

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

The Morning Post, 1772-1937

Portrait of a Newspaper

Wilfrid Hindle



The Morning Post, 1772-1937

First published in 1937, *The Morning Post, 1772-1937*, is a history of the conservative British newspaper, *The Morning Post*, from its inception in 1772 to its merger with the *Daily Telegraph* in 1937. Its uprightness and downrightness had helped to make it possibly the best-written newspaper in England. The story of the *Morning Post's* rise to eminence is a story not only of British journalism, but of British life and letters as well, with contributors such as Dr. Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Lamb and others. This book will be of interest to students of history, literature and sociology.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

The Morning Post, 1772-1937

Portrait of a Newspaper

Wilfrid Hindle



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

First published in 1937
By George Routledge & Sons Ltd.

This edition first published in 2023 by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN
and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© George Routledge & Sons, 1937

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

Disclaimer

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and welcomes correspondence from those they have been unable to contact.

A Library of Congress record exists under LCCN: 38012797

ISBN: 978-1-032-52159-6 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-40734-8 (ebk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-52586-0 (pbk)

Book DOI 10.4324/9781003407348



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

A contemporary cartoon of the Rev. Henry Bate, first Editor of
The Morning Post



A BAITE FOR THE DEVIL

A Various Compound is this Rev'rend Divine.
 In Speaking a Pedant with Satire Malign.
 A Canonical Buck, Vociferous Bully.
 A Duellist, Boxer, Gambler, & Cully.
 A Student at Law, Collector of News.
 A Preacher in Churches, an Actor in Stews.
 If Vices like these, Recommend to the Great.
 Then who is so fit for a Bishop as B—c.

A Government Runner, of Falschood a Vender.
 Staunch Friend, to the Devil, the Pope, & Pretender.
 A Managers parasite, Opera Writer.
 News paper Editor, Pamphlet Indicter.
 An Olla Padrina, foul Mixture of Parts.
 Is this Harlequin Parson, Master of Arts.
 If many Vocations, can make a Man great
 Then who is so fit for a Bishop as B—c.

[front.

WILFRID HINDLE

THE MORNING POST

1772-1937

Portrait of a Newspaper

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS LTD.

BROADWAY HOUSE: 68-74 CARTER LANE, E.C.

First published 1937

Printed in Great Britain by T. and A. CONSTABLE LTD.
at the University Press, Edinburgh

A NOTE ON METHOD

IN writing this book, the method followed has been to leave the newspaper and its contemporaries to speak for themselves whenever possible. For the sake of any future student of journalism, the source of quotations is given exactly in the Notes at the end of the book.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks are due, and are hereby gratefully rendered, to:—

Lieutenant-Commander KENNETH EDWARDS, R.N. (retired)—for suggesting this book.

Lord CAMROSE—for permission to quote from the later issues of the *Morning Post*.

Mr. JAMES GREIG—for many hints on the early history of the paper.

Mr. T. P. GREIG, late Librarian, and Mr. G. A. MITCHELL, late Assistant Librarian, of the *Morning Post*—for much valuable assistance.

W. H. H.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

	PAGE
I. AN ENGLISH NEWSPAPER: 1772-1937	1
<p style="padding-left: 40px;">Death at 164—The <i>Morning Post's</i> reputation—and its readers—Changes throughout the centuries—Some Liberal lines—A mirror of British society.</p>	
II. BOOKSELLER AND FIGHTING PARSON: 1772-1780	7
<p style="padding-left: 40px;">Journalism in the Eighteenth Century—The advertising influence—John Bell, the bookseller—The first numbers—A bogus <i>Morning Post</i>—Henry Bate, the “fighting parson”—“Scandal and Defamation.”</p>	
III. “WEST END SHEET”: 1772-1795	22
<p style="padding-left: 40px;">Great events and small—Parliamentary reports in prose and verse—The “leading” article—French Revolution welcomed—Newspaper verse—Theatres, art and sport—Ballooning and crime—Staff, costs and circulation.</p>	
IV. GRUB STREET: 1780-1795	46
<p style="padding-left: 40px;">Some early editors—Badini—William Jackson, Irish nationalist—The Prince of Wales buys a share—John Taylor—Peter Pindar and George III—Bohemian nights in Grub Street—Daniel Stuart buys the <i>Morning Post</i> for £600.</p>	
V. DANIEL STUART: 1795-1803	65
<p style="padding-left: 40px;">The Stuart family—“Friends of the People”—Stuart, Mackintosh and Coleridge—Stuart’s journalistic principles—Lamb’s sixpenny jokes—Attention to advertisements—Purchase of <i>The Telegraph</i>—The <i>Morning Post</i> sold for £25,000.</p>	

