To the PUBLICK.

MR. BRYAN having lately declin'd printing THE Worcester Journal,

It is now undertaken by H. BERROW, (who serv'd a regular Apprenticeship in LONDON) and will be conducted in such Manner, and contain such a Variety of News, Miscellaneous Pieces, &c. as shall render it, in all Respects, very useful and entertaining.

This Paper is publish'd (every Thursday) several Hours sooner than usual; and all proper (tho' expensive) Means are taken to extend its Circulation, in order that the Intention of Advertising therein may be the better answer'd:—Upon these Considerations, it is hop'd, the Publick will favour this Undertaking with Encouragement; whilst, to oblige them to the utmost, it shall be the constant Endeavour of

Their Humble Servant,

H. BERROW.

Note, Having purchas'd all Mr. BRYAN's Materials, I carry on the Printing Business, in all its Branches, at my Office in Goose-Lane, near the Cross, WORCESTER.
William Cowper was right when he declared in the fourth book of *The Task* that a newspaper was one kind of publication that not even critics would take the trouble to criticize; for no matter how eagerly a newspaper is read, after a few minutes it is thrown aside as heedlessly as a bus ticket and is as soon forgotten. To historians, however, a bundle of old newspapers—really old ones—is precious, and the reason is clear: the passage of two or three centuries can make a twopenny newspaper invaluable, not just because of its scarcity but because it discloses so much about the people who first read it and about the earlier developments of journalism.

Many years before the first regular local newspaper was established in an English provincial town, there were numerous corantos and newsbooks which, though printed in London, undoubtedly reached readers in the country. During the Civil War period, all England cried out for news, and many a *Perfect Diurnall* or *Mercurius* or *Intelligencer* came into being on both Royalist and Parliamentary sides. Then, for a number of years, it was only the *London Gazette*—for a few early issues printed in Oxford and called the *Oxford Gazette*—that brought news to

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*Fig. 1—Hervey Berrow’s announcement in 1748 that he had taken over the printing business of Stephen Bryan. (Used by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.)*
FRESHEST ADVICES

Englishmen living in the country. In the last twenty years of the seventeenth century, sporadic attempts were made to provide more bulletins of news from London, and (in addition to Sir Roger L'Estrange's Observator) there were competing papers with such titles as Domestic Intelligence or True Protestant Mercury; but it was not until George Ridpath's Flying Post and Abel Roper's Post Boy began to appear in 1695 that English readers in London and the country could count on seeing unofficial newspapers regularly every week, year in and year out, in addition to the London Gazette. By 1702, London had a daily paper, the Daily Courant, which in course of time had rivals in the Daily Post, the Daily Journal, the Daily Advertiser, the London Daily Post, and was followed in 1735 by the Daily Gazetteer. Those first decades of the eighteenth century saw also the establishment of numerous weekly, twice-weekly, and thrice-weekly papers in London—among them Defoe's Review, the Evening Post, George Read's Weekly Journal; or, British Gazetteer, the St. James's Post, Nathaniel Mist's Weekly Journal; or Saturday's Post, Parker's London News, the Whitehall Evening Post, the London Journal, the British Journal, the Craftsman (from number 45 called the Country Journal; or, The Craftsman), the London Evening Post, the Universal Spectator, the Grub-Street Journal, the General Evening Post—all of these and many other papers doubtless having some circulation in the country, as did the monthly Gentleman's Magazine and the London Magazine. As the eighteenth century advanced, any country reader willing to pay the cost of having newspapers brought or sent to him had his choice of a rapidly increasing number of London journals. Some papers, enjoying the benefits of subsidies and franking provided by the government, actually reached country readers free of charge.

Some of the London papers seem by their titles to have been intended primarily for circulation among readers in
the rural areas or in provincial towns. John Houghton, F.R.S., clearly expected country readers as well as city readers to be interested in his *Collection of Letters for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade* (published irregularly from 8 September 1681 to 16 June 1684) and in his weekly *Collection for Improvement of Husbandry and Trade* (from 30 March 1692 to 24 September 1704). Other papers printed in London and apparently intended for distribution in the provinces were the short-lived *Country Foot-Post* (1644), the *City and Countrey Mercury* (1667), and the *County [sic] Gentleman’s Courant* (1685). Even after local papers began to appear in provincial towns, there were London newspapers which were designed for distribution in rural areas: J. Morphew’s *Country Gentleman’s Courant: or, Universal Intelligence* (1706-1707), *Country Gentleman* (1726), Dormer’s *Country Tatler* (1736), the *Country Magazine: Or, Weekly Pacquet* (1739), and T. Cooper’s *Country Oracle: A Weekly Newspaper, Containing Answers to All Questions in All Sciences* (1741). There were some London printers of news who used the word “Oxford” in the title or subtitle, implying (quite misleadingly) some connection with the university city.

It is a fact that the proprietors of several London newspapers made special efforts to get their papers into the hands of readers outside of London. There is, at the Press Club in London, a single issue—number 2 (2 November 1646)—of a paper entitled *The Military Actions of Europe, as also the Councels made publique Relating thereto; with such other particulars as happen,* and its title is followed by the words, “Collected weekly for the Tuesday POST.” The emphasis given to that last word suggests that Giles Calvert and his printer, J.M., “at the sign of the Black-spread Eagle at the West end of Pauls,” expected sales in the country to be considerable. It was stated in the colophon of Houghton’s later *Collection,* mentioned above, that the papers were sold not
only by the hawkers and by certain named vendors in London but also by George Rose in Norwich; and in number 11 (14 May 1692), Houghton suggested that customers could receive the paper by post, or that local booksellers and coffee-men might arrange for carriers to bring regular supplies every week; "... or Carriers themselves may gain well," he added, "if they'll serve the Country Gentlemen. And any such Bookseller, Coffee-man, or Carrier that will apply themselves to me, shall have good Encouragement with liberty to return those that won't sell." One of the several papers called the London Post, in its issue of 9 May 1705, prefaced the news with a statement beginning, "since this Paper is Published every Night, to go into the Several Parts of England. . . ." George Ridpath, author of the Flying Post, announced in number 776 (30 April 1700) that although the paper came out early on the three days of publication, there would be added "for the conveniency of the Country" a postscript which would include all the domestic and foreign news arriving late in the day. A few proprietors went so far as to prepare special country editions of their London papers. Three times a week, two consecutive issues of the Daily Courant (1702-1735) were combined into a Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday country paper, and there was also a country edition of the later Daily Gazetteer.

