

The Daily Telegraph

VOL. 3 - No. 1

THE HERITAGE of FLEET STREET

LONDON 2021

Telegraph *Daily* & Courier.

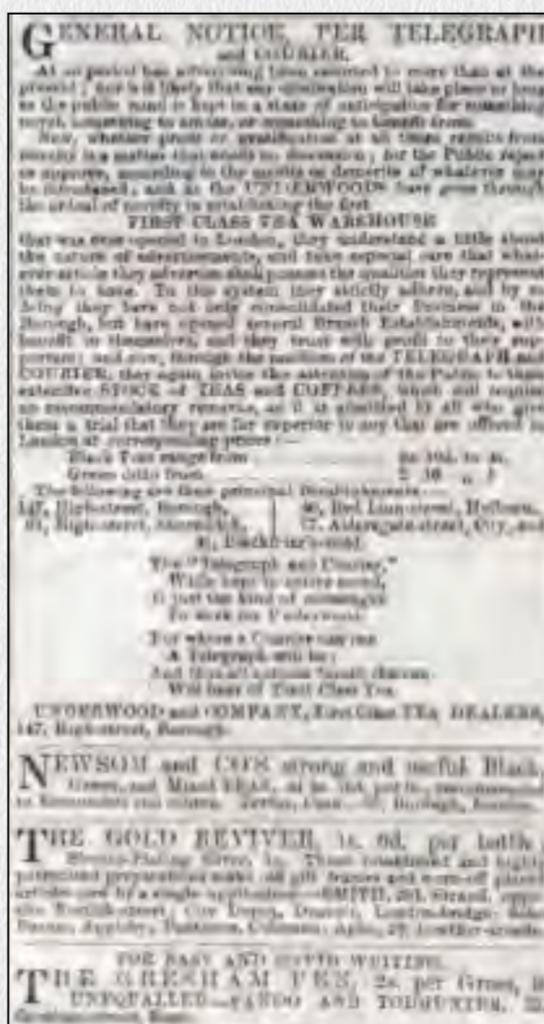
The Daily Telegraph & Courier, to give its full original name, was launched on 29 June 1855 by Colonel Arthur Burroughs Sleigh, a Canadian-born army officer and writer, as a vehicle for his pursuit of a grudge against the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the Duke of Cambridge.

Not that he admitted this in the initial issue, claiming merely to extend to the county “the benefit of a cheap and good Daily Press”, taking advantage of the repeal of Newspaper Stamp Duty on 1 July of that year to undercut the price of his competitors with an initial price of 2d, which was in September halved to a single penny. By then however Sleigh’s financial difficulties meant he had been forced to sell a half-stake in the paper to printer Joseph Levy, who bought Sleigh out in February 1857 to take full control.

Under Levy and his descendants The Daily Telegraph, as it became in October 1856, flourished as a paper aimed mainly at the aspirant middle class, and by the time of its second decade could claim to have the largest circulation of any newspaper in the world. By then it was a part of Fleet Street, having moved there in 1860 to a building which would be rebuilt twice under its tenure.

However despite such scoops as an interview with the Kaiser that ruffled diplomatic feathers in 1908, the competition from new papers in the early twentieth century saw circulation decline, and the investment needed to modernise and try and regain its popularity was more than its owners could afford. Thus the paper changed hands in January 1928, passing to the Berry family, and under their ownership the paper flourished again, to the extent that circulation

in 1947 topped the million mark. In 1937 the Berrys bought out the Morning Post and merged it with the Telegraph. To its new readership columnist J. B. Firth let it be known that “it is the practice of the Daily Telegraph to serve up honest, unadulterated news... free from all social and religious bias.” Two years later came its next major scoop, in the form of Clare Hollingworth encountering the German preparations for the invasion of Poland.



Part of one column in the first issue

Come the 1980s and it was the Berrys who were in turn unable to afford the investment needed to modernise again, and Conrad Black’s Hollinger took control in 1985. Under Black the paper joined the exodus from Fleet Street, moving to the Isle of Dogs in 1987, and embracing modern forms of production and even the internet, being the first British paper to appear in web form in 1994.

Black’s downfall in 2004 saw the paper change hands again. Now owned by David and Frederick Barclay it moved again, to Victoria, and in 2009 saw perhaps its greatest scoop of all in the exposé of MP’s expense claims.

The Daily Telegraph of the 21st century is a different beast from its 19th century counterpart, a substantial portion of which (including the front page) consisted of classified advertisements (see left). The dense text and limited illustration of the latter necessitated in part by a low pagination has long gone, with multiple sections giving room for a wider range of articles and full colour giving a much glossier look. Gone are the days

when its writers remained largely anonymous in its pages as well. But it still shares the right-wing outlook the paper adopted in the 1870s, and its mission statements of earlier times still by and large apply today, both in print and online.