CHAPTER	PAGE
VI. LAKE POETS IN GRUB STREET: 1797-1803 . . .	86
Coleridge's verse contributions— <i>The Devil's Thoughts</i> — Southey's poems—Wordsworth's sonnets to liberty—Cole- ridge at work—His Parliamentary reporting— <i>Of Pitt and Bonaparte</i> —Napoleon's enmity aroused—Escape from Italy.	
VII. THE "FAWNING POST": 1803-1830 . . .	105
Independence forgone—George IV's influence—Adulation of royalty—Leigh Hunt attacks the <i>Morning Post</i> —The "Corsican ogre"—Queen Caroline vilified—Coronation of George IV.	
VIII. IN REACTION'S RANKS: 1803-1830 . . .	123
The Corn Law of 1815—Attacks on Fox, Cobbett and Burdett—Assassination of Spencer Perceval—Peterloo—The Cato Street Conspiracy—Wellington and Catholic Emancipa- tion—Canning—Byron and the <i>Morning Post</i> —An Editor assassinated.	
IX. THE LOST BATTLE: 1830-1849 . . .	148
Praed as leader-writer—Disraeli's abusive style—The Reform Bill—The Lost Battle of Protection—Corn Law Repeal— Factory Acts supported—Income Tax under Peel—Chartism —Daniel O'Connell.	
X. FASHION AND DECLINE: 1830-1849 . . .	165
A persistent reputation— <i>Punch's</i> gibes—Thackeray dis- comfited—The <i>Morning Post's</i> attacks on Queen Victoria— Quarrels with <i>The Times</i> —Financial decline—A mortgagor takes over.	
XI. "PALMERSTON'S PAPER": 1849-1867 . . .	179
Peter Borthwick—A new journalism—"Regulating <i>The Times</i> "—Palmerston as idol—The Indian Mutiny—An "English Minister"—The Crimean War—Napoleon III— Allegations of French subsidy—Schleswig and Abyssinia— Palmerston's death.	

CONTENTS

xī

CHAPTER	PAGE
XII. ALGERNON BORTHWICK: 1852-1908	203
<p>An extra-journalistic career—Champion of royalty—Crime in the <i>Morning Post</i>—Some traditions developed—Philanthropy and sport—Conservatism in technique—A prospering newspaper—Some distinguished contributors—Borthwick on independence—The <i>Penny Post</i>.</p>	
XIII. HIGH TORY: 1867-1914	220
<p>Disraeli the new idol—Philanthropy at home, Imperialism abroad—Empress of India—The Suez Canal—Changing views of the Empire—The South African War—Attitudes towards Germany—Belgian neutrality—The age of alliances—Ireland—Protection again.</p>	
XIV. H. A. GWYNNE: 1910-1937	235
<p>Lost Causes—The new conservatism—Technical virtues—Changes in ownership—Independence maintained—H. A. Gwynne—"The Will and the Bill."</p>	
SOME BOOKS CONSULTED	246
SOME DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE <i>MORNING POST</i>	247
NOTES	248
INDEX	257



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

THE MORNING POST



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

CHAPTER I

AN ENGLISH NEWSPAPER: 1772-1937

THE *Morning Post* was merged with the *Daily Telegraph* on October 1, 1937. It was then a hundred and sixty-four years and eleven months old. In the course of its long life, it had acquired an individuality not surpassed by that of any other newspaper; at the end of its life, it was as vital as it had been at the beginning. That is why news of the merger, though for some time expected, came as a shock. Newspapers had disappeared before. Indeed, throughout this century a haphazard process of rationalization has steadily reduced the numbers of the London Press. A round half-dozen of daily and Sunday newspapers have gone,¹ and only one new daily newspaper² has come to take their place; and on several occasions the *Morning Post* had been subject to the same rumours of change as had affected these other newspapers. It had never been seriously expected, however, that in its case fact would overtake rumour so soon. Subject as it was to the same commercial laws, the *Morning Post* in other ways stood apart from other British newspapers. It was unique. To hear that it had been bought was, as one commentator remarked at the time,³ as if one had heard that a passer-by, seeing the Albert Memorial, had said: "I like that. I'll buy it." It was an English institution. To hear of its disappearance, was to hear of the disappearance of a part of the

England that had been and, it seemed, would be for ever more.

It would be difficult to say precisely why the *Morning Post* had this unique reputation. Age alone is not an explanation. Although it was in its hundred and sixty-fifth year, there are other newspapers which are not much younger.⁴ Nor was it an uniform quality among its readers. It was popularly supposed to be read mainly by the landed gentry and to be concerned only with their interests; but the supposition was false. As the present writer knows from personal experience, the *Morning Post* had a certain selective public in poverty-stricken industrial towns of the North. As he knows both from personal experience and from a study of the files of the paper, it had supported more truly liberal causes than most Liberal newspapers. The secret of its quality cannot, in fact, be found in any of the political and social legends with which it was surrounded. They are legends and little more. Neither can it be found only in independence. There are still some other independent newspapers. If the *Morning Post's* unique reputation can be ascribed to any one cause, it must rather be to the peculiarly English savour of its independence; a "Be damned to you!" savour; the sort of savour that there was about Palmerston (with whom, incidentally, the *Morning Post* long maintained the closest connexions). It might be mistaken in its opinions; mistaken or not, like John Littlejohn, it seemed ever

". . . staunch and strong,
Upright and downright, scorning wrong."

