

# 75 Years of your **Chronicle** & ECHO

# 75th anniversary but 286 years of history . . .

## 19th century stories were assembled letter by letter

**B**EFORE computers, production of daily newspapers relied on long-established but laborious methods.

Typewriters had recently been invented, but were still a rarity. And before the "eighth wonder of the world", the Linotype typesetting machine, reached Northampton, type was assembled letter by letter from typecases, and disassembled after printing for re-use. Printing machines were hand-fed with paper, sheet by sheet, and most would print on one side only. The machines being used by the *Northampton Echo* in 1882, as illustrated, were of this type. A second printing would be needed to "back-up" each sheet. Folding and any necessary collation would also be hand work.

In 1880, power for printing presses was supplied by a stationary steam engine, or a gas engine, driving shafts from which belts could reach each machine. Electric power and lighting were in the future. Thomas Edison's development of light bulbs was advancing, but had achieved a bulb life of only about 13 hours at this point.



**John BARONS**

**C&E's second editor 1959-61**

The shape of things to come in typesetting and printing was becoming visible in the techniques justified by national newspapers with their larger volume and speed requirements. Mechanical typesetting machines, having proved their reliability, were speedily introduced.

The use of paper rolls rather than sheets increased printing speeds, and printing from cylinders rather than flat surfaces enabled both paper surfaces to be printed at once.

Folders were developed to receive the printed "web" and produce separated and folded newspapers at full press speed.

Methods of duplicating a page of type enabled several printing machines to produce the same

newspaper simultaneously. The presses became capable of printing several paper webs, adding to the number of pages in each copy. Northampton's evening papers upgraded their presses as needed by growing circulation and paging. But when the time came for the *Chronicle* and *Echo* to merge in 1931, capacity and speed again needed to be stepped up.

A recent national press merger of the *Daily News* and *Daily Chronicle* (to form the *News Chronicle*) released some presses, and two were installed at the rear of the Market Square offices of the new paper.

The machines had been in use since 1902, and served the *Chronicle & Echo* until 1954. Full use was made of the ubiquitous Linotype, or the similar Intertype models throughout the C&E's Market Square days and 21 machines were listed in the 1978 Auction Notice after the move to Upper Mounts.



■ The Echo's steam printing press of 1882 (above) and (left) workmen on the roof of the C&E's 1950s extension



**T**HE *Chronicle & Echo* has been Northampton's evening newspaper since 1931 but its roots can be traced back more than 200 years before that!

It was back in 1720 when the first edition of the *Northampton Mercury* first hit the streets. The *Mercury*, now a successful free weekly paper, is the oldest newspaper in the UK with a proven record of continuous publication.

The original proprietors were Robert Raikes and William Dicey. Already seasoned newspapermen, they left the *Stamford Mercury* to try their luck on their own in Northampton.

The majority of early provincial newspapers lifted their stories directly from the London newspapers. Messengers on horseback were dispatched daily to bring the latest city news back to Northampton. Such a messenger is now our company's corporate logo and can be seen on the front of our Upper Mounts building.

An early scoop for the *Mercury* was the news of Bonnie Prince Charlie's retreat on December 6, 1745.

An important turning point in the

nature of Northampton's newspapers took place during the Industrial Revolution with the introduction of the steam engine.

The development of the railway made London newspapers readily and speedily available in the provinces.

This competition threatened to severely undermine the local newspapers. The response was to provide their readership with something the city papers couldn't: local news.

The *Mercury* did not have things its own way all the while. In 1831 the *Herald* was launched in Northampton.

The *Herald* was on the east side of Northampton Market Square and on the north side succeeding members of the Dicey family remained in ownership of the *Mercury* for 165 years from 1720 to 1885.

Both weekly papers spawned evening publications. The *Echo* was founded on February 9, 1880, by the *Mercury* and, a week later, the *Herald* launched the *Chronicle*. Professor Dicey, last of the family, had to sell out under the terms of his mother's will and did so to Sammy Campion, who had been the paper's chief reporter but who had left in 1876 in protest against someone else being made editor

instead of him.

Sammy Campion passed his newspapers on to the Northampton Mercury Press Ltd in 1905 and then in 1931 they were bought by Provincial Newspapers.

On November 2, the *Chronicle* merged with the *Echo* and the same week the *Mercury* with the *Herald*.

In the 1970s major redevelopment of Northampton took place and in 1978 the papers had to move to make way for the Grosvenor Centre.

The new home was a purpose-built edifice on the edge of the town centre at Upper Mounts. It contained new computer-set technology and a new web-offset press.

The next few years were ones of constant change. The *Mercury* was re-launched as a tabloid in 1980 and a short time later joined the fast-growing ranks of the free newspapers.