It is worth noting, moreover, that London papers were sometimes advertised in country newspapers, a good example being the announcement in the Gloucester Journal, number 296 (5 December 1727), that one week later the first issue of R. Nutt's thrice-weekly London Evening Post would appear. No reference was made in the advertisement to the cost of sending the London Evening Post to subscribers in or near Gloucester, nor was there any list of agents from whom it might be obtained. More explicit information on the provincial circulation of London papers is to be found in the advertisements in various
local papers in July, 1757, announcing the first issues of *Lloyd's Evening Post*: “It will be published in the Evening of every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and circulated thro' great Part of the Kingdom by the Post which now sets out on what were called the Bye Nights to all the trading Cities, and all the Sea Ports of Note.”

Long before 1757, as may be seen from Treasury records of the 1730’s, the government paid substantial sums annually to the authors and printers of the “double” *Courant*, the *Corn Cutters Journal*, the *London Journal*, and the *Free Briton*, which were “sent to the Post Office every Post day” for distribution by the clerks of the roads. The publisher of the *British Apollo* advised persons living in the country to have friends in town send them the paper.

The printers of some country newspapers offered to take in subscriptions for London papers.

The man who made the most remarkable efforts to induce country people to buy newspapers printed in London was Robert Walker, the address of whose shop was at various times given as (1) at Shakespeare's Head in Turn-again Lane, Snowhill, (2) in Exchange Alley, Cornhill, (3) next the White Horse Inn, Fleet Street, (4) at the British Oil Warehouse in Fleet Lane, (5) at the corner of Seacoal Lane, next Fleet Lane, and (6) at the corner of Elliott’s Court in the Little Old Bailey. From one or another of these establishments Walker issued various newspapers bearing the names of provincial towns or counties: the *Warwick and Staffordshire Journal* (1737 and following years), the *Shropshire Journal* (1737), the *Derbyshire Journal* (1738), and the *Lancashire Journal* (1738-1741), all printed in London except the later issues of the *Warwick and Staffordshire Journal*. From his Fleet Lane shop he also issued several editions of the *London and Country Journal*, one series of which was intended (without change of title) to circulate in the Bristol area, and another, with title altered to *Northamptonshire Journal* but not otherwise different, for dis-
FRESHEST ADVICES

tribution in a country region. It is possible that the concurrent but differing issues of All-Alive and Merry in 1741 represent a similar attempt to produce an edition for circulation in the provinces as well as the regular city edition.

More than one London printer of newspapers regularly left space at the end of the third page of his paper for use by customers who might wish to add written communications when they sent the newspapers to friends or relatives in the country, the fourth page being left blank so that the paper might be folded and addressed like an ordinary letter. According to Alexander Andrews, Ichabod Dawks announced in an early issue of his printed News-Letter (1696) that it would be "done upon good writing-paper, and blank space left that any gentleman may write his own private business." No copy of this issue has survived. The Evening Post, number 10 (16 September 1709), had on its first page the statement that "being chiefly design'd for the Country" it would always be printed on fine paper "with a Blank to write on." Issues of the Evening Post now at the British Museum have written messages sent to Gabriel Walter of Chatham in Kent by his "ever dutyfull and obedient Son, Will: Walter," or to William from his brother Thomas. The letter in number 155 (10 August 1710) is from Thomas to William, who was then at home:

Drs. Bro:" after ye worst Passage that I ere had, did arrive at London, ab: Ten a Clock last night, & this morning was wth: Cap: Cleasby, to whom I delivered ye Pay List. Mr: Redman Called on me this Day, & I let him Know that had his piece of Holland wth: he'll send for tomorrow; You may See pth: this paper what an alteration there is In Bank Stock Since I left you, If can get it at 108 or thereat tomorrow I will purchase; Pray let my Mother Know that have sent by ye Carrier this Day those things she desired. wth: my Due Respects to all I am

Drs: Bro: ye: Most Affect. Loving Bro:

Tho: Walter.
The title of another London paper suggests that this unprinted space left for personal messages was regarded as a postage-saving feature: the *London Post*, with the best Account of the whole Week’s News, Foreign and Domestic; with Room left to write into the Country without the Charge of Double Postage. Issues of the *Evening General-Post* in All Souls’ Library are addressed on the unprinted fourth page to the Rev. Dr. Kennett, Dean of Peterborough, at Peterborough in Northamptonshire. One of them—number 51 (10 July 1716)—has a long written letter in the unprinted lower part of the third page and in the inner margin. Hasty and informal communications scrawled in the margins of some other London newspapers show that personal postscripts were commonly added for readers in the country even when space was not provided by the printer for the purpose.

Although the history of newsletters wholly in manuscript has not yet been written, it is well known that during the seventeenth century there were several series of hand-written bulletins of news, prepared in comparatively small quantities by men living in London, where great affairs took place or were discussed, and sent to regular subscribers in the country for a suitable annual fee. They began with “Sir” or “My Lord” and were addressed on the back to the recipient, as ordinary private letters were. The effect intended, ostensibly, was that of direct correspondence between individuals, one a city dweller, the other a man eager to hear early reports and rumors of what was going on. A full year’s run of a manuscript newsletter sent from London every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 26 March 1723 to 24 March 1724 will serve as example. The letters, now in the British Museum, are uniformly written on the first three pages of small folio sheets (12 by 15 inches) folded once, the fourth page being left blank for the address and the last few items being carried over from the bottom of the third page to the left margin of that page, from there to the left margin of the second page, and from there
to the left margin of the front page. It is clear from their regularity and from the opening words of the first letter—"In order to inform our Readers . . ."—that these are not private letters but were professionally prepared and copied for more than one person. These particular copies all begin with "My Lord," and several of them have on the back page the recipient's address:

To
The Right Honble the
Lord Viscount Percivall
To be left at ye Post House
in Bath.

Doubtless other copies of these same letters were addressed to other recipients.

Manuscript newsletters do not represent a temporary transitional stage in the emergence of the printed newspaper, for they increased rather than diminished in number and popularity during the first half of the eighteenth century, those of Wye, Stanley, and many others being frequently quoted in provincial newspapers as more informative or more trustworthy than the London "prints."

