG,* 12 March 1852)

The following week, March 19, 1852, it reported that petitions from North and South Shields "praying for the removal of the taxes on knowledge" had, that Monday (March 15), been presented to Parliament. In its leader column of April 30, the main item declared that Milner Gibson had given a "masterly speech" on the subject of repeal of the taxes on knowledge and in another column carried a full report of the April 22 House of Commons debate. On May 14, 1852, the Gazette reported that Milner Gibson's motion for repealing the paper, advertisement and newspaper duties had been defeated: 107 for paper duty repeal, 197 against; 116 for advertising duty repeal and 181 against; and 110 for newspaper stamp duty repeal and 199 against.

In its leader column of Friday December 3, 1852, the *Gazette* said it was glad to report that the Attorney General had given notice to bring forward a motion in the House of Commons that Monday "with a view to an amendment of the law relating to the stamp duty on newspaper." It then nailed its colours firmly to the repeal mast:

> In the present condition of the country nothing can be more important than the introduction of some law for the abolition of taxes on knowledge. Let the advertisement and paper duties be done away with and the intellectual food of the people will improve in quantity and quality. It is a question concerning the working men, and we hope that some effective alteration will now be made. (*N&SSG* 3 December 1852)

A week later it reported that a party of MPs, including Milner Gibson, William Ewart and Joseph Hume, had visited the Prime Minister, Lord Derby, to present him with an address from the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of Taxes on Knowledge. The *Gazette* said Lord Derby conceded the law on this subject "was not in a satisfactory position". All the taxes, but the advertising tax in particular, were under the Government's consideration. (*N&SSG,* 17 December 1852)

On October 22, it published in full a letter Joseph Hume had written to Collet Dobson Collet, the secretary of the APRTOK, in which the Radical MP applauded him for his efforts to increase the number of associations for the removal of the taxes on knowledge and said the issue of repeal was becoming "more and more approved by all persons except the Whigs and Tories – both these parties oppose, as they consider government and its profits theirs alone; and that the spread of knowledge endangers their monopoly of power and profit" (*N&SSG,* 22 October 1852).

On Friday, February 25, the *Gazette* reported the next stage in the APRTOK campaign: the establishment of an unstamped weekly newspaper, the *Potteries Free Press* by the "indefatigable Mr CD Collet", to test the Government's reaction. "It remains to be seen whether the authorities at the Stamp-office will deem it proper to arrest its further progress, or allow it to pursue its course unmolested. The paper has not been projected for the purpose of defying the law, but merely to try the question of its legality, and, as soon as this is done, it will have performed its task (*N&SSG,* 25 February 1853)"

On April 8, 1853, the *Gazette* included an article from the *Educational Expositor*, which went into minute detail in its analysis of the way the taxes impeded the dissemination of knowledge. It opined: "As well might a man set forward for a long walk in tight boots and hope to arrive unlamed at his destination, as for the popular instructor, burdened as he is by these taxes, to expect to provide, at a sufficiently small cost, the required books for extended education." In castigating the advertising duty, the article summed up two of its perceived iniquities:

> The inequality of this tax not only consists in its indiscriminate levy – whether it describe a property for sale worth thousands of pounds, or it be a poor usher making known his want of employment – but also in its being levied solely on advertisements when printed in periodicals. No tax is laid on posting bills, whether in railway carriages, omnibuses, stations, or on walls, in perambulating vans, steam-boats, nor any other species of advertisement; and catalogues bound up at the end of books, although legally liable, pay no duty in practice. (*N&SSG* 8 April 1853)

It concluded: "As long, therefore, as these taxes are maintained, it behoves every real friend of education zealously to aid in the good work of repeal."

The following week, in its parliamentary column, the paper reported that a number of petitions had been received in favour of repealing the advertising duty and that Milner Gibson had proposed his motion for the repeal of all the taxes on knowledge. Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had replied that the Government intended to bring in a bill to "clear up the state of the law respecting news". The Attorney-General added that the Government was going to "make the law clear" so that publications that came out at "long intervals" – and he specifically named Charles Dickens' *Household Narrative of Current Events*, a monthly magazine published as a news supplement to the author's *Household Words* periodical – would be in future be exempt from paying stamp duty (*N&SSG* 15 April 1853).

On May 20, 1853 the *Gazette* explicitly gave its own views in a lengthy editorial entitled *The Two Ps, The Press and the People*:

> If the abolition of the Taxes on Knowledge involved no other interests beyond those of newspaper proprietors, we might still be pardoned for pressing the subject on the attention of our readers. But if it can be shown that the well-being of the community is seriously affected by the manner in which this question shall be disposed of, we can claim a wider sympathy in our feeble endeavours towards its right solution. (*N&SSG* 20 May 1853).

In relation to the advertising duty, the author wrote: "… we persist in enforcing the necessity of an entire repeal of an odious and profitless tax." As for the stamp duty, "… it is evident that the intellectual and social condition of the country is very seriously affected by the decision of the Legislature on the newspaper question."

He continued:

> Newspapers, not books, are the medium of instruction. For one man who reads a book, there are a thousand who read newspapers and reviews … the press is important, because its influence is universal. Either it is the duty of Government to promote education or to suppress it. This every one [sic] will acknowledge. We are repeating what the world will call a truism when we say "either it is the duty of Government to promote the circulation of newspapers or to repress it". If it is their duty to take the latter alternative, they are pursuing the course most likely to succeed when they display half-heartedness and dallying in their repeal of the taxes on knowledge. (*N&SSG* 20 May 1853)

Another change to the details of the taxes on knowledge was reported by the *Gazette* on July 29, 1853, in that the Government had altered the regulations governing the size of newspapers. It explained to its readers that the law had required the newspaper stamp to be paid on every newspaper and the size of the newspaper was not to exceed 1,530 square inches. Under the new regulations a newspaper could be up to 2,295 square inches. The *Gazette* stated that this did not deal with the main problem – the tax itself – which "does positively increase the price of existing newspapers, and prevents the establishment of new ones." In any case, the *Gazette* preferred small newspapers. The article concluded: "The principle is as vicious as before, but we shall now be able, in case of emergency or the event of an important crisis, to further our readers in a supplement sheet, with all the necessary information, but without any additional payments" (*N&SSG* 29 July 1853)

In that same edition, the *Gazette* announced that the Government had finally "consented to take off the 1s 6d Duty hitherto charged on all Advertisements" (*N&SSG* 29 July, 1853).

## Conclusion

As noted in the literature review of this thesis, Jean Chalaby did not base his theory of the press on empirical research. However, if he were to look for an example of newspapermen acting as "publicists", here we have it in the columns of the *North & South Shields Gazette*. Here were writers actively promoting the "political interests of the social class on whose behalf they spoke" (1998: 16) and offering a view of the world that might, when it came to working-class readers, "transcend" their "immediate experience of life" (1998:29). This was not an overtly commercial decision – as we will see later, the paper did eventually move towards a simplified form of address that was more concerned with attracting readers; these were newspapermen loudly contributing (whether it offended a large proportion of their town's inhabitants or not) to the public sphere about matters they considered important; important for the wellbeing of their own class, but also, as they would have it, important for the social class beneath them. They were not entirely unconcerned with matters of revenue, however; their articles did highlight the commercial bad sense of taxing newspapers. The next chapter will look at the balance between proselytising and profit beginning to tilt towards the latter.

## Chapter 7: The *North & South Shields Gazette* and the Repeal of the Advertisement Duty

This chapter will look in detail at the *Gazette's* response to the 1853 repeal of the advertisement duty, not only considering the paper's editorial announcements on the subject but using content analysis to plot the increase in advertising following repeal.

When, in 1853, the Government finally repealed the advertisement duty, the *Gazette* could barely contain its delight. In an editorial of July 29, 1853, the paper announced that in future not only would the 1s and 6d tax not have to be included in the price charged to customers for each advertisement, but the advertising charge itself would be reduced by the amount of the duty – 1s and 6d – on all single adverts; there would be further reductions on several categories of ads. Overall, the changes would make the *Gazette* not just "an excellent Family Newspaper, but also a Mercantile and Social Register". The *Gazette* clearly could see the potential for growth. The paper promoted reductions in advertising rates that would suit high and low: the wealthy looking for servants; servants looking for employment; shipowners looking for "masters, officers or apprentices"; "tradesmen of any kind wanting men or boys" (*N&SSG,* July 29, 1853). When it came to the repeal of the stamp duty two years later, the paper would make a more overt appeal to all classes, but the stirrings of a commercial appeal to a working-class audience were there in a statement that acknowledged a change in the role of newspapers post-repeal:

> The proprietors of the *North and South Shields Gazette*, determined to develop to the utmost extent this newly acquired power of the Press to stimulate trade and to give facilities for business which no other medium can possibly do, [a dig at the bill stickers and sandwich-board men] have resolved to place within the reach of every person in these towns and vicinities, this means of ADVERTISING, on such moderate terms that, while the richest merchant will enjoy the benefit without feeling the expense at all, the very poorest will have the opportunity of making known their wants and desires for the smallest sum compatible with the self-support of the paper. (*N&SSG,* August 5, 1853)

An indication of the extent to which the advertising duty was a drain on the finances of, and an irksome burden for, newspapers can be seen from an article in the *Newcastle Guardian* of 1849 which detailed the duty's impact. The tax made the act of setting up a newspaper financially more onerous because the prospective proprietors would have to factor in the sum of money they would be required to pay to the Inland Revenue each time an advertisement was published; it limited the amount of advertising that could be published – again because of the punitive additional cost – and it subjected the paper to surveillance from Government officials. This "pack of Argus-eyed officials at Somerset

House", said the article, were waiting to pounce – even if the paper made an announcement of its own, or published one "to oblige a friend" or carried an announcement that any of its readers had graduated as a lawyer, say, or a doctor.

> The Stamp Office is down upon us with a charge of eighteen pence for indulging in this piece of good nature, and we are thus taught, by experience, to be somewhat niggardly and stingy in our insertion of complimentary paragraphs of this sort. (*Newcastle Guardian* October 6, 1849)

That summer, the *North & South Shields Gazette* had envisaged the huge revenue boost to all newspapers if the taxes on knowledge were removed and advertising money could be spread more evenly across all titles:

> At present, powerful journals float upon their advertisements, and the duty on these so limits them in number as to put them practically within the all-clutching reach of two or three establishments. Were all fiscal restrictions removed, advertising would become too general to be monopolized by any single paper. The pre-eminence of the *Times* would gradually be lost. A more equal distribution of commercial chances would give to journalism all the advantages of active competition. (*N&SSG,* 31 August 1849)

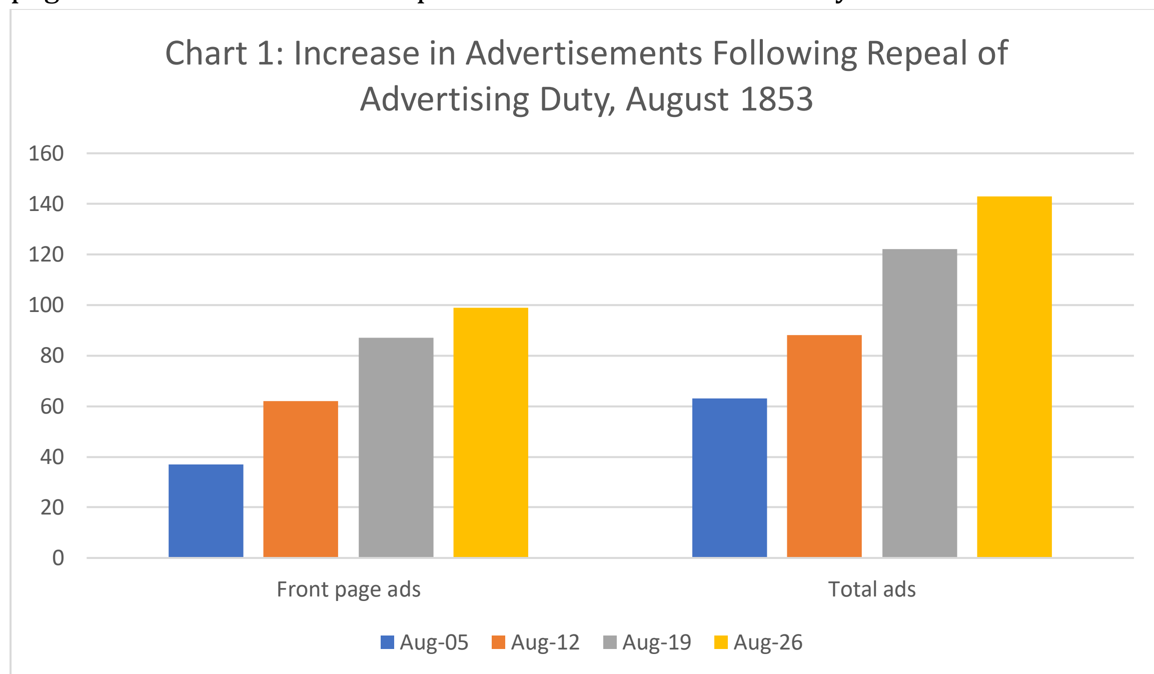
In a series of articles the *Gazette* curried favour with its potential advertisers, thanking the people of North and South Shields for their "kind support" since 1849 and emphasising the paper's work on their behalf. As a result of that support, the paper had increased its circulation over the previous nine months by "several hundred copies per week", it claimed. It continued to sing its own praises with a list of the improvements it had recently brought about to "still further increase its efficiency: engaging the "highest Editorial talent (as the leading articles for the last nine months will testify)"; appointing two "*short-hand verbatim Reporters* [its italics], in order that every subject of local interest and importance may be brought faithfully and correctly before its readers"; enlarging their premises; and having the electric telegraph wires laid in the Gazette office. This would allow them to have parliamentary information sent directly from the House of Commons, "by which means the transmission of news from the Great Metropolis and elsewhere will be even more accelerated." They were already able to include such news right up to the rising of the House at 2am or 3am and have the paper delivered to subscribers by 7am, or within four hours of the end of parliamentary business. (*N&SSG,* July 29, 1853)

It couched its come-on to advertisers in a way that once again stressed its philanthropy. "THE SHIELDS GAZETTE NEVER WAS ESTABLISHED FOR PROFIT", it asserted, "but simply for the advantage of the twin boroughs and their neighbourhood" (*N&SSG,* July 29,

1853). However, the article quickly moved on to matters of profitability, albeit in a way that stressed the empowerment of local commerce and the casting off of age-old monopolies in this age of progress. By advertising with the paper at the new rates Shields businesses would not only increase their own wealth, the *Gazette* stated, they would thereby stimulate local trade generally and divert customers' money away from those big businesses from outside the towns which had previously had more chance of affording to pay for adverts in the *Gazette*. Shields businesses were:

> … respectfully invited to support a Newspaper which was established exclusively for the benefit of their own towns and district, but which will soon result in retaining in their own businesses at home a rich harvest which at present finds its way to the coffers of tradesmen at a distance … (*N&SSG,* July 29, 1853)

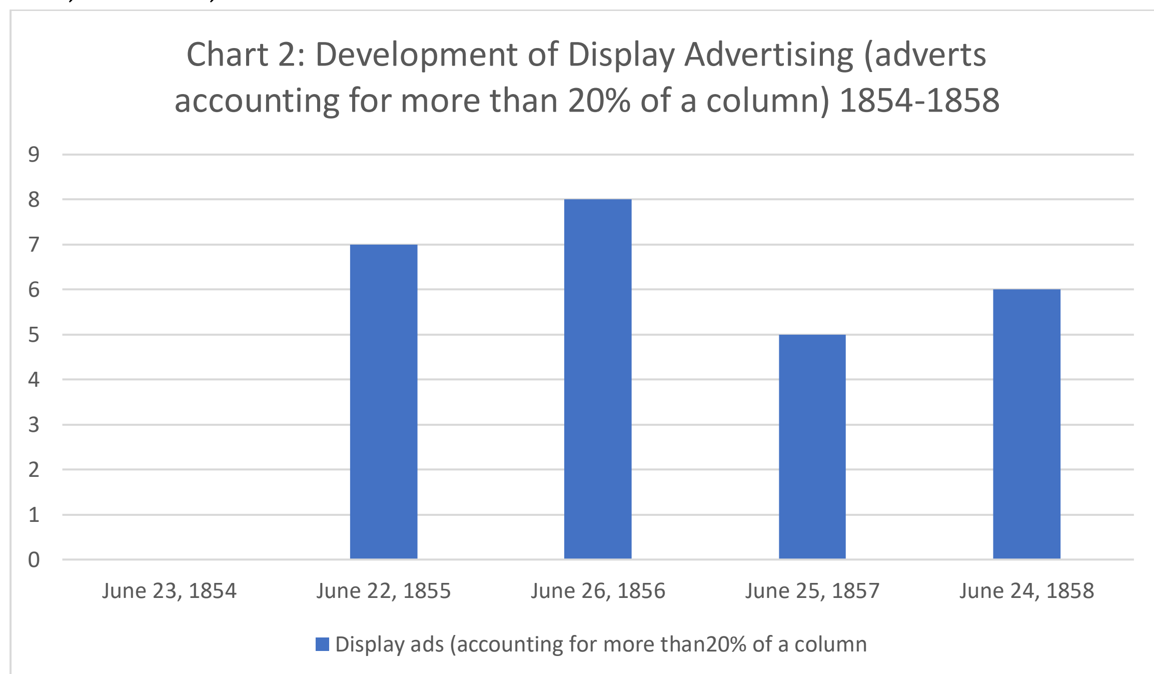
As can be seem in Chart 1, local businesses responded to the call. In the first edition following repeal, August 12, the number of advertisements in the newspaper rose from 63, with 37 on the front page, to 88, with 62 on the front page. The following week it was up to 122 with 87 on the front, and 143 in the August 26 edition, with 99 on the front page. The number did not drop below 140 for the rest of the year.




Of the 37 front-page ads in the August 5 edition, 17 were from South and North Shields, 10 were from Newcastle, three from Sunderland, one from Seaham and one from London. Of the 62 front-page ads on August 12 there were 19 adverts from South and North Shields but there were also 20 "business cards", or classified announcements from Shields businesses. Following the advertising duty repeal, such cards were available at the new advantageous rate of £3, 3s for a year's worth of insertions to non-subscribers and £2 to subscribers. Sixteen adverts were from Newcastle businesses, one from Blyth

and two from London. There were also two Newcastle business cards. On August 19, there were 23 Shields business cards out of a front-page first column of 30 items, plus five Shields ads, one from Newcastle, one from Blyth and one Newcastle business card (placed by Alexander Stevenson, who, in addition to his many other roles and interests, was a commission merchant and as such acted as agent to his family's Jarrow Chemical Works). In total there were, in addition to those business cards, 19 front page ads from Shields, 16 from Newcastle and two from London. In the meantime, someone in the Gazette management team had come up with the idea of appealing to the paper's maritime audience. Inserted at the top of the first column from August 12 was the following: "The attention of Ship Captains visiting the port of Shields as well as the inhabitants generally is respectfully invited the following business cards – by which a great saving of time and trouble will be effected" (*N&SSG,* July 29, 1853).

The increase in advertising continued into the following year. In the first half of 1854, if an issue per month is sampled, the number of front-page ads averages 109. The June 23, 1854 front page had 131 adverts. If we compare it with the June 22, 1855 page, the number of adverts drops to 75, but there is a marked change in the type of adverts, apparent even to the naked eye. The number of small ads drops from 40 on the 1854 page to 13 on the 1855 page. On June 26, 1856, the number of small ads is down to 5. There is a slight rise on June 25, 1857 to 10. The comparable figure for June 24, 1858 is 8. Meanwhile, as Chart 2 shows, there is a corresponding rise in the more expensive display adverts. On June 23, 1854 the largest display advert takes up only 13 per cent of a column. On June 22, 1855 one ad takes up 70 per cent of a column, another 52 per cent; there are three of 22 per cent, one of 35, one of 30. On June 26, 1856 there is one of 45 per cent, two of 40 per cent, two of 30, two of 22, one of 20. On June 25, 1857 there is one of 65 per cent, one of 43, one of 35, one of 30, one of 22. On June 24, 1858, there are two of 39 per cent, one of 35, three of 22.



This development of advertising post-1853 was part of a national trend. James Curran observes: “It was only with the abolition of the advertisement duty in 1853 that popular press advertising came fully into its own (2010:28). The Sunday newspaper *Reynolds News* increased its advertising volume by more than 50 per cent between 1854 and 1858 (Curran 2010). It was the combined effect of the repeal of advertisement duty, stamp duty (in 1855) and the paper duty (in 1861) that “transformed the economic structure of the popular press” (Curran 2010: 29).

**Conclusion**

It is easy for the 1855 repeal of the stamp duty to overshadow the repeal of the other taxes on knowledge. After all, as mentioned already and as we will see in greater detail in a subsequent chapter, it is the one that spurred the launch of so many newspapers; there is no gainsaying the fact that it was the major turning point. However, the repeal of advertisement duty was an important step on the road to what happened in 1855. Those post-1855 papers were not able to charge as high a cover price as had previously been the norm; they could not be as reliant on that income. What they could rely on though, and would increasingly come to rely on for profit, was advertising revenue, now so more readily forthcoming with the removal of what was effectively an advertising penalty. Profit was something the *Gazette* proprietor James Stevenson was starting to worry about in 1853. In December of that year he wrote to his brother Hew in Australia: “The Shields Gazette has heretofore been a bad speculation. I have advanced about £4,500 and see little chance of ever getting it back, or any part of it. It has done good to the district and I will not grudge if it is self-supporting in future” (Stevenson, 2009: 325).

## Chapter 8: Reporting Repeal 1853-55

This chapter will look further at the *Gazette's* coverage of, and attitude to, the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, focusing this time on the period between 1853 and 1855, and the paper's reporting on the Parliamentary progress of legislation to repeal the Newspaper Stamp Act. This section will culminate in the *Gazette* revealing its response to repeal. The chapter will also look at the attitude to repeal of the *Shields Advocate*, a rival publication to the *Gazette*, covering the same circulation area and espousing the same politics, whose launch in early 1855 was to influence the *Gazette* in its response.

On May 19, 1854 the *Gazette* reported that Milner Gibson had once again highlighted the anomalies of the newspaper taxation system. This time the Attorney General had given a sympathetic reply – "that the law on the subject of periodical publications required revision and amendment, and that it had been unequally, though not arbitrarily, enforced." The *Gazette* also reported Joseph Hume's contribution to the latest Parliamentary debate – in which he returned to the link between the lack of working-class education and crime: that "the course pursued in the Government prosecutions was to keep the people ignorant, and to foster crime. The press laws ought to be repealed altogether" – and John Bright's observation that the Government ought to act "on the highest moral grounds, of facilitating the access of the labouring classes to newspapers, by abolishing the stamp duty" (*N&SSG,* 19 May 1854).

The next significant article did not come until February of the following year, when the paper reported a speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir George Cornewall Lewis, who had recently taken over from Gladstone with the switch from Lord Aberdeen's administration to that of Lord Palmerston. It showed him moving towards repeal: "That it is expedient to alter and amend the laws relating to the stamp duties on newspapers, the printing and publishing of newspapers, and registration and giving securities in connection therewith and the regulation of the duties of postage on printed papers" (*N&SSG* 23 February 1855).

On March 2, 1855, it reported that the bill "to alter and amend the laws relating to the stamp duties on newspapers" had been issued. The following week it reported that the second reading of the bill had been postponed until that day – March 9. On March 16 the *Gazette* considered an aspect of the subject that subsequently has largely been overlooked. This was the crucial matter of the increased demand for paper that would come with the rise in the number of newspapers post-repeal. "Already the scarcity of paper is severely felt," it wrote. And with due provincial pride, it suggested that a Shields seaman would be ideally placed, as he travelled the world, to come up with an alternative for the expensive method of making paper from rags. Such an alternative would be "a boon equal to that of the electric telegraph," it declared (*N&SSG* 2 March 1855). It helpfully provided a list of places that the Tyne seaman might look for vegetable material similar in

constitution to the linen and cotton plant fibres then in use: among them the Falklands, where the tussock grass grew that could be cultivated on sandy "bents" of the sort that existed in South Shields (it doesn't make that local link, but the dunes of bent grass were a well-known feature of the town's coastline and its readers would have been alert to it); the prairies of North America; the Pacific side of the Isthmus of Darien, where grass was used to make hammocks and mats; and the uplands of Norway and Russia, where the slow-growing pine timber might be used in the way that a printer in New York, it reported, had recently used wood pulp.

The following week, Friday, March 23, the *Gazette* carried a report of the Parliamentary debate on newspaper stamp duties. It usefully sketches in some of the background. In the debate, Sir George Cornewall Lewis reminded the House that the current discussion stemmed from the 1851 select committee which reported that the newspaper stamp "was not a desirable subject of taxation", and the resolution of the last Parliamentary session, "on the notion of Mr M Gibson that the law was ill-defined and that the subject demanded the earliest consideration of the House" (*N&SSG* 23 March 1855). The Chancellor added that the move towards repeal had gathered momentum with the previous administration, under Lord Aberdeen, which had been influenced by the resolution but also by the "anomalous state of the law which had grown up under the Board of Inland Revenue, and the circulation of class [trade and special interest] newspapers, part stamped part not stamped" (*N&SSG* 23 March 1855). The *Gazette* drew its readers' attention to the fact that some of the unstamped newspapers had begun to publish news items, which meant they ought to have paid the stamp duty, and if they did not, they should have been prosecuted. But the large number of such newspapers flouting the law had become a logistical problem for the Government. In the *Gazette* article the Chancellor was quoted as saying he did not share the fears of those who foresaw an opening of the floodgates to a "cheap unstamped press". He went on to outline the current, complicated situation. "Such a press existed at present; unstamped newspapers, with an immense circulation, were perfectly innocuous and unexceptional, while certain stamped papers of a licentious character had become extinct" (*N&SSG* 23 March 1855). Allowing newspapers to be issued unstamped, unless they were being posted, would result in a loss of revenue for the Government. Sir George estimated that the loss would be in the region of £200,000 even taking into account the increase in the number of newspapers that would be published post-repeal.

Stamp duty repeal was indeed to lead to the launching of many newspapers; however, by the start of 1855, newspapers had begun to be launched in the knowledge that the duty was about to be repealed. One such was the *Shields Advocate*, which published its first issue on January 5, 1855. After six years' monopoly the *Gazette* suddenly had a rival, a Liberal newspaper espousing similar political views, which fact was to have a considerable influence on the *Gazette's* response to repeal.[37]

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[37] JC Stevenson noted the arrival of the *Advocate* in his diary. His entry for Friday, January 4, 1855 reads: "Today appeared the first number of this paper, which is, however nothing but the Sunderland Times and a

As the *Gazette* had done in its opening leaders and in many subsequent articles, the *Advocate* stressed the educational role of newspapers; it also gives weight to idea that repeal would allow respectable papers to drown out the less wholesome:

> The most effectual way, indeed, to counteract the mischievous tendency of … publications is to widen the circle of readers who can purchase a good newspaper; and this will be accomplished to an extent beyond what most people suppose by a reduction of a penny on the price. This is the great free-trade argument for the repeal of the stamp duty. (*Shields Advocate*, 16 March 1855)

Significantly, it identified 3½d as a reasonable amount to charge a "poor man" for a weekly newspaper once the stamp duty had been removed. As we shall see, this is the amount the *Gazette* would charge for its package of newspapers post-repeal.[38] The *Advocate* went on to stress the way newspapers might educate the poor man, not least in his role in and duty to society:

> … don't whine over the ignorance of the people, and twaddle of your desire for national education, while you plant your tax-gatherer at the publisher's door, to stop the poor man from buying a newspaper, immeasurably the most potent of all secular educational agencies – because it is read where, in its absence, nothing else would be read – because it is the first thing to supply intelligent topics of conversation in a rising family – because thus it lays the foundation of thought, and leads to the habits of inquiry – and because, drawing on its readers from step to step and from day to day, it gradually and steadily makes them acquainted with all their duties and rights, as members of civilized society, and citizens of a free state." (*Shields Advocate*, 16 March 1855)

Meanwhile, on March 30, the *Gazette* carried a report of the Newspaper Stamp Duties Bill's second reading, in which it focused on the new readers that publications would attract after repeal. It reported a speech by the Attorney General, Sir Alexander Cockburn, who declared: "a great public benefit would be secured by getting rid of the tax". He contended it "would not impair the means or deteriorate the character of the higher newspapers, but ... would call into existence a new and different class of readers." On May 18, the *Gazette* reported that the stamp duties bill had passed its third reading.

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Tory paper and an organ of George Hudson with alteration of the name and a little of the matter. And appearing in Shields is to advance liberal politics!" (Stevenson diary page 203)

[38] See chapter 10

On May 22 an article from the *Athenaeum*, which was reprinted as a *Shields Advocate* leader, entitled the 'Journalistic Revolution', excitedly surveyed the landscape of newspapers and magazines on the eve of repeal. The London dailies and most of the weeklies were keeping their cards close to their chest, it reported, but *Lloyd's Newspaper* planned to reduce its cover price by a penny and there was a "host" of new papers planned, among them a penny newspaper from "Messrs Willett and Ledger. A twopenny illustrated paper, *The Illustrated Times*, was already on the newsstands, as was "Mr Charles Knight's twopenny weekly newspaper." The article alluded to advertisements for a new daily paper, "'full-size', for 2d, - but everything else unknown)". This was the *Daily Telegraph*, which would be launched on June 29. It proclaimed that this "journalistic revolution" had been a victory for free trade (*Shields Advocate*, 22 May 1855).

The picture in the provinces was altogether clearer, it reported. The *Manchester Guardian* was going to switch from its "bulky bi-weekly form and ... its ancient price of 4½d per copy" to become a 2d daily paper. The *Manchester Examiner* was planning to come out as a *Times*-size publication on Saturdays, price 3d, and as a daily, the size of the *Globe*, for 1d. The *Liverpool Mercury* would continue as a weekly, but cut its price to 2½ d, though at double the size of the *Times*. The *Liverpool Journal*, meanwhile, was going to be published on Saturday an "enormous paper" for 3d and a daily paper, *Globe*-sized, for 1d. This was the first paper, said the article, to "announce a penny news publication." It would compete with the existing Liverpool daily, the *Daily Times*. "In future," it concluded, "we shall have to look at the provincial daily paper – with its 20,000 or 30,000, or perhaps 100,000 readers – with more interest, with, at least, not less interest, in its kind, than we attach to the London morning paper."

Karl Marx, in the *Neue Oder-Zeitung*, wrote in a similar tone of excitement and offered his own list of papers contributing to that "newspaper revolution", including reductions in price for the *Morning Herald, Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper, Reynold's News* and *The People's Paper*; and the launch of the *Courier and Telegraph*, (as the *Daily Telegraph* was originally named), the *Pilot* (which he described as a "Catholic magazine"), the *Illustrated Times*, "Mr Charles Knight's" *Town and Country Paper*, and a "new weekly London penny paper". "What is more significant, though", he added," was a "revolution in the provincial press caused by the abolition of stamp duty." He referred to four new papers in Glasgow and the relaunch of twice- and thrice-weekly papers in Liverpool as dailies (*Neue Oder-Zeitung*, June 21, 1855).

One provincial paper Marx did not mention was the *North & South Shields* Gazette, but it had been quietly working away on its plans to respond to repeal – and to the sudden competition from the *Advocate*. On April 6, it carried a leader addressed "To the Inhabitants of the Harbour Towns of Shields" which sought to identify the newspaper with the town's and their success. The *Gazette* and the people of Shields were in this together. The paper would pass any benefit of repeal on to the readers but it needed the readers to continue their support. It began by looking back at the progress made by

Shields in the six years since the *Gazette* had been founded and the part the paper had played in municipal improvements.

> It is not only that we now possess a Customs House, Municipal Institutions, and a share in the government of the river, which we had not then, but that, by long years of laborious endeavour, we have cleared the way before us to perfect freedom, equality, and independence – things even six years ago, undreamt of, in reference to Newcastle and the Tyne, by the majority of Shields men (*N&SSG*, 6 April, 1855)

It went on: "We trust that we may, without presumption, claim for the Shields Gazette, a portion of the merit of having produced the desirable result" (*N&SSG*, 6 April, 1855).

There followed what amounted to a statement of accounts, but couched in altruistic terms. If the proprietors of the *Gazette* had only been interested in profit, they would have given up by now. It had cost them £4,500 to set up the paper. During the six years of the *Gazette's* existence, it had brought in £10, 069 in revenue from sales and advertisements, but all that money had been reinvested in sustaining and improving the paper. Those proprietors had not made "a single shilling in return". In a reference, presumably, to the positive effect of advertisement duty repeal, the article added: "It is now simply paying its way, and no more" (*N&SSG*, 6 April, 1855).

It proceeded to issue a gentle appeal to its readers:

> The public does not often receive so frank a communication as this. But as the motive which first inspired the desire to establish the Gazette – that, namely, of aiding in the progress of Shields – remains in full force, there cannot be any reason for concealing the cost at which the desire has been so far realised; while the statement justifies us in calling, with similar frankness, on the public for additional support. The paper is *their own*, was established as it shall be continued, for their advantage, with if possible renewed exertions on our part for their good. (*N&SSG*, 6 April, 1855)

It concluded with the rather tantalising statement:

> Our readers shall promptly share any changes advantageous to the public which may be introduced by the Legislature … (*N&SSG*, 6 April, 1855)

On Friday, June 22, the *Gazette* published an announcement which explained in part what its response to repeal would be. There was no big editorial on the Government's actions; instead the paper concentrated on its own actions. It stated that now that the Government

was about to abolish the compulsory 1d newspaper stamp (and allow stamps to be optional so that proprietors could still use them to send papers through the post), after June 30, its price – "to all subscribers and purchasers of single copies in Shields" – would be reduced to 4½d to 3½. It added cryptically: "Other arrangements for giving the inhabitants of Shields the full benefit of the new measure are in preparation and will shortly be announced" (*N&SSG*, 22 June 1855).

On June 29, the day before repeal, the *Gazette* finally revealed its plans. Not only would there be a reduction in the price of the newspaper, there would be a "New Daily Telegraphic Edition". The proprietors had been inspired to launch this paper in order to "develop to the utmost extent the advantages of the new law regarding the Newspaper Press". They were planning on "making an experiment" that, as far as they were aware, was "unique in the history of newspapers".

