

The Daily Chronicle

AND CLERKENWELL NEWS.

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On 6 September 1876 an insignificant local London newspaper was sold for £30k. When relaunched as a national daily on 28 May 1877 the paper did not drop the Clerkenwell name.

By this time the new owner had spent over £150k on his new daily, including £30K for lavish advertising offices on the corner of Salisbury Court and Fleet Street, directly opposite the Daily Telegraph's building.

In order to massively increase circulation Edward Lloyd, the new owner ordered Hoe machines from New York that would print from a continuous roll of several miles in length, which folded the sheets and counted them into quires of 26 copies, ready for the newsagent. The Hoe machines installed on Fleet Street were the first that cut as well as folded the paper so that it could be delivered to the readers ready for use.

Lloyd's genius was to understand the demand for a national daily offering cheaper advertising. The Chronicle's advertising columns acted as an informal labour exchange that matched employers and employees from different parts of the country.

Like its sister Sunday paper, Lloyd's Weekly News, founded in 1842 it was crammed with news from all over the world. A few illustrations did appear to break up the tightly crowded text filling eight columns of eight pages but not until the 1890s. Despite its National and Imperial ambitions it remained a staunch advocate for the improvement of London.

What distinguished the Chronicle from other papers of the time was its tone and choice of language for example demonstrations were referred to as 'processions.' More Mazzini than Marx there were no attempts to set different interests against each other although MPs in the Lords and Commons were frequently ridiculed.

In 1892 the Chronicle was described as "An independent paper ... probably nearer the inner mind of the left wing of the Radical party than the Daily News, the Pall Mall Gazette or the Star ... Its labour news is the most extensive and most carefully edited than any paper."

A university for people who had left school at 14, the arts literature and politics often came together in the pages of the DC, as in the career of William Morris whose letters it published. During the Miner's Lockout in 1893 the paper encouraged support for the Welsh mining communities through financial donations and clothing. A champion of prison reform it was to the Chronicle that Oscar Wilde wrote in 1898.

By 1914 the paper had sales of 400,000. This put it in third place behind Lord Northcliffe's Daily Mail and the Daily News. The Daily Chronicle nearly doubled its circulation during the war years.

Towards the end of the war the Chronicle's editor Robert Donald started speaking out against Lloyd George for prolonging the conflict – a stance that was not stopped by the proprietor, by this time Edward Lloyd's son Frank.

And then on 6 October 1918, 5 weeks before the Armistice both the Chronicle and Lloyd's Weekly News were bought by, remarkably, the prime minister of the day, Lloyd George for £1.6 million. Overnight it was transformed from being an independent voice to a spokesperson for the Prime Minister. The Chronicle had taken great care to be the voice of the people, showing a respect for the good sense of the masses when in possession of the truth. Now, as a greatly enlarged electorate went to vote in December 1918, this independent paper was in the ownership of the man running to be Prime Minister.

Lloyd George sold the Chronicle in 1926, when it was no longer useful to him politically for £3 million. In the hands of the Lloyd family the paper had remained commercially successful through investing in improved technology and news gathering. For its new investor owners it was simply an investment to buy, asset strip and sell on. Its end was in sight: "The crash of the Daily Chronicle is the biggest catastrophe of the kind that Fleet Street has ever known" claimed The New Statesman on 7 June 1930.

It was not quite the end. In 1930 the 'Daily Chronicle' was merged with the Cadbury-owned 'Daily News' to form the 'News Chronicle.'



Daily Chronicle

Additional notes

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Further Reading:

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The London Daily Press, H W Massingham, New York, 1892

Additional notes