Prompted, one supposes, by a feeling for tradition and not by a desire to deceive anyone, the proprietors of certain early printed newspapers ordered special script type as a means of perpetuating the form of handwritten letters and, at the same time, producing more copies than even a large corps of scriveners could turn out. Most interesting of these quasi-manuscript news journals is Dawks's News-Letter, already mentioned. This was printed entirely in script type and began with the vocative "Sir" or "Sr" on the date line.¹³ Dawks's Letter, as it was at first called, continued to appear for at least twenty years (1696-1716). The same effect of a personal communication was suggested by the use of the salutation "Sir" at the head of the news in Sam. Farley's Bristol
Post Man (1715) and a few other newspapers printed in ordinary roman and italic type. Peter Motteux’s Gentleman’s Journal (1692-94) had as subtitle, “By Way of Letter to a Gentleman in the Country.” A similar intention may be observed in the name given by Roger Adams to his Manchester News-Letter in 1719, though Adams made less effort to make his paper appear to be a personal communication than Francis Leach did in the London News-Letter. With Foreign and Domestick Occurrences, which he printed thrice weekly in 1696. The term “newsletter” was retained for over half a century in the subtitle of the Kentish Post: or, the Canterbury News-Letter (1717-68).

The printed and written bulletins of news from London were available to all country readers who could afford them, but delivery by post to distant places was slow and costly. The author of the Country Gentleman’s Courant emphasized these disadvantages when he announced in the first issue (12 October 1706) that his paper would contain all that was of moment in the other newspapers published in London, “which many gentlemen and others have not the opportunity of seeing or perusing, either because of their distance from this City of London, or . . . by reason of the charge of the several newspapers and postage, which is very considerable.” The author of the Evening Post made a similar observation in his attempt to procure regular subscribers in the country, pointing out in his first issue (6 September 1709) that “there must be 3 or 4 £ per annum paid by those gentlemen that are out of town for written news.” From the point of view of a printer living in a town or city many miles from London, it must have seemed reasonable, once official restrictions had been removed, to hope that a local paper would be supported by readers in the area, even though some of them would probably continue to receive a London paper by post.

It might seem justifiable to declare that the Oxford
FRESHEST ADVICES

Gazette, number 1 of which appeared on 16 November 1665, was the first provincial newspaper. There are two good reasons why this opinion is unacceptable. For one thing, the Oxford Gazette was not a local enterprise but the official publication of the government, temporarily removed from London because of the plague; in the second place, it was not the earliest English newspaper printed outside of London. The statement made in 1827 by Eneas Mackenzie that "A newspaper, in post quarto, was printed by Robert Barker, at Newcastle, in 1639 . . . " suggests that Barker produced the first provincial newspaper. Barker, the King’s printer, was apparently in Newcastle only about two weeks in May, 1639, and while there he printed certain proclamations, a sermon which had been preached before the King at Durham on 5 May, and a set of military regulations. If he also printed one or two bulletins of news during that fortnight, he cannot on that account be credited with establishing a provincial newspaper. The same Robert Barker later also set up his press in York and other provincial towns, and he may have run off occasional bulletins of news in those places. J. R. Phillips asserted in Memoirs of the Civil War in Wales and the Marches (2 vols.; London, 1874), I, 118, that “packets of news” were printed on the King’s press at Shrewsbury; but no specimens have survived, and in any case they could hardly be looked upon as regular newspapers.

Concerning one other seventeenth-century publication the claim has been advanced that it marks the actual beginning of provincial journalism. This is the news book called at first the Oxford Djurnall: Communicating the Intelligence, And Affaires of the Court, to the rest of the Kingdome, printed weekly in Oxford by Henry Hall for William Webb from the beginning of 1643 until the first week of September, 1645. The first words of the title were soon altered to Mercurius Aulicus, and it is under this title that the publication is usually listed. A case has
been made by Mr. Varley\(^\text{17}\) for looking upon this as "the earliest regular English newspaper." That it \textit{was} a newspaper, issued weekly, and that it \textit{was} printed in Oxford cannot be denied, and to refuse to call \textit{Mercurius Aulicus} the first provincial newspaper may, therefore, seem to be cavilling. Yet, like the later \textit{Oxford Gazette}, already mentioned, this paper was published in Oxford only because the Court was there, and it was in no sense a local paper; it reported only the war news and other matters affecting the Royalist cause. When the "siege" was raised and "the mock-show at Oxford" was over, the paper ceased to be printed.\(^\text{18}\)

Provincial journalism cannot be said to have begun at Oxford in 1643 just because news was printed there during a temporary national emergency.

There is also scant reason to regard the \textit{Colchester Spie} (1648) as a genuine provincial newspaper. Its two issues give remarkably vivid accounts of conditions within the besieged city in August, 1648; but it was probably printed in London. No printer is named in the imprint, which reads simply, "Printed in the Yeere, 1648." The provincial press had not yet become established.

For any private printer to set up a press in a provincial town and issue a newspaper would, indeed, have been as much as his life was worth; for, in spite of John Milton's magnificent plea in 1644 for the removal of restrictions on printing, there remained for many years after \textit{Areopagitica} a strict limitation of the number of printing presses permitted in London and elsewhere. In 1680, a royal proclamation was issued forbidding all persons whatsoever to print or publish any news book or pamphlet of news not licensed by His Majesty's authority. From the Restoration until after the Revolution of 1688, the distributing of news, whether written or printed, was under the control of the secretary of state.\(^\text{19}\)

When government control of news was relaxed through the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695, it was naturally Londoners who took the lead in starting rivals to the
official London Gazette; and in that very year the coffee-house politicians in city and country were reading several new papers printed in London. There is no evidence that a regular country newspaper was established before 1701. The notion that there was a paper in Stamford earlier than the Stamford Post (1710–1712–?) continues to be mentioned locally, but it has long been recognized as unsupported conjecture based on the mistaken assumption that the early volume numbers of the Stamford Mercury (1713–32) were changed annually. The claim that provincial journalism began in 1690 in Worcester is based entirely on a vague statement (not verified elsewhere) made over a century later. The earliest first issue of a provincial paper to have survived is number 1 (7 December 1706) of Henry Cross-grove’s Norwich Gazette; but Cross-grove had been preceded by another Norwich printer by five years, and papers had also been established earlier than December, 1706, in two—possibly three—other towns.

It is not surprising that it was in Norwich and Bristol and Exeter—all progressive cities over a hundred miles from London—that the first weekly newspapers in the provinces were started. Two printers from London, Francis Burges at Norwich and William Bonny at Bristol, share with Sam. Farley of Exeter the honor of being the pioneers in English provincial journalism. It would be more satisfactory to ascribe full and exclusive honors to one or another of these three instead of making them share the distinction; but until more issues of the Norwich Post, the Bristol Post-Boy, and Sam. Farley’s Exeter Post-Man come to light, it is possible to calculate the starting dates only by counting back from issues printed long after number 1. That practice is not trustworthy.