Technical advances in the printing world made themselves felt in Northampton and our company was in the vanguard of the single-key-board/direct input revolution which

saw journalists typing their stories directly into the typesetting computer system.

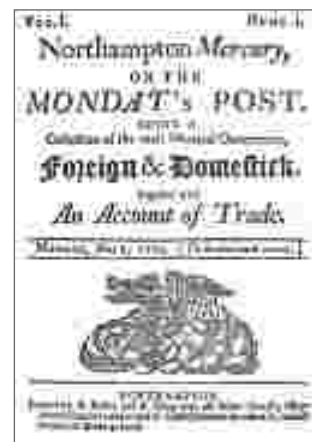
By the end of January 1991 most of the *Chronicle & Echo*'s editorial pages were being designed and created on a computer screen, often with the use of full colour.

In 1991 the *Chronicle & Echo* also became a tabloid after exhaustive market research.

In the autumn of 1992, the *Chronicle & Echo* and the *Mercury*, which had gradually phased out the *Herald* part of its title, were taken over by Peterborough-based EMAP. The tenure of ownership proved short-lived for in July, 1996, EMAP sold most of its local newspapers, including the *Chronicle & Echo* and the *Mercury*, to Edinburgh-based Johnston Press, more than doubling the size of the Scottish group.

Northampton is now the head office of the Midlands Division within Johnston Press and also controls the Kettering-based *Evening Telegraph* and *Citizen*.

In 2001 we launched a new newspaper, *Northants on Sunday*. These newspapers, and many others, are printed on our Upper Mounts press which in 2000-2002 was the subject of an £20 million update and enlargement programme.



■ The first Northampton Mercury, of May 2, 1720

# 75 Years of your NORTHAMPTON Chronicle & ECHO



## Cutting-edge technology brings the news

**T**HE very latest printing technology is used to bring Northamptonshire readers their *C&E* and other newspapers. Working around the clock, seven days a week, our presses keep rolling to bring our readers the news, views and issues which affect them.

We are one of the first local newspaper publishers in the country to install the cutting-edge computer-to-plate technology.

This means the news pages designed by our journalists on a computer screen are output as aluminium plates which can be installed on our Northampton press.

Our network of computer systems also services other titles in the county and in Bedford, Milton Keynes, Market Harborough, Rugby, Leamington, Banbury, Aylesbury, Buckingham, Hemel Hempstead, Luton and Biggleswade.

High speed links connect all our offices, allowing the rapid exchange of news and advertisements.

The printing press at our Upper Mounts site is a Goss Metroliner and our inserting units allow us to add high quality supplements to the papers. The press can even print two different newspapers at the same time.

It is also kept busy printing titles from across the region and occasionally national newspapers are contract printed on site.

These include *The Star*, *The Sun*, *The Independent*, *The Times* and the *News of the World*. Other titles like *Motor-sport News* are printed here along with many weekly newspapers.

Innovations made in recent years include the Property Net advertising system which allows the area's estate agents to upload property details and pictures directly on to their advertisement pages and this information is automatically simultaneously uploaded on to our website PropertyToday.

Digital technology means it is now possible to produce news pages ready for printing in a matter of minutes, keeping our readers up to date with the very latest local news.



■ Papers roll off our multi-million press at Upper Mounts, Northampton (above) and a one-tonne reel of newsprint is fixed in place ready to print some more (top)

## Local paper, national group

THE *C&E's* parent company, Johnston Press plc, is the second biggest local newspaper publisher in the UK and a major force on the internet.

The company publishes hundreds of local newspapers and websites, produced by teams of local experts.

They are dedicated to delivering comprehensive local news and information, that both informs and reflects the important issues of the communities they

serve.

Johnston Press now operates in more than 200 markets up and down the UK and Ireland. Each area is unique, which is why every newspaper and website is tailored to its market.

Johnston Press was first established in Falkirk in 1767 as F Johnston & Co Ltd.

The modern Johnston Press includes many titles that have been around for more than 200 years.

The group has grown by founding or buying individual local newspapers and newspaper groups, including *The Scotsman* in early 2006.

In 1988, F Johnston & Co Ltd became a listed company on the London Stock Exchange and changed its name to Johnston Press plc.

To find out more about the history of Johnston Press plc, you can purchase the *Life is Local* book from Amazon.co.uk.

## The Chron's BUILDINGS



■ Our old offices in The Parade, Market Square, Northampton, next door to the Emporium Arcade



■ The old offices were rebuilt in a modern art deco style in 1939



■ They were extended in Newland (now part of the Grosvenor Centre) in 1952-53



■ We moved to purpose-built offices at Upper Mounts in 1978