

THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTCHURCH TIMES

C.T. article 1955



The first type-setting machine installed by the Christchurch Times. This machine (which can still be used) is now 55½ years old. Prior to its acquisition the whole of the local news and advertisements were set by hand!

IT was the abolition of a government tax on newspapers on June 15th, 1855, which directly brought about the starting of the Christchurch Times and, as a matter of fact, led to the foundation of a number of other British newspapers which will be celebrating their centenaries this year.

The tax on newspapers was first imposed on August 1st, 1712, ostensibly as a means of increasing the revenue but, in reality, it was an attempt to interfere with the liberty of the Press.

The House of Commons decided that "the most effectual way for suppressing libels would be the laying of a great duty on all newspapers and pamphlets". All newspapers were taxed at the rate of ½d. per half sheet or less, or 1d. if on a whole sheet and 2d. a sheet if a paper was of larger size. A tax of 1s. was also imposed on every advertisement.

Both these taxes had been doubled in 1757 and the newspaper tax was increased to 1½d. in 1776. In 1789 this tax was increased to 2d. and the advertisement tax to 2/6. The tax increased progressively to 3d. in 1797, 3½d. in 1804 and 4d. (its highest) in 1815. The advertisement tax was raised to 3/6 in 1804, but it was abolished in 1853. The newspaper tax, reduced in 1836 to 1d. (which tax covered the cost of free postage), was

abolished on 15.6.55. Fifteen days later the Christchurch Times was founded

STARTED IN HIGH STREET

Originally it was produced by Rev. Joseph Fletcher, Henry Sharp and Risdon D. Sharp at No. 50 High Street—premises now occupied by Mr. J.L.T. Williams' shop. In the same year it was moved next door to No. 49, and Henry Sharp continued to be named as publisher until January 16th, 1869, after which George Marshall (who joined the business as manager in June, 1864) became proprietor and editor.

In 1880 the business moved from No. 49, High Street to West End (Bargates) where it occupied the house is still standing, numbered 24. This move was occasioned by the General Election of that year, the result of which was said to have "excited hostility in the mind of the owner of 49, High Street, and notice to quit was given".

PROPRIETOR A MAYOR

George Marshall remained proprietor of the newspaper until 1915 (being elected to the Council in 1890, Mayor in 1897 and Aldermen in 1903), when further moves were precipitated by the First World War. Towards the end of the Bargates phase of its existence, Mr. Edward Eyres had assumed the role of publisher and it was under him that the newspaper moved to its existing premises in Bridge Street (formerly the Post Office). In the meantime, the printing side of the business had been purchased by Mr. Gilbert Reid and Mr. Charles Nutman, the newspaper being owned by the late Mr. Harold Mooring Aldridge, the late Mr. Edwin Parton Whittingham (originally clerk to Mr. Risdon Sharp) and the late Mr. F. Abbott.

WAR DIFFICULTIES

Mr. Eyres connection with the newspaper ceased in April, 1918, (up to which time, incidentally, the whole of the printing type was set by hand). Falling victim to the war and post-war difficulties, publication ceased until June 1925, when the Christchurch Times Printing Company was formed to restart the paper, the type for which was for the first time to be set by a "modern linotype machine". The machine (which is still

preserved by us as a "museum piece") was already 25 years old when it was acquired, is now 55½ years old, and can still be used.

The only further alteration of ownership was the formation of a limited company in 1933 to acquire the business from the partnership of Nutman and Reid, and the paper is still owned by the company.

THE SIGN OF THE TIMES

It has become customary in recent years to commemorate minor events by the making of some record and major ones by the erection of a "permanent memorial". The attainment of our 100th anniversary is certainly a major event in the life of the Christchurch Times but we still don't quite like the term "permanent memorial". None the less, some time ago, we decided we would mark the centenary in a small way by the addition of some modest feature to our premises.

Being attracted by the display of wrought iron work and appropriately designed hanging signs in country towns, we consulted the Rural Industries Bureau, an organisation set up to preserve and encourage every aspect of traditional British craftsmanship in rural districts and country towns. We received the most enthusiastic and generous help from the Bureau, and particularly from Mr. William Morgan, their Senior Crafts Officer, through whom arrangements were made for the preparation of original designs for a wrought iron bracket by Mr. L. C. Lewis, of St. Austell Bay, Cornwall. Six designs were submitted by Mr. Lewis and the selected one has been added to the Christchurch Times premises carrying as a sign, a painting of the old hand press-still in our possession-upon which the first copies of the Christchurch Times were printed. It has been our endeavour to add a noteworthy feature to a street of character.

THE DESIGNER

Mr Lewis, who designed the wrought iron work, is one of the leading experts in the craft. He started in this line in 1919 under W. Bainbridge Reynolds, who had previously been chief designer J. Starkie Gardner, the great authority and revivalist of wrought iron work in this country. This experience lasted eight years during which time work was carried out for many eminent architects of the period, covering commissions for the Royal Household Memorial, St. George's Chapel, Windsor; Kitchener Memorial Chapel, St. Paul's Cathedral; ecclesiastical work for Liverpool Cathedral, York Minister and many other churches. Entrance gates and screens, staircases and grilles were executed in many fine country houses on behalf of Sir Edwin Lutyens, Sir Gilbert Scott, Sir Aston Webb, Sir Reginald Blomefield, W.H. Walters and C.A. Voysey, to name only a few. In the years 1926 and 1927, Mr Lewis was first prizewinner in competition for wrought iron work design sponsored by the Royal Society of Arts.

Taking up a designing post with the Morris Singer Company in 1927, during the period of the last war he was associated with manufacturers making Bailey Bridges and flail tank attachments for the Ministry of Supply. For many years he has been associated with the Rural Industries Bureau and at present is in practice as a freelance consultant and designer for architectural metalwork. The wrought iron work was made by Mr. N.C. Kaslake, New Milton.

POPULATION

At the time the Christchurch Times first appeared, fewer than 3,000 people lived in Christchurch. Census figures since then portray the growth of the borough:

1871	3,064.
1881	3,341.
1891	3,994.
1901	4,204.
1911	6,053.
1921	6,991.
1931	9,183.

N.B.-in 1932 Highcliffe and part of Hurn were added to the borough.

1941	15,360.
1951	20,506.
1954	22,230 (est.).
1955	23,200 (est.).