> The plan is simply this: - To deliver (*free*) to all their subscribers in North and South Shields, and Tynemouth, *every evening,* a *Telegraphic Edition*, containing all the latest news of the day of any importance, in addition to the weekly copy of the *Shields Gazette,* with all the usual local and general news of the week in a detailed form; but instead of being delivered as formerly on Friday morning, it will be sent to each subscriber on the Thursday evening. (*N&SSG*, 29 June 1855)

At no point does the *Gazette* use the term *evening newspaper.* However, a promotional advertisement in the third *Telegraphic Edition*, of July 4, referred to "preserving the uniformity of the evening delivery". The June 29 announcement was in fact somewhat ambiguous: it suggested that there would be six – Monday to Saturday – editions each week of the *Telegraphic Edition* in addition to the weekly *Gazette*. In the event, the *Telegraphic Edition* was issued on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings. The June 29 announcement urged the inhabitants of North and South Shields "to support this experiment by becoming subscribers themselves, and by recommending it to their fellow-townsmen". In responding in this way, the paper would be as successful as it was when advertisement duty was repealed and townsfolk "responded to the call … and rendered the *Shields Gazette*, as an advertising medium, one of the best … in the North of England" (*N&SSG*, 29 June 1855). The importance of advertising following repeal was repeatedly stressed. The new daily edition would be a quarto size and include all the "latest Home and Foreign News, Shipping, Sporting, Markets, &c." In addition, a "small space" would be "reserved for a few advertisements". By increasing its number of subscribers, the "usual weekly *Shields Gazette"* and what it called the "*Daily Telegraphic Gazette"* would "thus form advertising media of great value, as by these means all advertisements will be brought under the notice of every family in Shields and neighbourhood" (*N&SSG*, 29 June 1855). By increasing subscribers and gaining increased revenue from daily advertising, the proprietors would be able to cover the "necessary and very considerable" cost of bringing out their publication, which,

significantly, they referred to as “a Daily Newspaper” and one that would be affordable to even the poor:

> … thus all the advantages to be derived from a Daily Newspaper will be placed within the reach of even the poorest person in Shields, *the charge for the whole free daily Telegraphic Edition, and the usual weekly Newspaper, delivered free to all Subscribers, being* ONLY THREEPENCE-HALFPENNY PER WEEK. (*N&SSG*, 29 June 1855)

It finished by once again stressing what the proprietors saw as a unique experiment. With its new daily edition and its investment in telegraphic technology, Shields would “ultimately be placed in a position, in point of early and authentic intelligence, which even the ‘Great Metropolis’ itself will not surpass (*N&SSG*, 29 June 1855).

News of the *Gazette’s* frank appeal to its readers – if not the apparently revolutionary nature of its venture – was of sufficient interest to be reported by other publications. Part of its April 6 leader, in which it revealed its financial outlay, found its way into three London newspapers – the *Morning Advertiser*, the *Globe* and *John Bull* – in a paragraph entitled “The Risks of Journalism” and credited to the *Gazette*. It was also published in the *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury* on April 7, 1855, under the same heading but with the additional comment: “The public does not often receive so frank a communication as this”.

**Conclusion**

*Gazette* proprietor James Stevenson’s letter to his brother Hew that ended the last chapter was a significant one for the future direction of his family’s newspaper. He concluded with the words: “I will not grudge if it [the Gazette] is self-supporting in future” (Stevenson, 2009: 325). The repeal of advertising duty clearly put the paper on the road to self-sufficiency and possibly profitability: the paper trumpeted the support it had had from local businesses since that repeal and was now looking to improve its financial wellbeing with its response to stamp duty repeal. This was to be a venture that to a very large degree put commerciality to the forefront, but as will be outlined in a subsequent chapter, the paper had not given up its social role.

## Chapter 9: The Response to Stamp Duty Repeal (1) – The Launch of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*

This chapter will focus on the daily publication launched by the *North & South Shields Gazette* on July 2, 1855 in response to the repeal of the Newspaper Stamp Act. It will look in depth at the range of its articles, the writing style of its articles and the way it developed over the first few years of its existence and in doing so offer a new perspective to that offered in its very few mentions in other works.

In the flood of newspapers launched in 1855, either in anticipation, or as a consequence, of the repeal of the newspaper stamp duty that summer[39] – the *Tercentenary Handlist of English & Welsh Newspapers, Magazines & Reviews* lists 134 (Muddiman and Austin 1920: 239); Collet (1899: 32) puts the number at between 150 and 200 – the vast majority were weeklies. There were 11 morning titles. There were only two evening newspapers: *The Events*, launched in Liverpool on May 14, and the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* of the *North & South Shields Gazette*, which began publication on July 2.[40] The *Daily Telegraphic Edition* began as a quarto single sheet, printed on one side, and has, in its few mentions, been dismissed as something less than a "real" newspaper. Lee says: "Shields had boasted a halfpenny evening Liberal paper since 1855," but he adds: "…this had been only a telegraphic sheet until 1864" (1976: 136).[41] Hobbs references Lee in saying the "South Shields Gazette" was "merely a telegraphic sheet from 1855 until 1864" (2018: 241). Most dismissive of all is Manders, who writes "[it] cannot strictly be regarded as a true daily newspaper" (1999: 6). Milne, who does at least acknowledge its claim to be the "earliest halfpenny evening newspaper in England", describes it thus: "measuring twelve inches by nine [30cms by 23], and printed on one side only, it contained three columns, one of advertisements, one of shipping news, and one of general news by telegraph and from the London morning papers" (1971: 54). However, none of these descriptions quite does the paper justice.

Within a year it had been enlarged (30cms by 36.5) and its number of columns increased to four; within two it had grown again (30cms by 45). At busy news times it would be printed on both sides, or a second edition would be brought out later in the evening (for

[39] The Repeal Act received Royal Assent on June 15, 1855 and came into force on June 29.

[40] The *Daily Post*, launched in Liverpool as a morning daily on Monday, June 11, 1855, had, on its opening day, three editions, the last of these being an evening edition, billed as such, which came out at 3pm. The weekly *Manchester Examiner* launched the *Manchester Daily Times*, in December 1854, the *Examiner* appearing on Wednesdays and Saturdays and the *Daily Times* on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings. The two papers were amalgamated as the *Manchester Daily Examiner & Times* on Monday, June 18, 1855, and announced plans to bring out post-repeal morning and evening newspapers, the *Manchester Daily Times* and the *Manchester Evening News*, priced at 1 ½d and 1d respectively, but ended up launching only the morning, under the title of the *Manchester Examiner & Times.*

[41] A search of the British Library's Newspaper Archive brings up several examples of the term "telegraphic sheet" but only in the sense of a telegraphic dispatch sent to newspaper offices.

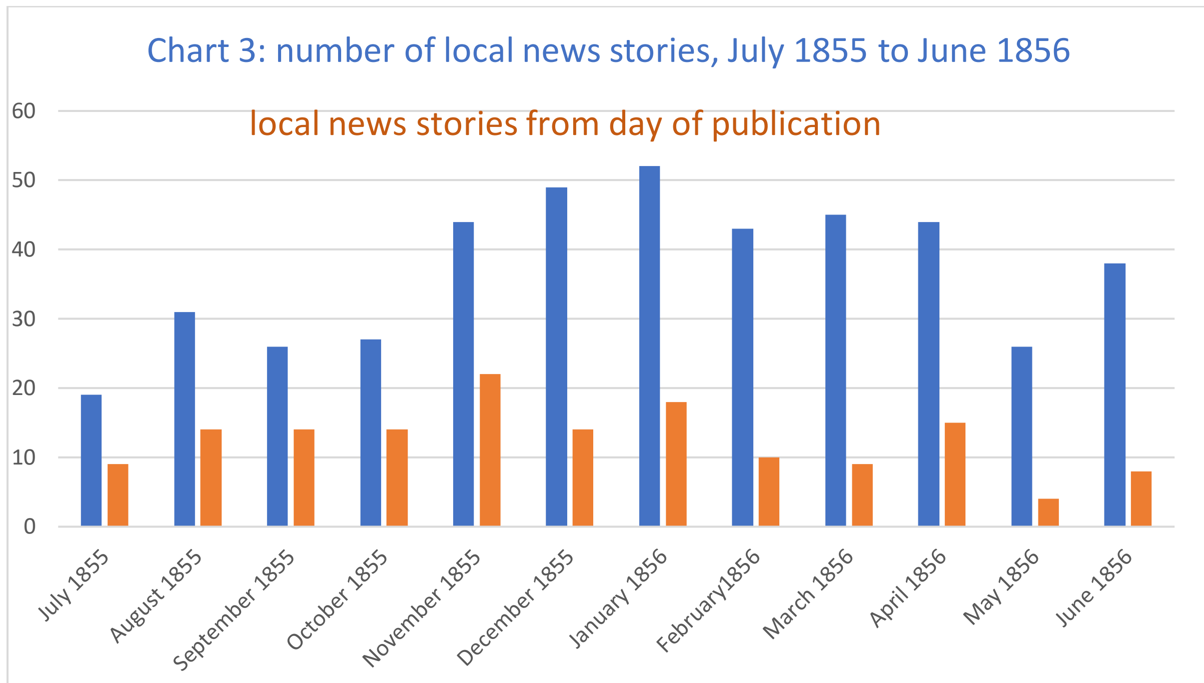
instance on Tuesday, January 22, 1856, when a second edition was printed to include the latest news of peace negotiations in the Crimean war) or it would be run to four or eight pages. The first two-pager was on the Friday of its first week. On January 15, 1856, the pagination was increased to four to accommodate a public meeting about North Shields and Tynemouth Dock. Four-pagers followed on February 6, February 19 and June 7; there was a two-pager on December 19, 1856 and on November 3 and December 18, 1857. There were two-page editions on April 11, April 16, April 26, April 29, May 6 and June 10, 1859 and a three-pager on September 23, 1859. There were Christmas special editions, of four pages in 1858, 1860 and 1861 and of eight pages in 1859.[42] Indeed it had more in common with today's newspapers than the wordy publications that were the 1855 norm. The *Gazette's* centenary history states, not without justification, "it was an evening newspaper in every sense" (*Shields Gazette*, 1949).[43] Most significantly, it was not just a telegraphic sheet, publishing items that had arrived from elsewhere via the paper's telegraph machine; it was a vehicle for breaking local news.

The *Daily Telegraphic Edition* of the *North and South Shields Gazette* contained breaking local news from its third day of publication. That first breaking news item, on Wednesday, July 4, concerned an iron steamer, *Fraeburg*, that had that morning turned back towards the Tyne, less than a day after sailing, following the death of its second engineer, who had been crushed in the ship's paddle case. That same issue also carried the report of a wedding that morning at St Hilda's Church in the town. The daily and the weekly editions would often work in tandem: a brief report in the daily, followed by a full report in the next weekly. The first example of this was in its second week when a story of a local court case was mentioned in brief in the Wednesday night *Telegraph* and a full report followed in the next day's weekly. The first same-day court reports, from North Shields Police Court, were published on July 23, 1855 – one paragraph about a man being committed to six months in Morpeth Jail for having assaulted a "respectable female" on the "Dark-stairs" and another about a chemist from North Shields who had been committed for trial for allegedly setting fire to his shop. Both cases had been heard that morning. The assault case was dealt with in greater detail in the weekly *North & South Shields Gazette*. That day's daily edition also carried a report of a body having been found that morning in the Tyne.

In the *Daily Telegraphic Edition's* brief mentions in academic works, only Milne refers to it bringing its readers "a daily minimum of news long before most other towns were similarly served" (1971: 54) but gives no sense of it as a medium for local news, let alone breaking local news, or of the range of its news coverage. In the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*, reports of events from the morning or afternoon of publication – court cases, inquests, council meetings, accidents, thefts, fires – quickly became a key component of the

[42] Milne does at least refer to subsequent "enlargements" to the quarto format but does not give a sense of the degree of change in the publication between1855 and 1864 or provide details of those changes (1971:54).

publication.[44] A striking example of the daily being used to cover breaking news comes from Tuesday, July 19, 1859 when it carried a graphic account from "our reporter on the spot" of a "fearful crime" that had taken place that morning, comprising a murder and an attempted suicide at a house in Jarrow. The town was "in a state of great excitement"; the house had been "surrounded by a large crowd". The reporter had managed to glean all the details of the incident and he recounted them in gory detail across two columns. The volume of local news stories, including those from the day of publication, can been gauged from Chart 3.




From its very early days the *Gazette* referred to its daily edition as the *Daily Telegraph,* indicating an independent existence. On February 25, 1856, for instance, the daily boasted to advertisers: "… where the quickest, the cheapest, and best possible publicity is required, the *Daily Telegraph* is without a rival in the North of England." On Saturday, April 21, 1860 (not April 26 as stated by Manders, 1982: 16), the size of the paper was increased from four columns to six and its name was changed to the *North and South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph*. In its promotional blurb in the previous day's edition, it described the enlarged publication as "being what is equal to a Daily Paper, at about half the price" (*DTE*, 20 April 1860).

The *Daily Telegraph* name persisted as its popular title even into the next century, after the newspaper had become the *Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph.* Aaron Watson, who was *Gazette* editor from 1885 to 1892, and who returned to write a column of reminiscences from November 1921, recalled, at the end of his first day as editor, going

[44] See the appendix to this thesis for a full breakdown of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition's* content in its first year

to the newly completed South Shields railway station in Mile End Road to take a train to Newcastle.

> At the station bookstall I asked for the "Daily Telegraph", meaning the London newspaper of that name, and the bookstall attendant handed me a copy of the paper that I had just seen to press. At South Shields, it appeared, the only "Daily Telegraph" that was much in demand was the "Shields Daily Gazette". The two names, as I now learned for the first time, were local synonyms. The "Gazette" and the "Telegraph" were the same thing. (*Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph*, 19 January 1922)

Its role as a vehicle for breaking local news is not to downplay its importance as a vehicle for breaking telegraphic news, however. Often it had local exclusives on events of global significance. One of the war items in the first issue was a report of an event that very morning: about the arrival in Marseilles of a ship carrying 200 wounded men from Constantinople during the Crimean War. On March 31, the Tyneside version of the *Daily Telegraph* brought to the Northumberland town of Morpeth the news of the Crimean War peace treaty being signed, which resulted in fireworks and the ringing of the town bells. An article in the paper's 50th anniversary edition in 1899 stated categorically that the *Telegraphic Edition* "was not, as has been sometimes alleged, simply a shipping sheet. It was from its first daily publication a newspaper in every sense" (*SDG&ST*, February 24, 1899).

According to the *Dictionary of Journalism*, a newspaper is: "a regular printed publication … that delivers news (and much else) on a daily or weekly basis" (Harcup 2014: 205). That same dictionary defines news as:

> Information about recent events deemed to be interesting, important, or unusual enough to be "newsworthy" (or fresh information about recent events) that is gathered, verified, and structured in accordance with journalistic norms before being published …. (2014: 197)

The *Daily Telegraphic Edition* of the *North and South Shields Gazette* was a newspaper.

When the Crimean War was at its height, it was the *Telegraphic Edition* which each day supplied the latest news of the conflict.

> It appeared in the nick of time to enable Shields folk to keep abreast of the stirring events which were happening in the Crimea, and in which a very large number of Shieldsmen and Tynesiders were engaged. Many Shields shipmasters and pilots were at that time requisitioned by the Government to pilot ships of the Baltic and Black Sea fleets … (*SDG&ST* 24 February 1899).

On September 10, 1855 it was through the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* that the town heard the first news of the fall of Sebastopol two days earlier:

> [It] was a red letter day in the history of the new paper. In rapidly succeeding editions, it announced during that afternoon the capture of the Malakoff, the fall of Sevastopol and its occupation by the Allies. (*SDG&ST* 24 February 1899).

The paper fulfilled a similar function during the American Civil War. On Thursday, January 9, 1862, the weekly edition of the *Gazette* reported that at the end of the South Shields town council meeting the previous afternoon the mayor announced that he had just received a copy of the second edition of the "*Daily Telegraph"*, which contained the breaking news from the conflict: the Confederate agents Mason and Slidell, who had been taken from a British mail ship, the RMS Trent, on their way to seek diplomatic and possibly military assistance from the UK, were about to be released, thus averting a possible war between Britain and the Northern states.

In 1854 *Gazette* proprietor James Stevenson had retired from the Jarrow Chemical Works and moved to Edinburgh, handing over control of his newspaper to his son, JC. When it became clear the Government was going to repeal the stamp duty, the *Gazette's* manager, Richard Whitecross, doubtless buoyed by a significant increase in advertising revenue since the summer of 1853, saw a way of finally getting a return on the Stevenson family's investment. This was a chance to turn a public-spirited newspaper, that had done much to foster civic pride and encourage civic improvements, into a publication that also made money for its proprietor. In launching its *Daily Telegraphic Edition* the *Gazette was* taking an ambitious step in terms of newspaper production and was explicitly aiming to increase circulation by reaching a new class of readers. As we have seen, in talking about the package of newspapers – five issues of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* plus one of the weekly the *Gazette* stated: "… all the advantages to be derived from a Daily Newspaper will be placed within the reach of *even the poorest person* in Shields [my italics]" (*N&SSG 6 July 1855).* In the first issue of the daily, a promotional announcement specifically for the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* made an appeal to all sections of the community. "Nothing will be spared to render the *Shields Gazette Telegraphic Edition* at once useful to men of business and interesting to general readers; and, as it is their own concern, the inhabitants of Shields, *of all classes* [my italics] are respectfully requested to forward the movement, by subscribing for, and advertising in, the *Shields Gazette Daily Telegraphic Edition*" (*Daily Telegraphic Edition*, July 2, 1855).

Whitecross, who is credited with coming up with the idea of launching the *Telegraphic Edition*, wrote in optimistic terms to James Stevenson in Edinburgh in April 1856, after the new edition had been running for almost a year.

At last, then, after seven years of unmitigated up-hill work, heavy expenditure and increasing effort, the Gazette has attained a vantage ground of circulation, importance and general prosperity which no Shields Newspaper ever reached before, and unless some unforeseen disaster nips this bud, and again scatters to the winds the elements of its success, there stretches out before it a career of social influence and commercial advantage which reversing the order of the Pharaoh's dream on the Banks of the Nile, shall make the seven years of the Gazette's local contempt and pecuniary famine on the Banks of the Tyne utterly forgotten. (Stevenson 2009: 326)

The paper made an extremely modest £4 profit in 1856 after the first year of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* but it was a start (Stevenson 2009). One advantage of Stamp Duty repeal was that the company could now print a larger number of newspapers in the hope of attracting the casual buyer – those who might buy the 1d daily on the street; the newspaper stamp had had to be paid in advance, which largely restricted the paper's circulation to existing subscribers. The *Gazette* management was also hoping casual buyers would become direct subscribers and thereby cut out the newsagents' commission (2009: 326). Moreover, there was the income stream of daily advertising and a kind of news content that would attract buyers who would then be exposed to that advertising. The key words here, though, are not just "commercial advantage" but "social influence" – as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The proprietors emphasised the unusual nature of their venture. In his diary entry for July 13, 1855, JC Stevenson wrote: "the idea is a very ingenious one and, so far as we know, not adopted in any other place in England," (Stevenson Diary Page 223).[45] In that entry JC gives an insight into the struggle it presented to his printers: "it takes about 2 hours with the hand press to print it all off, so that its 9 o'clock before all the copies can be delivered." He also gives an insight into the decision-making behind it: "the plan has been well considered especially the question whether it should be given for nothing, but Whitecross calculates that he will thereby not weigh the least possibility of any opposition". It is not clear whether it was the question of issuing the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* free of charge to subscribers, or the question of charging 1d for non-subscribers that was under discussion, but it was clear that Whitecross was in a position of power.

News of their venture spread as far as the capital. On July 13 the *Gazette* reprinted a snippet from the *Times*. Under the heading "The Press Run Mad", the *Times* wrote: "A rumour has reached us of the outbreak of a 'daily paper' in Shields." The *Gazette* placed ads about its *Daily Telegraphic Edition* in the London daily the *Morning Post* from October 1855 to January 1856. In the final pre-repeal issue of the weekly the proprietors explained they were bringing out the daily "in order to develop to the utmost advantage

[45] JC noted that the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* was, however, issuing a free sheet on the days when the paid-for was not published.

of the new law …" (*N&SSG*, July 13 1855). In an announcement on August 10 in the daily they stated: "Nothing less than a Daily Issue would have developed the full benefit of the abolition of the Newspaper Stamp." (*DTE*, August 10, 1855). It should be noted, however, that in private at least, JC was not yet referring to the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* as a daily newspaper but as "the germ of a daily paper, if ever Shields should come to be the field for such, and there is no mistake as to its being the best policy for rooting the Gazette on a sure foundation" (Stevenson Diary Page 224). Milne (1971: 54) lists the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* as one of the reasons why the *Gazette* survived at a time when so many local newspapers were so short-lived.

The Thursday night *North & South Shields Gazette* was a typical weekly of the time: by today's standards it looks impenetrable. A broadsheet, it was heavy on editorial comment and contained long verbatim accounts of parliamentary debates and local council meetings. It relied on much cutting and pasting from other newspapers around the country and had advertisements on the front and back of its eight pages. Buried at the foot of page four there was a column headed "*Local Intelligence*". This comprised the accidents, crimes and court cases we would consider to be prime components of a local newspaper today.

In the *Telegraphic Edition* there was no room for editorialising, or masses of cutting and pasting from other newspapers or – except when it was occasionally expanded to four pages – lengthy verbatim reports. APRTOK member and *Westminster Review* editor William Hickson told the 1851 Parliamentary Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps, that much of the news in the *Times* could not be understood by even the more intelligent agricultural labourer. Such a person needed a newspaper that carried a report of "some trial at Maidstone assizes" or a "stackyard fire" (Wilson, 1985: 65). It was exactly this kind of news that the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* brought to the fore. "Destructive Fire To Farm Buildings" ran a heading on a local story in one of the first issues of the paper *(DTE*, 29 December, 1855). Such stories were featured alongside reports of sudden death, fatal accidents, suicides and crime. The power of such articles to attract a working-class audience had been proved with their successful inclusion in the unstamped radical newspapers. When *Poor Man's Guardian* editor Henry Hetherington relaunched his radical publication the *Destructive* as the *Twopenny Dispatch* in the summer of 1834, he stated it would be:

> a repository of all the gems and treasures, and fun and frolic and 'news and occurrences' of the week. It shall abound in Police Intelligence, in Murders, Rapes, Suicides, Burnings, Maimings, Theatricals, Races, Pugilism, and all manner of moving accidents by flood and field.' In short, it will be stuffed with every sort of devilment that will make it sell …" (Hollis, 1970: 122)

Similarly, another radical publication, the *Man,* which was launched in 1833, had police news, poetry, cuttings and 'scraps of everything' on three of its eight pages (1970: 121).

Hetherington and his fellow radical editors also realised the importance of local news for their working-class audience. Hollis writes: "At least half, and probably two-thirds of the well-established Unstamped paper were sold to the provinces (1970: 120). Hetherington encouraged his agents around the country to gather as much local news as possible.

Because the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was, on most days, a single sheet, such stories were given a front-page prominence that was rare in 1855 and much more akin to the news priorities of today; indeed, when the publication ran to four pages, local news still tended to be a component of page 1 as well as featuring elsewhere. For the rest of the century, the norm with regional and national newspapers was to place advertisements on the front page. Of the other daily newspapers launched in 1855 which are still robust enough to be viewed at the British Library only the *Events* had any local news on the front page: hidden among mostly lengthy and tightly-packed Crimean and Parliamentary articles, the first issue had a paragraph of Liverpool shipping news and a theatre review but the second issue had no local news, most of its front page being taken up with a round-up of London events. There was not a single advertisement in either issue and their columns were set out as in a typical weekly of the time, with long articles, mostly of national, international and general news, but there was some local news tucked away inside, mostly in the final columns of pages: court round-ups, market reports, shipping news, births, marriages and deaths and sporting odds. Of the morning dailies, the early issues of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, launched on June 11, carried advertisements on page 1, as did the *Manchester Guardian* (from July 2), *the Manchester Daily Examiner & Times*, (from June 18) and the *Northern Daily Express* – both when it launched in Darlington on April 24 and when it moved to Newcastle upon Tyne on October 30. The *Manchester Daily Examiner and Times* is included in the British Newspaper Archive. Unlike the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* its inside pages made no allowances for readability; as was the case with the *Events,* it was laid out along the lines of a typical weekly of the time. The *Liverpool Post* is also included in the archive but it similarly prioritised lengthy reports of national and international concern or verbatim accounts of local meetings. *Stevenson's Daily Express*, launched in Nottingham on July 2, repeated a self-congratulatory leader on every front page until July 10; it had no local news until July 19 when it carried a list of runners and riders in that day's Nottingham Races. *The Sheffield Morning News*, launched on June 8, had national news on page 1, as did the first issue of the *Manchester Halfpenny Express* on June 13, while the *Birmingham Daily Press* combined adverts with news from around the country on its first front page on May 7; later editions contained ads alone.

The *Daily Telegraphic Edition* had more in common with the Sunday newspapers that were popular in industrial areas such as North and South Shields. The edition of the big-selling *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper* (edited by APRTOK member Douglas Jerrold) that came out on July 1, 1855, the day before the South Shields daily's launch had long, wordy articles on its front page, but the first two columns of page 2 comprised shorter pieces from Ireland, Scotland and the provinces and several of them focused on crime and fatality, with such eye-catching titles as "Shocking Accident at Vitriol Works," "Civilians Stabbed

by a Soldier" and "Singular and Fatal Accident at Southampton. The July 1 edition of another of the populist Sunday papers, *Reynolds's News*, on a marginally more (to modern eyes) accessible front page, had, in addition to its long columns of Crimean War news and "Foreign Intelligence", a court case involving a knight of the realm being brought from the House of Correction to Bow Street Police Court for a remand hearing in a fraud case, and a story of a farmer who was alleged to have kicked his wife to death. Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy talk of the Sunday newspapers targeting "working-class families looking for reading material on their day of leisure" (2015: 5). They say that "from this point on," meaning in the wake of tax repeal and the mid-century advent of new technologies such as the telegraph and the steam press, "any newspaper aiming at a popular audience had to design a market-orientated mode of address to its readers: entertaining them, informing them but most of all appealing to them in a language that represented their everyday experiences" (ibid). That was certainly the case with the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* and the Sunday papers, which had been inspired by the sensationalist content of some of the radical newspapers and, to a degree, their politics, but does not appear to be the case with the other newspapers launched immediately in the post-repeal period. There are no letters or diary entries that refer to the *Gazette* managers being directly influenced by the Sunday papers, but it is reasonable to imagine them being inspired by their content in their drive to reach a working-class audience.

In South Shields those managers made it clear that they saw their *Daily Telegraph* as a vehicle for concise breaking news stories and implied that the only reason they did not launch a full-size daily newspaper was that it would not at this stage be viable. In the August 10 announcement in the daily, they explained:

> A Daily Paper, of a large uniform size, would, at present, be absurd out of London – and, indeed, of the London Daily Papers, only a very few have been successful adventures. But our small Daily Sheet supplies the News which "will not keep" while the Police and Town Council Reports and other bulkier items of Intelligence, are fully given in the Large Sheet on Thursday Evenings. (*DTE*, 10 August 1855)

But, as we have seen, when there were "bulkier items" that would not keep, such as the dock meeting mentioned above, the daily sheet would include them. In the daily's approach to breaking news, there is a comparison with the situation today where some provincial newspapers have switched from daily print production to weekly; they use their online editions for breaking news while retaining longer, more considered articles for their print versions. On July 1, 1856, the day that the daily was increased in size and number of columns, the *Telegraph* informed its readers:

> Besides the usual *Telegraphic Intelligence* received from London and elsewhere, the interest and importance of the little sheet will be considerably enhanced by its containing short notices of the various prominent events

taking place in our own locality, and the country generally, while full details will be given in the large sheet published every Thursday evening. In this way every circumstance of importance will be brought instantaneously, as it were, before the readers of the *Shields Gazette*, who will thus, *without any expense to themselves,* be kept informed in an easy, simple, and expeditious way, of what "the world they live in" is doing around them, both at home and abroad." (DTE, 1 July 1856)

Because of the limited space in the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* – and possibly because of the need to reach a wider audience – the style of writing changed between it and the Thursday evening edition – the old-style weekly. A report of a church meeting, for instance, which took up three-quarters of a column in the weekly of January 3, 1856, and which gave a full account of each speaker's contribution, in chronological order, appeared in the daily of December 28, 1855, as a five-paragraph summary with the most important points brought to the fore. On Wednesday, January 16, 1856, the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* carried a single-paragraph report of the North Shields Mechanics' Institution annual meeting that had taken place the previous evening. It lists the two main attendees – the Mayor, JW Mayson, who was in the chair, and the town's MP, W. Lindsay – and summarises the two main matters of discussion, a Government plan about shipping charges and an offer from Lindsay to donate £200 towards the cost of starting work on a new building for the institution. The report in the following night's edition of the weekly took up more than a column of the six-column page 3 and covered Lindsay's speech in full, complete with all the "hear hears" from his audience.

Milne cites Stanley Morrison, the historian of newspaper typography, who claimed the repeal of the stamp tax made very little difference to the way newspapers were designed: "No attempt was made to digest the text in the interest of rapid reading" (Morrison, cited in Milne, 1971: 19). Milne maintained that it was "unattractive content and presentation, the price of one penny a day, and the sheer effort and eye-strain involved in reading such a paper in an overcrowded dwelling with inadequate lighting at the end of a long day's toil" that acted as a disincentive to the working class to read newspapers, rather than "basic illiteracy" (1971: 30). He mentions the fact that the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* worked out at one halfpenny per day for those who paid the weekly subscription (actually, it worked as 0.583d) – which would remove the cost disincentive – but not the changes in presentation and layout of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*.

The *Daily Telegraphic Edition* also had a role, as we have seen, as a vehicle for breaking national news, with Crimean reports sustaining its early months. A letter to the weekly *Gazette* of July 27, 1855, less than a month after the *Daily Telegraphic Edition's* launch, showed that at least one reader could see the worth of this cheap daily news service. "It is the 'latest news', the 'telegraphic despatches' from all parts for which most people wish to see the *Times* as quickly as possible," the correspondent wrote. "And if you can supply us with that, we can wait for the leading articles of the *Times* till our visit to the news-

room." He was, however, concerned that the new package of *Gazette* newspapers was being sold too cheaply. "It is very desirable that so important an experiment should not fail from an attempt to do too much, or what is the same thing, to do it too cheaply," he wrote. He suggested putting the price up to 4d, the extra halfpenny possibly making the difference "between profit and loss" (*N&SSG*, 27 July 1856).

It is perhaps telling that this correspondent, at least, saw the *Gazette* experiment in preparing the way for a daily paper – in Shields and other parts of the provinces – rather than being a daily paper itself. He wrote: "I am pleased with and proud of the enterprise, and hope it may end in due time, in a daily paper accessible to every intelligent inhabitant..." He also took issue with the bulkiness of some newspapers, chiefly the *Times*. This trend towards weight had begun a few years previously, he said, "when the Newspapers suddenly blew themselves out to double their previous size ... (a sort of literary stampedo as general, and, in many cases, as irrational as the panic which seizes a troop of horses on the prairies)." He added, again referring to daily papers as something that had not yet arrived: "One hope with which the prospect of daily papers inspires me is that our journals may return to moderate dimensions" (*N&SSG*, 27 July 1856).

If stamp and advertisement duty repeal had provided the fiscal stimulus to daily production, the advent of the telegraph was the technological stimulus.[46] The UK's first regular UK telegraph services had been introduced in the late 1830s. A telegraph office was established in South Shields in the early 1850s (Hodgson, 1903) and the *Gazette* had a telegraphic line installed in its South Shields office, where the newspaper was printed, from 1853, to receive dispatches from the British Telegraphic Company, which had its own news gathering department. *The Times* and the other London mornings – *Morning Chronicle, Daily News, Morning Herald, Morning Post, Morning Advertiser* and *Daily Telegraph* – reached South Shields by post at 6.45 each evening (Slater, 1855: 67); the first

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[46] In its opening editorial when it launched in Newcastle on October 30, 1855, the *Northern Express* outlined the extent to which the telegraph was levelling the playing field between the London and provincial newspapers – and offsetting the advantage which the developing railway network had given the former.

> The advantage of railway communication which was so much in favour of the metropolitan press as to affect the interest of provincial newspapers, has been more than counterbalanced by the extended use of the Electric Telegraph. At the present time it makes little difference whether a newspaper be established in the south or the north so far as regards the transmission of news by the electric telegraph. The communication is instantaneous, it requires no railway train, rapid as its flight may be, to bring it, and the same moment that intelligence is published in London may find it communicated to the furtherest [sic] corner in England where there is private enterprise sufficient to serve the public purpose. The telegraph has indeed, broken down all the advantages which the metropolis monopolized in the receipt of early intelligence and the only difference which exists between the press in the metropolis and in the provinces consists in the ability and independence which may be exercised by one more than the other. (*Northern Express*, 30 October, 1855)

six of these were priced at 5d, the *Daily Telegraph's* initial cover price was 2d. The *Daily Telegraphic Edition*, free to subscribers to the weekly *Gazette*, and 1d to casual buyers, was not only cheaper than these titles; it provided breaking national and international news via telegraph up to 6pm in its first months and from 5pm thereafter. Newcastle newsagents, meanwhile, had decided to charge a halfpenny above the cover price for each copy of the now unstamped London newspapers. "Such a resolution as this, added to other circumstances, will tend very much to localise the circulation of newspapers", the *Gazette* declared (*N&SSG*, June 29, 1855).

Provincial papers at this time also faced competition from the four London evening newspapers: *The Express, Globe, Standard* and *Sun*. The invention of the telegraph might have allowed evening newspapers to be set up across broad swathes of the country in the 1850s but any launched in towns that the London post could reach on the evening of publication would have faced stiff competition from those well-established metropolitan titles. One of the reasons why the *Gazette* proprietors could set up a paper with evening delivery was that South Shields was, at 285 miles, far enough away from London. The London evening newspapers arrived in South Shields with the London mail at 8.45 the morning after publication (Slater, 1855: 67). But, as Hodgson relates, because there was only one post office in the town, "managed by two sisters" and only one letter-carrier, it was sometimes 2pm or 3pm before the morning mail reached its recipients in the centre of the town (1903: 405). As the Gazette management pointed out in the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* of October 1, in one of a series of excitedly promotional announcements:

> The news given in the Daily Telegraphic Edition consists not only of the important news of the London morning papers (received by telegraph) but also all that is known in London of Home and Foreign News up till five o'clock in the afternoon. Our Readers may easily convince themselves of this important fact by comparing the Telegraphic Edition with the London Evening Papers which reach Shields more than twelve hours after the Shields Telegraphic Edition is delivered. (*DTE*, October 1, 1855).