No issue of the Norwich paper or of the Exeter paper is known to be extant earlier in date than number 91 of the Bristol Post-Boy (Saturday, 5 August, to Saturday, 12 August 1704). If there was no error in numbering and
if there was no irregularity in weekly publication, the first issue of the *Bristol Post-Boy* must have been dated 21 November 1702. There is no particular reason for supposing that there was any irregularity in the publication of the first ninety issues of this paper; but errors in serial numbering occur frequently in newspapers of the eighteenth century. There is a disparity of two weeks (or two serial numbers) between number 91 of the *Bristol Post-Boy* and the next issue to have survived, number 281, dated Saturday, 13 March, to Saturday, 20 March 1708; by normal reckoning the paper issued on 20 March ought to have been numbered 279. At any rate, certainty about the conjectured date of the first issue is hardly possible.

Was that first issue of the *Bristol Post-Boy* earlier than number 1 of Francis Burges’ *Norwich Post*? By the same process of counting back from the earliest issue extant—number 287 (3 May 1707)—one may conjecture that Burges’ paper began its life span on 8 November 1701. This reckoning makes the *Norwich Post* the first country newspaper of England. Yet there is a greater probability of error in the numbering of a series of 287 weekly issues than in a series of 91, and there are obvious irregularities in the numbers of the nine issues of the *Norwich Post* known to have survived. The next extant issue after number 287 is dated nine weeks earlier than its number, 348, would lead one to expect and, in relation to the date of number 413, number 594 is out by nearly four months. Forty years ago, A. D. Euren suggested 22 that the additional identifying numbers and letters—“14 K” in number 349, for example—printed at the left of the title indicated the half-yearly volumes and the successive issues in the respective volumes; but most of these special designations neither match the regular serial numbers nor fit into any recognizable sequence of dates. Irregularities in the numbering of both the *Bristol Post-Boy* and the *Norwich Post* compel one to leave the
question of priority unsettled; the available evidence is inconclusive.

Whatever may have been the dates of the first issues of the *Norwich Post* and the *Bristol Post-Boy*, Burges and Bonny stand in the records among the first men known to have published country newspapers in England. Deserving to share the special distinction here accorded to Burges and Bonny is Sam. Farley of Exeter. Various members of the Farley family appear in the imprints of West Country newspapers, but Sam. was the man who made Exeter one of the first three provincial cities of England to have a newspaper. Once again the date of the first issue is conjectural, and the uncertainty is still greater. If *Sam. Farley’s Exeter Post-Man; or, Weekly Intelligence* was a weekly paper from the beginning, the serial number, 556, of the only issue to survive, dated 10 August 1711, suggests a beginning in December, 1700; but a passage in the *Boston News Letter* dated 9 April 1705 makes it seem probable that the starting date was sometime in 1704. In either case, Sam. Farley is in the front rank of venturesome provincial printers.

It is possible that the next in priority was a Welshman, Thomas Jones of London and Shrewsbury, but evidence is scanty. Of a paper said to have been published by him in Shrewsbury in 1705, no copy has survived. The only hint that such a paper ever existed is in a note published in a Shropshire newspaper in 1881. In May of that year, a correspondent, T. W. Hancock, sent to the *Oswestry Advertiser* a statement describing a two-page paper which he said he had seen “some years since” entitled *A Collection of all the Material News*, with the imprint, “Printed and sold by Thomas Jones at his house in Hill’s Lane, near Mardol. Price 1d.” A paragraph of news which Hancock remembered concerning the Duke of Marlborough’s visit to Woodstock in order to “give his last instructions about building his palace” suggests that the only recorded issue of the Shrewsbury *Collection of all*
the Material News was dated sometime after 14 March 1705, the date on which the Queen gave formal assent to the bill for granting to Marlborough the honor and manor of Woodstock. There is no particular reason why the existence of a local paper in Shrewsbury as early as 1705 should be doubted; but until a copy with serial number comes to light, it is impossible to do more than place it among the first four. In any case, Thomas Jones (1647-1713), Shrewsbury's first regularly established printer, should be remembered for another reason: he was the man who made the earliest recorded attempt to establish a newspaper in the Welsh language. While he was in London, he announced in his Almanack for 1691 that he proposed to print a monthly bulletin of news for Welsh readers. A year later he announced that the plan had proved unacceptable; the Welsh distributors of his Almanack had been unable to induce their customers to subscribe to the projected newspaper, their reasons being that the Welsh people said there was no need to spend money for news from London when there were plenty of local people who could concoct sufficiently interesting news free of charge.

Burges, Bonny, Farley, Jones—the list is growing. The first man to establish a newspaper in any town or city ranks as a pioneer, and it is proper to celebrate in their turn Stephen Bryan of Worcester, the proprietor of the Stamford-Post, Joseph Button of Newcastle, and John Collyer of Nottingham, all of whom started newspapers in their respective communities before the end of the year 1710. By the time Parliament decided to raise money by imposing duties on soap, paper (now including newsprint), pamphlets, and newspaper advertisements, the provincial "press" had well begun. Thereafter it never faltered in its steady and at times swift development.

If only four of the fifteen provincial papers established before 1712, the year of the first Stamp Act, can be shown to have continued thereafter—Sam. Farley's Exeter Post-
Man, the Norwich Gazette, the Worcester Post Man, and the Newcastle Courant—ten others came into being within three years after the tax was imposed. Several of those earlier papers may well have ceased publication before the tax was imposed. The Shrewsbury Collection mentioned above, if, indeed, it continued for more than a few weeks, certainly expired long before 1712. The latest known issue of the Bristol Post-Boy is dated 26 August 1710; there is no evidence that it continued to appear long enough to collapse under the weight of a stamp a hundred weeks later. There is a reference to Thomas Goddard's Norwich Post-Man in February, 1710, but not thereafter; did it live on for another two and a half years, only to be taxed out of existence? Since the latest surviving issue of Jos. Bliss's Exeter Post-Boy is dated 17 August 1711, who can say whether it ceased to exist a year later or lived on until Bliss decided in September, 1715, to bring out a paper with a different format and title? These examples show that no one can be sure he is right if he asserts that most of the papers in existence in 1710 were killed off by the Stamp Act of 1712.