Its uprightness and downrightness had helped to

make it possibly the best-written newspaper in England; certainly the most English of English newspapers. At first sight it may seem curious that this should have been so. Irishmen and Welshmen, Scotsmen and Jews, had done as much for the *Morning Post* as Englishmen, and the Scotsmen had done most of all. Its first great editor was a Scot; the greatest of its editor-proprietors was a Scot of remotely Hungarian descent. Its last editor, who was also a great editor, is a Welshman. Yet this mixture is not so curious as it seems. Much more than

“Saxon and Norman and Dane are we.”

In the light of English ethnography, it is natural enough that men of many nations should have combined to create an unmistakably English institution. In the light of English history, it is perhaps natural, too, that the most conservative of English institutions should in the end have become almost the embodiment of the original Liberal principle. The *Morning Post* was not always reputed conservative. In its early days, which were also the days when the world was shaken by the American War of Independence and the French Revolution, it wore an “Off with his head!” air if a Conservative Minister like Pitt displeased it. In later days, it welcomed the revived Income Tax and praised the Factory Acts. In the age when the Manchester School were more eager that children should know how to spin cotton than how to read and write English, it advocated national education. In Palmerston’s time, it rejoiced at the liberal revolutions on the Continent. Garibaldi was then one of its heroes, Kossuth another. In its last days of individual existence, it was a persistent pleader for

decent treatment of what euphemistical British statesmen call the Special Areas. At many times in its history—again the present writer speaks both from personal experience and from a study of the files—the *Morning Post* had welcomed to its staff men who profoundly disagreed with some of its policies. It had, however, been generally recognized as a champion of Conservatism for over a century. It had been the consistent advocate of Protectionism, the consistent opponent of Irish nationalism. If, in spite of these policies, it appeared in the end to have shifted its ground, it may be that it was the ground which had shifted instead; that Liberals had adopted some Conservatism, Conservatives, some Liberalism. Be the explanation what it may, the fact remains that by independently maintaining some Conservative causes and always maintaining independence more devotedly than Conservatism, the *Morning Post* in these latter days had developed into one of the few expressions of Liberal individualism. Liberals admitted the fact by implication when it was sold. Not only did the ranks of Tuscany forbear to jeer; they even mourned more truly than followers in the opposite camp.⁵

The story of the *Morning Post's* rise to eminence is a story not only of British journalism, but of British life and letters as well. To call the roll of its contributors would be to recite many notable names in English literature. Dr. Johnson's "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides" first appeared in its pages. Coleridge wrote leading articles for it. Wordsworth contributed sonnets. Charles Lamb elaborated jokes—at sixpence a time, and often not worth more. Winthrop Mackworth Praed and Disraeli were later leader-writers. George Meredith

was its special correspondent in the Italian wars of liberation. Nearer to our own times, Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling wrote verse for it; and in our own times Mr. Maurice Baring and Mr. Ian Colvin maintained its literary distinction.

Together, and along with many others of an eminence but little less, these men made the *Morning Post* a mirror of British literature. It was also a mirror of British society. It should be added that the reference here is not to that "Society" which takes unto itself a capital "S." Thackeray in his time chose to maintain that the *Morning Post* was preoccupied with the activities of the wealthy, and Mr. R. D. Blumenfeld in our own time has related that the *Morning Post* was once "snobbish, with information about duchesses and advertisements about butlers."⁶ Both, however, were much mistaken. Even when it was *The Morning Post and Fashionable World*, the *Morning Post* was not exclusively fashionable; and in the long course of its history it had never been so lusciously "social" as the "social gossips" of the popular press in the twentieth century. The society its pages reflected was the whole society, and, if the reflection was sometimes distorted, it was not the less revealing on that account. It was only in its opinions that the *Morning Post* ever belonged to one class exclusively; and in this respect it must be admitted that it was very much the organ of the leisured classes.