And once again they stressed, as they saw it, the unique nature of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition: "*So far as we know no other town in England possesses such an advantage" (*DTE*, October 1, 1855).

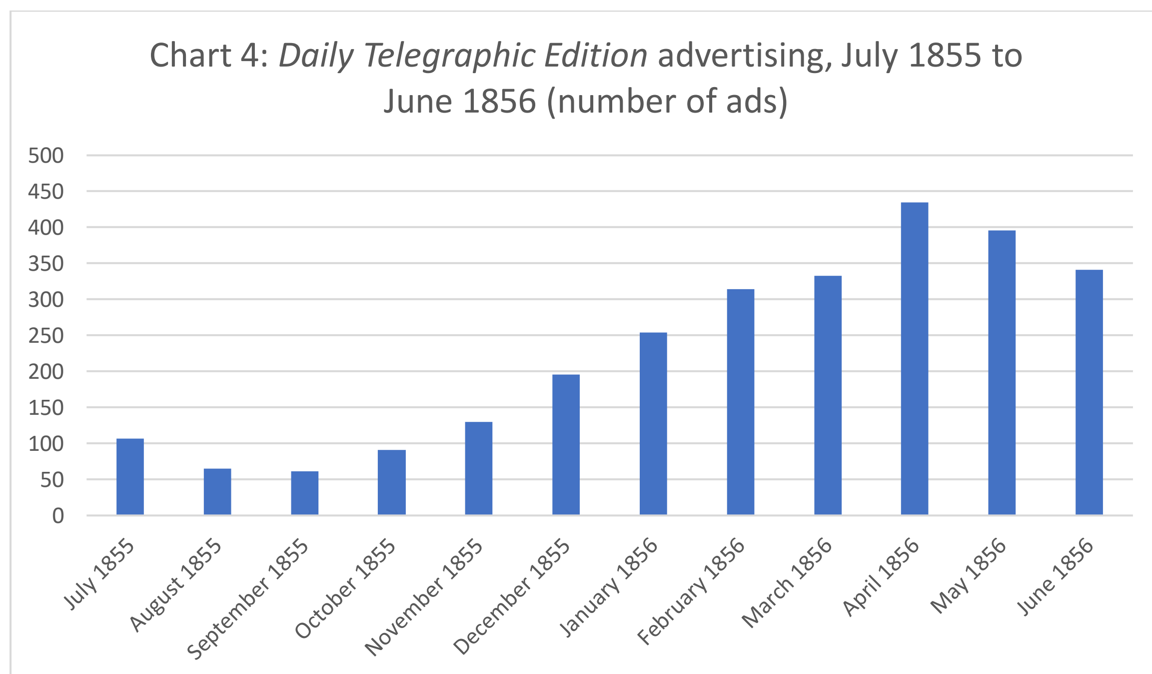
As with most newspaper – and technological – advances, however, there were teething problems: the first item in the first issue of the new daily was an apology for the paper's late delivery, "owing to some yet unexplained blundering amongst the Telegraphic Authorities themselves" (*DTE*, 2 July 1855).

The fact that the Gazette proprietors chose to bring out an evening rather than a morning paper might also point to their intention of reaching a working-class audience. They don't

state this in print but they would no doubt agree with the rationale expressed in the second issue of the *Events*, launched in Liverpool in May 1855:

> As the Working Man has only leisure for reading after the conclusion of the daily toil, and with a view to furnish him with the very latest news 'THE EVENTS' will be published every afternoon at four o'clock, so that its distribution through the town and neighbourhood may be accomplished by six, when operatives generally quit their workshops. (the *Events,* 4 June 1855)

An 1855 article in the *Birmingham Post*, quoted in Lee, maintained: "In the provinces the habit of daily advertising has not yet been acquired (1976: 86). However, the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was to prove that the daily advertising habit could be acquired. While it did not have a full first page of advertising when it launched on July 2, it did contain adverts; indeed, as we have seen, it was conceived as a daily advertising medium as well as a supplier of news. As already noted, with reduced cover prices, newspapers became reliant on advertising for revenue (Temple, 2017). The *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was a result of the repeal of the advertisement duty as much as the stamp duty. Where previously the *Gazette* had only one platform for advertising, here were six in one week. As readers and businesses, who had already increased the amount of advertising in the weekly *North & South Shields Gazette* since 1853, became accustomed to the new paper, the number of adverts increased – as Chart 4 shows.




Pre-1855 newspapers aimed their adverts at a moneyed middle class, targeting luxury goods – tea, coffee, medicines, books (Black, 2001: 68). The early editions of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* followed this pattern but there were also ads for apprentices, and an appeal in the July 2 issue for "two steady active men" to deliver the new daily in South

Shields was repeated for several days. Small personal ads of this sort became more frequent, suggesting that the publication was reaching, or at least being aimed at, a working class audience as well as its traditional middle-class readers, as its circulation and its number of ads increased.[47] By November 1855, it was repeatedly boasting of printing nearly 2,000 copies each night ,[48] "every Telegraph on the lowest estimate is seen by at least ten people, every advertisement inserted in it is read by at least 20,000 persons." (According to figures in the rival *Newcastle Courant*, on January 4, 1856, the weekly *Gazette* was selling 961 copies per week in 1855.) On May 24 1856, there was an ad for "a respectable middle-aged female to attend at a bar" but also one announcing a ropemaking business for sale. On June 21 one James McCartney, of Market Place, South Shields, advertised for "a Man to go with a Poney [sic] and Cart" (*DTE*, 21 June 1855).

As Milne (1971) acknowledges, daily publication allowed the *Telegraphic Edition* to provide essential information for the town's merchant and seafaring classes. The common seaman as well as the rich merchant or shipowner would be interested in reading news of the daily arrival and departure of ships in the Tyne; each day there was need for sea and weather information. In addition to its breaking local news stories, the new paper was crammed with local up-to-the-minute information harvested by its reporters.[49] It carried daily shipping lists and reports on the state of the weather and the sea at the mouth of the Tyne at the moment of going to press each evening. The telegraph meanwhile supplied it with daily weather reports from most of the major UK ports and, in a section that was clearly for the merchant class, there were market prices from across the country. The prices from local markets – in South Shields, North Shields, Newcastle – on the day of publication were also often included. In addition, the telegraph supplied horse racing odds and results.

The final spur to go for daily production was probably provided by the launch of the *Shields Advocate*. Milne argues that "in daily publication, the crucial asset was to occupy the field first" (1971: 215). The *Advocate* was fairly speedily vanquished. After several changes of direction and a change of name, to the *Shields Advertiser and Tyne Advocate*, it folded amid an acrimonious bankruptcy in May 1858. While he is somewhat dismissive of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition's* content, Milne concedes that in bringing it out, the *Gazette's* proprietors "… responded to repeal … in a most enterprising fashion" (1971: 54).

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[47] See the next chapter for further details of advertising aimed at the working class.
[48] The jubilee edition of the *Gazette* on February 24, 1899, recalled that, at the launch of the *Daily Telegraphic* Edition, subscribers in North Shields, South Shields, Blyth, Tynemouth and Jarrow were entitled to free delivery; by October 1855 the free delivery area was expanded to take in Chirton, Westoe and Harton; and that by the end of that year *Gazette* news agents were appointed in every town and village on Tyneside as well as in Sunderland and Blyth, "so that the whole district was provided with a daily paper at the small charge of a halfpenny". Note the use of the words "daily paper".
[49] See the appendix to this thesis for a full breakdown of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition's* content in its first year.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated that the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was so much more than a "telegraphic sheet". Perhaps a glance at a copy in isolation might give the impression of a publication limited in scope; ostensibly it is unprepossessing. But this was a vibrant newspaper, reflecting the life of a busy port, its content of very real value and interest, not just to the subscriber but to the casual buyer. It would be attractive to those wealthy enough to buy a ship, or a pub, or who needed to know the price of mutton at the London Metropolitan Cattle Market, but it would also be cheap enough for a worker to pick up on his way back from the colliery or the shipyard, wanting to read the latest in the saga of the local police chief who was up for embezzlement, or the verdict in the trial of the "Rugeley Poisoner", found guilty of killing his friend, brother, mother-in-law and four of his children, whose case was reported in the *"Daily Telegraph"* in the spring and early summer of 1856. Unlike the pricey, stuffy broadsheets that had so far monopolised the market with their acres of dull type and their few interesting stories buried beneath deathly parliamentary reports, here, in short paragraphs and lively writing, were the juicy details of the cases before North Shields Police Court or Newcastle Assizes alongside gory tales of industrial accidents, dockyard drownings and farmyard fires. These were also cautionary tales, to warn this new audience of the consequences of crime: the man who defrauded the bank and looked "petrified" when he was sentenced to 14 years' transportation (December 4, 1855), the steam-boatman who had assaulted a woman on the quayside at North Shields and been sent to Morpeth gaol for five months' hard labour (October 3, 1855) and the woman who was deemed an "unnatural parent" and committed to the House of Correction for one month for ill-treating her daughter (14 April, 1856). The next chapter in this thesis will look further at the way this audience was addressed.

## Chapter 10: The Response to Stamp Duty Repeal (2) – Addressing the Working Class

The *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was launched not as a stand-alone publication; it came as a package with its parent paper, the weekly *North & South Shields Gazette.* This chapter will look at the package as a whole before focusing on the latter title and the way it addressed the working class post-repeal.

"The abolition of the Duty on Newspapers will tend to diffuse useful information among the poorer classes of her majesty's subjects". So said the Lord Chancellor, in delivering the Queen's Speech on the dissolution of Parliament on August 14, 1855, as reported in the *Newcastle Courant* of Friday, August 17. In its promotional announcements, the *North & South Shields Gazette* referred to its new package of newspapers being aimed at "all classes" and "even the poorest person". As we have seen, in several respects the content of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* might be said to have been shaped to suit a wider readership. On September 7, 1855 an announcement in the *Telegraphic Edition* referred specifically to a new audience the daily publication was aiming to reach. Significantly, the *Telegraphic Edition* saw itself in terms of providing an educational service to that wider readership:

> We have great satisfaction in believing that our daily publication is doing considerable service in an educational point of view; that is training the mind of many to take an interest in public and national affairs, which otherwise they would not have felt. (*DTE,* 7 September 1855*)*

To some extent this notion of simply exposing the working class to a "faithful record of the facts" might be seen as a philanthropic action consistent with the traditional "liberal" theory of the press as a forum for free discussion (Lee, 1976). Hampton cites John Stuart Mill as one of those who considered this discussion educational in itself (2001). The *Gazette* announcement of September 7, 1855 might be viewed in that light; it talks of an inclusively "profitable and interesting conversation":

> … under the old system it was comparatively few of the population who saw a daily paper, and were enabled to maintain that continued acquaintance with passing events by which alone they can be rightly understood and appreciated…therefore we feel we are really serving the cause of public intelligence, when we create an increased number of watchful and attentive observers of public events. And furnish daily new materials of profitable and interesting conversation of the highest class,

> even to the humblest social circles or our neighbourhood. (*DTE*, 7 September 1855)

And yet, as we saw in the statements of repeal campaigners in Parliament, there was implicit in such statements a belief that the mere act of exposing the working class to the "facts" – as framed by the mainstream newspapers – would result in that class accepting the status quo and realising that any challenge to that status quo was based on a prior ignorance of the true facts. As the Gazette put it, "passing events" needed to be "rightly understood and appreciated". There is also the reference to "training". John Stuart Mill described the role the post-repeal newspapers could play in exposing the new working-class readership to the "facts" and thus educating it on the niceties of political economy but thereby encouraging it to be non-confrontational:

> The instruction obtained from newspapers and political tracts may not be the most solid kind of instruction, but it is an immense improvement upon none at all. What it does for a people, has been admirably exemplified during the cotton crisis, in the case of the Lancashire spinners and weavers; who have acted with the consistent good sense and forbearance so justly applauded, simply because, being *readers of newspapers,* they understood the causes of the calamity which had befallen them, and knew that it was in no way imputable either to their employers or to the Government. It is not certain that their conduct would have been as rational and exemplary, if the distress had preceded the salutary measure of fiscal emancipation which gave existence to the penny press. (Mill, quoted in Golby 1986:136)

However, the *Gazette* management did not simply launch a cheap daily sheet that would frame the facts of the world for a new audience; it launched it specifically as part of a package of newspapers: the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* plus the Thursday night "weekly" edition and in that weekly publication it had room for editorials and longer articles that took an overtly paternalistic tone. It conceived of the new daily and the old weekly – shifted from Friday morning to make for a consistent evening delivery – as one package, aimed at a working-class audience as well as its existing middle-class readership. As we have seen, a promotional announcement in the Thursday night edition of June 29, 1855 – the last before stamp duty repeal – stated:

> … all the advantages to be derived from a Daily Newspaper will be placed within reach of even the poorest person in Shields, the charge for the whole five daily Telegraphic Editions and the usual weekly Newspaper, delivered free to all Subscribers, being ONLY THREEPENCE-HALFPENNY PER WEEK. (*N&SSG* 29 June 1855)

In order to benefit most from this price reduction, one would have to be a subscriber, each component of the package – including the weekly edition, which had previously been priced at 4½d – working out at just over a halfpenny each. If each paper were to be bought separately, the cost of a week's worth of the *Gazette* would be – with individual copies of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* charged at 1d – a somewhat prohibitive 8½d. Such a discount is comparable with those on offer today to those who subscribe to the online version of the *Times* and are thereby entitled to buy the print edition of the newspaper at a reduced price. Nevertheless, the street price of 1d for the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* would still be, one would imagine, an attractive one for the casual buyer who had not previously been able to afford the 4½d weekly. In an editorial of six years previously, the weekly *Gazette* had given a glimpse of the newspaper-buying habits of the working class, suggesting that a working man might, on the day he received his wages, buy a newspaper if there was a particularly interesting "public event, or rumour of one"; otherwise such a man would be more likely to buy some of "cheap literary periodicals … he buys the penny this and the penny that, and the journal for three half-pence, and has three papers for 3½d instead of one for 4d, or 4½d, or 5d or 6d" (*N&SSG* 30 November 1849). It is interesting to note that the article put the cumulative, and non-prohibitive, cost of buying several cheaper papers at 3½d, the price of subscribing to the full 1855 package of *Gazette* newspapers.

On May 14, 1857 the weekly *Gazette* published a song by the Geordie entertainer Ned Corvan, who at the time was running Corvan's Music Hall in South Shields. It was entitled *The Telegraph* and is in praise of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition.* It speaks specifically of its appeal to "poor folk" and refers to the package deal the paper's proprietors were promoting. It is not known if Corvan had been hired specifically by the newspaper to write a piece of promotional puffery or whether he had been spontaneously inspired to compose the song, but at the very least its lyrics give an unequivocal picture of the *Gazette* proprietors' intentions: it refers specifically to poor folk as the target audience of the package deal, as well as to the notion of providing working class readers with "that continued acquaintance with passing events by which alone they can be rightly understood and appreciated." The chorus is:

> What a blessin for poor folk, we cannot be bet
> For knowledge o' things daily springin,
> Nobbit pay once a-week for the *South Shields Gazette,*
> And the *Telegraph* daily they'll bring in.

It lists the contents of the *Telegraph,* outlines its appeal to the working class and implies that it is successfully competing with the populist Sunday newspapers – even to the extent of claiming, because of the rival attraction of the *Telegraph,* the *News of the World* was "seldom bought". Its first verse begins with a reference to that prevailing notion of "expanding" the knowledge of the working class.

Ye may jaw 'boot yor telegraph touches and sing
Boot knowledge and how its [sic] expanded,
But summic its cliver to notice awl bring,
Far an' near round wor collerie its handed.
Every neet it comes *daily*, 'sides ye get it for nought;
The *News of the World* in wor *raws*[50] seldom bought,
*Gum* the Telegraph kittles thor capers.

A later verse gives a colourful description of the *Telegraph* being delivered in working class districts:

When the laddie comes wid thou'd laugh at the lark,
The Neighbours upon him keep starin;
Aye, an even wor dog, sic a rummin to bark,
For his presence an news seems preparing.
Its tail starts a waggin, then wiv capers and pranks,
You may guess 'it the laddie's respected;
Gox ivery one welcomes his Telegraph shanks
An through him the poor postman's neglected.

In terms of the newspaper's content, the song highlights the fact that the daily edition had a much wider range of articles than has previously been stated – and suggests that its appeal lay specifically in its breaking news, sporting updates and advertising as well as its role in collating telegraphic news from further afield.

It mentions the shops to buy sugar and tea,
An coffee's at aw kind o' prices;
Its [sic] a *North Country Guide*, and gives *advice free,*
Which attention commands and entices,
It brings ye the news *from* each forin clime,
A boot shipwrecks, great storms, and what's better,
It tells when a man's droon'd afore he hes [sic] time
To send his relations a letter.

… The wind and the weather it tells tiv a tee,
Gox the Telegraph's iver contrivin.
If yor wives gans a shoppin an gets on the spree,
Thou'll ken awl upon its arrivin.
Man, there's aw kind o' news int, not a corner to spare,
For to benefit aw kinds thor wishing;

[50] rows – the terraces of colliery houses

Gox, thor raisin a Company at saw much a share,
To gantoot o' thor dips at sea fishin.

It speaks 'o the bettin an aw sportin news,
Goshcab thor's nought misses its tellin; …

That the *North & South Shields Gazette* as well as the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was aimed at the working class can be gleaned from the working-class recruitment ads both publications ran. As the decade progressed, there can perhaps be discerned a swing towards working class ads in the *Telegraph*, but ads for servants increase in the weekly.

- In the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* in 1855 there were 39 adverts seeking apprentices, eight for errand boys and one for a "sober, good workman" (*DTE*, 22 August, 1855).
- In the *North & South Shields Gazette* in that year there were two ads for errand boys, one for an office boy at the *Gazette* office, 138 for apprentices, 22 for servants, including repeated repeals for "good plain cooks" and "maids of all works".
- In the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* of 1856 there were 91 recruitment ads for apprentices, 13 for errand boys, seven for servants, five from employers wanting a workman. [51]
- In the *North & South Shields Gazette* in 1856 there was only one ad for an errand boy, but 53 for apprentices and 20 for servants.
- In the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* of 1857, there were 115 ads for apprentices, 12 for errand boys, eight from employers wanting a workman; one ad specifically required a "two good horse-shoers" (*DTE,* 3 October, 1857).
- In the *North & South Shields Gazette* in 1857 there were 67 ads for apprentices, 17 for servants and one for a workman.
- In the *North & South Shields Gazette* in 1858 there were 27 ads for apprentices, 15 for servants, including once again "good plain cooks" and "maids of all work" and one from Tynemouth Corporation, seeking an "active, steady and intelligent workman" (N&SSG 9 September, 1858).[52]
- In the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* in 1859 there were 83 ads for apprentices, 15 for servants, eight for errand boys.
- In the *North & South Shields Gazette* that year there were six ads for apprentices, two for errand boys and 49 for servants, including 20 encouraging members of that profession to consider emigration to New Zealand.

The volume of this recruitment advertising can be seen in the following four charts.

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[51] The *Gazette* itself had immediate need of "a Good Compositor, capable of making up a Newspaper and Superintending the Jobbing Department." Testimonials were solicited that would attest for the applicant's "ability and sobriety". If proof were needed that such a person were required, it lay in the ad itself, which began with the words: "WANTED IMMEDIATEDY" (sic) (*DTE*, 29 March, 1856).

[52] There are no copies of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* for 1858 in the British Newspaper Archive.

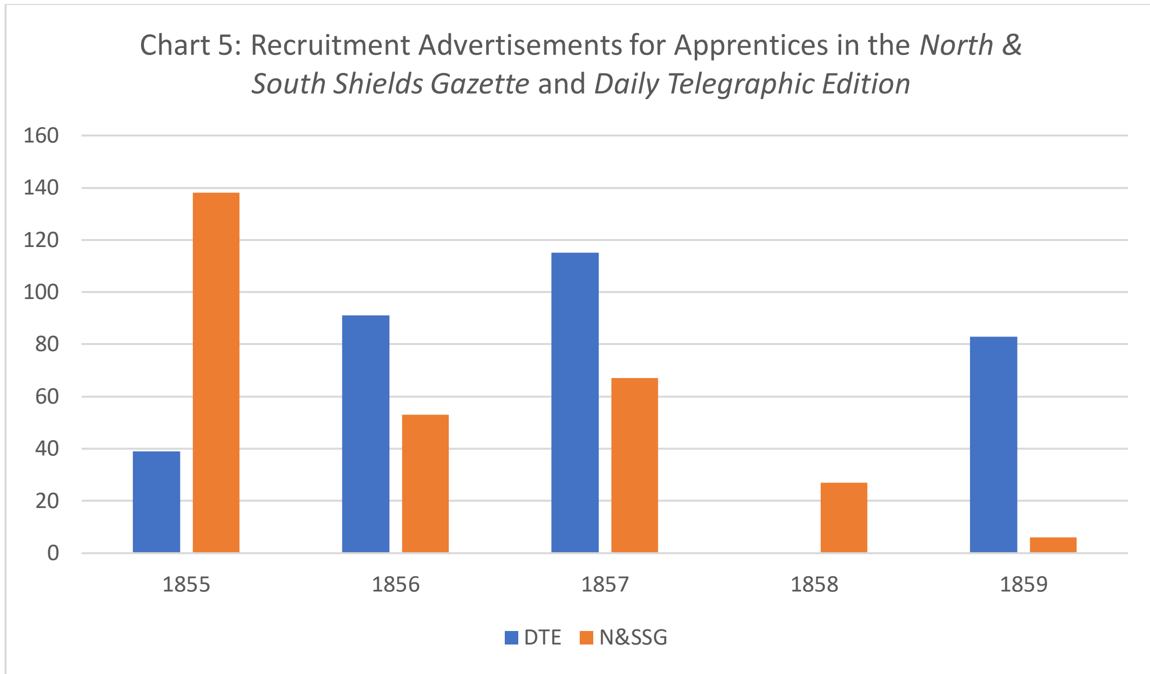


Chart 5: Recruitment Advertisements for Apprentices in the North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraphic Edition
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
1855
1856
1857
1858
1859
DTE
N&SSG

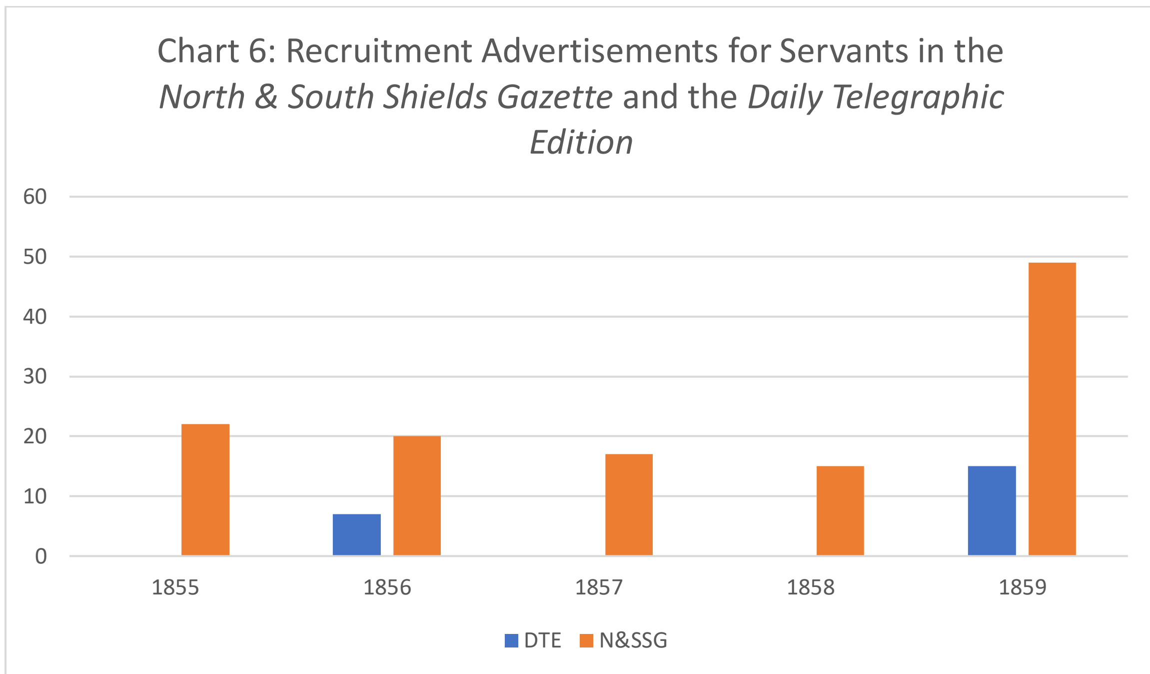
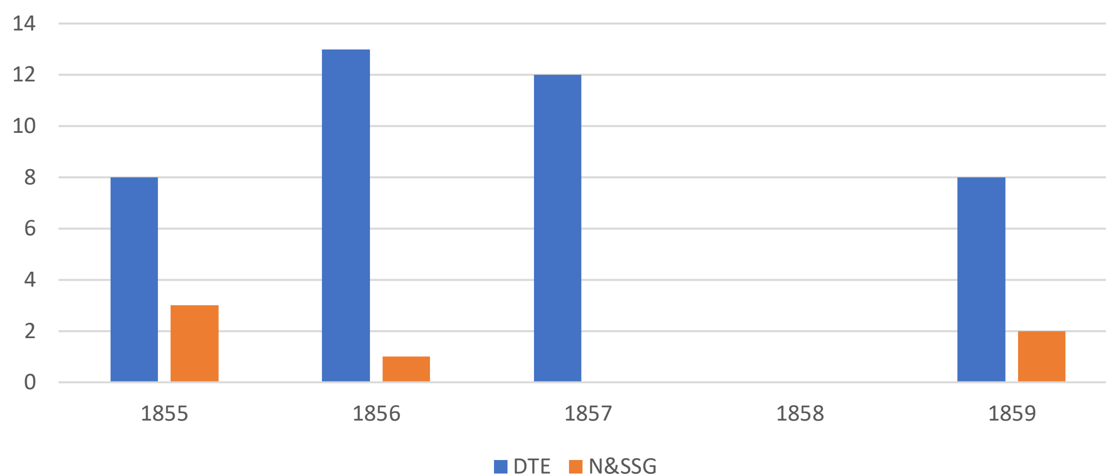
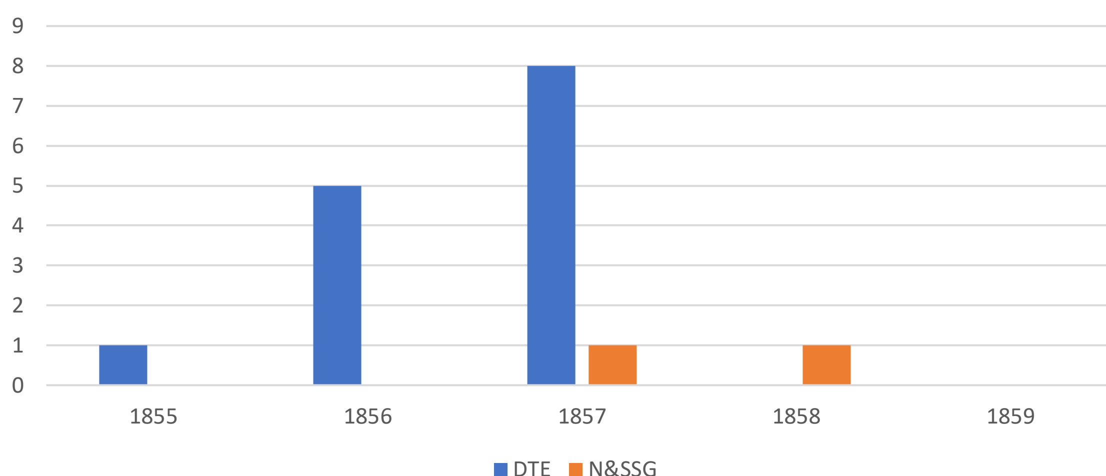


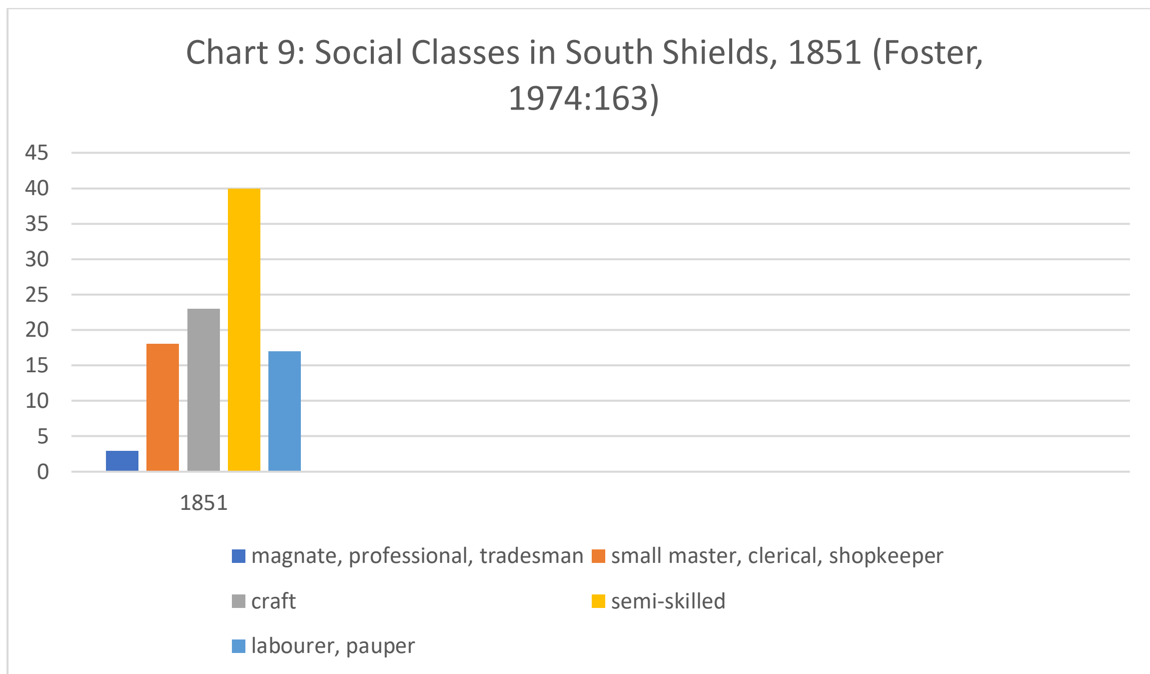
Chart 6: Recruitment Advertisements for Servants in the North & South Shields Gazette and the Daily Telegraphic Edition
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
1855
1856
1857
1858
1859
DTE
N&SSG




There are no figures for the socio-economic groups that comprised the Gazette readership. In his analysis of South Shields, based on the 1851 census, which recorded the population of South Shields at 28, 974 and that of North Shields at 8, 882, John Foster (1974: 76) estimates that the population of the former town comprised 3% magnate, professional, tradesman; 18% small master, clerical, shopkeeper; 23% craft; 40% semi-skilled; 17% labourer, pauper (see chart 9 below). (His maths are slightly off, since this comes to 101%). The last three categories constitute 80% of the South Shields population, or 22,634 people. Among the remaining 20% of the population or 5,659 people, were the proprietors of the *Gazette* and what might be seen as its traditional

readership among the middle and professional classes. Within that 20%, Foster calculates that only 414 in 1851 might be termed an elite: 68 from the professions, 250 employers and 96 tradesmen (1974: 163). Foster actually singles out the *Gazette*'s proprietor at the time, James Stevenson, as being "very rich" (1974: 164). When his potential new audience constituted as much as 80% of the town's inhabitants and a similar percentage of the population in North Shields and surrounding villages, Stevenson and his son JC had the possibility of becoming substantially richer still.




And yet, there is no sense – notwithstanding the innovations in layout and content in the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* – of the Stevensons or their editors making the content of the Thursday night "weekly" *Gazette* appealing to that potential new audience, despite them stating that this was a publication they were aiming to place "within the reach of even the poorest person." That class is certainly not pandered to in the way that a demographic group might be today if a newspaper were attempting to attract it. In subject matter and language the Thursday night edition of the Gazette maintained its *de haut en bas* form of address. The appealing element of the newspaper package was the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*: if working-class readers bought the lively daily as part of a weekly subscription they would also be exposed to the more didactic content of the weekly – just as Milner Gibson had envisaged in the Commons in 1853.[53]

On April 13, 1855, two months before the *Gazette* proprietors launched the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* and appealed to readers and advertisers "of all classes" to subscribe to the package of newspapers, it reported a speech by sometime *Gazette* leader writer Solomon Sutherland, in his capacity as chairman of South Shields Working Men's Institute

[53] See page 44

and Mutual Improvement Society. The occasion was a soiree and ball in aid of a fund to build a new hall for the organisation. He began with a plug for the successful work his organisation and others like it were carrying out. He acknowledged that …"the advance which the working classes have made in knowledge, in intelligence, in temperance, in every thing [sic] which gives dignity and elevation to the character" was "prodigious" (N&SSG 13 April 1855). But he quickly declared that no one could doubt the "necessity" of that work or fail to acknowledge that there was still a lot of work to be done:

> … yet still the mass of ignorance, and its concomitant evils, vice and depravity … is such as cannot but excite the most painful feelings in the reflecting mind … As the census returns lately shewed to us, one fourth of those who enter the marriage state are unable even to write their names ... as our prison reports are constantly exhibiting to us, hundreds are committed to our jails to whom the idea of a God or the dread realities of a future state are things utterly unknown. And we have but to go along the lanes and alleys of our town, to see that there are hundreds in our midst who are living cared for by none, taught in no social duty, instructed in no religious faith, and who know no moral aim or motive, or scarce any distinction between vice and virtue. Agencies for initiating our population in demoralisation and vice, we have numerous and active enough; organisations for checking and controlling them how few there are. On every side, more and more singing saloons, casinos, and such like, and schools for instruction in coarseness and indecency are springing up around, and spreading their allurements in every direction to entrap our young, while other temptations to evil are becoming more and more rife and abundant. (N&SSG 13 April 1855)

Could these benighted people be the *Gazette*'s new audience? The contrast with the cheery customers of the newspaper depicted by Corvan in his song is stark. Moreover, the "we" who "go along the lanes and alleys of our town" are clearly someone other than those members of the working class who "know no moral aim or motive, or scarce any distinction between vice and virtue". The analysis is entirely from the standpoint of the middle class. As John Richardson puts it, presupposition is at work here: "a taken-for-granted, implicit claim embedded within the explicit meaning of a text or utterance" (2007: 63). Who says the poor need "checking and controlling"; what is intrinsically "coarse" and "indecent" about a "singing saloon"? This tone of writing was maintained in the weekly *North & South Shields Gazette* – in editorials and in reports of speeches – once it had become part of the new package. There is very little in the sense of a direct appeal to a working-class audience. There are, however, articles that show the working class – or the poor in general – the error of their ways, or which present images of the ideal working-class man to whose state such men might aspire; what Patrick Joyce calls a "projection of a desired working class" (2003: 270). There are also articles in the Thursday night edition in which the traditional middle-class readership is advised on its

responsibility to the working class, urging it to take action that would allow working-class men and women (mostly men) to lead a *better* life but which would in turn render that working class less threatening. This would be consistent with Carey's "ritual view of communication",[54] which, as explained by Conboy (2010:8) states that newspapers "are far more concerned with the re-creation and reconfirmation of social groups than they are with the transmission of information *per se*."