It is easy to exaggerate the blighting effects of the Act for laying several Duties upon all Sope and Paper made in Great Britian . . . ; and upon certain printed Papers, Pamphlets, and Advertisements (10 Anne, c. 19). Those who have deplored the government's lack of wisdom and foresight in imposing what they call a "tax on knowledge" have said nothing about the equally discouraging consequences of the tax on washing. It is still commonly asserted that the tax was imposed in order to suppress adverse criticism of the government; but surely the main intention was to raise money. A government does not stamp out libel by making people pay a little more for their newspapers, any more than it stops people from smoking tobacco or drinking beer by taxing those commodities. The purpose of taxing newspapers and soap was to bring in revenue; and the very fact that the Act of
10 Anne, c. 19, imposed a tax on newspapers is itself evidence that by 1712 they were firmly enough established in common use to be regarded—like soap—as a substantial and continuing source of revenue; they were there to stay. It is not to be denied that the government, so far as it was able to do so, continued to exercise strict control over certain kinds of news, but this control was exercised through *sub rosa* subventions to favored printers and by direct arrests of offending printers and venders.

This point is worth exploring, for it bears directly on the history of the provincial newspaper press. Addison, it will be remembered, expressed in *Spectator*, number 445 (31 July 1712), the day before the Stamp Act became effective, his fear that “this great Crisis in the Republick of Letters” would cause many a newspaper to collapse “under the Weight of a Stamp,” but he added that several journalists who had resignedly taken farewell of the public would presently reappear, “tho’ perhaps under another Form, and with a different Title.” And Addison’s forecast proved true. His tone, moreover, implied no great concern over restrictions on printing. In *Spectator*, number 488 (18 September 1712), he reported that he and a soap boiler both regretted having to charge higher prices for their respective wares and were both suffering a slight slump in sales. Jonathan Swift in his *History of the Four Last Years of the Queen*, written in 1713 but not printed until 1758, emphasized Queen Anne’s desire to have effective measures taken for preventing the publication of “False and Scandalous Libels, such as are a Reproach to any Government,” and went on to point out that in her message to Parliament the Queen had in mind “those Weekly and Daily Papers and Pamphlets, reflecting upon the Persons and Management of the Ministry”; but he gave it as his own opinion that the “Law for Taxing single Papers” had been quite unsuccessful in preventing the publication of reflections upon the government, for “the Mischiefs of the Press were too Exorbitant to be
secured by such a Remedy as a Tax upon the smaller Papers.” Moreover, he said, even though it must be acknowledged that “the bad Practices of Printers had been such, as to Deserve the Severest Animadversions of the Publick,” there had hitherto always appeared “an unwillingness to Cramp overmuch the Liberty of the Press.” These are significant observations.

Further contemporary evidence supporting the opinion that the Stamp Tax was imposed to raise money rather than to restrict the liberty of the press in London and the provinces is to be found in John Toland’s “Proposal for Regulating ye News-papers.” Toland did not attempt to decide whether the duties laid on newspapers had been intended to produce “a fund for the public service, or as a restraint upon the swarming of such papers, or for both these ends,” but his own proposal was financial, not repressive. He simply recommended that the regulations requiring the use of stamped paper for printing news should be made tighter and more inclusive. True, he said, he “wou’d not have seditious insinuations spread abroad, . . . nor private persons, much less public ministers, abused with impunity”; but he did not advocate the suppressing of newspapers. At one point, on the contrary, he stated quite explicitly that Parliament, “intending the stamps for a duty, took at the same time all possible precautions not to discourage the sale of regular Newspapers. . . .” And he insisted that the government’s desires could be achieved “without incroaching in the least on the Liberty of the press (which ought to be sacred) or confining to any one party the privilege of supplying the public with News. . . .”

Two or three other considerations suggest that, in the beginning at least, it was not determination to control the press that led the government to tax newspapers. For one thing, individual pamphlets were quite as offensive to Parliament as were the newspapers, yet the tax levied on pamphlets was much lower than that on newspapers;
the Treasury received from the printers of pamphlets only two shillings per sheet regardless of the number of copies printed, whereas the printer of a newspaper had to pay a tax of a halfpenny for every half-sheet he sold. On an octavo pamphlet of twenty-four pages (a sheet and a half), a printer paid a total of three shillings, even if he printed a thousand or two thousand copies; for a run of only seven hundred and twenty half-sheet newspapers, the printer paid ten times that amount in tax. It should be noted, furthermore, that the preamble of the Stamp Act itself (10 Anne, c. 19) indicates that the primary intention was to raise “large Supplies of Money to carry on the present War” and to defray the Queen’s other extraordinary expenses. And it is to be observed that when the printers of newspapers were summoned to the House of Commons for violating the privilege of the House by printing in their columns matter which the members found offensive, there was no talk of increasing the tax as a means of stiffening control of the press.

When the government, moreover, after permitting artful dodgers to evade the newspaper tax for nearly thirteen years, formulated its law all over again in 1725, the printers complained only that their sales would be reduced; they did not protest against being muzzled. Even when the tax was increased in 1757, the printers said little about a tyrannical government’s throttling of the public voice. “I will not presume to say,” wrote Robert Raikes in his Glocester Journal on 4 July 1757, “that this Proceeding of the Legislature has its Rise in a Design to subvert the LIBERTY of the PRESS, on which every other Liberty of an Englishman in some Measure depends; or to suppress that Kind of Intelligence which all my Countrymen have a Right, and an Interest, to know.” Raikes was perfectly confident that the tax would prove entirely ineffectual in subverting the liberty of the press. “However this be,” he continued, “it is at present in the Power of my Readers to defeat any Attempt of this Kind,
by continuing to take the GLOCESTER JOURNAL at the small Advance above-mentioned.” Whatever hopes the government may have had of stifling libels by collecting a halfpenny for every half-sheet of news, two things are clear: the Stamp Tax did not put an end to bold censuring of the government, and in course of time it did bring in substantial revenue to the Crown. The retarding effects of the tax in 1725 and 1757 were certainly slight and temporary. There were a few casualties among both city and country papers, but in the provinces the momentum was quickly regained, as a glance at the chart in Appendix B will prove.

In any case, there were other reasons why newspapers proved short-lived. Some papers went down to defeat because the regional population was really too sparse to support a local paper; some were unable to overcome strong competition from papers printed in other towns of the region or brought in from London; some came to grief because another printer in the same town proved more aggressive in inducing people to buy his paper. Slender circulation and the lack of advertisements brought an early end to the Ludlow Post-Man in 1720; and it is probable that Thomas Hinton found the circulation of his Cirencester Post shrinking in 1723 because of the aggressive efforts of Raikes and Dicey to win a regional monopoly for their new Gloucester Journal, founded the year before. It is likely that Samuel Hodgkinson’s second attempt to start a newspaper in Derby—the British Spy: or, Derby Postman (1727–1731–?)—was crowded out of business by Sam. Drewry’s very successful Derby Mercury, which began in March, 1732.30 Richard Lewis’s New Worcester Journal (1753-54) was apparently hooted out of existence by the ebullient Hervey Berrow.31 Sometimes even well-established papers were driven to the wall by relentless opponents. Robert Whitworth had been publishing his Manchester Gazette (with various changes of title) for nearly thirty years when he announced in
number 3414 (25 March 1760) that, “finding the Profits not an Equivalent for the Trouble,” he would print no more news in Manchester. He was, he said, fully satisfied that the interest of his newspaper had been “much hurt thro’ the Opposition of a Party.” The “Party” was doubtless Joseph Harrop and the supporters of his Manchester Mercury.

