

150 Years Of Memories

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The family who built the Gazette

IN the first issue of the Whitby Gazette on July 6, 1854, Ralph Horne was not only the publisher but also the principal advertiser, occupying two-thirds of the back page to commend himself as a printer, book-seller, stationer, bookbinder and paperhanger.

To this catalogue of skills he could soon add newspaper proprietor, editor, reporter, sub-editor and press hand, for his venture prospered, and the publication launched as a seasonal list of visitors became a proper weekly newspaper on 2 January, 1858.

Ralph Horne was then in his fifties, a man-about-town in Whitby. He was a member of the Literary and Philosophical Society, and the Association for the Prosecution of Felons, and a former publisher of Whitby Magazine. Like most of the town's businessmen, he was a shipowner in the sense that he took shares in merchant vessels. As a child, he had been an apprenticed printer with the local firm of Clark and Medd which brought out the Rev George Young's A History of Whitby in 1817 with "Master Ralph Horn" (sic) listed as a subscriber. At that time the lad would be 11 or perhaps 12.

His interest in the inky trade and its products survived a bruising experience with Whitby Magazine which he launched in 1827 with the assurance that it would contain "nothing offensive to morals or decorum". However, that did not exclude invective directed at rival publications, as the editor of Whitby Repository discovered when a letter in the Magazine excited him as "at once cowardly, inhuman, ill-judged and ungentlemanly".

Alas, this hearty knock-about did not revive the magazine's commercial fortunes, and after subsiding somewhat, with one issue running into

We recently launched a new feature to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Whitby Gazette, which was first published on 6 July 1854.

Local people will be sharing their memories of the paper as well as the stories it has covered over many decades of change.

This week we feature an article written for us by Malcolm Barker OBE, a former reporter at the Whitby Gazette and editor at the Yorkshire Evening Post. He looks back at the family who founded the Whitby Gazette and then ran it for over 120 years...

another, Whitby Magazine abruptly ceased. Ralph Horne must have been disappointed. His Magazine had some of the characteristics of a newspaper, including announcements of births, marriages and deaths, "shipping intelligence", which mainly dealt with the loss of Whitby-registered vessels, and reports of public meetings.

Possibly with this failure in mind, Ralph Horne did not at first invest in new machinery for the Gazette, and the editorial content consisted only of lists of visitors to the town, identifying where they were staying, a formula which was already a proven success in the spa town

of Harrogate.

Even as the circulation edged up to 1,000, he continued to print it laboriously one sheet at a time on a double-crown Columbian press in the attic of his offices in Bridge Street.

An early employee, Frederick Collis, who worked for five years in Whitby from 1857 before moving on to Sheffield, wrote a memoir of those early days for the Jubilee issue of the Gazette in 1904.

The proprietor impressed him as "one of the few men I have known who apparently had no trouble with himself". Ralph Horne provided much of the editorial content, for although he had no shorthand, he had a retentive memory, and with the aid of what Mr Collis called "catch-notes" he was able to cover courts and meetings "at considerable length and commendable accuracy". Instead of writing out a report, he would sometimes set it up in type right away, a facility which would have later caused hysteria among officers of the printing union, the National Graphical Association.

He also indulged in investigative reporting. After a disaster at Rosedale ironworks, "Mr Horne went over to learn what he could about it. He was not recognised as a journalist, and in the chats he had with the people he not only got to know the cause of the disaster, but its consequences, and a very full report appeared in the Gazette. When the management saw it they were very angry and



Three generations of the Horne family are captured in this portrait. They are FW (Mr Fred), his son WM (Mr William), and WM's son LM Horne, who grew up to be Mr Lionel and was the last submitted picture

threatened Mr Horne with all sorts of pains and penalties for trespass and so on; but nothing came of it." An early challenge was the capsizing of the Whitby lifeboat with the loss of 12 lives in 1861. He responded with successive editions culminating in a special devoted wholly to the disaster.

This all-round newspaperman was also the most adept hand on the Columbian, and printed the first 200 of each issue himself with the help of a maidservant called Sarah who worked the fly, collecting and bundling the papers.

In 1858, with more and bigger papers required, an Ulverstonian press was placed in the cellar. This machine was operated by a flywheel turned on press night by two men summoned from the docks. Mr Collis, who had taken his turn on the Columbian, also "fed" the new machine and commented on the ease with which an issue was printed off. A few years later, there is reference to yet another new machine, a "Belle Sauvage" which was proudly described as being "universally considered the best printing machine extant."

Marion Keighley's Whitby Writers, published in 1957, includes a memory of Ralph Horne written by "An Old Exile": "A kindly, genial man whose very life was a long and interesting sermon, with a gracious word for every customer.....and a smile for the younger generation".

He brought two of his sons into the business, William Bridekirk Horne and Ralph

Horne jnr., but outlived them both, dying in January 1892, aged 86. By then Horne and Son Ltd was in the hands of two of his grandsons, FW Horne ("Mr Fred"), who was admitted as a solicitor in 1880, but relinquished law to take up the chairmanship of his grandfather's business, and HS Horne ("Mr Harry"), who mastered shorthand and combined the role of editor with that of Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for Whitby.

The business prospered under their direction, and in 1898 there was a further investment in machinery with the purchase of a two-feeder Wharfedale press built by W Dawson and Sons of Otley, West Riding. This produced an eight-page paper of 56 columns, and was later adjusted to provide more capacity.

"Mr Harry" retired in 1920, and died in Kent in 1947. "Mr Fred" had a son, William Mackenzie Horne, who volunteered in September, 1914, and served in the Army throughout the First World War, mainly in Flanders. He was Horne's managing director between the wars, but he died before his father. "Mr Fred" just kept going, and was still chairman of Horne's when he died in 1949, aged 92. Reminiscing, his grandson, LM Horne ("Mr Lionel") called him as "a rather fussy, important little character who never went anywhere without being Fred Horne of the Whitby

Gazette, and everybody knew it."

In complete contrast, Lionel Horne was quiet and self-effacing. He was a man in control, calm, good humoured and reliable. Like his great great grandfather, he seemed to have no trouble with himself.

He suffered a sad loss with the death in 1966 of his sister Joan, who had worked on newspapers elsewhere and eventually joined the board of Horne and Son Ltd. He had hard and brave decisions to take, and there came a time when he was required to draw on inner strength.

His inheritance was a newspaper sometimes called "The Bible of the Dales". In Whitby it was simply "t'Whitby paper".

It provided a livelihood for 38 people, with four part-timers.

But it was brought out in an archaic fashion. When he took over as chairman, the press was a Cossar built by Dawson Payne and Elliott of Otley and acquired second-hand from the Accrington Observer in 1923 to supplant the Wharfedale.

He could replace the press, but he was unable to escape a costly labour-intensive method of production. As early as 1968, he was saying that he thought the problem of finding staff would catch up with him.

The last of the old broadsheet Gazettes ran off the flat-bed press on the night of Thursday, March 30, 1978. Thenceforth, the paper was printed in Scarborough.

The fifth-generation Horne had faced the inevitable, and sold out.



Above: The cover of the very first Whitby Gazette