Five months after the launch of the package of newspapers aimed at the poorest person as well as the wealthiest, an article in the weekly *Gazette* of December 13, 1855, on the need to raise money to provide a library, lecture room and classrooms for North Shields Mechanics' Institute, likened the potential beneficiaries of this fund-raising to a primitive tribe:

> We have known such things [funds], got up in a very rapid way, realise considerable sums for the purpose of reclaiming sections of the wild Irish, and enlightening savages of whose very names, until the fair enthusiasts began the agitation in their favour, the world had scarcely heard; - can not [sic] an effort of the kind be made for the sake of our own mechanics and artizans? (*N&SSG*, 13 December 1855)

That there was poverty in North and South Shields at this time – and that not every poor person could afford the attractive new package of newspapers, or to patronise singing saloons and casinos – is evident from Foster's research. There was clearly a level of poverty below that of the working poor – and the working poor could easily, and would frequently, join the ranks of the non-working poor. Foster found that "poverty was not so much the special experiences of a particular group within the labour force as a regular feature of the life of almost all working families at certain stages in their development, especially in old age or before young children could start earning." (1974: 96) [55] He calculated that in 1849 23 per cent of Shields families' income was below subsistence and 15 per cent of families did not have a wage-earner. Nevertheless, much of the *Gazette's* most condemnatory prose was directed at the working poor.

Another article in the *Gazette* of December 20, 1855 proposed that, as had been employed in foreign lands, a band of missionaries might be mustered; it is significant that listed among the weapons they might wield in their battle to help enlighten the savages were "suitable periodicals":

> A band of intelligent, active, good men might arrange for visiting the working population at their own homes, for preaching to them in the

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[54] Carey, J. (1989), *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society.* Boston, M.A: Hyman Publishers
[55] Here he was referring to Oldham and Northampton, as well as South Shields. These were the places he studied for his 1974 book *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns*

> great thoroughfares or places of public resort, for the delivery of lectures, or the circulation of suitable periodicals or tracts, for attending them to their institutes or reading rooms, and exercising a good influence there … Their prejudice and indifference … would by the blessing of God, melt away under the warming influence of so genial an atmosphere. (N&SSG, 20 December 1855)

A blatantly cynical approach to this missionary work was expressed in a report, published in the *Gazette* on December 9, 1858, on an essay-writing competition for "Members of the Working Classes". It was sponsored by Thomas Rochester Esq of Whalton, Northumberland, on the subject of *Man's Duty to God*. Fifty-four working men and women of Northumberland entered and there were five prize winners. The *Gazette* stated:

> Such tangible expressions of sympathy with the religious condition of the labouring classes must be ranked among the most effectual means to not only recommend *our* common faith to *their* esteem [my italics], but likewise in some degree destroy those baneful suspicions often found rankling among the poor against their superiors in station and opulence; hence political as well as purely Christian considerations stamp this generous enterprise with an aspect of even national utility. (*N&SSG,* 9 December 1858)

Once again, this was a direct address to a class that was *not* the working one; a working-class reader might see this and be reminded of his or her duty to God and to their "superiors" but he or she could equally be angered by its patronising tone and reconsider any intention they had of becoming a subscriber to any form of the *North & South Shields Gazette and Northumberland and Durham Advertiser*. The pages of the *Gazette* afford us occasional glimpses of a less than compliant working class. A letter in the weekly *Gazette*, on November 4, 1858, appealing to the lower class to respect the Sabbath, refers to "working men who are so ready to sneer at religious philanthropists, by crying 'saint' and 'Puritan'." The letter below it in the column addressed working men directly, so it must have been with an expectation that they would see the paper: "Working men, let me ask you again to do all you can to preserve from spoliation the day of rest, for it is good for bodies and minds; it is good for this world and the next" (*N&SSG*, 4 November, 1858).

On a national scale though the working class of the 1850s is usually characterised as being more quiescent; this was a period of relative economic prosperity and political calm following the failure of successive attempts to change the social order through direct action. Foster gives examples of working-class leaders moving into alliance with the middle class. "It was this that really confused and dispirited the movement; and did so precisely because it resulted from a new plausibility in arguments for the existing order, not from outright repression" (1974:206). The *Gazette* certainly provided many arguments in favour of the existing order. Foster points out that in South Shields there

had already grown up a tradition of political collaboration between the classes. Politicians of the ship-owning class had encouraged their employees to recognise a community of interest in attacking such national issues as the repeal of the Navigation Acts and the establishment of a north-south rail link to London which bypassed South Shields and threatened its trade in transporting coal to London (1974: 121).

An editorial on Reformatory Schools, in the *Gazette* of January 3, 1856 stated that the relationship between "society" and the working man was that of a parent and a child. It also made plain the division it saw between itself and those members of the working class. Where the article is not likening working men to children, it uses "working men" and "criminals" as virtual synonyms. Working men are throughout referred to as "they" or "them"; the working man as "he" or "him". "We" is used in the context of the newspaper's "voice", but also to encompass the writer and a middle-class readership. Its fourth paragraph refers to "working men" in its first sentence then "criminals" in the second but the subject of the article has not changed. By the end of that second sentence it is conflating working men, criminals and children:

> We do not think society has done its duty to the working men of this country in very many respects. The coddling and petting of criminals – of which we have seen something in England during the last ten or fifteen years – is only the foolish kindness of a weak parent trying to make up for previous hardness and severity. (*N&SSG*, 3 January, 1858)

The *Gazette* recognised that crime was often the result of poverty and hardship. That editorial of January 3, 1856 acknowledged:

> We cram men too often into noisome streets, leaving them, after they have done their day's work, without the means of innocent amusement and employment, and then when the natural result, in the case of the idle and the ill-disposed fellows, we cram them into gaols. (*N&SSG*, 3 January, 1858)

A better plan would be, it said, to improve public health and standards of education while providing "innocent outdoor recreations." If the young turned to crime they should be sent to reformatory schools. Such prevention would end up being cheaper to the nation.

The paper continued in its parental voice:

> Yet until we consider it our duty to provide for all those classes who cannot provide for themselves … homes and lodging houses wherein they are not tempted to vice and crime, we shall be leaving to the police and the gaol the 'cure' of moral maladies which wiser and more kindly prevision [sic] would 'prevent.' (*N&SSG*, 3 January, 1858)

The leader writer proceeded to clearly differentiate himself and middle-class readers from those members of the working class who might turn to crime:

> The 'let alone' system will not do any longer – the conscience of the Nation as well as the criminal returns are against 'letting alone', for we find the more we let alone the national criminals *the less they will let us alone* [my italics] – nay, the more powerful and prolific they grow, and the most severely they punish us. (N&SSG, 3 January 1856)

Was the inclusion of the word "national" an attempt to tone down what might be perceived as an attack on a section of the paper's readership? The article pointed out that many workmen were coming to build the Tynemouth pier, and although the police force in the village was to be "very considerably increased", those workmen nevertheless needed to be engaged in some way in their leisure time, possibly with allotment gardens, to keep them out of mischief. The paper also identified potential problems of a similar nature with the area's "navigators by sea". Here we have the paper "othering"[56] a substantial number of its potential readers; Foster calculates, from the 1851 census, there were 2,000 such seafarers in South Shields alone (1974:76).

It is difficult to gauge the impact of the new package of daily newspapers on the working class, but on July 3, 1856, a year almost to the day after the launch of the *Telegraphic Edition*, a reader signing himself "A Working Man" wrote to the letters page of the weekly. He said he had become a "constant reader" since the first issue of the daily paper. Here then we appear to have evidence of at least one member of the class that the July 1855 relaunch was intended to attract having become a reader as a result of that relaunch. He too was keen to stress the societal benefits of allotment gardens. He urged landowners to keep working men out of mischief by making allotments available to them: "…it is my matured conviction that if the fertile fields which surround our towns were torn up and converted into garden allotments, with working men as their occupants, we would have less wife beating that unhappily now exists." He went on to offer a brief but glowing testimonial to the *Telegraphic Edition* (and possibly to the whole package of newspapers) and to endorse its proprietors' stated good intentions:

> PS I have been a constant reader of your paper since the issue of your daily sheet, and I beg to tend my humble testimony to its great usefulness. I am what I profess to be, a working man. I am actuated by

[56] John A Powell, director of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, gave a definition of othering in an article he wrote for the *Guardian* on November 8, 2017. It perfectly describes what is going on here with the writers at the *Gazette*: "Othering is not about liking or disliking someone. It is based on the conscious or unconscious assumption that a certain identified group poses a threat to the favoured group. It is largely driven by politicians and the media, as opposed to personal contact. Overwhelmingly, people don't 'know' those that they are othering."

> no ambitious motive, but am anxious for the elevation of my class, and would want no opportunity wherein I could show them that there are those above them who are desirous of their welfare. (N&SSG, 3 July 1855)

It is of course also difficult to know whether such sentiments were representative of the general feeling among the area's working class or even of working-class readers of the newspaper. Certainly, newspapers have always had the power to publish favourable letters and suppress unfavourable ones. John Richardson, in his analysis of readers' letters, states: "… editorial staff … select and print letters; … this gives an indication of the newspaper's news values, but also about how the paper wants to represent the opinions of their readers" (2007: 151). Andrew Hobbs, in his study of readers' letters in Victorian provincial newspapers, gives examples of editors writing letters to further pet causes and concedes that such a practice was not unknown a century later (Hobbs, 2019). One could imagine the editors of the Gazette being delighted to publish one in which their own sentiments were so clearly echoed. If we were to be entirely cynical and accuse the Gazette of fabricating the letter, it would show that the paper did at least see such a man as an example of the new reader it was trying to attract.

It is possible that we are seeing here a distinction between sections of the working class. Best writes:

> Often stronger than any social division, so far as I can see, was that 'vertical' one between the Respectable of any 'horizontal' class and the Non-Respectable of the same … Such feelings of "horizontal' class hostility as there were seem not to have prevented plenty of men 'rising in the social scale' and slipping at once into the attitudes of the class attained; and class attitudes which could be slipped on and off like that don't indicate the deep-dyed attitudes predicated of class by the Marxist analyst (1979: 15-16).

Since 1844, James Stevenson, and later his son JC, had provided a school for his workmen's children – first in temporary buildings then, from 1849, in purpose-built premises; it also accepted children whose fathers he did not employ. By 1850 it had 600 children – educated at 2d per week for employees, 5d per work for others (2009: 46). Despite them being staunch Presbyterians – as we have seen, James had funded the building of the town's English Presbyterian church in 1848 – the Stevensons were not proponents of education being in the hands of the churches. A *Gazette* editorial of January 10, 1856, put the case for "an ample system of national education". "We cannot but hope the time is at hand," it said, "when all parties will agree to forget their differences, and when the poor children of Great Britain may be permitted to learn to read, write and cast a sum in figures, without much references to the Athanasian creed or the doctrine of purgatory." It pointed out that such a style of education had been deemed perfectly

acceptable for children of the "comfortable classes". Here at least, the readership – if they are members of that "comfortable class" – are not addressed as "us" or "we". Again, however, the paper saw such a secular national system not primarily or solely as a means of improving the lives of the working classes but as "... in some respects, the largest plan for the prevention and repression of crimes engendered by, or mainly flourishing, in the rank soil of ignorance" (*N&SSG* 10 January 1856).

The article focused on an association recently established to educate the mining communities of Northumberland and Durham – and, echoing John Stuart Mill, Henry Morton, agent for the Earl of Durham, quoted in the article, used the same rationale (and wording) but offered the additional benefits in that the educated miner would be less likely to go on strike and less likely to suffer fatal accidents:

> ... one of the greatest advantages of diffusing education amongst the miners and manufacturing trades would be, that they would acquire a taste for reading, and amongst other things acquire a knowledge of the principles which governed the rate of wages, and ascertain that strikes only rendered their condition worse, and took from their masters so much of the capital which would otherwise be expended in labour. (*N&SSG* 10 January 1856)

Here we are back to the working class being referred to as "they". Working-class readers would undoubtedly see this article and the *Gazette* leader writers would have intended for them to see it. There is no sense that that newspaper was tempering, or adapting in any way, its language to suit a new audience; but that is not to say that audience did not exist. The writer quoted the dying words of Thomas Talfourd a politician and judge, who had expired on the bench at Staffordshire Hall the previous year: "Oh yes! ' sympathy between the rich and the poor,' – the glorious sentiment which Talfourd died in uttering, this is the grand element of success in all educational scheme, - in every scheme of true social advancement." Once again, the ideal arrangement for Stevenson and his writers appeared to be one in which the poor might have their lives "improved", even to the extent of rising up the social order themselves, but not to the extent that they felt empowered to upset that social order.

The *Gazette* of January 17, 1856 gave its backing to a further scheme to keep working-class men usefully occupied in their leisure time: a series of "popular lectures" for the long winter evenings, which they recommended for "working men in particular".

> And if popular lectures are likely to be useful (of which there is no reason to doubt) let them by all means be given, that the population, but especially the working classes, may be interested and benefitted. We would, therefore, most cordially commend this series of popular lectures to the attention and support of our readers, of the public at large, and of

> working men in particular, hoping that the patronage which the lectures receive during the course of their delivery will be sufficient to lead to a similar effort on the evenings of future winters. (*N&SSG*, 17 January, 1856).

This sentence would suggest that working men are a subset not just of *the public at large* but of *readers.*

A couple of weeks later there came a report on the rather halting progress of North Shields Mechanics' Institute, which, as we have seen, had been set up with similar intentions of keeping the working man occupied with safe self-betterment. It pointed out grumpily that the one section of the community that had done little to support the institute was that for which it had been established.

> There is one portion from whom the Committee have received no assistance, for whose interest in the matter they have been most especially anxious, and to benefit whom has been of their main objects. Doubtless it is difficult for working men, in emphatically hard times, to spare anything from their hard earned wages, yet if the sum was ever so small, it would be a matter of great encouragement to the Committee, for the People's Pence have a higher value than Princes' Pounds. (*N&SSG* 31 January 1856)

To what extent in "emphatically hard times" could working men spare "anything from their hard-earned wages" to spend on a newspaper? At least at a mechanics' institute they could read the communal newspapers. The report also pointed out, in typical fashion, the benefits to employers of supporting the institute. "Let the wealthy employers and merchants of the Tyne see their workmen taking a general interest in this matter, and no fear of our wanting funds. Yet a little longer, and they shall see their workmen enlightened and elevated by the operation of these institutions" N&SSG 31 January 1856). The article ended in stirring fashion by drawing a link between efforts to educate the working class and efforts to defeat the Russians in the Crimean War. Indeed, the writer stated that efforts on the domestic front were the more important, referring to them as "that nobler struggle, whose results are to be the overthrow of ignorance and crime." Note the reference to crime, not just ignorance.

Before and after the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, newspapers were available to read at newsrooms. Newspapers could also be read in pubs, or hired from them (Lee, 1976) A newsroom had existed in South Shields from 1788 at Lawe House, on the hill overlooking the mouth of the Tyne (Hodgson, 1903). There were newsrooms at the mechanics' institutes and working men's clubs – in South and North Shields and in Tynemouth. The Stevensons themselves had founded one at their somewhat incongruously grand-sounding Jarrow Chemical Works News and Literary Institute. There were also

independent newsrooms – the Exchange and the Holborn in South Shields, the Tyne Newsroom at Dockwray Square, North Shields. The working class did not have to subscribe to the *North & South Shields Gazette* package deal, or buy it or the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* on the street or from a shop to read either. The Globe Inn New Spirit Vaults in Clive Street, North Shields, advertised in July 1856 that as well as stocking the "best of Wines, Spirits, Ales and Stout", it had a newsroom that was "lightsome, comfortable, neatly, though not extravagantly furnished", and among the national and local newspapers on offer in that commodious establishment were the *North & South Shields Gazette* and the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* (N&SSG 31 July 1856). Six years later the paper was still available at Blyth Mechanics' Institute (*Morpeth Herald,* 15 February 1862).[57] However, things did start to change in this respect with the repeal of the stamp duty: "with the cheapening of newspapers, the habits of collective purchase, collective reading and hiring out began to fade … such practices began to die out with the appearance of the cheap newspaper which could be bought outright for 1d" (Lee, 1976:64). Hobbs (2009) has shown that while the number of news rooms, reading rooms and libraries increased in the 1850s and 60s in another northern town, Preston, and the number of working-class reading spaces rose even when the overall number began to fall thereafter, private reading was at least more of a viable alternative for poorer readers, in part as a result of falling newspaper prices following the repeal of the taxes on knowledge.

In the circulation area of the *North & South Shields Gazette* and its *Daily Telegraphic Edition* meanwhile, mechanics' institutes were, as we have seen, struggling to attract mechanics. On January 20, 1859, the *Gazette* reported: "While, however, there has been a gradual increase of Mechanics' Institutions, it is found on close enquiry that the mechanics or working men do not support them; that of upwards of 100,000 members in the 1,200 institutions, perhaps not one-sixth are working men, but chiefly of the trading and middle classes." There followed a stirring passage in which it was recognised that at least the institutes, with their libraries as well as their newsrooms, were one of the ways that a taste for reading was spreading to those members of the working class who saw fit to become members (so there might be a knock-on effect for newspaper subscription). Another stimulant to reading was, it stated, the repeal of the newspaper stamp duty, and thereby "every aspect of our intellectual, moral and social condition has been improved" (*N&SSG*, 20 January 1859). The article contrasted the late-1850s with the situation a half-century earlier. "Half a century ago, the importance of education to the working classes was not perceived either by themselves or the wealthy and educated portion of the community. There were few social and intellectual gatherings of the rich and poor, master and employed then." Once again, the article stressed that knowledge had helped the working man understand that the world had to be the way it was – that certain aspects of existence simply had to be "endured".

[57] A sale of newspapers at the institute listed the *Shields Gazette and Telegraph*, which might have been a reference to the weekly and the daily, or the daily alone, which was by then titled the *North & South Shields Gazette & Daily Telegraph.*

> Knowledge, however, has extended, and her light and facts have gradually exposed and expelled the delusions of ignorance, and year after year it has been shown that to educate man made him a better workman, and made the workman a better citizen; made him better understand what could be remedied and what must be endured, while it opened up the avenues of progress for him to seize on all intelligent and virtuous means to aid him in society. (*N&SSG*, 20 January 1859)

It was the "moral" as well as the "mental" improvement that mattered. Happiness could spring from an increase in knowledge, but only if that knowledge were put to good use for the benefit of society:

> By the diffusion of knowledge and experiences those that lack may receive, and by an intercommunication of ideas each mind is improved, and its powers to do good increased. The happiness of man exists from his knowledge, and its exercise in virtuous pursuits. Through the power of his mind, he provides for his wants, and enjoys under the divine law of his being, the benefits of life. It is not, however, enough that men should learn or know the duties of life – they must do them, and bring their knowledge to practice that they may realise the benefits. (*N&SSG,* 20 January 1859*)*

On February 19, 1856, JC Stevenson was a speaker at a public meeting in the Central Hall, South Shields, at which the mayor and various other bigwigs spoke. It was held "for the purpose of agreeing to petition parliament against the bill for opening of the Crystal Palace (which in 1854 had been rebuilt on Penge Common in London), and other public institutions on the Sabbath Day." Its first resolution was "that the meeting regards the Sabbath as of Divine authority and of perpetual obligation, and its observance eminently conducive to the spiritual and temporal welfare of man" (*N&SSG* 21 February, 1856). However, the meeting quickly focused exclusively on the spiritual and temporal welfare of the working man.

As we have seen, Sunday observance was something of a personal crusade for JC Stevenson. At the public meeting in February 1856, he told the packed hall that the idea of letting working people take a relaxing and instructional excursion on a Sunday was "contrary to the best interests of man as an immortal being" (*N&SSG* 21 February, 1856). He took issue with those who said it would be a benefit to the working classes to allow them to visit the great display of British manufacturing on their only full working day off work, because the Sabbath should be respected by all as a time for attending church and reading the Bible. He agreed that the working man needed time for recreation but he and other enlightened employers already provided for that by allowing their workforce Saturday afternoon off, he said. This experiment in leisure had been in force for more than two years and had produced "the most gratifying results". Stevenson was among

several to speak on behalf of preserving the sanctity of the Sabbath. A Rev Mr Chew opined:

> Suppose they took the Sabbath from the working classes, could they be equally intelligent as they were at present. He affirmed they would not. Could they be equally social? Could they be equally useful on material and commercial grounds? He maintained they could not. Could they be equally religious? No they could not. Therefore they would be inflicting an injury upon the working man if they took the Sabbath from him. (Hear, Hear). (*N&SSG* 21 February, 1856)

The only voice in opposition was that of Mr Robinson, described only as "a working man". He said the opening of such institutions as the Crystal Palace, the British Museum and the National Gallery would "greatly assist in the moral and mental improvements of the people." Moreover, the opening of such places would be a "means of drawing the poorer classes from the tap room and the gin palace". He argued that the Sabbath was made for man and not vice versa. He had "a right to enjoy it in a rational and sensible manner – in a manner which was conducive to his interest, comfort and happiness in the present world". This produced cheers from the audience. He said some of the public works in the town had men employed on Sunday (uproar from the audience.) "He thought workingmen "could not spend a Sunday better than in admiring the works of nature, and in paying a visit to the Crystal Palace". This produced "Uproar, and cries of "No, no", reported the *Gazette*. Robinson ploughed on. "He would say yes, yes. With all deference to the opinion of others, he claimed for himself the right to spend the Sabbath Day according to the dictates of his own conscience. If they had a mind to go to a place of worship, by all means go; and if he had a mind to go and wander about the fields and along the sea shore he had a perfect right to do so." There was further uproar from the audience and then he sat down. Robinson's speech stirred emotions but did not sway the mood of the meeting; there was a unanimous vote to petition Parliament against the Sabbath opening of public buildings.

It was fine for those betters to visit the Crystal Palace because they might well have time free to do so on weekdays – and it would be fine for the working class to visit the Crystal Palace on Saturday afternoon if they lived near enough to London and had been granted a half-day's holiday. Their betters obeyed the Sabbath too, but the implication was that the working classes needed to be reminded of their obeisance, because they would be most likely to stray towards less edifying Sabbath pursuits. There was also the implication that they in particular needed to obey the Sabbath because they in particular were in need of religious instruction.

On Saturday June 7, 1856, the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was expanded to four pages to include a report that spread over two pages and one column; it concerned a meeting that had been held the previous Wednesday evening and had therefore been too late to be

included in the Thursday "weekly" edition. The tone of address in this article is very similar to that of the Crystal Palace debate. In fact, a Mr Robinson, this time described as a shoemaker, is once again the representative of the working class, on this occasion agreeing with the employers, churchmen and councillors with whom he shared the platform for a debate on working men being given a half-day holiday each week. The tone is identical to that of similar reports in the weekly *Gazette*; there is no sense of the writers tempering their language to suit a publication with a larger proportion of working-class readers; they certainly did not omit passages of the speeches which were, to modern ears, extraordinarily patronising or in some cases admonitory – warning the working class to work with the employers on securing half-holidays rather than force the issues through trade union agitation. The speakers from the platform were also addressing a largely working-class audience – in the Central Hall, Chapter Row in South Shields – and the only sense that they are adjusting their language to suit that audience is in an occasional dose of flattery which, judging from the applause which reportedly followed, suggested that the working class were not averse to being lectured to about their shortcomings.

"It was perhaps true that the working classes of this country were not so intelligent, refined and cultured as they might be, and ultimately would be," said the Rev Mr Chew.

> It was, however, equally true that they were progressing; it was equally true that their tastes were somewhat refined; it was equally true that they were elevating themselves… and he appealed to their mechanics' institutions, their reading rooms, their popular lectures, and to a thousand other things to prove that there was at this day a positive and advancing intelligence amongst the working classes. (Applause) (*DTE*, 7 June, 1856).

Meanwhile, the series of popular lectures continued with a talk entitled: "The Representative Man – A Model for Working Men", helpfully offered by Rev Mr Phillips, in which he urged – nay, warned – those classes not to shake the foundations of the society. The report of the talk, in the weekly *Gazette* of March 6, 1856, was clearly intended to be read by members of the working class. As with the addresses from the platform at the half-holiday debate, in part it is patronisingly complimentary; in part it is threatening. It clearly offers advice on how the ideal working man ought to comport himself.

Phillips began by describing, along lines that were well established at this time, the hierarchical structure of society. Cannadine (1998) lists examples of churchmen, politicians, writers and the illustrator George Cruikshank depicting society as a beehive, or a social pyramid, or a God-given, mutually dependent system of subordination.

> The social system in this country has been compared to a Pyramid. The working classes being the largest portion of the population formed the base or its first layer, tradesmen and merchants the second, gentlemen and professional men the third, the nobility the

> fourth, each class being smaller as you ascend, and on the top of this noble structure stood the most virtuous Queen that ever sat on the British throne, and long might she live to reign over a free and happy people … Now the preservation of the whole of this beautiful edifice depended upon the stability of the layer at the bottom, for if that should give way, down would come our proud and lofty pyramid, and terrible would be the consequence; no class would escape unscathed, but undoubtedly the lowest would be bruised and crushed the most, for the history of all violent revolutions showed that the greatest calamity always falls upon the people. It was therefore, in their interest to acquire the knowledge and virtue so necessary to the good of all, and to themselves in particular. (*N&SSG*, 6 March 1856)

If we were to look for society's representative man, declared the good clergyman, we ought to look for him not among the upper reaches of that pyramid, but "among that great and important mass down at the bottom." He proceeded to describe this ideal fellow: he would be "virtuous", "religious", he would do all he could to educate and enlighten himself and he would visit his local library. "Instead of being rash and violent, he was calm and patient. He was not carried way with every impulse and driven about by every passion, like a ship without a rudder on the broad and stormy sea." He was not "pert, saucy, or insolent". He looked after his earnings. "He was not a complaining, grumbling, miserable being, dissatisfied with everybody and everything, fancying that all the world was bent upon injuring and oppressing him, but was a cheerful and happy man."

Rev Phillips then sketched out scenes from this ideal man's life.

> He was not to be found in a public house. There were several persons standing in a group at the corner of the streets with their hands in their pockets; they would not find him there. They might see him in his master's shop, not keeping a sharp look out for the approach of his employer, but working away with a free good will, determined to earn every penny that he should receive at the end of the week. They might see him returning home on a Saturday afternoon with every shilling of his week's wages in his pocket. His joyous children ran [sic] to meet him at the door, for they knew their father's step. His good and happy wife smiles him a cheerful welcome. He proudly produces the money he had honestly earned and consults with his trusty and confiding partner how much can be spared for benevolent purposes, and how much can be deposited in the Savings Bank towards their support in old age, or for the benefit of their children. Soft and sweet sleep did not close the eyes of that peaceful family until a portion of God's words had been read, and he had offered a prayer to the giver of every

> good and perfect gift for a blessing upon him and his household. (*N&SSG*, 6 March 1856)

On Sundays, of course, our hero was to be found in church; he did not spend the day on a railway jaunt – "his sense of justice prevented him from doing so. He knows that, in consequence of vast crowds of people travelling by rail on Sundays, great numbers of men were employed that day, and he would not assist in depriving them of that great boon, the birthright that God had given to every man." Phillips admits that such a man might rise up the social pyramid and that was a good thing, because it "increased the demand for labour, decreased its amount and pushed up its value". He also proposed him as a model for all men – but it is telling that he did not single out a man from a higher class and suggested how he might ideally live his life. One thing such a man might do of an evening was attend the series of popular lectures. In addition to educating and enlightening him, such lectures would keep him out of mischief. In its April 10 issue of 1856, the *Gazette* reported the views of one of the speakers in the series, who listed the particular qualities of the talks:

> They would … draw the better and more thoughtful portion of the working classes from places of questionable character and scenes of vice. If men were to work day after day, and rise at six o'clock in the morning, and work until six o'clock in the evening, it was necessary that some enjoyment should be provided. They would have it, and if one thing was to be obtained they would have another, and perhaps of a questionable character. Temptations were many and strong, and many, contrary to their better judgments, and purer instincts, were led away. Popular lectures supplied a counter attraction and an antidote and would in all probability lead those who were wavering to be more virtuous and intelligent. (*N&SSG*, 10 April, 1856).

However, it seemed that despite being considered such an attraction, the lectures had not drawn in working men in any great number. The speaker went on to suggest another means of educating the people: the press (meaning the printing press in general). "They had got in this country an engine which perhaps, in some respects, was more powerful than the platform. … and from that press was pouring literature among the working classes of the country." Not all of it, though, was of a suitable character. "There undoubtedly was a taste created for reading, but the food supplied in many instances rather tended to excite certain feelings, than gave a healthiness to the mind and a discipline to the man's brain." The speaker clearly did not have the *North & South Shields Gazette,* or its *Daily Telegraphic Edition,* in mind.

## Conclusion

The repeal of the newspaper stamp tax presented the *North and South Shields Gazette* with an opportunity; but it required a certain amount of ingenuity to grasp it and realise its potential, and not a little courage to stick with it. From a commercial point of view, here was a chance to build on the foundations of advertisement duty repeal and finally make some money. With what was presumably a modest outlay – there was little trumpeting about the expense of the venture, in contrast to the announcements about staffing and technological improvements at the time of the advertisement duty repeal – the *Gazette* management was able to increase its advertising revenue and increase its presence in the town – before anyone else, such as the *Shields Advocate*, launched a daily. JC Stevenson wrote in his diary that the "main expense" of launching the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was "£35 extra beyond what it was before and the cost of delivering such seems to be 27/- a week" (Stevenson diary page 224). At the same time that management was able to continue to give expression to its views on the proper functioning of society and the place of the working class in it, but this time have a better chance of that class actually reading their words. Not only was the weekly, with its pontificating and preaching, cheaper following stamp duty repeal, but there was an incentive, in the form of the subscription package with its altogether more palatable *Daily Telegraphic Edition*, to encourage that class to subscribe to and read the *North & South Shields Gazette.* As this chapter has shown, while the *Telegraphic Edition* allowed the *Gazette* to frame the news, the latter publication expressed what appears to be a blatantly hegemonic view most forcibly. The contrast between those articles that likened such potential subscribers to children and primitive tribes and the cheery picture of the working class in Ned Corvan's song was stark; so too was the contrast between those articles and the friendly invitations, made repeatedly in both versions of the *Gazette,* to all classes to become subscribers and advertisers. However, enough did subscribe, or buy the papers casually at their street price, to make the move a success. There is no suggestion that the management considered jettisoning its new package deal; on the contrary, it was to lead them to set up two further newspapers, one a direct development of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*, one an entirely new publication that was also a development of that paper but which was to rival its parent publications.

## Chapter 11: The Response to Stamp Duty Repeal (3) – The Question of Philanthropy

This chapter will compare the response of the *North & South Shields Gazette* to repeal with that of the Conservative newspapers in Newcastle and consider the motives of the *Gazette* proprietor and its leading journalists.

When I began my research for this thesis, I took it for granted that all newspapers in the 1850s would be in favour of stamp duty repeal. What publication would not relish the idea of being freed from a tax that inflated its cover price and advertising costs? What publication would not wish to reach a wider audience? It came as a surprise, therefore, to discover that a large section of the industry was, as I describe in Chapter 6, against repeal. Newcastle's Tory newspapers, the *Courant* and, to some extent, the *Journal*, were among those in opposition.

In February 1855, on the eve of repeal, the *Newcastle Courant*, in a lengthy excerpt from the *Examiner*, poured scorn on William Hickson's statement to the 1851 Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps, in which he said the labouring classes struggled to understand much of the *Times* and needed instead newspapers that carried "a good account of some farmer's stack-yard having been burnt down." According to the article, a person such as Hickson

> …seemed to think that, because a well-written newspaper was unintelligible to persons unable to understand words of more than one or two syllables, ill-written newspapers ought to be encouraged. And it is for this class of the population, we are assured, that the necessity has arisen for a different sort of newspaper from those which exist at present. (*Newcastle Courant,* 16 February, 1855)

One of the reasons *The Examiner*, and presumably the *Courant*, was in favour of retaining the present arrangement was that, as we have seen, payment of the stamp duty entitled newspapers to free distribution through the post. The article went on:

> We are to have a swarm of sheets and broadsides telling police reports in easy sentences, at the cost of a serious check to the free circulation of thought and material for thought, in carefully-written newspapers passing many times through the post, and submitted from mind to mind among the people who have mastered their ABC … The ignorant are not to be made capable of using wholesome food, but wholesome food is to be taxed that the supply of garbage, for those who can swallow nothing

> else, may be free and unrestricted. (*Newcastle Courant,* 16 February, 1855)

It finished by envisaging, none too happily, a future that largely came to pass, the article encapsulating the huge change in content that would eventually occur – largely as a result of stamp tax repeal:

> Proposing to repeal a tax on knowledge …Mr Gladstone's plan is expected by its advocates to have for one of its direct results the establishment of local and other papers no longer presuming to lead or guide opinion, but satisfied by unremitting supplies of local accidents and crime, and familiar bits of local scandal. (*Newcastle Courant,* 16 February, 1855)

The article made a case for the status quo, maintaining that the stamp duty had, as originally conceived, been "a really unjust taxation" but that the system of newspaper taxation had worked well since its reduction in 1836 to 1d per sheet. On January 26, 1855 it a reprinted an article from the *Manchester Guardian*, a newspaper that, given its subsequent status as the paragon of liberalism, seems surprising in its guarded, almost lukewarm, backing to repeal:

> We do not much share in the sanguine views which are entertained as to the wonderful advantages to be derived from a cheap press, nor are we more enamoured of it, when America is pointed to as an example of its influence. We may rely upon it, that such a press as England can now boast of is, even at present, really the cheapest press in the world, but there is all the difference between a really cheap thing, and a thing that is low priced. However, it is pretty plain that the experiment must be tried. (*Newcastle Courant,* 26 January, 1855)

The *Newcastle Journal* meanwhile issued a decidedly grumpy editorial on June 30, 1855, in which it grudgingly acceded to the change in taxation. It would henceforth be priced at 3d unstamped and 4d stamped but it declared: "Upon ourselves the alteration of the law not only confers no profit, but, on the contrary, imposes many burdens." By this it meant that it was "as far as possible" going to have to go to the expense and trouble of getting unstamped copies of the paper to readers in outlying areas; it could no longer put such copies in the post at no extra cost to the reader. On April 14,1855 it had stated: "as the newspaper reading community have not demanded [repeal of stamp duty], they will not thank the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the questionable boon." It was concerned that repeal would "open the floodgates and offer a premium to a low class of newspapers, which might be comparatively innocuous in peace and prosperity, but which in adverse seasons, commercial depression, and industrial hardship, might inflame the multitude, upset constituted authority and reduce the country to a state of anarchy" (*Newcastle Journal* 14 April 1855). On June 30 though it conceded that "upon the whole …" the new

law was a "boon to the public" and it was confident it would increase the *Journal's* circulation, but it would not go out of its way to attract a wider circulation, maintaining that when it came to advertising it was quality of reader that was more important than the quantity. Such papers were perfectly happy that they appealed to, and could be afforded by, only a select part of the community, because their readers were at once the advertisers and the chief audience for advertising. They could see little reason in extending their readership to poorer parts of the community and they objected to having to shape their language and content to suit that audience. As the *Journal* put it on June 30, 1855 (in a dig at those publications such as the *North & South Shield Gazette*, which were pushing for new readers and advertisers among the working class) it vowed that it would

> … studiously abstain from … hawking newspapers through the streets at reduced price, amongst a class of persons, to whom advertisements are about as applicable as a knowledge of Arabic, or the working of abstract mathematics. " (*Newcastle Journal* 30 June 1855).