It will be noticed that the first ventures in the printing of local papers were made in towns on main roads far away from London—Norwich, Bristol, Exeter, perhaps Shrewsbury—and it is interesting to observe that the next five towns to make a beginning were also at a considerable distance—Worcester, Stamford, Newcastle, Nottingham, and Liverpool. Once established, the Worcester Post-Man, under various titles, throve, with Stephen Bryan as its editor for forty years, and then Hervey Berrow. The Stamford Post, the pioneer paper in Lincolnshire, after two or three years gave way to the Stamford Mercury, printed by Thomas Baily and William Thompson, who were also (until the death of Thompson in 1732) the joint printers of the Suffolk Mercury: or, St. Edmund’s-Bury Post. Like Worcester, Stamford was not thereafter without a newspaper. The next towns to have papers were still farther north. The Leverpoole Courant (1712) did not find favor, or it was silenced by the Stamp Tax, and Liverpool had to wait forty-four years for its first successful paper. But at Newcastle-upon-Tyne there began in July, 1710, an activity in newspaper publishing which has never ceased to this day. Nottingham was not far behind. The Nottingham Post began in October, 1710. The very year of the Stamp Tax saw the beginning of Ayscough’s Weekly Courant, which kept going for half a century, during which time three other papers—the Nottingham Mercury, Collyer’s second Nottingham Post, and Creswell’s Nottingham Journal—came into being.

Meanwhile, within a period of five years—1715 to 1719
—Salisbury in the south, St. Ives in Huntingdonshire, Bury St. Edmund's in Suffolk, Canterbury in Kent, Plymouth in faraway Devon, Cirencester in the west, Leeds, Manchester, and York in the north—all produced their own newspapers. By the date of the re-imposed Stamp Tax in 1725, there were or there had been "first" papers in Ludlow, Northampton, Ipswich, Derby, Chester, Gloucester, Reading, and Maidstone, as well as additional papers in Bristol, Exeter, and Norwich. Nor did the government's more effective taxing of newspapers from 1725 onward stem the onrush either of new papers or of the well-established ones.

During the next twenty years, one or more additional papers came into being in fifteen of the towns which already had a paper; and in seventeen other towns all over England, local papers were printed for the first time: Taunton, Yeovil, Sherborne, Bath, Hereford, Birmingham, Preston, Kendal, Whitehaven, Lewes, Eton, Colchester, Cambridge, Coventry, Lincoln, Hull, Durham. Between 1745 and 1760, nine more towns—Oxford, Stratford, Leicester, Doncaster, Sheffield, Liverpool, Warrington, Middlewich, and Halifax—began to have local papers.

The titles of most of these newspapers named only the towns in which they were printed; but there were several papers whose proprietors added the name of the county or the names of adjacent towns. It is, perhaps, hope rather than evidence of extensive circulation that one sees in such titles as the Suffolk Mercury: or, St. Edmund's-Bury Post, the Kentish Post; or, the Canterbury News Letter, the Cirencester Post; or, Gloucestershire Mercury, the Essex Mercury; or, Colchester Weekly Journal, and the Sussex Weekly Advertiser, or Lewes Journal. When each of those papers began, there was no other paper in the town named, and no other paper printed elsewhere in the shire; it is to be assumed that the whole county was expected to regard the paper as the journal of the region. Circulation beyond the bounds of a single community is
implied in the change of the title of *Jopson's Coventry Mercury* for a time to *Jopson's Coventry and Northampton Mercury*. In 1742-43, a paper published in Bristol implied in its title that it circulated in an adjacent county: the *Bristol, Bath and Somersetshire Journal*. Still more inclusive in its ostensible coverage was a paper printed in Stratford-upon-Avon by James Keating in 1750 with the title *Stratford, Shipston, and Aulcester Journal*. Two years later, the title was expanded to *Keating's Stratford and Warwick Mercury; or, Cirencester, Shipston and Alcester Journal*. Many other papers served five towns; this is the only one whose title boasted that it did.

Merely enumerating the titles of newspapers and the towns named in those titles, however, is not a very sound way to estimate the true state of journalism. To say that there were one hundred and fifty newspapers in provincial England during the period 1701-60 is to conceal the fact that half of them did not last more than five years and that a quarter of the sixty towns and cities credited with having one or more newspapers in that period were actually without a local paper for fifty-odd years of that time. Nevertheless, as one looks at the scores and scores of newspapers which sprang into being in country towns all over England during the reigns of the first two Georges, one thing is apparent above everything else: a mighty struggle was in progress, the struggle of a force that burst its way into the open, thrusting aside all impediments, gaining momentum steadily, and bringing a new dimension into the life of England. It was a phenomenon of which few people at the time recognized the significance. Only now, two centuries later, is the magnitude of that emerging force becoming apparent. Even so astute an observer as Samuel Johnson saw only the fact; he did not perceive that what came to be called the fourth estate was in the making, even in the country. "Not many years ago the nation was content with one gazette," he wrote in his "Idler" paper, number 30 (11 November 1758),
“but now we have not only in the metropolis papers for every morning and every evening, but almost every large town has its weekly historian, who regularly circulates his periodical intelligence.”

Samuel Johnson had his facts right. Had he glanced at a map showing the towns which had their own papers in 1758, he would not, perhaps, have been surprised to find that there were twenty-eight such towns, though the map would not have told him that five of those places—Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Coventry, and Bath—had two papers each, and that Newcastle and Bristol each had three. He would be interested to observe that Yorkshire had papers in three of its busiest towns, York, Hull, and Leeds, that the two university towns each had a paper, that other towns not a hundred miles from his beloved London—Reading, Lewes, Canterbury, Ipswich—had papers, and that more distant places—Norwich, Sherborne, Exeter, Gloucester, Worcester, Chester—had their “weekly historians,” as well as Stamford, Leicester, and Northampton. He would note with interest that in the town where he and Mrs. Porter had been married the Derby Mercury was still being printed by Sam. Drewry. Johnson would know that the paper in Birmingham was Aris’s Birmingham Gazette and not Thomas Warren’s earlier Birmingham Journal, to which he had contributed essays back in 1733. He would notice that Salisbury in Wiltshire had its own paper, though he would not know in 1758 that his friend Goldsmith’s novel would later be printed on the same press as that on which Benjamin Collins produced his weekly Salisbury Journal. By 1758, there was no corner of England in which at least one attempt to found a local paper had not been made. Neither the government nor rivals nor the slow development of the market could keep the country newspaper from making itself felt as an instrument of information and opinion.