What the opinions of these leisured classes were, how they changed, what was their background, it is the aim of the present book to show. The change of opinion was not always continuous, and it was not always consistent with changes in the background. The *Morning Post* on

occasion switched from moderate conservatism to extreme reaction at a proprietor's whim, as when Daniel Stuart was succeeded by Nicholas Byrne in the early nineteenth century. Its policies were sometimes discordantly out of tune with reality, as when it advocated protection during the "hungry forties." Like other newspapers, it was scared out of its sense of proportion by the Bolshevik Revolution. Like all English institutions, it was not without its perversities and not without its follies. These anomalies, however, made it the more characteristically English. A nation which can call its railway carriages "First Class" and "Third Class" when they are really "First Class" and "Second Class"; a nation which can subscribe liberally to funds for the relief of people whom its own policies have reduced to destitution; a nation which can continue to call a *Fortnightly Review* "fortnightly" long after it has become monthly; a nation which can hold a parish ball to provide money for a parish hearse—this nation had a journalistic counterpart in the *Morning Post*. Its idiosyncrasies made the *Morning Post* thoroughly English. A continuing thread of devotion to the greater English ideals made it great. There never was such a newspaper before, and it is unlikely that there will ever be such a newspaper again. We may find some consolation for that thought in the fact that it might have suffered a worse fate.

CHAPTER II

BOOKSELLER AND FIGHTING PARSON:

1772-1780

THE *Morning Post* was born on November 2, 1772. It was a favourable time for journalism. Walpole had gone, and with his going corruption of the Press had declined. John Wilkes and Junius had used the Press against the Government; and their success had brought a somewhat precarious freedom. Before them, the proceedings of Parliament had commonly been reported under some such allusive style as "Debates in the Senate of Lilliput." Now they could be reported, though still not without risk, for what they were. On the material side the development of daily posts between London and the Home Counties had extended the influence of the London newspapers. More important, the posts had extended the range of newspaper advertising. At the same time, advertising was growing with the growth of commerce.

It is necessary to emphasize the influence of advertising on late eighteenth-century journalism for two reasons. The first is that, whatever criticism may be made of the influence of newspaper advertising today, it was advertising which made the firm establishment of a free Press possible. The second is that the *Morning Post* was in origin a business proposition. Its founders were the enterprising business men of their generation.

An accepted custom of newspaper enterprise in those

days was to interest as many men as possible in a new venture in order to ensure as many advertisements as possible. The *Morning Post* did not depart from the custom. Its original proprietors numbered a round dozen. Some of them had already achieved public notice. Others were to achieve fame, or notoriety, later. They included John Bell, the bookseller; James Christie I, the founder of Christie's; the Reverend "Dr." Trusler, intelligent anticipator of the book clubs of our own times; Richard Tattersall, the founder of Tattersall's; and Joseph Richardson, a minor playwright who assisted Sheridan in the management of Drury Lane Theatre.¹

James Christie I was forty-two when the *Morning Post* was founded. He had been out of the Navy for some time and was already established as an auctioneer. "Dr." Trusler was thirty-seven, and had founded his Literary Society, designed to suppress booksellers, some seven years earlier (which incidentally made him a curious partner for Bell). Tattersall was forty-eight and also established. As a horse auctioneer he had bought horses for the King of France and the Dauphin. Bell and Richardson, however, were men with their way still to make. Bell was twenty-seven, Richardson only seventeen. Of them all, old and young, Bell was the most remarkable. He was, according to Leigh Hunt, "a plain man, with a red face, and a nose exaggerated by intemperance; and yet there was something not displeasing in his countenance, especially when he spoke. He had sparkling black eyes, a good-natured smile, gentlemanly manners, and one of the most agreeable voices I ever heard. He had no acquirements, perhaps not even grammar; but his taste in putting forth a

publication, and getting the best artists to adorn it, was new in those times, and may be admired in any.”² The aspersion on Bell’s grammar is not altogether borne out by the signed paragraphs which he occasionally contributed to the *Morning Post*. Even if it were, it would be more than outweighed by Bell’s other achievements. He was a pioneer of publishing, typography and journalism. He revolutionized bookbinding and published immense numbers of books cheaply. Before his time, “old face,” a letter-form derived from calligraphy, was generally used in English printing: his example led to the general adoption of the more legible “modern face.” In journalism he was the founder, or part-founder, of no fewer than five papers. They were, besides the *Morning Post*, *The World*, *The Oracle*, *Bell’s Weekly Messenger*, and *La Belle Assemblée*, an illustrated monthly. It has also been claimed that he was the first modern war correspondent. In 1794 he went to Flanders to report operations, though not for the *Morning Post*, which he had then left.

It is a reasonable surmise that John Bell regarded the *Morning Post* as the advertising department of his book-selling business. The title *Post*, due to the early connexion of journalism with the postal system, had been used for newspapers before and, indeed, was one of the commonest of titles. Crabbe has testified to the manner in which

“*Post* after *Post* succeeds, and all day long
Gazettes and *Ledgers* swarm, a noisy throng—
 When evening comes, she comes with all her train
 Of *Ledgers*, *Chronicles* and *Posts* again,
 Like bats appearing when the sun goes down,
 From holes obscure and corners of the town——”³