It went on:

> Perhaps one-half or two-thirds of a radical print's circulation is thrown away – is utterly useless – to the generality of persons who have anything to sell, wish to purchase, or to obtain situations, because that portion of the number goes into the hands of persons who, unfortunately, buy little and sell nothing." (*Newcastle Journal* 30 June 1855).

Quoting one of the "more intelligent London Advertising Agents", it asserted:

> … a Tory or Conservative journal, with an average standard circulation is worth more, for all advertising purposes, than a Whig-radical print which may circulate twice or thrice that average. (*Newcastle Journal* 30 June 1855).

It cited Charles Mitchell, the proprietor of *Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory*, who in his chapter on *The Philosophy of Advertising* stated that a newspaper with a circulation of 2,000 that was read by the "families of the district" and which could also be perused at newsrooms and libraries was a better advertising medium than one with a circulation of 4,000 that circulated in "inns, public houses and beer-shops", because the patrons of the latter establishments tended to read "for the news and the politics, not for the advertisements" (*Newcastle Journal* 30 June 1855).

In the event, the *Newcastle Courant* came up with a compromise that would allow it to continue as a newspaper of record, filled with editorials and verbatim reports of speeches while, at the same time, reaping the commercial benefit that seemed the probable outcome of repeal. On June 29, 1855, it revealed its plans, which bore some

similarity to those devised by the *North and South Shields Gazette*, in that another newspaper – this time with an entirely new name – would be produced from the *Courant* office and would be quite different to the its parent paper, not least in its publication of news and the social class of readers it might reach.

> … the idea was entertained at one moment of issuing the Courant twice in the week instead of only once. But from so many quarters were requests made by subscribers, for it to continue to be sent out as heretofore, that it was determined, with the exception of reducing it one penny where the stamp was not required, not to make any change whatever. Still, as the classes of newspaper-readers were certain to be increased by the issue of cheap journals of smaller size, the proprietors of the *Courant* decided to establish another unstamped paper, three days a week viz., Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays to meet the wants of that part of the public who required such a medium of intelligence. (*Newcastle Courant,* 29, June 1855).

That new newspaper was the *Newcastle Messenger and Advertiser*, price 1½d. The *Courant* and its offspring would be quite different "entirely separate in every respect." "The two publications," it went on, "will in fact be as distinct from each other as if they belonged to different parties." One of the aims of the new paper was "to make the charge so moderate, as to place it within the reach of almost every individual or family who may feel the slightest interest in current events" (*Newcastle Courant,* 29 June 1855).

Unlike the *Gazette*, the *Messenger* was not entirely sanguine about this move towards mass circulation. In place of the cheery confidence and aim for inclusivity exhibited by the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*, the suspicious tone of the parent paper continued in its offspring. In the *Messenger's* first editorial, on July 3, 1855, it observed: "The era of cheap newspapers is now at length being entered upon in this country. "Whether good or evil will predominate in its character, will shortly be known." The fact that it had an editorial also differentiated its approach from that of the *Telegraphic Edition* and to some extent belied the claim in the *Courant* that it and its thrice-weekly offshoot would be entirely distinct.

It did nevertheless hope that some of the direst predictions of repeal opponents, of a "moral mischief" being unleashed on a newspaper market flooded with cheap publications would not come to pass. Instead, the *Messenger* hoped it would be able, as repeal campaigners had predicted, to be "the means of diffusing useful information more extensively" and to "inculcate sound principles amongst all classes of the community" (*Newcastle Messenger and Advertiser*, 3 July 1855). It proposed to carry "a larger quantity of news" than its weekly parent. It continued, in a rather sour tone, to say that it would not issue a prospectus which would promise things that might be unattainable. It would leave the reader to "form his opinion of its excellencies or imperfections, from what he

sees actually before him, rather than in any promises or commendations of our own". It then embarked on a lengthy attack on the new breed of newspapers, launched as a result of stamp duty repeal which criticised the existing press and which promised "to supply … a print which shall be in nothing deficient, having nothing superfluous, and so adapted to every taste and interest that will satisfy everybody!" It had been moved to make such comments, it went on, after having read the "prospectuses and addresses" of so many "small newspapers", which are "not a little grandiloquent in their own praise". They were so fanciful that perhaps "Mr TP Barnum" might have "had a hand in assisting a few at least in bedecking themselves so as to render their attractions quite irresistible" (*Newcastle Messenger and Advertiser*, 3 July 1855). And on it went, paragraph after paragraph, attacking such newspapers and being reluctant to make any promises about itself. It is perhaps not surprising in the light of such a lukewarm opening salvo, that the *Newcastle Messenger and Advertiser* did not last long.

It did, like the *Daily Telegraphic Edition,* have news on the front page of its first issue. Reports of July 4 court cases were included in the second issue of the paper, on July 5, and with the same wording in the July 6 issue of the *Courant*. However, as Milne writes: "The *Messenger* was an unfortunate venture in several ways." The *Courant* seemed "rather half-hearted" in launching the *Messenger*, possibly fearing competition from it, and, with its prominent position in the community and solid position in the market, as the region's biggest circulation paper, might have been better off making itself a tri-weekly. The *Messenger* quickly faced stiff competition from the *North of England Advertiser*, a weekly launched on June 30, 1855, and the daily morning newspaper, the *Northern Daily Express*, founded in Darlington on April 21, 1855, but which switched its operations to Newcastle in October of that year. The *Messenger* shut down in March 1857.

Like their counterparts at a pro-repeal Liberal paper such as the *North & South Shields Gazette,* the local Tory publications wanted the working class to be law-abiding and respectful but did not, beyond such general statements about the diffusion of "useful information" and the inculcation of sound principles", have a particular interest in actively promoting working-class education. On June 26, 1858, the *Journal* happily quoted the views of Charles Adderley, the vice-president of the Council on Education in Lord Derby's Conservative Government, who stated that "any attempt to keep the children of the labouring classes under intellectual culture after the very earliest age at which they could earn their living would be as arbitrary and improper as it would be to keep the boys of Eton and Harrow at spade labour" (*Newcastle Journal*, 26 June 1858). On November 15 that year it reported what it referred to as an "eloquent and telling address" by the Hon Henry Riddell, the Conservative MP for South Northumberland, to Blaydon News Room and Literary Institute, in which he said: "I don't think it is to be desired that our labouring classes should become bookworms". In 1853 the *Courant* included a news report that there was no demand for working-class education. It focused on efforts to educate the working class in Birmingham, where, it stated, there was "no want of schools" but "a want of scholars to fill them". It went on: "Myriads of pounds had been spent in the

town to educate the labouring classes, and scholars could not be got" (*Newcastle Courant*, 30 December 1853).

The *North & South Shields Gazette*, however, as we have seen repeatedly, was – in the 1850s at least – deeply committed to working-class education and to establishments such as the Blaydon News Room and Literary Institute. Can we infer from this that the proprietor and leading journalists of the *Gazette* were acting in a philanthropic manner or were their articles as blatantly hegemonic in intention as they appeared to be? The *Gazette's* proprietor, JC Stevenson, clearly believed as an industrialist that he had a relationship with his men that transcended that of worker and employer. Indeed, he said just that in a "workmen's soiree" for members of his Jarrow Chemical Works News and Literary Society in December 1860. He told his audience: "The relation in which they stood to each other as workmen and employers was not one of mere buying and selling, or of exchanging the labour of the one for the money of the other. It was something higher than this" (*N&SSG* 20 December 1860).

In the summer of 1865 JC Stevenson allowed the men at his Friar's Goose chemical works on the banks of the Tyne at Felling to have a day off to go on a trip to Bishop Auckland Park, courtesy of the Bishop of Durham. Two thousand men, women and children took part. A few weeks later the men presented Stevenson and his business partner John Williamson with an illuminated address at one of the Friar's Goose workshops – to acknowledge his "great kindness in stopping all your manufactories to provide a day's enjoyment for the workmen" and to convey their "warmest thanks for the very liberal and generous arrangements made to convey us to Bishop Auckland for the substantial treatment we received while there."

> … we trust that our thorough enjoyment of the day's holiday and appreciation of your kindness may be some little recompense for your trouble and expense. Trust that you may both long be spared in the enjoyment of health and happiness. We are, gentlemen, your obedient servants. (*N&SSG&DT* 23 August 1865*)*

This would seem to be evidence of a philanthropic impulse, but is clearly bound up in notions of duty and hierarchy and paternalism. The men do not see this day off in terms of a right but as a remarkable gift and thank their employers for their "trouble and expense". What were Stevenson's motives? He was no longer keeping a diary, as far as we are aware, so we don't have access to his private thoughts. However, we get a sense of those motives in the report of his reply:

> It would be a poor thing to carry on a manufactory merely to make profit for those who happened to own it without any regard to the happiness of those who helped to carry it on. (applause) … He could assure them that nothing would give himself … greater pleasure than to know that

> everyone of their workmen had the benefit of the best of all blessings, a happy life [and] a comfortable and well furnished house ... (*Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph* 23 August 1865)

So far so good but then he talks about the kind of happy workman who would be his model employee and we move on to notions of respectability, religious observance and sobriety: he wanted his workmen's houses to be so "comfortable and well furnished" that they "would not be ashamed to show any person"; he wanted them to be the kind of men "who clothed themselves and their children respectably, who attended the House of God regularly, and who were living a godly, righteous and sober life." He was glad that many of them were members of cooperative stores and building societies and he urged them to set up a savings bank and building society so that they could buy houses nearer his chemical works.

In a gesture that was consistent with the ambiguous nature of Victorian philanthropy, as described by Young (1936), Morris (1979), Walvin (1988) and Hampton (2001, 2004) in chapter 2 of this thesis, the event ended with JC handing out 100 copies of *Better Days for Working People*, by William Garden Blaikie, a Scottish minister and temperance campaigner, whose book exhorted the working class to be sober, clean and respectful, but at the same time advised them not to become "dissatisfied" or be "jealous towards those who are better off" (1865: 7).

## Conclusion

It is not until one reads the Tory newspapers' response to repeal that the response of the *North & South Shields Gazette* can properly be considered: the one throws the other into relief. As outlined in this chapter, proprietors of those Tory newspapers and the Stevensons in North and South Shields were of one class; the difference was in their political and social outlook. Considered in isolation, the *Gazette* seems utterly hegemonic in its approach; even the charitable work of its leading lights, as detailed in chapter 5, seems so. But compared to the Tory newspapers, the work of the nonconformist Liberal *Gazette* acquires a patina of benevolent paternalism, possibly even philanthropy. In its final chapter, this thesis will return to, and come to a conclusion about, the question of hegemony versus philanthropy.

## Chapter 12: The *Gazette* and the Repeal of the Paper Duty – Reporting Repeal 1856 -1861

In this chapter this thesis will move on to the next phase of the repeal of the taxes on knowledge: the repeal of the excise duty on paper. It will show the *Gazette's* attitude to repeal and follow its coverage of the parliamentary process towards repeal. The chapter will end with the *Gazette's* response to repeal of the paper duty and will provide contextual details of how other papers around the country responded to it; this will to some extent diverge from existing research on the subject.

In 1835, the Radical MP and future APRTOK campaigner John Arthur Roebuck directed a diatribe at the press in one of his *Pamphlets for the People*: "The writers of the Newspaper Press are ... irresponsible, and irresponsibility produces in their case what it produces in all others viz. an utter disregard of morality" (Roebuck, 1835: 7). In 1858, when he spoke to an audience of working men and civic dignitaries at the opening of North Shields Mechanics' Institute, he urged working men to read the press *expressly* for its moral content:

> … no man who reads the public press of England from day to day, and takes in the instruction which that press affords … but at the end of the year, must have reaped a large lesson. You will find nothing in that press which is not in accordance with a very large, a very high-minded morality. (*N&SSG*, 12 August 1858)

Although Roebuck – who, during his visit took part in a soiree and a meeting at the Albion Assembly Rooms, North Shields attended by JC and Alexander Stevenson[58] – doesn't mention it, he is clearly acknowledging the change that had been brought about by the removal of the stamp duty. As we have seen, in his contribution to an 1850 debate on the taxes on knowledge, he expressed his belief that the country was moving towards a time when working men would demand a greater role in the running of the country but they needed to be educated if they were to do so. If, for reasons of mere taxation, the right kind of newspapers were not available to educate the people, "socialists and economists" would step in (HC Deb 16 April 1850 vol 110 c408). By 1858, he speaks with optimism that the press could provide that instruction:

> Depend upon it, a man who reads a newspaper with care will instruct himself by their means … I wish the people to govern themselves. But I

[58] On August 9, 1858, JC wrote in his diary: "Was at the soiree of the new Mech. Inst. North Shields. Roebuck, who I had never seen before, gave a short speech with great effect. I met him on the stairs coming out with Mr Lindsay and he looks very much older and shaky on a close view than on a platform at a distance" (Stevenson Diary page 254)

> cannot hide from myself the great danger we would run by having an uninstructed people to have the government of this great country. (*N&SSG*, 12 August 1858)

There was clearly a sense in what Roebuck said that the battle over the taxes on knowledge had, to a large extent, been won. On June 16, 1855, the day after the Royal Assent was given to the repeal of the stamp duty, the association's *Gazette* had called for the repeal of the paper duty and the security system (Collet 1899) but thereafter the association was largely focused on internal matters of finance and organisation until campaigning resumed in the autumn of 1856 (Collet, 1899; Hewitt, 2014). It proved to be something of a false start, for in the General Election in the spring of 1857, most of the parliamentary leadership of the APRTOK, including Milner Gibson and Cobden, lost their seats (largely because of what had been perceived to be their unpatriotic opposition to the Crimean War). Collet lamented that 1857 brought the campaigners "much trouble and little profit" (1899: 63). However, before Roebuck made his North Shields speech, voices in the press and some of his fellow campaigners were starting to make themselves heard once again.

On June 24 1858, the Thursday night weekly of the *Gazette* reprinted at length an article from the *Times*, which itemised a comprehensive set of objections to the paper duty, not least the role it continued to play in inflating the cost of newspapers. The article was a commentary on a debate the previous night in the House of Commons led once again by Milner Gibson, who had returned to Parliament as the member for Ashton-under-Lyne. The paper characterised it as a "field day of extraordinary interest and success on behalf of the still heavily taxed press". The *Times* stated it had consumed 1,300 reams of paper the previous week, which required £732 in duty. The yearly amount it paid in duty was more than £38,000. "This is a very large contribution to the State from one manufacturer for one article of universal necessity." In striking images, the *Times* set out the scope of its reporters' work:

> Hundreds are employed in the production of this journal, chiefly in those hours which more favoured mortals give to sleep, in the heart of this dense city, and near that now famous river the Thames. Others are distributed all over the world foraging for information, some braving pestilential climates, others sharing only two [sic] gallantly, the dangers of a tropical campaign; others unravelling factions, and penetrating the secrets of Courts. Before the labour of these persons can be presented to the public it is charged with a heavy duty for the very material through which it is conveyed. (*N&SSG*, 24 June, 1858)

It contrasted the situation with the duty-free import of cotton and other fibres and their manufacture into clothes and then, when they were worn out and discarded, their conversion into paper.

> It is imprinted no longer with roses and sprigs and pinks and lilacs; but with the speeches of Messrs Disraeli, Milner Gibson, and Bright. Before however, it can return to the public in that form it has been visited and weighed by the officers of the Treasury, and compelled to pay a heavy tax. . (*N&SSG*, 24 June, 1858)

In perhaps a reference to its own extraordinary power, the *Times* conceded that a state might regard the press "as a sort of rival" and therefore tax its raw material, but it could see no reason for the imposition of the duty on all kinds of wrapping and packing paper, no matter how rough or heavy. The tax also impeded the expansion of the paper-making industry, while other trades were "continually assisted by the legislature". In the conclusion to the article, the *Times* returned to the educational benefits of repeal:

> "… we really think the House may reasonably decline to do more for the promotion of literature and diffusion of knowledge till it has taken off the tax which is not only an obstacle and a discouragement, but a positive penalty on those undertakings." (*N&SSG*, 24 June, 1858)

The excise duty on paper was not the only thing which made the process of paper-making expensive and potentially irksome to the papermaker. The Paper Duty Act of 1839 laid down a complicated set of regulations and associated financial penalties, which even if a manufacturer did not incur them, required him to employ more staff to ensure there were no infringements. Paper mills and all their equipment had to be registered; there were stipulations on where mills could be situated; there were precise rules on the wrapping and bundling of paper and the kind of weights and scales that had to be used; weighed paper (which had to be dried before weighing to keep it as light as possible) then had to be stored separately for six hours after weighing; there were even rules governing the movement of paper within a mill (Knight Hunt, 1850; Collet, 1899; Hewitt 2014). Manufacturers had to be prepared for spot-checks by excise officers. Penalties ranged from £20 to £200. The APRTOK MP William Ewart told the House of Commons that all this amounted to "much vexatious interference" (Knight Hunt, 1850: 189).

On February 25, 1858 the weekly *Gazette* reported on Milner Gibson's return to the fray. This followed his pivotal role in the demise of Palmerston's administration, when on February 19, 1858, the Government was defeated on his amendment to the Conspiracy to Murder bill (1899: 66). At something of a triumphal meeting at Manchester's Free Trade Hall he had addressed a meeting of about 1,000 people to advocate the repeal of the paper duty. He reiterated his contention that the taxes on knowledge had been imposed to restrict the press rather than for reasons of revenue – and that the duty's removal would result not only in an increase in production and trade but would enable paper manufacturers to expand their operations. He cited a manufacturer in the North West who had formerly supplied paper to Buenos Aires and Montevideo but because of

the increased costs as a result of the excise duty, had latterly been pushed out of the market by the French and Belgians. Milner Gibson said there had been a similar situation in India and other British colonies. The paper duty was "mischievous", he declared. The meeting voted to petition Parliament for the repeal of the duty and of the security system, which required newspaper proprietors to set down a bond of £400 as a security against legal action.

On July 1, in a column of news snippets, the *North & South Shields Gazette* reported that Bright, in a debate on the paper duty, had given the evidence of "an eminent publisher" who in two years, had paid £80,000 to writers and authors and £50,000 to the Government in paper duty. It returned to the subject the following week via an excerpt from the literary magazine, the *Athenaeum*, which criticised not only the Government for imposing the tax, but the press for rarely raising its voice in favour of repeal.

> No reasons ever had been given, or ever can be given, why thought, imagination, and intelligence should pay a toll of more than a million per annum for a right of way where everything else is free. Cotton is not so taxed. Corn pays no toll, Then why tax paper? Why should a lyric, a novel, a history , a review, or a newspaper come under the hand of an exciseman? Why should paper be more heavily weighted than the skins on which deeds are drawn, bargains recorded, property transferred? ... Is it not monstrous that writers and readers, though the warmest friends in the world, may not shake hands without paying a fine to the Exchequer of a million a year? Is it not absurd that while Government is enforced to spend vast sums in promoting popular education it should not see the impolicy of inflicting heavy fines on those who are educating all classes of the people free of charge to the State? Away with these restrictions on intellectual light and air – on speed, on discovery, on discussion. Let the press declare against this wrong, and the wrong will have to cease. The case is proved. The time has come. No impost in the whole book of rates can match in absurdity and injuriousness with this tax on paper. It must be abolished. Public intelligence must be free. (N&SSG, 8 July, 1858)

The article looked ahead to a conference of London newspaper editors and proprietors that was due to take place the following Monday and in the next edition of the weekly *Gazette*, there was a report on the event. The paper was taking a keen interest in the subject. The report had not been taken from one of the London newspapers but written by the *Gazette* itself, which suggests that it had a reporter at the conference, or had had the report contributed by a correspondent.

The conference, at Peel's Coffee House in Fleet Street, was convened by the APRTOK with the purpose of bringing the newspaper press into their campaign. Milner Gibson was in

the chair and the resolution was moved by the publisher John Cassell: "That it is desirable that the members of the newspaper press make a vigorous effort to obtain a repeal of the paper duties in the ensuing session of parliament." Joseph Levy, the proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph*, which had been launched at the point of stamp duty repeal in 1855 and now was the capital's best-selling newspaper, spoke in support of the motion. He said that any revenue transferred from the Government to the newspaper industry would be spent "improving the quality of the article, and in providing superior literary productions, which they were at present unable to do in the manner they could wish" (N&SSG,15 July, 1858). Samuel Carter Hall, editor of the *Art Journal*, said he paid £70,000 in paper duty in 1851 and lost more than £3,000 that year. Henry George Bohn, publisher of the *Bohn's Library* series of cheap instructional books, spoke against the motion, contending that if the duty were removed, there would be "a great rush for rags" and the publishing and paper-making industries would not be able to obtain the necessary supplies of this raw material. His argument was countered by a Mr Fowler of the London newspaper the *Standard*, which had switched from evening to morning production the previous year. He said Bohn's argument could be summed up thus: "If you take off the duty you benefit all mankind, but you ruin me"(N&SSG,15 July, 1858). This remark resulted in applause and the resolution was passed, with a Mr Lucas of the *Star* saying that the big demand for rags would inspire "inventive minds" to look for alternative raw materials.

On November 25, 1858, the Gazette devoted an editorial to paper duty. It asked the public not to distrust newspaper editors who advocated the repeal of the paper duty – for there were risks.

> As far as newspapers are concerned, it is still an unsolved problem whether the proposed change would not be rather injurious than otherwise to all but the penny press. If we were actuated only by considerations of self-interest we might hesitate before we recommended a change, the inevitable effect of which must be to augment the number of our rivals, and secure to a large and increasing class of them a margin of profit sufficient to enable to compete on much more advantageous terms than they now do with higher price journals.

But here risks were overridden by the educational and societal benefits of repeal:

> The repeal of the paper duty is essentially a people's question. The excise on paper has existed permanently since the reign of Queen Anne, when it was imposed along with a tax on newspapers and advertisements, all three being avowedly intended to put down newspapers and pamphlets. Since that time the people of this country have had 150 years to consider the question, whether or not it was for *their* interest that newspapers and pamphlets should be put down, and the conclusion they have arrived at is by no means dubious. The things which a corrupt Legislature

> endeavoured to suppress in the interest of bad government are now become universally acknowledged necessities of English social and political life. Two of Queen Anne's taxes on knowledge are defunct, and are as little regretted as Queen Anne herself. The third must go after them. It must go not only because it is a tax on knowledge but because it is a tax on industry, a hindrance to production, and a promoter of pauperism. (*N&SSG* 25 November 1858)

The article went to list the problems it caused – in hindering the paper industry in competition with France and Belgium for foreign markets; in adding unnecessary costs to those exports, such as cloth, that were wrapped in paper; in adding to operating costs at paper mills; in contributing to the closure of paper mills (132 mills had closed since 1838, it said) and the subsequent rise in unemployment. Because cheap new alternatives to rag-produced paper were being taxed at the same rate as the more expensive paper, the duty acted as a disincentive to innovation.

As with the campaign against the stamp duty, when a large section of the newspaper press opposed repeal, the battle lines for paper duty repeal were not clearly drawn. Despite the efforts of Milner Gibson and friends to encourage newspaper proprietors to join their organisation, a group of them formed a separate organisation, the Newspaper and Periodical Press Association for the Repeal of the Paper Duty (NPPARD) which eclipsed the APRTOK in 1858 (Hewitt, 2014). On April 21, 1859 the *Gazette* published a letter from John Cassell and the writer and publisher Henry Vizetelly[59], chairman and secretary respectively of the NPPARD. It was in the form of a round robin, addressed to the nation's electors, sent to newspapers ahead of the General Election that was to begin on April 28. The letter urged electors to get candidates to take up the cause of paper duty repeal for educational and societal considerations. It went on:

> The tax of paper shuts out light from the minds of working men… it weighs on all classes of manufactures; as a source of revenue it is a delusion; it aggravates pauperism; and tends, by narrowing the area of productive labour, to cripple legitimate consumption, and to retard social progress; it hinders the spread of a wholesome literature among the people, and absorbs a considerable portion of the money contributed to the great publishing societies established to secure the diffusion of religious and useful knowledge. (*N&SSG*, 21 April, 1859)

However, for some of the Conservative newspapers, reform of press taxation had gone as far as it needed to. "Now paper is cheaper than ever it was, the poorest man in the country can readily obtain his sheet whenever he wants it," the *Leeds Intelligencer* declared in an editorial on June 26, 1858. "… we are not disinclined to a remission of the

[59] Vizetelly was at this time publisher of the *Illustrated Times*.

paper duty at its proper and legitimate time. What we say is this; that it would not prove the great boon to the public which Mr Milner Gibson asserts; that the benefit to the public, if any would be inappreciable. In our opinion it should take its turn along with others, and not be pressed forward under the unfounded pretext that it is a tax on knowledge" (*Leeds Intelligencer,* 26 June, 1858). The *Newcastle Journal* was vehemently opposed to repeal. An editorial of October 1861, was typical of its coverage during this period. "We feel that those who, like ourselves, deprecated the repeal of the Paper Duty during the last Session of Parliament, as an act of wanton, reckless and culpable extravagance, have been only too fully justified"(*Newcastle Journal*, 4 October 1861).

Moreover, despite the rigorous regulations and potential financial penalties it faced in addition to the tax itself, the paper-making industry was not unified in opposition to the duty (Hewitt, 2014). The APRTOK took much heart when Milner Gibson was appointed President of the Board of Trade in Palmerston's second administration – which took office on June 12, 1859 – and was allied with Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer once again, who had repealed the advertisement duty in 1853 and introduced the bill for the repeal of the stamp duty. But there was a split in the cabinet between Gladstone and Milner Gibson on the one hand and the rest of the cabinet, not least the Prime Minister himself, who were opposed to repeal. War with China and a fear of war with France led ministers to be wary of any reduction in Government revenue that might be needed for the armed forces and defence (there was considerable demand for Britain's fortifications to be strengthened against a possible foe across the Channel). The *Times,* fearing a loss of influence, now changed tack and came out against repeal, and there was, the *Gazette* reported, an apathy among the general public; proposed reductions of the duty on tea and sugar were seen as more obviously beneficial. The *Gazette* appeared to lose interest in the question of paper duty for more than a year after this date. There was only one reference to it in the paper in 1859, then in early 1860 it began to report on debates in Parliament as Gladstone prepared to include repeal in his budget.

In his first budget since returning to the Treasury, Gladstone continued the work that had begun under his political mentor Sir Robert Peel, who in his 1841-46 Government had set about reducing the number of indirect taxes and customs duties, and which Gladstone himself had extended in his first budget, in 1853. In his 1860 proposals he aimed to reduce the number of items liable to indirect taxes to 48 (they had numbered in the thousands at the start of Peel's administration) (Jenkins 1995). At this time, the parliamentary practice was for the Commons to debate the Chancellor's proposals and then, when they were approved, a series of Finance Bills were drawn up to be passed into legislation (McCord 1991). In the spring of 1860 matters came to a head when it emerged that the House of Lords (in a moved favoured by Palmerston and the Queen herself[60]) was likely to reject Gladstone's bill to repeal the paper duty, which had scraped

[60] Jenkins refers to a letter from Palmerston to Queen Victoria, in which he said the Lords "would perform a good public service" if they rejected the bill. The Queen in turn informed her uncle Leopold, King of the Belgians, that the rejection was a "very good thing" (Jenkins, 1995:227).

through the Commons on May 8, 1860 with a majority of 9, cabinet members having voted against it (Jenkins, 1995).

On May 17 1860 the *Gazette* published an angry editorial, attacking a move by the House of Lords to reject the legislation by 193 votes to 104, claiming that for the upper House to do so with a revenue bill amounted to a “revolutionary act” and a “coup d’état”. In the same edition it reported that there had been meetings against the proposed rejection in London and Manchester and the press had “spoken out strongly against the course concerted between the Tories and malcontent Whigs in the Upper House”. The following week, May 24, it reported that the Lords had indeed rejected the bill. There were meetings held in some of the large towns in Lancashire in support of the rejected bill but Liverpool Chamber of Commerce had resolved to do nothing about it. The Government too had decided to “take its ‘punishment’ philosophically, and [had] shown no disposition to cause a collision between the two Houses”. The public, meanwhile, said the *Gazette*, “regards the result with a gentle astonishment, in which there is scarcely a trace of interest. People are interested to ask what next, but nothing more”. For its part, the paper industry had been “thrown into despair” but the leader writer said it had only itself to blame; if it had not pushed for a protective duty on the import of foreign paper, the bill would have passed through the House of Commons with such a comfortable majority that “would have put the interference of the Peers out of the question” (*N&SSG* 24 May, 1860).

On May 31 it reported (in an article that was “supplementary” to one in the daily edition of the previous night, which shows how the two forms of the paper could act in tandem, as they moved towards a uniform daily) that the Paper Duty Repeal Bill had returned to the House of Commons and had been passed by a majority of 53, it being resolved that “the void occasioned by their removal” should be made up by adding 1d in the pound to income tax. In that same edition it reported on a meeting of the Lancashire Reformers’ Union to discuss progress in the “popular opposition” to the Lords’ action. Resolutions were passed “expressive of a determination to uphold the dignity of the House of Commons against the encroachments of the Lords, and equally expressive of a determination to appeal to public opinion for its support in this movement”. The *Gazette* also carried an editorial on the subject, in which it repeated its observation that most of the press was in favour of repealing the paper duty – despite the increased competition it would bring. Only the *Times*, it said, was now against repeal, because it feared a “diminution” of its powers in the face of increased competition (*N&SSG* 31 May 1860).

On June 14 the *Gazette* printed in full a letter sent by Richard Cobden to the Rochdale Constitutional Defence Association, in which he attacked the notion that the unelected House of Lords, which he characterised as an “irresponsible body”, should be allowed to prevent repeal. He also gave a recap of the struggle by campaigners to repeal the taxes on knowledge over the previous decade, during which time, no one had thought it necessary to petition the Lords on the subject. “Yet, suddenly, and after one evening’s

debate only, their lordships have reversed a decision founded on ten years' discussion and investigation, and they have defended their rash proceedings with arguments which I am sorry to be obliged to characterise as at once arrogant and insulting to the House of Commons"(*N&SSG* 14 June 1860). This was despite the fact that the paper duty had undergone a vote of condemnation and had, in the present session, been abolished by the Commons. In the same edition it reported that the Liberal MP for Stoke on Trent, John Lewis Ricardo, had expressed similar sentiments in a letter to the Hanley Reform Association. On June 28, in another follow-up to an article in the *North and South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph* (as the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was by then known) the *Gazette* reported that a petition had been presented to the House of Commons in opposition to the Lords' rejection of the Paper Duty Bill on its second reading. Among its contentions was "That the imposition of taxes on the sole authority of the House of Lords is a thing wholly without precedent in the history of this country – is in direct and flagrant violation of the law of the realm as inscribed on the rolls of Parliament for ages past, and tends to a total overthrow of the British Constitution" (*N&SSG* 28 June 1860). It urged the House to take "such measures as shall compel the Lords to withdraw their illegal opposition". For a while, the campaign to repeal the paper duty became subsumed in one for parliamentary reform (Hewitt, 2014).

The *Gazette* followed the debates on the paper duty throughout the Parliamentary sessions of 1860 and 1861. In the latter year, Gladstone changed the parliamentary procedure, so that all his financial proposals were encompassed in one bill, "daring the House of Lords to reject the entire Budget" (McCord, 1991: 254). On April 18, 1861 the *Gazette* reported Gladstone's announcement, in his budget statement to the House that Monday (April 15), that the duty would be removed from October 1. An editorial in that same edition stated that "possibly a stronger case might be made out for reducing the tea and sugar duties … than for the proposed remission of either income-tax or paper duty". On April 25 it quoted a parliamentary report from the London weekly the *Saturday Review* which stated that a reduction in the duties on tea and sugar would have been "far more beneficial to the community". It did not hold out much hope for a reduction in the price of newspapers, claiming it would be "absurd" to think that the penny papers could be sold for anything less than a penny, and the more expensive ones could not be expected to reduce their prices by "fractions of a penny" (*N&SSG* 25 April 1861).

There is a marked difference in tone from the early mentions of paper duty repeal in the Gazette in 1849 and the 1850s with its mentions in 1860 and 1861. The educational and societal benefits of repeal are no longer stressed. The April 25 excerpt from the *Saturday Review* even went so far as to state that "tea and sugar are far more required than what is called knowledge". Hewitt writes in relation to campaigning by the NPPARPD in late 1859/early 1860: "The 'taxes on knowledge' theme was somewhat buried by this stage, although Radicals continued to press the need for repeal to 'bring a newspaper to every man's door' (2014:79). In a report on the Budget debate on May 2, 1861, the *Gazette*

stressed the constitutional necessity of repeal, rather than the societal and educational: "We frankly acknowledge the superior claims of the tea duty to Parliamentary correction on financial grounds, but have to repeat that the political grounds on which the abolition of the paper-duty is proposed are paramount to all other considerations." In an editorial in the same edition, it repeated its assertion that the duty must be repealed on political grounds – to rectify the constitutional wrongs of 1860.