*Fig. 2.—Map showing English provincial towns and cities that had local newspapers in 1758.*
Certainly the founding of a newspaper demanded firm confidence and unquenchable hope. Again and again one finds the sturdiest kinds of resistance offered by established papers to those endeavoring to emerge. The efforts of William Cuthbert and Isaac Thompson to establish a new paper in Newcastle in 1739 were eminently successful in the long run, but they and their Newcastle Journal were jeered at mercilessly by John White, notably in White's Newcastle Courant, number 750 (8 September 1739). In their own paper on that same day, Cuthbert and Thompson referred to "the many ungrounded Charges and Misrepresentations" which had been "industriously spread round the Country" concerning both the Newcastle Journal and its publishers; they scorned to reply in kind to "the low squinting Scurrility" which had been thrown upon them. In November, 1755, John Gregory of Leicester and Samuel Creswell of Nottingham decided to undertake jointly the publication of a paper which up to then had been published by Gregory as the Leicester Journal. They gave the new paper a new title, the Leicester and Nottingham Journal, and in the first issue under this name (8 November 1755) they complained in large type about the "mean Artifices and bullying Gasconades" of the author of the Nottingham Courant, George Ayscough, "who like the Dog in the Fable wou'd neither eat Hay himself nor suffer the Ox to taste it; or in other Words refuses to furnish the Publick with a good News-Paper, and yet cannot bear others shou'd. . . ."

Particularly lively attacks were delivered upon rival newspapers by Robert Raikes and William Dicey, both from their office in Northampton, where they published the Northampton Mercury, and from their office in Gloucester. In 1720, they took up cudgels in asserting their superiority over the Stamford Mercury, a paper which had been in existence seven years. Later on, when Dicey was alone as proprietor of the Northampton Mercury, equally vigorous attacks were delivered against the Cam-
bridge Journal; and there were occasional disparaging remarks against Jopson's Coventry Mercury. Nowhere else can one find such merciless abuse of a newcomer, however, than that which appeared in the Northampton Mercury, number 115 (9 July 1722), when Raikes and Dicey began their attack on James Pasham and the Northampton Journal which he was trying to start. With many a violent phrase they condemned "the new upstart Author who, bigotted in himself, and nurtur'd in his foolish Opinions by others," had "lavishly thrown away Money on a Press." They wrote of his "doating Brain," "his thick and stupid Cranium"; they called him a "noisy Animal" and an "Old Doatard"; they referred to the initial issue of the Northampton Journal as "his first Parcel of Bum-Fodder"; they described him and his assistants as "an opinionated Master, a Cypher of a Journey-man, and a Good-for-Nothing Sidesman." Raikes and Dicey did not extend the right hand of fellowship to rivals.

The Northampton Journal succumbed; but the shouting of insults did not always bring a rival to his knees. One of the most voluble of the several Norwich printers, Henry Cross-grove, tried more than once to dishearten Elizabeth Burges, printer of the Norwich Post after her husband died; and he also delivered heavy blasts against the Norwich Post-Man, printed by William Chase for Thomas Goddard. It must be admitted that Cross-grove was not unreasonable in insisting that in a city of about thirty thousand inhabitants there was hardly room for three local newspapers; but his tone was invariably peevish and uncompromising. It irked him that he could not crush either of his rivals.

In these contentions Cross-grove was apparently only the agent of the Norwich Gazette's real owner, Samuel Hasbart, perhaps the "Mr. Hasbart, Distiller, in Magdalen-street" who frequently advertised in the Gazette. It was Samuel Hasbart, at any rate, who made repeated
attempts to buy Mrs. Burges’ paper, both before and after the first issue of the Gazette had been printed. No date was attached to Hasbart’s letter to Mrs. Burges when it was published in the Norwich Gazette on 20 December 1707, but Cross-grove introduced it with a statement that proposals had been offered privately to Mrs. Burges “not only of late, but formerly before this Office was set up.” The full text of the letter (for which see item 101 in the Register) indicates Hasbart’s annoyance that Mrs. Burges was selling copies of her paper for too low a price and emphasizes his willingness to buy her out or to combine with her against their common rival. Mrs. Burges refused his offer with spirit and thereby evoked harsh words from Hasbart in “An Answer to the PRINTER of the NORWICH POST,” printed in the Gazette, number 63 (10 January 1708). Cross-grove, meanwhile, acting no doubt on orders from the proprietor, announced that the Norwich Gazette would thereafter be sold for a halfpenny and that advertisements would be printed free of charge.

Cross-grove triumphed temporarily, for both the earlier Norwich Post and the Norwich Post-man came to an end within a few years; but William Chase and Thomas Goddard ultimately provided irrepressible opposition in the form of a paper at first defiantly announced in 1713 as Transactions of the Universe and eventually known by its more modest name, the Norwich Mercury. It enlivens the pages of both the Norwich Gazette and the Norwich Mercury that both editors frequently shouted over the wall at each other; and they kept on shouting until both men died in 1744.

In spite of opposition from other printers, there were many enterprising men who saw opportunities for starting new local papers and were undeterred by inexperience, financial risk, unexplored possibilities of sales, and other uncertainties or discouragements. A weekly paper “compos’d of such articles as deserve the Public Attention
cannot fail of Encouragement," said James Keating hope­fully in the opening number of his *Stratford, Shipston, and Aulcester Journal* (5 February 1750). Equally confident of success were several printers who thought it was necessary only to assure the public that every effort would be made to please the readers. "It shall be the peculiar Aim," wrote the undertakers of the *Bristol Weekly Intelligencer* in their first issue (23 September 1749), "to take great Care, that neither Pains nor Cost shall be wanting, to entertain its Readers, in all Occurrences, with the utmost Impartiality, Perspicuity, and Correctness."