> We adhere to our opinion that the measure will be carried – the income tax reduced by a penny, and the paper-duty abolished; and that this will be done upon political grounds, and in spite of financial objections. The paper-duty, though by no means the most objectionable of taxes, must be preferred for abolition to others, in consequence of what took place last year. There is a constitutional aberration to be corrected, and it is infinitely more important for all classes of the people that the rectification should take place than that any tax whatever should be repealed. (*N&SSG* 2 May, 1861)

That edition listed Gladstone's Budget resolutions and provided the precise wording: "That on and after the 1st day of October, 1861, the duties of Excise now payable upon on in respect of paper of any denomination, and cotton-board, mill-board, paste-board, and scale-board made in the United Kingdom, and also allowances and drawbacks of or in respect of any such duties, shall cease, and shall be no longer charged, levied, allowed, or paid respectively." The Budget also removed the customs duties on paper: "That the duties of Customs chargeable on the articles undermentioned imported into Great Britain and Ireland shall cease and determine on and after the 1st of October, 1861: - viz, paper, as denominated in the tariff; mill-board, paste-board, books, as denominated in the tariff; prints and drawings, as denominated in the tariff" (*N&SSG* 2 May, 1861).

The May 2 edition also included a brief article which pointed to a change in the reading habits of the working class now that cheap publications were available, the implication being that tax-free knowledge was reaching the class most in need of it. It quoted a Mr James Guest of Birmingham who said that in 1830 there had been only two news vendors in Birmingham who supplied the weekly and daily papers "almost entirely" to public houses, "where the working man took in his news and left on average one-third of his wages." He made the contrast with 1861, when there were now more than 300 newsvendors, and 24 "very respectable booksellers who deal more or less in periodicals". These booksellers sold an average of 83,200 copies a week, "comprising very few of an objectionable character". This points to a significant reduction in the number of such objectionable publications when we compare it with the statistics produced by campaigners in the run-up to the repeal of the newspaper stamp, who, as we have seen,

took considerable relish in listing at length the titles of "penny bloods"[61] upon which the working classes were wont to spend their wages in the absence of cheap newspapers.

On May 9, the *Gazette* returned to the subject of paper duty in a lengthy excerpt from the *Saturday Review* but is again sceptical of its societal benefit:

> Paper is a highly useful commodity, and its cost price is increased by taxation; but manufacturers and traders of various kinds will, in the natural course of business, intercept nearly the whole amount of the reduction. A portion of the savings of publishers, retail dealers, and newspaper proprietors may possibly become applicable to the payment of labour; but no economist can foretell the effect of the repeal on the great bulk of the community. (*N&SSG* 9 May, 1861)

And in the same edition it returned to the theme of tea vs knowledge, in a report of a speech on the Budget by a Mr Liddell MP: "He did not deny that the repeal of the paper-duty might give indirect benefits to some classes of the people, but it certainly would not produce such a beneficial result to the community generally as the repeal of a tax on an article which was necessary for life [tea]. In several *Gazette* articles of the time, for instance on May 30 and June 6, 1861, there are references to cheaper tea – the "poor man's tea" – being of particular benefit to the working class.

In terms of the effect of paper duty repeal on the newspaper industry, Hewitt writes:

> Undoubtedly, the immediate impact of the removal of the paper duties is much less easily discerned than that of the newspaper stamp. One reason for this is that by October 1861 repeal had been anticipated for almost two years. More generally, once the frenzy of activity associated with repeal itself died away, some form of normality returned (2014: 175).

But that was not the case. The immediate impact can be easily discerned in newspaper advertisements in the autumn and winter of 1861; as soon as the duty was removed, the papers were full of announcements about price reductions, enlargements of paper size, increases in pagination, investments in staff, changes to advertising rates – all in response

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[61] That there was still a widespread market for such publications, nevertheless, can be gleaned from a picturesque tale in Dicken's *Household Words* of August 21, 1858, in which the author Wilkie Collins relates his adventures in the newsagents and tobacconists of London's "third and second rate neighbourhoods" and in the "fruit-shops", "oyster shops" and "lollypop-shops" in "every town, large or small", noticing the number of penny serial periodicals. He encounters such publications "among the deserts of West Cornwall", in a populous thoroughfare of Whitechapel", in a "dreary little lost town at the north of Scotland", in a "lovely county of South Wales", which the railway had not yet reached but the "audacious picture quarto" had. He concludes that there is an "Unknown Public; a public to be counted by millions [he puts it at three million] the mysterious, the unfathomable, the universal public of the penny-novel Journals." (*Household Words* 21 August 1858)

to repeal. There were also launches of new titles. Altick (1963: 356) writes: "The repeal of the paper duty in 1861 benefited all periodicals alike. The conjunction of a greatly expanded mass audience and lower costs threw the publishing and printing trades into a happy uproar."[62]

On September 12, 1861 the *Gazette* reported "among the announcements that have been made as supervening on abolition of the paper duty is that of a new daily commercial journal for Liverpool, entitled the *Liverpool Journal of Commerce and Daily Shipping and Mercantile Advertiser.*" On November 7, it carried an advert from the weekly London literary magazine, the *Athenaeum*, stating that, "taking advantage of the abolition of the Paper Duty" its proprietors had decided to cut its price from 4d to 3d from October 5. On February 13, 1862 in its review of the latest magazines, the *Gazette* observed that "there is no end to the flood of cheap monthlies", from which it drew its readers' attention to a new illustrated magazine called *London Society*. The *Halfpenny Ledger*, a London weekly billed as the "cheapest in the world", was launched in the autumn of 1861, as was the *Penny Ledger*, another London weekly, proclaiming it was the "same size as the Times". John Cassell launched the *Quiver*, a magazine that would expound "Biblical truth"; the *Penny Illustrated Paper* brought out its first issue on October 12, 1861, and the papers were full of ads for the imminent launch of the *Penny Library and Illustrated Novelist.*

Among the papers that reduced their prices were the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, the *Berkshire Chronicle* and the *Windsor and Eton Express*, (4d to 3d); the *Fifeshire Journal* (3½d to 3d); the *Caernavon and Denbigh Herald* (3½d to 2d); the *Newcastle Guardian* (3d to 2½d); and the *Hull Advertiser* and the *Leeds Intelligencer* (3d to 2d). The *Barnsley Times* joined the ranks of the penny press, as did the *Wakefield Press and Examiner*, the *Cork Daily Reporter,* the *Leigh Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser*, the *Northern Whig* in Belfast and *Saunders's News-Letter* in Dublin and the *Daily News*, the *Weekly Times*, *Lloyd's Weekly News* and *Reynold's Newspaper* among the London papers. The *Times* joined the *Athenaeum* in reducing its price from 4d to 3d and the *Athenaeum's* competitor, the *Critic*, came down from 6d to 3d.

The *Liverpool Mercury*, *Tiverton Gazette*, *East Kent Gazette*, *Louth Advertiser*, *Wellington Journal*, *Roscommon Advertiser*, *Dundee Advertiser*, *Dundee People's Journal* and the Weekly magazine the *Leisure Hour*, published by the Religious Tract Society, were among publications that enlarged their pages or increased their pagination, or in some cases, both. In Dundee, the bi-weekly *Advertiser* was enlarged while its price was reduced from 3½d to 2½d; its sister papers, the halfpenny four-page *Daily Advertiser* – launched on May 1, 1861 – and the *People's Journal* both had their number of columns increased.

[62] This printing and publishing boom resulted in a "type famine". This led to the old fashioned 'f' being "brought back from retirement" to serve once again as an 's' (Altick 1963: 356)

The *Sporting Life* invested in new type; the *Liverpool Mercury* invested in staff ("increased quantity of typographic and literary labour"); the *Western Morning News* improved the quality of its paper and its type, offered free announcements of birth, marriages and deaths, and pledged to include more news, particularly from mining areas; the *Newcastle Guardian* made its advertising rates more attractive; the *West London Observer* invested in a better quality of paper; the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* declared that it could not further reduce its price from 1d but would invest in its news-gathering services. Charles Dickens, in *All The Year Round*, announced that money saved as a result of paper duty repeal had enabled him to purchase the rights to serialise the latest Bulwer Lytton novel, *Strange Story* – and to do so on better quality paper.[63]

In an editorial of October 9, 1861, the *Nottingham Journal*, declared that it was recruiting more staff and arranging to be supplied with better quality paper. It surveyed the recent history of campaigning against newspaper taxation and – in contrast to the stance adopted in the *Gazette* – was one of the papers which returned to the taxes on knowledge theme. Proclaiming the paper duty to be the "last shackle of the Press", it saw its repeal to be part of the process begun with the repeal of the advertising duty and stamp duty. At a time when there was free trade in so many areas of the economy, the paper asked: "What then could stand in the way of the emancipation of the mind?" (*Nottingham Journal*, 9 October, 1861). It was among many to continue emphasising the societal and educational benefits of repeal.

Away from the newspaper industry, stationers in Liverpool, London, Tadcaster, Sleaford, Dublin, Norwich, Aberdeen, Montrose, Blarney, Tralee, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Cork, Ulverston and Stewarton were among those advertising reductions in their paper prices. Again, from a reading of newspaper advertisements from the end of 1861, it can be seen that wallpaper could be obtained at more advantageous prices in, among other places, Dublin, Bristol, Bath, Whitehaven, Brierley Hill, Cradely Heath and Lancaster, as a result of paper duty repeal. In Jersey and Newcastle paraffin lamps were being sold on the back of the paper duty repeal – to enable people to read their newspapers more clearly.

And yet the *North & South Shields Gazette*, which had responded so speedily and boldly to the repeal of the stamp tax, not only made no reference to the educational aspect of paper duty repeal but made no change to its product. Its price remained the same and there is no mention of improvements to paper, enlargement of pages, increases in pagination or investment in staff.

[63] It could be that all these changes, launches and upgrades are what Hewitt considers the "frenzy of activity associated with repeal" rather than the "immediate impact of repeal" but he gives no sense of the range and scale of this activity. If he is referring to longer term changes, then certainly the demise of the paper duty did not quite produce the systemic and wholesale changes wrought by stamp duty repeal but the lowering of paper costs was undoubtedly another step on the road to the halfpenny press in this country.

**Conclusion**

By the turn of the 1860s, the *North & South Shields Gazette* was changing. On April 21 1860, as outlined in Chapter 7, its *Daily Telegraphic Edition* took on a new title, *North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph* (as well as increasing its number of columns to six). Here we see the daily beginning the next phase of its existence: it has had the parent paper's title appended to its own and it has formally adopted the name by which it had familiarly been known. It was on its way to becoming the company's chief publication. The underlying reasons for this will be covered in the next two chapters, but in this chapter we have seen the *Gazette's* tone and political outlook also changing. In the immediate aftermath of the 1855 repeal of the paper duty, the paper was as proselytising as ever; by 1860 it was, as this section has shown, moving away from that stance. It now stated that paper duty repeal was necessary to correct a constitutional wrong. By 1861 it is saying that the repeal the duties on tea and sugar was more important that paper duty repeal. When it came to responding in practical terms to repeal, it did nothing. The next chapter will assess the reasons for that.

## Chapter 13: The *Gazette* and the Repeal of the Paper Duty (2) – The *Gazette* and the working class: a developing relationship

As alluded to in the last chapter, the *Gazette* had a somewhat surprising response to the repeal of the excise duty on paper. This chapter will provide the context for this – by highlighting a change in the way it viewed and addressed its working-class readers.

In none of its columns did the *North and South Shields Gazette* explain why it had not done as so many other papers had in passing on the benefit of the price reduction in paper to its readers – either directly in the form of a drop in the cover price, or indirectly in employing more staff, or increasing the pagination, or investing in better type. One reason for this might have been that it considered it had, in the wake of stamp duty repeal, already made a huge change to the way it operated. As we have seen in 1861 editorials, the paper no longer saw the repeal of the paper duty in terms of being a boon to the working class; it had switched from talking about it as a further tax on knowledge to saying, first of all, that it ought to be repealed to correct the constitutional wrong it considered had been committed by the House of Lords and then that repealing the tax on tea would have been more beneficial to its poorest readers. To some extent, its editor and leader writers clearly felt the work of providing cheaper newspapers to help educate the working class had been completed. There is also a sense to be gleaned from reading its pages of the early 1860s that the war was over because there had been an improvement in working-class behaviour and that the need to educate less fortunate members of society was less pressing. A more cynical way of looking at this is that perhaps they realised there was more commercial gain to be had – no matter what the state of working-class morals – from cultivating working-class people as readers and advertisers rather than bullying and lecturing them. Alan Lee sees the hegemonic element of newspaper content – "the accent on order and control" – being toned down "after the 1860s" (1976: 28) but with the *Gazette*, there were clear signs of this at the start of the 1860s.

By 1861 there was a marked change in the way the *Gazette* addressed the working class. Some articles – not all – were more conciliatory. In a *Gazette* editorial of May 9, 1861, for instance, the paper is sceptical of measures it itself had advocated a few years earlier, not least the role of mechanics' institutes – to which it and its writers and proprietors had been so deeply attached – in the education of the working class:

> All the members of all the Mechanic's [sic] Institutes in the country do not make one per cent of the population, and of that small percentage only the most insignificant proportion are mechanics or manual labourers. … for the mechanic class, there is no demand among them for the advantages which the Institute is capable of supplying … this plan of self-education is a recognised failure. What improvement had taken place, was down to "indirect ... casual influences. (N&SSG, 9 May, 1861)

Among the casual influences it listed, in a nod towards the educational role played by post-stamp duty publications, was the "increased influence and efficiency of the press". The article was in response to a recent edition of *Macmillan's Magazine* which had pointed to the efficacy of evening classes. In some contrast, however, to the mid-1850s *Gazette*, which was in favour of working men using their leisure time for schooling, it highlighted what it saw as a flaw in this plan: that working men would be too tired after a hard day's work to attend a night class. Significantly, in outlining its objections, the writer even went so far as to apologise for using the words "working-class", saying it was merely "convenient to use this objectionable phrase".

> We must not expect working-class men and boys to be more self-denying, more energetic than other people, and it should be no matter of surprise if it turns out that they are unwilling to spend the intervals of labour in study. … We find few well-to-do middle-class men giving their spare time to metaphysics or political economy. It will be a most remarkable proof of the moral superiority of the classes living by manual labour if the night-school is ever largely successful." (*N&SSG* 9 May 1861)

At South Shields Mechanics' Institute Annual Soiree and Ball in 1864, the chairman, the town's MP Robert Ingham, referred to recent articles in the press which had stated that mechanics' institutes had not been a success – "that they had not turned out any adventurous mechanics or any great proficients in art, science or literature – that as educational institutions mechanics' institutes had failed." But, in a statement in some contrast to those of the *Gazette* editorial of November 1849, quoted in chapter 3, which talked of the need to impart "profound knowledge" at mechanics' institutes, he claimed that he had never looked upon them as schools. He saw them as "places where the learning acquired at school might be further cultivated by association and converse with others." He regarded a mechanics' institute as "a garden and not as a nursery." It was in the nursery they sowed the seed and dibbled in the young plants, but it was in the garden where they watched over the growth of the plant." He went on:

> Now the mechanics institutions were true pleasure gardens, for they came there and enjoyed themselves and favoured others with the learning they acquired by irksome work, and by this intercourse they perfected their learning, and they also laid the foundations of pleasing and profitable companionships and friendships. (*N&SSG&DT 31* December 1864)

There is certainly a sense, when looking at the mechanics' institute announcements and reports in the *Gazette* of the early 1860s, of there being a lot more pleasure on offer, mainly in the form of concerts and exhibitions that would attract the whole community, not just the working class that had previously been considered as requiring the educational and moral improvement that such institutions might offer. Among them were

the two concerts by Dr Mark and his orchestra of "Little Men", at South Shields Mechanics' Institute on Saturday, October 29, 1864; a concert by Messrs Kirton (organ accordion), McIvor (piccolo) and Adey (violin) at Tyne Dock Mechanics' Institute on September 12, 1864; an appearance by the Swiss Singers, comprising six ladies in "picturesque national costume" at South Shields Mechanics' Institute on September 11, 1861; a performance by a troupe of Christy Minstrels at the same venue on December 1 and 2, 1860; a display of William Powell Frith's painting *The Railway Station*, at South Shields Mechanics' Institute in June 1864; a Grand Concert at North Shields Mechanics' Institute on Whit Monday, May 16, 1864; a display of sewing machines at North Shields Mechanics' Institute on April 7, 8 and 9 1864; and – potentially most entertaining of all – Messrs Young and Poole's "marvellous ghost" illusion, which, if that were not exciting enough, was accompanied by a panorama of the coasts of China and Japan, on view at South Shields Mechanics' Institute in April of that year. Similar moves were afoot at the working men's institutes to open them to a wider range of activities and an audience drawn from across the community. A *Gazette* editorial of October 1863 referred to a decision by South Shields Working Men's Institute, which had more in common, it said, with the traditional mechanics' institutes, to add "attractive features in the way of amusement and social intercourse" which were the "speciality" of the working men's clubs that "have recently been established" (*N&SSG* 22 October 1863). A *Gazette* editorial of November 29, 1865, described South Shields Working Men's Institute as more of a club for men who worked, rather than one for working-class men and included among its members "shipowners and shipwrights; soldiers and policemen; keelmen and watermen; printers and reports; cartmen and enginemen" plus, in a sentence that knowingly hinted at a rather unfortunate ambiguity, "four ladies, who are carefully classed amongst the 'trades'!" (*NSG&DT*, 29 November 1865).

On October 31, 1861 the *Gazette* published an article from the *Scotsman* which, denounced those members of the middle class who treated the working class as children. "… it has become a fashion among a multitude of fussy and well meaning people to treat the working classes like children, to be treated with alternations of flattery and flogging." This is in some contrast to articles from the mid-1850s such as its editorial of January 3, 1856, which stated:

> We do not think society has done its duty to the working men of this country in very many respects. The coddling and petting of criminals – of which we have seen something in England during the last ten or fifteen years – is only the foolish kindness of a weak parent trying to make up for previous hardness and severity. (*N&SSG* 3 January 1856)[64]

The 1861 article continues, quoting Robert Burns: "This everlasting 'taking care of the people by laws and police men is the most effective possible way of impairing that self-

[64] See Chapter 10

respect, self-reliance, and self-control which form 'the stalk of carle hemp in men, without which he is but a limber and rotten reed'." And this, remarkably, in an article in opposition to a plan to impose prohibition in certain areas of the country. Was this a case of an editor taking an entirely different editorial line to the newspaper's teetotal proprietor? [65]

On February 7, 1861, the *Gazette* wrote not only in favour of trade unions but in favour of strikes. It refers to an article in *Macmillan* magazine by a Mr Ludlow, a member of the Committee of the Social Sciences Association.

> He reminds us that in a great many instances strikes are successful, and that in a far greater number the threat of a strike leads to an equitable compromise. In withdrawing or threatening to withdraw their labour from the market, working-men, he argues, are no offenders against economical laws – they simply do what other vendors often do successfully and without reproach, create an artificial scarcity to effect an enhancement of price. (*N&SSG* 7 February 1861).

The article contrasts markedly with a *Gazette* article of December 6, 1850:

> What does "a strike" mean? Very few of the working men, or their families, know what a strike means before they enter into it. They expect that it means triumph over their oppressive masters, good wages, and "allowances", and a "regulation" of the trade. But in reality, if the masters, (as on the Tyne is likely to be the case) are more able to "bide a bat" than the man, a strike is more likely to mean, first a few miserable weeks of idleness and vacuity, then with some expatriation, with others a recourse to the soup-kitchen and the Poor Law, and finally a return to their labour, by those who may remain on worse terms than the present. (*N&SSG* 6 December 1850)

Nationally, the period is marked by a change in attitude towards the working class, or at least its "respectable" members. David Nichols points to such a shift following the Crimean War when Roebuck was in favour of the conflict but highly critical of its direction by the Government, and fellow radicals Cobden and Bright opposed it outright. They could all agree on the way that it had been mismanaged by the aristocrats of Lord Aberdeen's administration and that a middle-class government would not make the same mistakes. "The way was prepared for the emergence of … above all, the parliamentary reform

[65] According to the paper's centenary pamphlet, the editor in 1860 and most of 1861 was DM McLennan, who had been described by a "contemporary journalist" as a "most accomplished young man". The pamphlet says McLennan resigned in October 1861 to become a barrister and he practised as such in London until his death. Again, according to the pamphlet, he was succeeded by JT Finlay, "a vigorous writer of a marked style and individuality but one who, it seems was not happy in South Shields " (Shields Gazette 1949). It gives no reason for this assertion. Finlay was in post until 1865, when, according to a letter JC wrote to his father, he resigned to focus on a "salmon fishing concern in Canada" (Stevenson correspondence, 11 July, 1865).

movements, for a change in political leadership. And in this political campaign, the middle-class radicals appealed once again to the working class, but a working class now demarcated by "respectability" (1985: 431). A move towards a second Reform Act, which would bring that sector of the working class into the franchise, gathered force towards the end of the 1850s. In 1859 Disraeli proposed "opening avenues to the mechanic "whose virtue, prudence, intelligence and frugality entitled him to enter the privileged page of the constituent body of the country" (Briggs, 1979: 492). Gladstone meanwhile, argued that "responsible working men possessed the qualities most needed for the proper exercise of the vote – 'self-command, self-control, respect for order, patience under suffering, confidence in the law and respect for superiors'" (1979: 492). The *Gazette* began to follow the campaign that grew up to extend suffrage to such upstanding yet lowly citizens.

When Disraeli drew up his reform bill of 1859, JC Stevenson spoke in favour of extending the franchise to "intelligent and industrious working classes"(although he was highly critical of the terms of the bill and sceptical about the Government's intentions). He told a public meeting in South Shields on March 15, 1859 (as reported in the *Gazette* two days later):

> From what he knew of the working classes, they were as able to discharge the duties of citizens as those who resided in higher rented houses. They were also as exemplary in their conduct as the £10 householders [whom, it was proposed, should gain the vote]. Many of them in their own town were foremost in good works, and the greatest portion of the benevolent work was done by them. They took the most active part in the carrying on of the Sunday Schools, with which he had a tolerable acquaintance. (*N&SSG* 15 March, 1859).

This is in stark contrast to an editorial in the *Gazette* of a mere four years previously. In attacking a Chartist proposal to extend manhood suffrage, it fumed:

> Let the working men of Tyneside enquire into this matter and they will find that the best friends of their education are not the men who spout at Chartist meetings or advocate (until Education has done its proper work), "Manhood Suffrage"… It is – in plain terms – false to say that the elector claims his vote by virtue of his manhood … A certain amount of intelligence is necessary … (*N&SSG* 4 October, 1855).

The article went on to complain that the men of "ignorant classes – and the disaffected classes" were not doing enough to get an education or improve the sanitary conditions of

their homes and neighbourhoods. Only when they had made amends in these areas of life could they become electors.[66]

Perhaps most significantly of all, working men had by 1861 become a target of advertising within the *Gazette*. A rise in working class spending power would appear to be consistent with the sketchy details known about wages during the period. McCord refers to wages increasing in the "third quarter of the century" (from 1850) and that this improvement became more pronounced from the 1860s (1991: 332). Best, citing Briggs and others, refers to "considerable 'working class progress" from the 1840s but makes the point that such progress was not entirely predicated on wage rises, but on other factors: "in the rising proportion of better-paid jobs, in improved environment, cultural provisions, shorter work hours etc. (1971: 114). Of the 82 mentions of the words "working men" in the weekly *North & South Shields Gazette* in 1861, 34 were in advertisements; 12 of these were for working men's suits and overcoats; eight were for working men's watches. The remainder were for a couple of publications that would at least, in part, have been intended for a working-class audience: nine were for a pamphlet in the series *Household Tracts for the People*, price 2d, entitled *Working Men's Hindrances, Set Forth by a Working Man*; the remaining five were for a collection of prize essays by working men and women.

In 1855, however, while the working class were seen as a target for recruitment ads [67] within the *Gazette* publications, they were not, in any significant way, as a target for goods. There had been 42 mentions of the words "working men" in the weekly *North & South Shields Gazette* that year, of which eight were advertisements but none was directed at working men themselves. Seven of those were for businesses proclaiming that their work was carried out by the best workmen; the eighth mention came in the words of a song used in an advertisement for a Joseph's outfitters of Newcastle, but its reference to working men is somewhat obscure.

In 1856 there were 56 mentions of "working men" in the *North & South Shields Gazette* but none of these came in advertisements directed at that demographic. In 1857, in the *North & South Shields Gazette,* there were 47 mentions of working men, three of which were advertisements: a bookseller's listing for *Working Men's Hindrances*.

In 1858 there were 35 mentions of working men, two of which were advertisements for another publication which might have expected to attract a working-class audience:

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[66] Three months earlier, in an editorial inspired by a debate at a meeting of Newcastle Town Council, the *Gazette* warned that areas of unsanitary housing would become a hotbed of insurrection if the "revolutionary spirit" of Europe were to "find its way to England". "The unhealthy condition of the houses of our workingmen will be made a watchword and war cry of the democracy – and that the squalor, disease, and mortality [sic] of the poor will rise up in judgement against the rich". Once again, the *Gazette* warned that such conditions ought to be improved not only "as a religious and moral duty" but "as a measure of prudence and safety" – to safeguard the rest of society against democratic insurrection from below (*N&SSG*, 27 December 1855).

[67] See Chapter 10

*Household Truths for Working Men*, was listed among many other titles in a bookseller's advertisement, but at the rather more prohibitive price of 1 shilling and sixpence. In 1859 there were 62 mentions of working men in the *North & South Shields* Gazette, including one ad – for a North Shields company that was selling off a large stock of working men's lamps.

In 1860 the ads increase. There are 57 mentions of the words "working men" in the *North & South Shields Gazette*, eight of which come in adverts – seven for *Household Truths for Working Men* in another long list of titles at a bookseller's; one, of more practical application, for a steamer service on the Tyne between South Shields and Newcastle which, "for the convenience of working men", would include a service leaving South Shields at 5am for their workplaces at Howdon Dock and Jarrow.

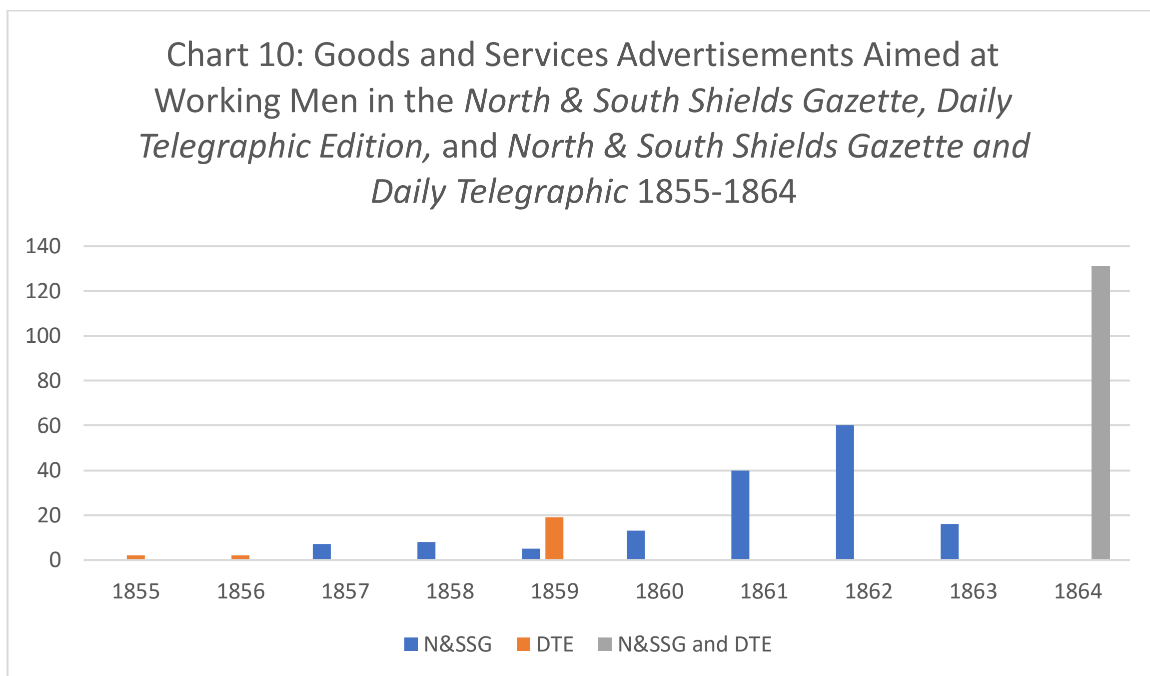
As shown above, in 1861 there was a significant shift in working class ads towards coats, overcoats and watches. That trend continues in 1862 when out of 96 mentions of working men in the *North & South Shields Gazette*, 54 of them were for advertisements, with 42 for workmen's coats, six for workmen's watches ("extra strong") and five for weekly tickets for working men (1 shilling) and working boys (6d) on the daily ferry from North Shields to Newcastle. There was also one for a Christmas tea, concert and ball at South Shields Working Men's Institute. The following year the number of working men's ads in the publication had dropped sharply to 10 out of 58 mentions, including four for watches, six for *Working Men's Hindrances* and one for another publication, *Better Days for Working People* but in 1864, when the *North & South Shields Gazette* and the *Daily Telegraph* were amalgamated as the *North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph*[68], the number of working men's ads had rocketed to 117 out of 373 mentions, including 100 for workmen's watches.

When we turn to the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* there are two mentions of the words "working men" in the whole of 1855, both of them in advertisements but these were announcements relating to a talk at South Shields Working Men's Institute on the subject of "Cromwell: The Man, the Warrior and the Prince". In 1856 in the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* there are seven mentions of working men, two of which were in advertisements: one for a talk at the Central Hall on the subject of "The Representative Man – A Model for Working Men [69]; the other for a talk at the mechanics' institute which states the discounted admission price for members of the working men's institute. In 1857 there were 22 mentions of the words "working men" in the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*, three being ads, but all were in the form of announcements: two were related to the donation of the takings of a circus performance to the town's mechanics' and working men's

[68] see next chapter
[69] See Chapter 10

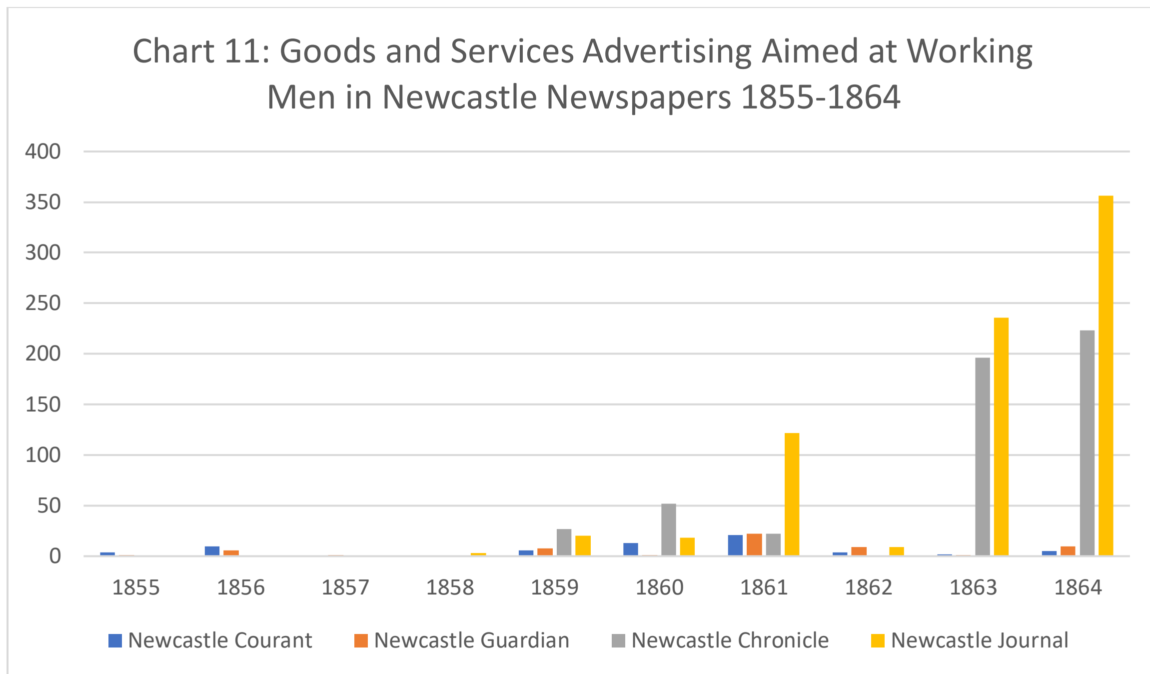
institutes, the third related to an annual excursion by a group of tailors. [70] It is in 1859 that we see a change: in that year, out of 53 mentions of the words "working men" in the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* there were 19 ads and of these 11 were for goods aimed at working men – nine were for working men's paraffin lamps; one was from a draper's, offering discounted fabrics specifically to the wives of working men; another, addressed to "working men anxious to become their own landlords", concerned the sale of 20 freehold cottages in High Street, Jarrow, for which the "purchase money" would be taken in instalments (*DTE*, 23 July, 1859); the remainder were for events at the working men's institute.

If we look at this in the form of a chart, the steep rise in adverts for working men is clearly visible (but for an inexplicable drop in 1863).



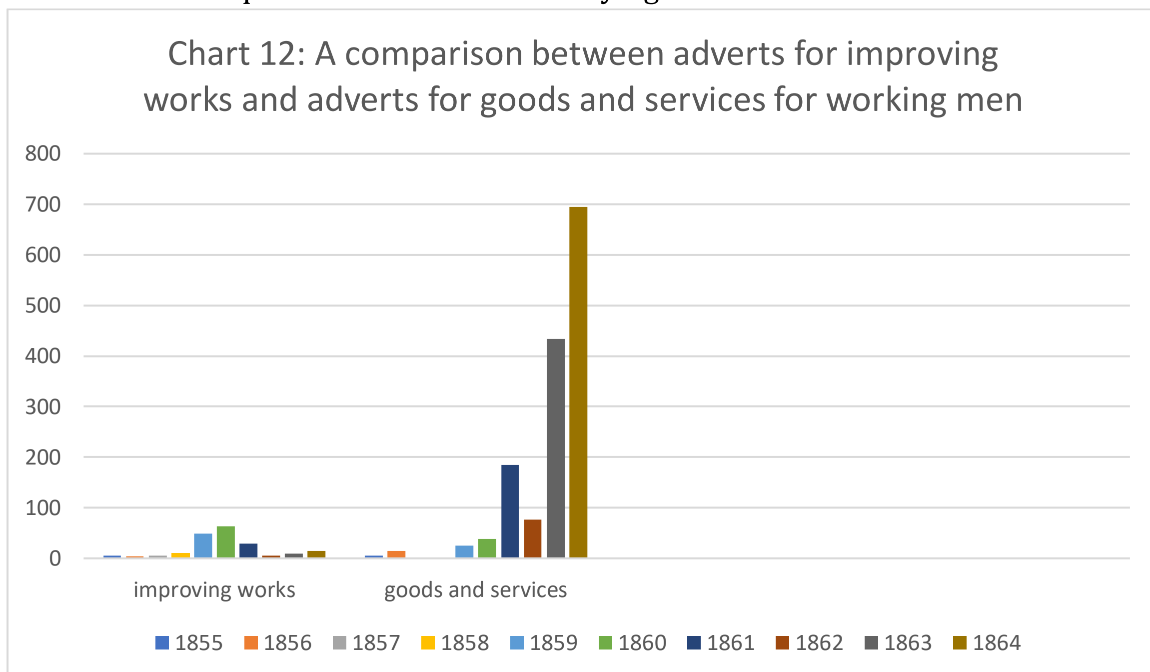

A similar picture emerges if the same kinds of advertisements are analysed in the four Newcastle newspapers over the same period: a steady rise and then a huge leap in the early 1860s:

[70] Copies of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* for 1858 and the *North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph* (as it was renamed in April 1860) for 1860, 1861, 1862 and 1863 are not available in the British Newspaper Archive. Copies for 1859 have been archived with the *North & South Shields Gazette.*



[71]

And if we separate advertisements for goods and services from advertisements for improving works of all kinds – pamphlets, essay competitions, lectures, worthy magazines – across the *Gazette's* two publications and the four Newcastle papers, an even clearer picture emerges (see Chart 12 below) of the working man as a retail target rather than someone who requires his behaviour modifying.




[71] The dip in numbers for 1862, which is consistent across all the titles, might be connected with the disaster at Hartley Colliery in Northumberland on January 16, 1862, when 204 men and children died. The advertising columns that year were filled with notices of donations from groups and individuals to the victims' families.

## Conclusion

In some respects, the *North & South Shields Gazette* began to change its approach to the working class in a remarkably quick time. It was only a matter of five or six years from the apparent height of hegemony in the immediate aftermath of the repeal of the stamp duty to its rather more inclusive articles in the start of the 1860s. On the other hand, when considered in tandem with the way it viewed working class advertising, this shift was entirely consistent with the process that had begun in 1853 with the repeal of the advertisement duty in gradually prioritising commercial considerations. In the overall conclusion to this thesis, this process will be considered in more depth. That conclusion will also take into account the further significant steps in that process detailed in the next chapter.

# Chapter 14: The Launch of the Four-Page Daily

This chapter will look at the launch of the halfpenny daily evening version of the *Gazette* in January 1864. As it will show, it grew from the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* of 1855 and from the *Gazette's* new relationship with its readers.

On December 17, 1863, the *North & South Shields Gazette* announced that the *North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph* – as the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* had been known since April 1860 – would, on January 4, 1864, be enlarged into a four-page daily paper, under the same name, price one halfpenny. The paper would be published at 5pm Monday to Saturday with the weekly edition, comprising eight pages, moved from Friday evening to Saturday morning; its price would be three-halfpence. There was no mention at this time of extending readership to "all classes" or " the poorest person" or "the humblest social circles", only of seeking the support of "the public" and providing a service for "every man". There was, though, talk of building on the success and the principles of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*, which had been "so warmly supported and [had] met with such universal approbation". It was now time for "another advance", which would mean that "every man may now have his daily paper at his own fireside".

> The *Gazette* will then definitely assume the character towards which it has been gradually tending ever since the removal of the newspaper stamp – that of a regular daily paper. (*N&SSG* 17 December 1863)

The writer of the article then apparently had a second thought and corrected himself to state that the *Telegraphic Edition* had been a daily paper from the outset. It continued:

> In point of fact, we have published a daily paper during all that time. The sheet issued every evening as a supplement to the weekly has gradually grown upon our hands, until at length further enlargement of the same plan has become impracticable. With the limited space at our disposal we found we could not do justice to the interests of the district, to the important general news of the day, or to the advertising business which the existence of a daily medium was creating. (*N&SSG* 17 December 1863)

The article pointed out that it been charging a higher rate for advertising in the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* partly because of the greater prominence it was able to give on its single sheet but also, rather surprisingly, to put off advertisers – "to operate as a check on advertising" – because it simply did not have the space to accommodate such an amount of advertising.

Although it stated January 4 as its launch date, the *Gazette* was first seen in its daily four-page format on Saturday, January 2, with the edition of Thursday, December 31 being the last under the title of *North & South Shields Gazette and Northumberland and Durham Advertiser*.[72] That issue contained an article that continued the conciliatory approach to class we saw in the last chapter and was in stark contrast to the report of March 6, 1856 in which the paper had reported on a talk entitled "The Representative Man – A Model for the Working Classes".[73] This time, instead of offering a version of the working man that working men might aspire to emulate, it reported the words of a speaker who stated that the working man as he already existed was "the model man". At a ball and concert at North Shields Working Men's Institute, "well-attended by workmen and their wives", the Rev. Mr Salmond told the audience that he considered "a working man as the model man." He went to express his regret that he "had not learned some trade". He was proud that his ancestors had been working men. "He rejoiced to be able to state these facts regarding his ancestors, and he believed that, on this account, his blood was purer than it would otherwise have been." Since he had arrived in the town he had met working men who were "so noble that, on their account, he admired and loved the class to which they belonged"(*N&SSG&DT* 2 January 1864).

On January 6 the *Gazette* included a report of a speech by Edward Baines, the Liberal MP for Leeds, in favour of giving the vote to working class men:

> So long as the intelligent labour of the kingdom is all but wholly unrepresented in the legislature, there remains a great injustice unaddressed … when I look at the state of the franchise, and see that the working classes, although they form at least three-fourths of the population, have only a minute fragment of a share in the representation, and that fragment constantly diminishing, I am astonished that such a state of things can be allowed to continue. (*N&SSG&DT*, 6 January 1864)

By May 1864 the *Gazette* was once again questioning the use of the term "working class": "It would be well if the everlasting talk about the 'working classes' could be discontinued …" This came in an editorial which referred to a speech by Gladstone:

> … what Mr Gladstone said of the working classes cannot fail to be approved of by all who know anything of those classes. In no respect whatever are they inferior in personal character to those immediately above them. In point of intelligence, independence, and honesty the better class of working men are certainly above the class of small shopkeepers. Even socially they can scarcely be said to be beneath them or apart from them. Why then should they be kept separate politically?

[72] At the top of each inside page, however, the title had already been abbreviated to *Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph*, and that title was retained for the inside pages of the new Saturday weekly

[73] See Chapter 7

(*N&SSG&DT, 14 May 1864*)

One element of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* that the new daily would build on was not just the "general news of the day" but the provision of local news. The 1849 launch of the weekly had, in its list of priorities, made no mention of local news; the 1855 *Daily Telegraphic Edition* had become a vehicle for breaking local news; the 1864 *Gazette* pledged that "the local news of our own district" would "meet with every attention." To that end the paper had "made arrangements with well-informed correspondents in the neighbouring towns and villages, so that we may be informed down to the latest hour of any occurrence of importance". It declared: "It is the foremost duty of every journal to awaken public attention to important local questions, which would otherwise fail to be discussed, or even thought of" (*N&SSG* 17 December 1863).

The four-page daily prioritised breaking news – local and national – in the way that the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* had. Instead of the long excerpts from the London papers and the parliamentary reports that had been the norm for pages 2 and 3 of the weekly *North & South Shields Gazette*, the new paper had the latest telegraphic news on page 2, its first full page of editorial, either directly under the masthead, or after a leader column, with each item often being merely a paragraph in length. This was followed by the "Local Intelligence" column of regional snippets, which had customarily been consigned to page 4 of the old weekly. Court reports, local council reports, shipping news, market prices and sporting odds were now on page 3 and older items of foreign news on page 4. In addition, until enough advertising had been attracted to fill the front page there was also a column or two of news on page 1 for much of the first year. The Saturday edition, the first of which was seen on January 9, 1864, reverted to the style of the *North & South Shields Gazette and Northumberland and Durham Advertiser*, with the "Spirit of the Press" page of long excerpts returning as the first item on page 2, followed by lengthy parliamentary reports and editorials.

Brown (1985: 111) states that throughout the Victorian period, news of a particular kind "dominated the newspaper". By this she means "serious reports of public affairs, local and national". This kind of content was certainly a significant component of the *North & South Shields Gazette* and of the new weekly edition of the *North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph* but the daily, just like the *Daily Telegraphic Edition,* placed a much greater emphasis on bringing news of the latest national and international events to its readers as well as the "stackyard fire" kind of story that William Hickson had identified in his evidence to the 1851 Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps. The Saturday January 2 issue – the first in the new format – led with a story about the death of officers and crew in an attack on a Federal gunboat in the American Civil War, then had an item on the conflict between Denmark and Germany in Schleswig-Holstein. The *Local Intelligence* column which followed began with a story about the Duke of Northumberland presenting the mayor of South Shields with a silver cygnet, before moving on to a diverse range of stories that included one about a strawberry plant in Sunderland sprouting fruit in the

unseasonably warm weather, the launch of two lifeboats after the sighting of a mysterious light near the North Pier in Tynemouth, the sudden death of man "of about 56 years of age" in South Shields the previous day, the derailing – without any injuries or damage – of a passenger train that morning on the main line from Newcastle to Sunderland and the death "from burning" that morning in Newcastle Infirmary of an "old woman" (aged 55) whose clothes had caught fire when she was warming herself by her fire. These local stories are exactly the kind of article – with the addition of photographs and "human angle" and some sense of proportion about the comparative worth of human life – local newspapers would come to focus on in the 20th and 21st Century.

This is in some contrast to the page 2 content of the final edition of the old-style *North & South Shields Gazette and Northumberland and Durham Advertiser*, three days earlier. Its first item was the paper's *Literature* column which led with a review of *The Forty Days After Our Lord's Resurrection* by the Rev W Hanna, LLD, author of *The Last Days of Our Lord's Passion.* This was followed by a half-column excerpt from the *Economist* on the finances of France and a column-length exposition (not a comparatively pithy news story as listed above) on the notoriously unfathomable Schleswig-Holstein question taken from the *Saturday Review*. This in turn was followed by two columns of news from everywhere except North and South Shields – and some of that was more than a week old, including a report of a "stackyard fire" but one which had occurred, vaguely, in the Inverness area "on Thursday week".

The new daily followed the *Daily Telegraphic Edition's* example of focusing on locality and topicality. Some of the international and national news that came by telegraph was derived from the London newspapers but such items were now prefaced by a snappy few words: "The *Times* says:", "The *Daily News* says:", "The *Herald* says:". If an old-style public affairs article was included on page 2, it was usually kept until the final column and often at the bottom of that column. On Wednesday, January 6, there was a classic example of the kind of story that previously had been prioritised on that page. It began: At the annual meeting of the Exeter School of Art, on Friday, Sir Stafford Northcote took the chair as president, and delivered a lecture on 'Art-progress in England'…" However, it was at the bottom of column five. Some of the articles that appeared on the front page of the daily before it had accrued sufficient advertising, were of a similar kind; this was clearly older copy that could be set in advance, leaving page 2 to be completed last with the most up-to-the-minute news. On Friday, January 8, one of the main items of front-page news was a reprint from the *Star* comprising a letter the MP John Bright had sent two days previously seeking to have details of a report that the *Star* had in turn reprinted from the *Birmingham Post* corrected! Also included on that front page was a report of the enthronement of the Bishop of Dublin five days previously. In contrast to both these less than riveting stories, the lead item of page 2 news in that edition, was dated 5pm on the day of publication and comprised the latest from the conflict between Denmark and Germany (a single paragraph about the most recent events rather than another lengthy exposition on the reasons for the dispute). The *Local Intelligence* column included a report

of an accident involving one of the workers building the South Shields pier, who had had a "large quantity of stone" fall on him. We are not yet at the point of this being splashed on the front page with a photograph and full personal details (the unfortunate individual is simply described as "an Irishman and a single man") but we are moving towards that time in the prioritisation of human interest stories. The local news column was followed by a lengthy public affairs report, a meeting of South Shields Volunteer Rifle and Artillery Corps, but there was a particular reason for its prominence: *Gazette* proprietor JC Stevenson was the corps' captain.

The lead story in the telegraphic news column in the Saturday, January 9 edition of the daily was the announcement of the birth of a child (Price Albert Victor) to the Princess of Wales, the future Queen Alexandra. The lead in the *Local Intelligence* column on that same page concerned a fatal accident at a local coal mine, where a man was crushed by a fall of stone. This was followed by a sequel to the story of the Irishman who had been similarly injured on South Shields pier; he too had died. In some contrast, in the weekly edition that also came out that day, page 2 had reverted to the *Spirit of the Press* feature, which began with a two-column excerpt from the *Daily News* on the subject of "Trade and Finance".

On Monday, February 8, the *Local Intelligence* heading was replaced by the somewhat snappier *Local News*. However, for the following Saturday's weekly edition, the *Local Intelligence* title had been retained – but *Local News* was the title in that day's daily and it was back in the daily on the Monday and every edition of the daily until Friday, August 12, when the *Local News* title was itself dropped, with only a single-column rule separating national and international news above and local news below. The title of the whole section was now *Latest News.* On Saturday, October 29, 1864 four editions of the daily *Gazette* were published, covering the developing events in the murder trial of Franz Muller, eventually found guilty of the first killing on a British train.

Two years earlier, on October 16, 1862, the *Gazette* announced that it had moved offices and installed a new printing press. The article stated that the original offices in Dean Street had become cramped and so the paper's proprietors had bought the former premises of a draper, comprising a shop with frontage on the town's high street, King Street, and rooms above. They had also bought and demolished a block of buildings at the rear of the draper's and built a new machine room to house the printing presses. The King Street shop doubled as the paper's front office and a bookseller's and stationer's run by Richard Whitecross and Augustine Yorke, the paper's managers. Next to the front office were the premises of the Electric Telegraph Company, "whose wires are in direct communication with all parts of England and the continent." The article gave details of the presses, one of them a Napier machine, which printed the weekly *Gazette*, and one by Cassell, Potter and Galpin, which printed the daily *North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph* (as the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was by then called). When the newspapers had been printed in Dean Street, the presses had, for most of the time, been powered by steam; in the new offices, a pair of hydraulic engines by the company of Nelson and Sanderson

had been fitted. When the broadsheet four-page daily *Gazette* began operation, even this improved machinery was found to be inadequate for printing this number of pages every day, so, on May 28, 1864, the *Gazette* announced plans to invest in an improved printing press to meet the demands of daily publication. The editorial claimed the success of the daily had "surpassed their expectations" but that it could not increase its circulation without better and more expensive machinery. The proprietors had decided to install a press, the first of its kind in the area, by the Hoe company of New York, which supplied the London dailies and the bigger provincial morning papers in Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The article took a swipe at those who had imagined it would be an easy thing to set up cheap newspapers after the repeal of the stamp duty – and at those who had feared such a development – pointing out that many such had come to the realisation that, to be viable, a cheap newspaper needed a large circulation and that in turn required a powerful, expensive printing press. In order to survive at a halfpenny (plus 1½d rather than 3½d for the weekly), the *Daily Gazette* needed such machinery. The article also stressed that, in order to increase its circulation, it would be striving to cover more "local interests" – not just in the towns of North and South Shields but in surrounding districts and that, in coming out cheaply each evening, it would be particularly suited to working men who could read it after their day's work: "As both in point of price and the time of its publication the *Gazette* is exactly suited to the circumstances of the working man, we anticipate a great increase in the neighbourhood, through the exertions of local agents, supported by the increased attractions of the paper" (*N&SSG&DT,* 28 May 1864). In that article we see at work the essential process in the prioritisation of news: the strain on existing machinery and staff of daily production; the strain on revenue of cutting cover price; the need to invest in more powerful, expensive equipment; and then the additional need – to finance such investment – of making a newspaper as attractive as possible to as wide an audience as possible, by the publication of breaking news, preferably of the most eye-catching kind.

The Hoe was a rotary press, which printed on a continuous roll of paper and could produce between 12,000 and 14,000 copies per hour. Patented in 1845, it was first used in the UK by *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* in 1856. The speed and capacity of a rotary press allowed newspapers with large circulations to have later deadlines and so be able to more easily include breaking news.[74] They were very expensive so were a sign of confidence and something of a gamble – they required fewer men to operate them but increased circulation and advertising revenue were required to offset the cost (Black, 2019; Brown, 1985). Matthews writes: "Without taxation … the path was cleared for the provincial newspaper to revolutionise and become a mass-circulation, mass-produced product with advertising revenues central to their profitability" (2017: 69). The increased emphasis on local news, the improvement in the paper's ability to print breaking news, the

[74] Although the *Gazette* did not react immediately to the repeal of the paper duty in 1861 by investing in new equipment or reducing its cover price, as was the case with other publications, the switch to web printing in 1864 can be seen as an indirect consequence. Web had not been widely adopted pre-1861 because of the difficulties of applying the tax, which was levied per sheet, to the rolls of paper (Brown, 1985).

investment itself, point to the fact that the Gazette management was thinking in more commercial terms. Chalaby sees competition being a driver for much of these developments. He regards stamp act repeal as the pivotal point because so many cheap newspapers were launched in its wake and they began competing for the increased readership that repeal opened up. "The immediate effect of this was to create a market of readers, as opposed to a public, and in consequence, to provoke competitive struggles to conquer shares in this market" (1998: 35). This led, he maintains, to a change in the emphasis in newspaper content, away from political coverage which might be considered stuffy and/or off-putting if readers were not of the same political persuasion as the newspaper, to politically neutral and more obviously appealing news stories. "Newsworthiness ceased to be defined by principles, and events began to be reported because journalists had a competitive advantage to gain by publishing them" (1998:84). He goes on:

> Commercially ambitious pressowners adopted a more dynamic view of their readerships. They ceased to perceive the readership of their paper as a closed universe and instead to see it as an expandable market with open and fluid boundaries. (1998: 136)

Similarly, Mathews writes: "the content of these titles was developing from the didactic towards the populist in order to accommodate the interests of a wider population" (2017: 77). The increased emphasis on breaking news was first seen in the United States in the 1830s, where, according to Schudson, "the penny press … invented the modern concept of 'news".

> To be more precise, in the 1830s the newspapers began to reflect, not the affairs of the urban elite in a small trading society, but the activities of an increasingly varied, urban and middle-class society of trade, transportation, and manufacturing … News became the mainstay of the daily paper. The penny papers did not depend on the usual trickle of stale news but sought out news. They took pride in their activity … (1978: 22)

It was in the 1860s that there began to be an increased emphasis on news in British newspapers. Brown's research into the news output in the *Daily Telegraph* focuses on that decade (1985).

As we saw in relation to the immediate post-repeal period, the launch of the rival *Shields Advocate* in January 1855 was a spur to the *Gazette* management launching the *Daily Telegraphic Edition.* Milne's assertion that "in daily publication, the crucial asset was to occupy the field first" (1971: 215) was also relevant to the 1864 *Gazette*. On August 22, 1864, the *Gazette* once more had a local rival, the *Shields Daily News*, a title somewhat more direct than the *North & South Shields Gazette and Daily Telegraph.* The launch of the *Shields Daily News*, another halfpenny evening paper, might have encouraged the *Gazette*

management, driven by the competitive force identified above by Chalaby, to place its increased emphasis on local news. Although it was printed in North Shields and had its office and press there, it was – as evidenced by that title – aimed at both of the "harbour towns". Describing itself as "the independent newspaper of the Port of Tyne", it was set up by Henry Augustine Yorke and Richard Whitecross from the *Gazette*. Was JC Stevenson aware that his founding managers, who were also running the stationer's and bookseller's business from the *Gazette*'s front office, were about to quit to set up a rival daily newspaper covering the same area as the *Gazette?* One imagines he cannot have been happy about such a development; he had, however, given up writing his diary by this time, so it is hard to gauge his opinion. Whitecross & Yorke had often placed advertisements for their shop in the *Gazette* but their last was on June 4, 1864. They continued in business but at other premises: Yorke is listed in the *Shields Daily News* as being a bookseller at 7 King Street, South Shields, which was at some distance from his former premises, the *Gazette* office at 82 King Street. This address is also given for Yorke in the printing and publishing details on the back page of the *Shields Daily News.* In the *Daily News* Whitecross and Yorke were advertising as having prints and lithographs for sale at the *Daily News* offices, which were at 11 Howard Street, North Shields. Yorke's King Street address was listed as the paper's South Shields office; elsewhere in the newspaper, there were regular announcements that Yorke was an advertising agent for the *Times* and other London and provincial newspapers at his King Street premises. On the day the *Shields Daily News* was launched, one Thomas Shields was listed on the back page of the *Gazette* as being responsible for printing and publishing the paper on behalf of the proprietors. He had taken over that role from Yorke on August 1. The *Gazette* offices were listed as 82 King Street and at 4 Howard Street, North Shields, just along the road from those of the *Shields Daily News.* On Tuesday, June 27, 1865, the *Shields Daily News* printed a somewhat ill-tempered editorial that referred to

> The morbid jealousy and ill-concealed fear and dislike which has been exhibited by the *Shields Gazette* towards us from our commencement, and which has been manifest not in an open and manly hostility, but in covert sneers and masked "scurrility". (*Shields Daily News*, 27 June, 1865)

The *Shields Daily News* was an exclusively daily operation from the start, there being no accompanying legacy weekly edition to accommodate. Whitecross and Yorke had been central to the founding and operation of the *Gazette.* Whitecross had, in 1855, been the driving force behind setting up the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* and had, quite possibly, as we have seen, been carrying out the duties of editor of the *Gazette* at that time. JC Stevenson's diary refers to him carrying out some editorial duties from 1852 and the paper's centenary pamphlet quotes him as having firm views on newspaper content:

> There should be two or three columns weekly of the most interesting extracts from all the new works and periodical literature of the day … There should be one column weekly on an average of a selection of racy and

> humorous varieties … Many articles now printed as paragraphs should have large heads whenever they exceed forty lines in length, as in this way they are far more attractive … (Shields Gazette 1949)

This was, of course, his ideal arrangement for a weekly newspaper – he made this statement in a letter advising the *Gazette's* proprietor in 1851, four years before the birth of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*; it is also, given the letter's recipient, an expression of his confidence and authority on such matters. His *Shields Daily News* of August 1864 was, like the new daily *Gazette*, influenced more by the news values of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*. It too prioritised breaking news – its first news page was page 3 – and it went a step further than the *Gazette* in prioritising local news, albeit still under the heading of *Local Intelligence.*

Its first news item reported that the penny savings bank at Willington Quay now had 600 depositors. This was followed by the news that a Mr Heath, a farmer in Benton, had "commenced to cut a fine crop of wheat", and that a three-week-old child from North Shields had been found dead in his bed. Modern news values did not yet quite prevail, however; a report that a 26-year-old Newcastle grocer had drowned while swimming at Tynemouth the previous afternoon could only make fourth place in the column. Local news filled three columns of page 3. National and international news by telegraph (up to 4pm that day) could be found at the top of the fifth and final column of that page; the bottom section of that column contained shipping information such as the barometer and thermometer readings, times of low and high tide and a list of arrivals and departures from the Tyne but also a number of small news items, including a report on the previous night's herring fishing from Shields, complete with the average number of catches. The final item in the column comprised brief reports from that day's business in the London stock markets. Between the local news and the telegraphic reports came a half a column of letters and a column and a half of older news, the lead item of which (about riots in Belfast) did, nonetheless, contain an additional paragraph providing an update from the night prior to publication. The latest report in the *Local Intelligence* section was dated the afternoon prior to publication, but in the second issue of the *Shields Daily News*, when the *Local Intelligence* section had moved to page 2, there was a report of an event that day, the brewster session held on the morning of publication in Tynemouth. The national and international news via telegraph appeared on page 3 of that issue, along with reports of that day's cases at North Shields and South Shields police courts. The court news followed reports of the previous day's cases, which had clearly been typeset first while awaiting the later reports. The last item in the final column of page 3, entitled *Sporting &c*, contained that day's horse racing news and the latest odds.

The *Shields Daily News'* opening editorial referred to the apparent mood of harmony between the classes and took a vigorous stance on the move towards franchise extension.

> It is impossible to separate the astonishing prosperity we have noticed, from that gradual extension of political power to the people which has made all classes understand each other so much better, trust each other more thoroughly, and act together like parties in a common enterprise for the improvement of the common estate. And if the people of Shields have not already got their eyes open to their share in this enlargement of the political power, and to the magnificent tasks still before them, we fully intend to waken them up; and to that end we shall spare neither labour nor bold speaking. (*Shields Daily News,* 22 August, 1864)

Back across the River Tyne in South Shields, the weekly edition of the *Gazette* was nearing the end of its life; on December 31, 1864 it was discontinued. This completed the *Gazette's* transition over 15 years – during which the newspaper business itself had been transformed – from a weekly to a wholly daily publication.

One hundred and eight-five miles to the north west, however, a newspaper had already proclaimed itself to be the first provincial halfpenny evening in the United Kingdom. This was the *Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette*, a weekly which brought out a daily version from August 1863. From the start it trumpeted itself as "the first halfpenny evening newspaper in the United Kingdom". To mark the paper's 40th anniversary in August 1903, it published a league table to show how pre-eminent it was in this regard, and listed the *South Shields Gazette*, with its launch date of January 1864, as second on that list and the *Shields Daily News*, with its launch date of August 1864, as third. There is no mention of the Liverpool daily, the *Events.*

## Conclusion

In launching its four-page daily at the beginning of 1864 and finally jettisoning its parent publication at the end of that year, the *Gazette* had completed the transformation that repeal of the taxes on knowledge had brought about. In the next chapter, the overall conclusion to this thesis will consider this process in more detail, considering it in the light of current theories about the industry's response to the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, and will make a judgement about the paper's place in newspaper history.

## Chapter 15: Conclusion

This chapter will draw the threads of this thesis together to answer the research questions and state my overall argument. It will demonstrate how it has added to existing knowledge but will also point to the limitations of that research and indicate where further research might be carried out.

As outlined in my literature review, much of the debate over the nature of the repeal of the taxes on knowledge centres on the relationship between the repeal campaigners and pro-repeal newspapers on the one hand and the working-class readership that repeal opened up on the other. Looking at existing research, I identified in that review that the debate centred on hegemony, philanthropy and commerce. In the course of writing this thesis, I have discovered that, firstly, it is in fact difficult to separate the philanthropic from the hegemonic, the altruistic from the benignly despotic.

We can see the weekly *North & South Shields Gazette* relating to its new working-class audience for a few years after the 1855 repeal of the stamp duty in an ostensibly hegemonic way; in this respect it continued in the manner in which it had addressed its audience before repeal. Repeal, which reduced the price of the weekly and packaged it as part of an attractive subscription offer with its *Daily Telegraphic Edition,* gave the *Gazette's* proprietor and leading journalists a better chance of getting the didactic articles of the *North & South Shields Gazette* to that working-class audience. Those articles, to modern eyes at least, seem shocking in their blatant "othering" and their apparently naked self-interest.

I have shown that the paper's stance in this respect echoed that of the middle-class MPs who began their repeal campaign in the 1830s and then reanimated it to such effect in the 1850s. I have also shown there were clear links between the MPs' Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge (APRTOK) and the *Gazette*: the campaign organisation's local representative worked at the newspaper and there was a relationship between the paper's proprietor and two of the leading repeal campaigners, the MP Joseph Hume and the journalist Thornton Hunt. I have demonstrated through the numerous statements of the APRTOK and the *Gazette* that both wanted the taxes repealed because they were a constraint on trade, not just in terms of their financial imposition but through the anomalies and utter confusion of their regulations. However, as I set out, the MPs and the paper (until the early 1860s at least) were equally concerned with the effect repeal would have on working-class education. The *Gazette's* stated aim of "training the mind of many" (*DTE* 7 September 1855) has echoes of Milner Gibson's desire to "give to men of capital and respectability the power of gaining access by newspapers, to the minds of the working class" (HC Deb 16 April 1850 vol 110 c378). The societal concerns of the *Gazette* and the APRTOK also chimed with the aims of the social and charitable organisations in the newspaper's circulation area; many of the *Gazette's* leading lights

were active members of those organisations. In referring to such societal initiatives, Royle maintains that “though total middle-class hegemony … was never established, there is widespread agreement among historians that something like it is to be found in mid-Victorian Britain” (2012:130). He gives examples of the middle-classes “quite openly” admitting that their aim was the “socialisation of the lower classes”.

However, Royle also points to a degree of philanthropic intention: “it would be a gross distortion to imply that the middle classes saw their actions as anything other than beneficent, or that many of the working classes did not welcome what was offered to them” (2012: 131). As discussed in my methodology, while distance does at least allow us “to make sense of the past” (Tosh, 2006: 198), we should guard against imposing modern-day notions on the actions and behaviour of yesteryear and there is a certain amount of subjectivity involved in any consideration of such concepts as hegemony (Cerny, 2006). I do not think it is stretching the imagination beyond reasonable bounds to state that the committed newspapermen of the *Gazette* of these years and their fellow active citizens would be outraged if we were able to accuse them of reprehensible or unchristian conduct. They undoubtedly considered they were acting in an ethical way; they undoubtedly wanted working class folk to be less threatening to the classes above them but they also genuinely wanted them to live happier lives. In this respect – and to this extent – the *North & South Shields Gazette* articles of the period conform to Hampton’s view, when he talks of newspapers being “… both inclusive and optimistic in welcoming the common reader into a government by public discussion, and at the same time proselytizing in trying to encourage the working classes to hold the ‘proper’ opinions” (2001: 214). He goes on: “There is no incompatibility between seeing the hegemonic, self-serving function of the ‘free trade’ of ideas, and at the same time granting the sincerity with which many among the dominant classes promoted it in the mid-Victorian years” (2001: 215-6). LG Mitchell, in his biography of Bulwer Lytton, the novelist and repeal campaigner who was so vocal in the Parliament of the 1830s in his desire to prescribe the corrective “medicine” of respectable newspapers to the working class, talks of Lytton’s genuine sympathy for the poor, expressed in such novels as *Paul Clifford* (1830), *Eugene Aram* (1832), *Night and Morning* (1841) and *Lucretia* (1846), and his genuine desire to improve their lot (2003). I have not been able to discover if JC Stevenson and his editors read Bulwer Lytton, but again, it is hard to envisage them – on the evidence of their writing – departing from him in these sentiments. In fact, I would suggest it is possible to identify two strands of hegemonic activity in operation here: such Tory newspapers as the *Newcastle Journal* and *Newcastle Courant* were exercising an *exclusive* hegemony in that they wanted to keep working class people in their place but were certainly not spending any time or money on encouraging them to be happy in that state; the *Gazette*, on the other hand was *inclusive* in its hegemonic designs – wanting the poor to be contented occupants of the social hierarchy’s lowest rung.

The *Daily Telegraphic Edition*, on the other hand, might be seen in a somewhat different light. As I have shown, it had no room for editorialising or proselytising; it prioritised

news of a kind that would attract a wide audience and in particular a working class audience that could afford such a cheap publication. Moreover, it presented the news in a way that made it easily digestible; it was thus pioneering modern methods of news presentation and writing. In the short term, this could also be seen as part of a didactic process: in order to get the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* for free, members of the working class would have to subscribe to the full package of newspapers, including the lecturing and hectoring weekly edition; the *Daily Telegraphic Edition's* lively treatment of news stories might be seen as the attractive packaging for the more morally instructive material of the weekly, as envisaged by Milner Gibson in the House of Commons[75]; the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* framed the news so that the working class "could maintain that continued acquaintance with passing events by which alone they can be rightly understood and appreciated" (*DTE* 7 September 1855) and thereby have their minds "trained" appropriately; the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* was also a vehicle for court stories that might warn and instruct. In the longer term though – certainly by the early 1860s – the commercial imperative of stamp duty repeal, which had its roots in the release of advertising revenue following the repeal of the advertisement duty in 1853, could not be resisted by the *Gazette*. News stories began to be prioritised for purely commercial reasons. News is an uncomplicatedly easy product to sell. It appeals to all; the increased audience it brings can be sold to advertisers. There are benefits to be had from daily exposure of advertising to its market. But as the Gazette pointed out in an 1864 editorial, a cheap daily newspaper needs a wide circulation to make it viable, which in turn requires better and more expensive printing equipment, which in turn requires a wider circulation – and so on. In that editorial, the paper stressed that it would endeavour to increase circulation through seeking out an increased number of local news stories. In setting out its decision to launch its 1864 halfpenny daily, it had gone as far as it could with the *Telegraphic Edition* in providing space for such articles and, crucially, advertising; it even claimed to be charging a higher advertising rate to keep advertising down to a manageable level. In that respect the 1864 daily can be seen as simply an enlargement of the *Daily Telegraphic Edition.* As Schudson (1978) and Chalaby (1998) have stated, another established way to increase circulation is to place a greater emphasis on news stories than political editorialising that might run counter to the beliefs of the audience – which is, of course, a reversing of the process we saw in operation with the weekly *North & South Shields Gazette* in the mid-1850s. As I have also shown, the weekly became less confrontational in the early 1860s, less critical of the working class and less exercised about working class education: in 1861 the *Gazette* did not see the repeal of the paper duty in terms of educational benefits. The working class, meanwhile, had become a market for advertising – even in the *Newcastle Journal,* which in 1855 had been so dismissive of such a notion.

Together, the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* and the weekly *North & South Shields Gazette,* show evidence of a response that was far more nuanced than general theories about

[75] See page 45

stamp duty repeal have suggested. With this newspaper company at least, there wasn't the immediate switch to commerciality in 1855 as proposed by Chalaby (1998). The *Gazette* was straddling at least two worlds. When it came to the Thursday night weekly edition of the *Gazette*, its proprietors were still acting, in the initial period after stamp duty repeal, in an overtly didactic way but with the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* they were, for the most part, acting as one of Chalaby's "journalists," with a cheap, lively product that was more obviously a "commodified form of public address", as Conboy put it (2011: 2), albeit one that was part of a subscription package that linked commerciality with education. The *Gazette* management and its leading writers at that point believed strenuously in the idea of the press as educator but also wanted to make money – as we see in James Stevenson's letter of 1853 and Whitecross's of 1856 to James Stevenson, in which he wrote of their relaunched newspaper providing them with "social influence and commercial advantage." This is the key statement about the *Gazette's* response to stamp duty repeal: the newspaper's management wanted "social influence" *and* "commercial advantage".

Can the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* be regarded as more than merely a "telegraphic sheet" (Lee 1976: Hobbs 2018)? Can be it be regarded as, contrary to Manders' view (1999), a "true daily newspaper"? And if so, can its claim to be the country's oldest provincial halfpenny evening newspaper – launching eight years before its only other existing rival, the *Greenock Telegraph* – be substantiated?

As demonstrated in chapter 9, the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* contained news from its very first issue and breaking local news from its third. It was a newspaper. The *Daily Telegraphic Edition* can only be dismissed as "a true newspaper" when compared with the accepted notion of a mid-19th Century newspaper. Hampton describes such a newspaper thus:

> Papers contained leading articles propounding the official 'line', verbatim transcriptions of important speeches, strictly informative (not to say accurate) advertisements, and little else. Views, rather than news, were the hallmark of this mid-Victorian press. (2004: 217).

On the contrary, news rather than views was the hallmark of the North and South Shields *Daily Telegraph.* Williams says it was only in the 1880s that there arrived in UK journalism the "inverted pyramid" style of writing – in which the most important information was placed in the introduction of a news story and what followed was arranged in order of decreasing relevance – and the concept of "news values", whereby an established idea of what would grab the attention of the reader determined the content of such a story (2010). However, we can see the *Gazette* prioritising breaking news, often of a shocking nature – fatal accidents, exciting court cases – and at least condensing accounts of events in shorter articles in its *Daily Telegraphic Edition* from 1855. This was at variance with the practice of the other daily newspapers launched in 1855, but had similarities with the

approach of the Sunday newspapers and, in turn, of the more populist iterations of the working-class radical press, which is ironic in the case of the latter, given the middle-class fear of such publications. As we have seen, this was not an unequivocal revolution in reporting style or content; the *Daily Telegraphic Edition* included old-style verbose, and often verbatim, accounts when space allowed and importance dictated; the 1864 daily *Gazette* initially included such articles on the front page when it lacked sufficient advertising, retained them in the Saturday weekly edition while it lasted, and featured them in the daily after the opening news briefs. Nor was the four-page daily averse to the occasional suggestion that the working class ought to keep quiet and not cause trouble, as we saw in its report of the Jarrow Chemical Works outing to Bishop Auckland in 1865. Nor yet was there a rapid movement towards front-page breaking news; the *Gazette* retained its front page entirely for advertisements until Monday, November 9, 1931 when it switched to news. However, from 1855 we can see it adopting an entirely different approach when and where appropriate. The *Daily Telegraph* was a newspaper – and one in its own right rather than simply an add-on to the weekly. The newspaper itself certainly recognised that fact. On February 24,1899, the *Gazette* published its 50th anniversary number. On its masthead it proclaimed:

OLDEST DAILY NEWSPAPER IN THE PROVINCES. ESTABLISHED AS AN EVENING DAILY IN 1855

Inside, there was a retrospective article which stated in very much a matter-of-fact manner, that "it was in 1855 that the paper commenced to be published daily". There was also a piece by former editor Aaron Watson in which he recalled how the founder of the *Bolton Evening News* had written to the *Athenaeum* to celebrate the 21st anniversary of his newspaper, claiming it was the "oldest provincial daily" (*SDG&ST*, 24 February 1899). Watson had replied to that letter to say the *Shields Gazette* was 10 or 11 years older than that. It was actually 12 years older, the *Evening News* having been founded in 1867. In Watson's anniversary edition article there is a reference to a paper that would appear to be the *Events*, founded in Liverpool in May 1855. Watson mentions a Mr Justin McCarthy, who, in a debate about the birth of provincial evenings, "told of a still earlier daily paper with which he had been connected at Liverpool." Watson continues: "but he missed the point of the discussion, which was not, when the first provincial daily newspaper was started, but which of existing provincial newspaper was the first to come into existence. Dead papers did not count" (*Shields Daily Gazette*, 24 February 1899).

To sum up, the two main elements of my argument are as follows:

i. The *Daily Telegraphic Edition* of the *North & South Shields Gazette* was indeed a newspaper and therefore can be regarded as Britain's oldest halfpenny provincial evening daily. That distinction ought to be more widely recognised in histories of the press in this country. In terms of its historic distinctiveness, though, the *Daily*

*Telegraphic Edition* deserves recognition not so much for its place in any league table, but rather for its unusual and enterprising nature: that its proprietors were trying to do something that they suspected was unique, a claim that this thesis has gone some way towards substantiating

ii. Existing theories about the response to repeal of the taxes on knowledge are, in isolation, inadequate to encapsulate the response of the *North & South Shields Gazette.* Its management and leading journalists were not solely concerned with "modifying" the behaviour of a working-class readership in a hegemonic manner, nor were they acting entirely philanthropically towards that readership or merely concerned with increased profits; they were motivated by hegemonic, philanthropic *and* commercial concerns.

In addition, this thesis has demonstrated that:

- The weekly *North & South Shields Gazette* was a mainstream newspaper that did, contrary to Black's reservations (see page 17), attempt to "socialize the working classes into a passive acceptance of laissez-faire economic principles" (2019:89). Meanwhile, the *Daily Telegraphic Edition*, contrary to the views of Altick (1963) and Morrison (cited by Milne, 1971), did shape its content to reach a new, largely working-class audience.
- The pronouncements of the MPs who led the APRTOK campaign groups were more than mere rhetoric. They resonated further than the walls of Westminster and were echoed by leader writers of the *North & South Shields Gazette;* in this respect, James Curran is right to stress the significance of those words. The APRTOK was, however, more of a national organisation with regional offshoots than Curran (2018) states.
- I have identified a striking difference between the *Gazette's* response to stamp duty repeal and its response to paper duty repeal, in that by the time of the latter, in 1861, the newspaper had, to a significant extent, revised its view of the working class – as an audience and as a market – and was less concerned with modifying that class's behaviour and morals.
- The "immediate impact of the removal of the paper duties" (Hewitt 2014: 175) was more readily discerned nationally than Hewitt appears to suggest.
- The term "taxes on knowledge" was in use almost 50 years before the date Wiener (1969) identifies as its first use.

### Limitations of research and areas of further study

Although I have looked at several iterations of a newspaper across two decades and, for comparison, at other newspapers in the same area of the country and publications

elsewhere in Britain that launched at the same time as the *Daily Telegraph Edition,* my research has largely focused on what happened at one newspaper operation. I have been able to say how that experience related to existing theories and to conclude that existing theories do not entirely reflect that experience. However, it is not possible to accurately extrapolate from such focused research results to say how an entire industry responded, or to overturn entire theories. Clearly, there is work to be done on this subject; an exhaustive study of how a large number of newspapers responded to newspaper tax repeal has yet to be carried out; only then could more extensive conclusions be drawn in relation to existing theory. To a large – and growing – extent the British Newspaper Archive has made such a vast undertaking practicable but it would ideally require a team of researchers to bring it to fruition. And, vast though it is, the archive is also limited: there are gaps in its collection of digitised newspapers. Some of the newspapers that have not been digitised were directly relevant to my research, among them the *Newcastle Messenger and Advertiser*, the *Northern Daily Express*, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* and the *Hull Morning Telegraph.* I was able to access these titles to a limited extent through the collections at Newcastle Central Library and the British Library but the next stage in my research would be to examine them more extensively and over a longer historical time period. Now that further copies of the *Events* have been discovered, further comparison could be made between this and the *Daily Telegraphic Edition.* There is also more work to be done with the North East newspapers in this period that *are* included in the online archive and which I consulted to a limited extent; among these are the *Gateshead Post, Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury, Newcastle Daily Chronicle, Teesdale Mercury, Alnwick Mercury and Morpeth Herald.* In addition, there were some online resources, including some academic journals, that I was not able to access, although I was able to search the subjects of their articles in online indexes. Moreover, I would be interested to explore other research techniques such as the "mining" of digitised text using corpus linguistics programs, (Hobbs, 2016: 232) to further analyse word choice and writing styles employed by *Gazette* writers.

All historical research is selective. Even with the British Newspaper Archive and its search facility it is not possible to cover every issue of any research topic. I am aware there was a heavy bias towards male writers and readers in this thesis; because of the patriarchal nature of society at the time, women appear only sporadically in the texts. Where there have been mentions of the position of women, I have made a point of highlighting them. There has already been important research on this subject and it would be useful to add to that with a more forensic look at the depiction of women in the Victorian provincial press. It would be also be useful to look in greater depth at the *Gazette's* attitude to the working class in general in the 1860s, and to track the development of the paper's relationship with its readers in the period after 1865, and to look more closely at the role of local news within the newspaper into the 20th Century; in this thesis it was possible to make only a very limited statement about the positioning of news in the post-1865 period.

My immediate research aim is to look further at the attitude and response to repeal among other titles launched in this pivotal period in the history of British journalism.

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**Appendix:** Content analysis chart, *Daily Telegraphic Edition* 1855-56

| Date | Local stories | Market reports from day of publication | Shipping and sea reports from day of publication | Wind and weather reports from day of publication | Reports by telegraph – (by column) | Sport | House Ads (number of columns) | Adverts (number of columns; number of ads) | Births, marriages and deaths |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| July 2, 1855 | | x | x | | 0.9 | | 0.5 | 17;1.2 | |
| July 3 | | x | 0.5 | x | 1.5 | | 0.25 | 7;0.5 | |
| July 4 | 3 (1 from that that day) | | 0.5 | x | | Race results | 0.25 | 8 | 3 (1 that day) |
| July 6 **2 pages** | 2 | x | 1.1 | | 2 cols (front and back) | results and odds | 0.5 | 13;1.5 | 1 |
| July 7 | | x local markets | 1.1 | | 1.1 | | 0.5 | 7;0.5 | |
| July 9 | | x | 0.6 | x | 1 | | 0.5 | 6; 0.6 | |
| July 10 | | x local and national | x | x | 1 | | 0.5 | 2 | |
| July 11 | 1 | x | 0.5 | x | 1.1 | | 0.6 | 3 | |
| July 13 | | | 1 | | 0.6 | | | 8;1 | |
| July 14 | | x | 0.9 | x | 0.6 | | 0.6 | 4 | 1 |
| July 16 | 1 | | 1.5 | x | 1 | | 0.4 | 2 | 1 |
| July 17 | | 0.4 | 1 | | 1.5 | | 0.4 | 2 | |
| July 18 | | x | 1 | | 0.9 | | 0.9 | 3 | |
| July 20 | | x | x | x | x | | | 3 | |
| July 21 | 1 (from that day) | x | x | x | 1 | | x | 2 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| July 23 | 3 (from that day) | x | x | x | x | | x | 2 | |
| July 24 | | x | x | x | x | | x | 3 | |
| July 25 | | x | x | x | x | | x | 4 | |
| July 27 | 1 (from that day) | x | x | x | x | | | 6;1 | |
| | | x | x | x | x | | | 1 | |
| July 28 | | x | x | x | x | | x | 1 | |
| July 30 | 1 | x | x | x | 0.5 | | 1 col | 3; 0.5 | 1 (from that day) |
| July 31 | 6 (3 from that day) | x | x | x | 0.5 | | 0.5 | | |
| August 1 | 2 (1 from that day) | x | x | x | 0.6 | 1 | .5 | 3 | |
| August 3 | 4 (2 from that day | x | x | x | 0.5 | | 0.1 | 4; 0.9 | |
| August 4 | | x that day, local markets | x | x | 0.5 | 1 | 0.9 | 3 | |
| August 6 | 2 (1 from that day) | x | x | x | 1 | | 0.9 | 3 | |
| August 7 | 2 | x | x | x | 0.9 | 2 | x | 2 | 1 |
| August 8 | | x | x | x | | 4 | 0.9 | 2 | |
| August 10 | 1 (from that day) | x | x | x | 0.6 | x | 0.5 | 1 | |
| August 11 | 1 | x | x | x | 1 | | 0.5 | 1 | |
| August 13 | | | 0.5 | x | 1.1 | | 0.6 | 4 | |

| August 14 | 3 (1 from that day) | x that day, local markets | 0.9 | x | 0.4 | Racing results and odds | 0.5 | 4 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| August 15 | 1 | | 0.4 | x | 2 cols | | 0.5 | 4 | |
| August 17 | 1 (from that day) | x | 1.1 | x | 1 | ditto | 0.5 | 2 | |
| August 18 | 1 (that day) | x that day, local markets | x | x | J u 1 | | 0.5 | 2 | |
| August 20 | 1 (that day) | x | 1.1 | x | 1.1 | | x | 3 | |
| August 21 | 1 | x | x | x | 1.1 | Results and odds | | 3 | |
| August 22 | 2 (1 from that day) | x | 0.9 | x | 1.1 | x | x | 4 | |
| August 24 | | x | 0.5 | x | 0.6 | x | 0.4 | 5; 0.6 | |
| August 25 | 1 | x that day, local markets | 1 | x | 1.1 | x | x | 2 | |
| August 27 | 2 (from that day) | x | x | x | 0.6 | | 0.5 | 3 | |
| August 28 | | x that day, local markets | x | x | 1.1 | 2 | x | 5 | |
| 29 | 4 | x | x | x | 1 | 2 | x | 3 | |
| August 31 | 2 from that day) | x | x | x | 0.5 | | x | 2; 0.9 | |
| September 1 | 1 | x that day, local markets | 0.9 | x | x | | 0.6 | 2 | |

| September 3 | 2 | x | x | x | 1 |  | x | 3 |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| September 4 | 1 (from that day) | x | x | x | x | x | x | 5 |  |
| September 5 | 1 | x | x | x | 1.3 | 1 | x | 3 (0.3) |  |
| 7 |  | x | x | x | 1 |  | 0.6 | 3 |  |
| September 8 **(2 eds): 6pm and 8pm** | 3 (one from that day) | x that day, local markets | x |  | 0.5 |  | 0.5 | 3 |  |
| September 10a |  | x | x |  | 1.5 |  | 0.5 | 1 | 1 |
| September 11 | 2 (from that day) | x | x | x | jo 1.5 |  | .5 | 3 | 2 |
| September 12 | 1 | x | x | x | 1.25 | 1 | x | 4 |  |
| September 14 | 3 (2 from that day) | x | x | x | 1 | 2 (0.3) |  | 2 | 1 |
| September 15 | 1 (from that day) | x that day, local markets | x | x | 1 |  | 0.6 | 1 | 2 |
| September 17 | 2 (from that day) | x | x | x | 1 |  |  | 3 | 1 |
| September 18 | 1 (court report from that day) | x | x | x | 0.9 | x | 0.5 | 2 |  |
| September 19 |  | x | x | x | 0.9 | x | 0.5 | 4; 0.5 |  |
| September 22 |  | x that day, local markets | 0.6 | x | 1.1 | x | x | 4 |  |
| September 24 | 1 | x | x | x | 0.6 |  | x | 3 |  |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| September 25 | 1 (from that day) | x | x | x | 1.1 | x | | 3 | |
| September 26 | | x | | | 2.5 | x | | 1 | |
| September 28 | | x | x | x | 0.5 | | | 6;1.2 | |
| September 29 | 3 (one from that day) | x that day, local markets | 1 | x | 0.5 | | | 5;1.1 | 1 |
| October 1 | 1 (court report from that day) | | x | x | 1.1 | | | 2 | 1 |
| October 2 | 1 (from that day) | x that day, local markets | 0.9 | x | 1.1 | x | | 3 | |
| October 3 | 1 (from that day) | x | 0.5 | x | 1.1 | x | 0.6 | 2 | 1 |
| October 5 | | x | 0.9 | x | 1.1 | | 0.6 | 1 | 2 |
| October 6 | 1 (from that day) | x that day, local markets | 1 | x | 0.6 | | ditto | 2 | |
| October 8 | 1 | x | 1.1 | x | 0.9 | x | x | 3 | |
| October 9 | 1 (from that day) | x | 1 | x | 1 | 2 | x | 3 | |
| October 10 | 3 (from that day) | x | x | x | 1 | x | 0.6 | 2 | |
| October 12 | | x | 0.4 | | 0.5 | x | 0.6 | 8 | |
| October 13 | | x that day, local markets | 0.4 | | 1 | x | 0.6 | 1 | |
| October 15 | 2 | x | x | x | 1 | | x | 5; 0.6 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| October 16 | | x that day, local markets | 0.6 | x | 1.1 | x | x | 3 | |
| October 17 | 2 (from that day) | x | .5 | x | 1 | x | 0.6 | 3 | |
| October 19 | 1 (from that day) | x | 0.6 | x | 0.4 | | 0.6 | 5;0.6 | 1, that day |
| October 20 | 1 (from that day) | x that day, local markets | x 0.6 | x | 1 | | 0.6 | 4 | 1, that day |
| October 22 | 1 (from that day) | x | x | x | 1.5 | | | 6 | 1 |
| October 23 | 5 | x | .5 | x | 1 | 2 | .3 | 4 | |
| October 24 | | x | 0.6 | x | 1.1 | 1 | .3 | 3 | |
| October 26 | | x | .3 | x | 0.4 | x | | 13;1.9 | |
| October 27 | 1 | x that day, local markets | 0.4 | x | 0.9 | x | .25 | 2 | 1, that day |
| October 29 | | x | x | x | 1.2 | | .3 | 5 | |
| October 30 | 4 (1 from that day) | x | x | x | x | x | x | 4 | 1, that day |
| October 31 | 3 | x | x | x | x | x | | 7 | 1, that day |
| November 2 | 1 (from that day)<br>+ a letter | x | 0.4 | x | 0.6 | | 1par | 9; 1 col | |
| November 3 | 4 | x that day, local | .5 | x | 0.6 | | 0.5 | 6; 0.6 | |
| November 5 | 3 (1 from that day) | x | 1.1 | x | 0.9 | | | 7 | 1 |
| November 6 | 1 | x | 1.1 | x | 1.1 | x | x | 4 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| November 7 | 2 (from that day) | x | 0.9 | x | 1 | x | x | 7 | |
| November 9 | 4 (3 from that day) | x | 0.6 | x | 0.6 | x | x | 8 | 1 |
| November 10 | | x that day, local markets | 0.5 | x | 1.1 | | x | 7 | |
| November 13 | 2 (1 from that morning) | x | 1.1 | x | 1.1 | x | | 4 | 1 |
| November 14 | | x | 0.5 | x | 0.9 | x | x | 4 | |
| November 16 | 2 (from that day) | x | 0.4 | x | 1.1 | | | 11;1.2 | 1 |
| November 17 | 3 (2 from that day) | x that day, local markets | 0.5 | x | 0.6 | x | x | 9 | |
| November 19 | | x | 0.9 | x | 0.9 | | x | 8 | |
| November 20 | 1 from that day) | x | .3 | x | 1.2 | | x | 6 | |
| November 21 | | x | 0.4 | x | 1.1 | x | x | 4 | |
| November 23 | 3 (1 from that day) | x | 0.5 | x | 1 | | x | 6 | 2 (1 that day) |
| November 24 | 1 | x that day, local markets | 0.6 | x | 1.1 | x | | 6 | |
| November 26 | 5 (2 from that day) | x | 0.9 | x | 0.9 | | x | 7 | |
| November 27 | 4 (2 from that day) | x | 0.6 | x | 1 | x | x | 4 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| November 28 | 7 (4 from that day) | x | x | x | 0.6 | | x | 5 | 1 (that day) |
| November 30 | 1 | x | .3 | x | 0.9 | | x | 8 | 1 |
| December 2 | 1 (from that day) | x that day, local markets | >.2 | x | 0.6 | | | 10; 1.6 | 1 |
| December 3 | 3 (1 from that day) | x | 0.5 | x | 0.6 | | 5 | 7; 0.6 | 1 |
| December 4 | 2 | x | 0.4 | x | 0.9 | x | x | 8 | |
| December 5 | 1 (from that day) | x | 0.6 | x | 1.1 | | x | 3 | 1 |
| December 7 | 4 (2 from that day, including court case over two columns) | x | .2 | x | .25 | | | 7 | |
| December 8 | 2 | x that day, local markets | .25 | x | 1.25 | | | 3 | 2 (1 that day) |
| December 10 | 3 | x | .2 | x | 1.1 | | x | 10 | |
| December 11 | 6 (2 from that day) | x | 0.4 | x | 1 | x | x | 6 | |
| December 12 | 3 | x | .5 | x | 1.25 | | x | 3 | |
| December 14 | 1 (from that day - court case across two columns) | x | .2 | x | .3 | | | 7;0.75 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| December 15 | 1 | x that day, local markets | 0.3 | x | .5 | | t | 9 | |
| December 17 | 1 (that day court case across two columns) | x | 0.2 | x | 1.1 | | | 7 | 1 (that day) |
| December 18 | 2 (1 that day) | x | 0.75 | x | 1.2 | x | 0 .5 | 6 | 1 |
| December 19 | 3 (2that day, including story of 8-year-old boy drowning) | x | 0.4 | x | 0.6 | x | x | 4 | |
| December 21 | 2 | x | 0.2 | x | 0.3 | | | 31;<br>2.2<br>cols | |
| December 22 | 3 | x that day, local markets | 0.4 | x | 0.4 | | x | 13; 0.9 | |
| December 26 | 3<br>+ 1 letter | x | 0.4 | x | 0.6 | | x | 6 | 1 |
| December 28 | 1 (that day with today angle) | x | .3 | x | .75 | | 0.5 | 9 | |
| December 29 | 5 | x that day local | .3 | x | .75 | | x | 8 | |
| December 31 | 2 (1 from that day) | x | 0.45 | x | 1.1 | | | 11<br>.8 | |
| January 2, 1856 | 2 (1 from that day) | x | x | x | 0.9 | x | 0.5 | 9 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| January 4<br>**2 editions 6pm and 7pm** | 5 (2 from that day) | x | .2 | x | No war or foreign news – 6pm;<br>0 .3 at 8pm | | .2 | 12; 1.1 | 1 |
| January 5 | 4 | x that day, local markets | .25 | x | 1 | x | | 4 | |
| January 7 | 6 (including 3 from that day) | x | 0.4 | | .5 | x | .5 | 4 | 1 (from that day) |
| January 8 | 0 | x | x | x | 1.1 | x | | 14; 1.9 | |
| January 9 | 4 | x | .5 | x | 0.4 | | x | 13 | 2 |
| January 11 | 3 | x | 0.6 | x | 0.6 | x | | 9 | |
| January 12 | 0 | x that day, local markets | 0.4 | x | 0.5 | | | 15 ;1.6 | |
| January 14 | 4 (all from that day) | x | .5 | x | 1.3 | | | 10 | |
| January 15<br>**4 pages** | 1 from that day | x | 0.4 | | 0.6 on p1 and .5 on page 2 | | | 13 | |
| January 16 | 3 (2 court stories from that day) | x | 0.5 | x | 0.6 | | 0.5 | 12 | |
| January 18 | 0 | x | 0.9 | x | 1.1 | | | 11 – 1 col | 3<br>(1 from that day) |
| January 19 | 3 | x that day, local markets | .25 | x | .5 | | | 8<br>.75 col | 1 |
| January 21 | 3 (2 from that day) | x | .4 | x | 0.9 | | x | 12; 0.9 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| January 22 | 2 (1 from that day) | x | 0.4 | x | 0.6 | | x | 11 | |
| January 23 | 2 | x | .3 | x | 1 col | | 0.6 | 12; 0.6 | |
| January 25 **two editions** | 3 (1 from that day) | x | .25 | x | 0.4 | | | 12;0 .75 | |
| January 26 | 6 (1 from that day) | x that day, local markets | 0.4 | | 1 col | | | 13 | |
| January 28 | 0 | x | 0.6 | x | 1.25 | | | 17; I col | 2 |
| January 29 | 2 | x | .3 | x | .8 | | | 14 | 1 |
| January 30 | 1 | x | .2 | x | 1.1 | | x | 15 | 2 (1 from that day) |
| February 1 | 2 (1 from that day) | x | .25 | x | .6 | | | 18 1 col | |
| February 2 | 0 | x | .25 | x | .75 | | | 15; 1 | 3 (1 from that day) |
| February 4 | | x | .5 | x | 1 | 2 | .3 | 1; 1.5 | 2 |
| February 5 | 1 | x | 0.6 | x | 1.1 | 1 | .3 | 3 | |
| February 6 **4 pages** | 4 on page 1 | x | 0.6 | x | .75 | | x | 12 | |
| February 8 | 1 | x | .3 | x | .3 | | | 17;.3 | 1 |
| February 9 | 0 | x | .3 | x | .25 | | | 18; 1.8 | |
| February 11 | 0 | x | .3 | x | .5 | | | 20; 1.6 | |
| February 12 | 1 | x | .3 | x | .3 | | | 13 | |
| February 13 | 4 | x | .3 | x | 0.4 | | x | 4 | 2 |
| February 15 | 4 (one from that day) | x | .25 | x | .75 | | | 20 | |

| February 16 | 1 | x | .3 | x | .5 | | | 20 | 3 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| February 18 | 2 (one from that day) | x | .25 | x | 0.6 | | | 20 | 1 | |
| February 19 **4 pages** | 4 (3 from that day on Page1). Two local stories on 4 | x | .3 | x | .5 | | | 14 | 1 (page 4) | |
| February 20 | 2 (court reports from that day) | x | .2 | x | 0.9 | | 1 (.3) | 19; 1.2 | 1 | |
| February 22 | 1 (long report, small print) | x | .5 | x | 0.6 | | | 18 | 1 | |
| February 23 | 4 (1 from that day) | x | .5 | x | .2 | | | 20 | 1 | |
| February 25 | 2 | x | 0.4 | x | 0.25 | | | 15<br>1 | | |
| February 26 | 2 | x | .4 | x | .6 | x | Very small | 16 | 2 | |
| February 27 | 3 | x | .4 | x | .75 | | ditto | 14 | | |
| February 29 | 3 | x | 0.4 | x | .25 | | | 17; 2 | 1 | |
| March 1 | 2 | x | .25 | x | .5 | | | 18<br>1.7 | | |
| March 3 | 0 | x | x | x | 1 | | | 20; 1.6 | | |
| March 4 | 1 | x | .75 | x | .8 | x | | 12 1 | 1 | |
| March 5 | 3 – two from that day, including colour piece from that day's | x | .4 | x | .6 | | x | 10; 0.6 | 1 (from that day) | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | council meeting | | | | | | | | |
| March 7 | 3 | x | .3 | x | 1.1 | | | 20 1.3 | 1 |
| March 8 | 3 | x | .2 (that day, local markets) | x | .2 | | | 19; 1.9 | 2 (1 from that day) |
| March 10 | 3 | x | .3 | x | 0.4 | | x | 18; .2 | |
| March 11 | 5 (1 from that day) | x | 0.1 | | .3 | x | x | 11; .75 | |
| March 12 | 2 | x | >.25 | x | 0.6 | x | x | 13 .75 | 4 (1 from that day) |
| March 14 | 1 (from that day) | x | x | x | 0.5 | | | 20; 1.6 | |
| March 15 **two editions** | 0 | x | .2 | x | .3 | | | 18 1.6 | |
| March 17 | 2 (1 from that day) | x | .1 | x | 0.6 | | x | 15; 1 col | 3 |
| March 18 | 3 | x | .2 | x | 0.6 | | x | 18;1.2 | 2 |
| March 19 | 2 (1 from that day) plus a letter from JC Stevenson on behalf of Town | x | .5 | x | .75 | | | 17 | 1 |

| | and River Mission. | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| March 22 | 1 | x that day, local markets | .6 | x | .25 | | | 24; 1.8 | 1 that day |
| March 25 | 3 (1 a meeting report from that day) | x | .2 | x | .5 | x | | 19 | 1 |
| March 26 | 1 | x | .5 | x | .3 | 2 | .2 | 16 1.25 | |
| March 28 | 3 (including an inquest from that afternoon) | x | Ju .5 | x | .5 | | x | 15 | |
| March 29 | 5 (1 from that day) | x | .25 | x | .6 | | | 15; 0.9 | |
| March 31 | 3 | x | .3 | x | .6 | | | 15; 0.3 | 1 |
| April 1 | 1 | x | .3 | x | .5 | | x.5 | 10.; I col | 1 |
| April 2 | 2 (including meeting report from that day) | x | .5 | x | .6 | x | x | 15; 1.25col | |
| April 4 | 1 | x | 0.4 | x | .5 | | x | 16; 0.9 | |
| April 5 | 1 letter – sanitary appeal on behalf of working class | x | .4 | x | .5 | | | 19; 1.2 | 2 |
| April 7 | 2 – (1 a court case from that day) | x | .3 | x | .4 | | | 21; 1.4 | 4 |
| April 8 | 2 | x | .25 | x | .75 | | | 17; 1.25 | |

| April 9 | 5 (1 from that day) | x | .3 | x | .5 | | 0 .5 | 9;.4 | 2<br>1 that day | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| April 11 | 0 | x | .25 | x | one line + weather | x | | 21; 1.9 | 2 | |
| April 12 | 3 (one from that day) | x | .2 | x | . | | | 20; 1.25 | 3 | |
| April 14 | 3 (2 from that day) | x | .4 | x | .5 | | | 20; 1.25 | 3 | |
| April 15 | 3 (1 from that day) (bazaar opening | x | 0.25 | x | .25 | | | 24; 1.75 | | |
| April 16 | 1 | x | .3 | x | .3 | | | 25; 2cols | 1 | |
| April 18 | 1 | x | .5 | x | .6 | | x | 18; .9 | 1 | |
| April 19 | 2 (incl suicide by laudanum that morning) | x | .5 | x | .6 | | x | 22; .4 | | |
| April 21 | 4 (3 from that day) | x | .5 | x | .25 | | | 22'; 1.5 | 2 | |
| April 22 | 0 | x | .2 | x | .2 | x | .4 | 20; 1.3 | 1 | |
| April 23 | 4 (2 from that day) | x | .5 | x | .6 | | x | 16 ; 1.1 | 2 | |
| April 25 | 2 (1 from that day) | x | .4 | x | .25 | x | | 20 | | |
| April 26 | 3 | x | .4 | x | .3 | | | 26; .6 | 1 | |
| April 28 | 1 | x | .35 | x | .6 | | | 27;1.4 | 2 | |
| April 29 | 1 | x | .2 | x | 1 | | x | 22; 1.3 | 1 | |
| April 30 | 2 (1 that day) | x | .2 | X | .5 | x | | 25; 1.5 | 1 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| May 2 | 2 (1 from that day) | x | .4 | x | .3 | x | | 22; 1.6 | 1 |
| May 3 | 1 | x | .25 | x | .3 | x | | 24 1.6 | |
| May 5 | 3 (2 from that day) | x | .3 | x | .6 | | | 18 1.3 | 1 |
| May 6 | 1 | x | .5 | x | .35 | | | 22 1.5 | 1 that day |
| May 7 | 1 (court case from that day) | x | .6 | x | 0.9 | | | 12; 0.9 | 1 |
| May 9 | | x | .3 | x | .8 | x | x | 21 | |
| May 10 | 5 | x that day, local markets | .4 | x | .6 | | | 17; 1.1 | 2 |
| May 13 | | x | .5 | x | .8 | | | 22 | 3 |
| May 14 | 4 | x | .3 | x | | regatta results | x | 12 | |
| May 16 | 1 | x | .4 | x | .25 | x | | 25; 1.4 | |
| May 17 | 2 | x that day, local markets | 0.6 | x | .6 | | x | 18 | |
| May 19 | 1 | x | .3 | x | .7 | x | | 22; .3 | |
| May 20 | 1 – Kossuth in Newcastle | x | .3 | x | .65 | | | 22 | 1 |
| May 21 | | x | .3 | x | 1.1 | | | 22;1.3 | 1 |
| May 23 | 1 | x | .3 | x | .8 | | | 19; 1 | 1 |
| May 24 | 0 | x | x | x | 1 | | | 21; 1.3 | |

| May 26 | 0 | x | .3 | x | 1.3 | | x | 18; .9 | 1 that day | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| May 27 | 2 | x | .4 | x | .75 | x | | 21; 1.2 | 2<br>1 that day | |
| May 30 | x | x | .4 | | .25 | x | | 19; 1.4 | 3 | |
| May 31 | 1 | x that day, local markets | .4 | x | .3 | | | 19; 1.75 | | |

| June 2 | 2 (court cases from the day) | x | .25 | x | .75 | | | 19; 1.3 | 1 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| June 3 | 2 (1 from tat day) | x | .5 | x | .75 | | Ditto | 18 | 2 | |
| June 4 | 3 (2court cases from that day) | x | .4 | x | .7 | | ,, | 16; 1.2 | 1 | |
| June 6 | 1 | x | .6 | x | .3 | | | 22;1.45 | | |
| June 7 **4 pages** | 5 on back page | x | .3 | x | .4 | | ,, | 23; 1.5 | 1 | |
| June 9 | 3 | x | .3 | x | .75 | | ,, | 17; 1.25 | 2<br>(1, that day | |
| June 10 | 0 | x | .5 | x | .2 | | ,, | 23; 1.5 | (1, that day | |
| June 11 | 2 (from that day) | x | .75 | x | .75 | | ,, | 14; 1.2 | 1 | |
| June 13 | 0 | x | .3 | x | .3 | 2 | ,, | 21;1.5 | | |
| June 14 | 0 | x | .3 | x | 1..5 | | | 12; 0 .6 | | |
| June 16 | 3 . | x | 0.9 | x | .6 | | ,, | 17; 1.2 | 3<br>(from that day | |
| June 17 | 1 | x | .8 | x | .75 | x | | 17 1.1 | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| June 18 | 2 | x | .75 | x | .8 | | | 14 | |
| June 20 | 1 | x | .5 | x | .75 | x | | 12 | 2 |
| June 21 | 2 (1 is cricket report of match between Northumb. and Tynemouth) | x | .5 | x | .75 | x | | 15 1 | 1 |
| June 23 | 1 | x | .75 | x | .8 | | x | 14 1 | 2 |
| June 24 | 2 | x | .6 | x | .5 | 2;.25 | x | 14; 1 col | |
| June 25 | 1 | x | .6 | x | .75 | x | x | 7 .75 | 1<br>From that day |
| June 27 | 2 (1 from that day - meeting report) | x | .5 | x | .6 | | | 17; .5 | |
| June 28 | 3 | x | .3 | x | .6 | | | 15 | 2 |
| June 30 | 1 | x | .4 | x | .4 | | x | 14; 1.2 | 1 |