One of the most ingratiating printed statements of the proprietors' intentions as they attempted to found a new provincial newspaper is in the first issue of the *Northampton Mercury, or the Monday's Post. Being a Collection of the most Material Occurrences, Foreign & Domestick. Together with An Account of Trade*. The title itself indicates the broad scope of the proposed publication, but number 1 of the paper (2 May 1720) contained an introduction in which Robert Raikes and William Dicey repeated (presumably) much of what Dicey had printed in his *St. Ives Mercury* during the two previous weeks. "It is surprising to think that this famous, this beautiful, this polite Corporation, has not long ago been the Object of those many Printers who have establish'd Printing Offices in Towns of less note." After these flattering words to elicit attention, Raikes and Dicey indicated that they had received official permission from the mayor, the alder­men, and the common council to conduct the paper, and they said that "the Country" would be "entertain'd and accommodated every week with a Journal of the most authentick Advices, foreign and domestick, drawn from the best private and publick Intelligences from London." They added somewhat vaguely that the news they printed would be "continually interspers'd with some delightful and instructive Amusement." With this declaration by
its founders, the *Northampton Mercury* entered upon its long life. It is now well into its third century.

The same combination of assurance and blandishment appeared in other papers. When William Parks, whose *Ludlow Post-Man* failed to find a good reception, came to Reading in 1723 to found, with David Kinnier, the first newspaper in Berkshire, he and his partner addressed an enthusiastic paragraph “To the Gentlemen of Berkshire, and Counties adjacent; more particularly, To the Right Worshipful the Mayor, the Worshipful the Aldermen, and the rest of the Worthy Members of the Ancient Borough of READING.” The art of printing, they said, had flourished for many years in London, York, Bristol, Norwich, Worcester, and other cities, and the success of printers in those larger places had encouraged the setting up of presses in smaller places, “as Cirencester in Gloucestershire, St. Ives in Huntingdonshire, Gosport in Hampshire, and several other Places.” This development of newspaper presses in the smaller towns made it a matter of wonder that Reading—“a Place of far greater Note than any of the last-nam’d”—should for so long have been slighted.

We have, however, pitch'd our Tent here, induc'd by the good Character this Country bears, for Pleasure and Plenty, and intend, with your Leave, to publish a Weekly News Paper, under the Title of The READING Mercury, or Weekly Entertainer; . . . . And when a Scarcity of News Happens, we shall divert You with something Merry. In a few Words, we shall spare no Charge or Pains to make this Paper generally Useful and Entertaining, since we find ourselves settled in a Place, which gives all the encouraging Prospects of Success; . . . .

Like the *Northampton Mercury*, the *Reading Mercury* had the initial benefit of a bold manifesto; and as it turned out, both papers had merit enough to deserve and to receive continued encouragement.41

Success was doubtless the consequence of aggressive
management, but modesty had its place, too. It is pleasant to read Joseph Harrop's engagingly frank address "To the Publick" in the first issue (3 March 1752) of his *Manchester Mercury*. Having been "greatly encouraged" to publish a weekly newspaper, said Harrop, he had procured a new set of types and announced his intention to proceed with the plan, promising to abide by the stipulations in his printed proposals.

... Though in a Time of general Peace a greater Dearth of foreign Advices may be urged as a Discouragement to my Undertaking at this Juncture; yet the friendly Excitement that I have had, and the honest Desire of Employment in my proper Calling, in the Place of my Nativity, are Motives, excusable at least, for attempting, in a private Station, to bespeak the Encouragement of the Public; to whom I purpose to give all the Satisfaction that I can, and no just Cause of Offence whatsoever. ... 

It is gratifying to record that this forthright, unpretentious local printer was entirely successful in establishing his new paper, even though two other weekly newspapers were being published in Manchester at the time.

Among all the printed prospectuses and introductory addresses to the public, there is not one which sets forth so comprehensively the objectives of a country newspaper as the statement circulated by the proprietors ten weeks in advance of the first issue of the *Newcastle Journal* in 1739. On 22 January of that year, Isaac Thompson and William Cuthbert announced their intention to publish a new paper; and in the successive paragraphs of their *Proposals*, they set forth their objectives; the *Newcastle Journal* was to be attractive in its presswork, varied in its substance, comprehensive and trustworthy in its news reports, extensive in its circulation ("we are already assured of several Subscribers in Seven different Counties"), and, above all, non-partisan.

We declare we have no Design to enter into the Service of
a Party, nor to set our selves up in Opposition to any present Paper, or Publisher of News; but only to carry on an Affair, in a Manner as useful and entertaining to the Publick in general as any thing of its Kind extant. We shall therefore cautiously avoid the Rancour and Ill-nature of all Factions, Sects, political Distinctions, and particular Interests; tho' we shall make an impartial Use of every Side and Party to come at the Truth, and omit nothing in our Power, either of Information, or agreeable Amusement.

In their attempt to make the paper "as useful in general, as the Nature of the Thing will admit," Thompson and Cuthbert pledged themselves "honestly to apply all the Diligence, Skill and Care" they were capable of.

It will be convenient to keep these objectives and these pledges in mind as an attempt is made in the following chapters to answer such questions as these: What was the shape and what was the size of the provincial newspapers? What was in them? How were the contents arranged? How widely did they circulate? When and to what extent did local newspapers become significant in the history of journalism? And what is the interest or the value of early provincial newspapers to twentieth-century readers?

1. The most detailed account of these early news books is Joseph Frank's *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper 1620-1660* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961).

2. Listed in a manuscript (AO3/952) at the Public Record Office.

3. Advertised in the *Reading Mercury*, number 96 (5 November 1739).

4. Examples are these: the *Oxford Post: or, the Ladies New Tatler* of 1718-19 (printed by and for Francis Clifton in Little Wild Street, London); *Clifton's Oxford Post. Or the Ladies New Tatler Reviv'd*, number 46 of which was published by Francis Clifton, near Scotch Hall, Water Lane, in Blackfriars, London, with the date 24 October 1723; and William Rayner's *Compleat Historian, or the Oxford Penny-Post* (1733).

5. From number 301 (9 January 1728) the *Gloucester Journal* regularly quoted the *London Evening Post*.

6. The passage is quoted from *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, number 58 (1 July 1757).

8. The taking in of subscriptions to newspapers published elsewhere was apparently not regarded by some printers as jeopardizing the circulation of their own papers. All the extant issues of George Ayscough’s Nottingham Weekly Courant from 1737 to 1754 have in the imprint the statement that at his printing shop in Bridlesmithgate subscriptions would be received for all the weekly and monthly papers. Elizabeth Jopson of Coventry went one better. In 1759, she advertised in her Coventry Mercury that at the desire of several gentlemen she was going to take subscriptions of half a guinea per annum from those who, at no additional charge, would like to read at her shop the London Gazette, the London Chronicle, and other papers which came from London on post days (Monday, Thursday, and Saturday), and “during the Time the Machine shall continue to Fly, in One Day,” the Daily Advertiser and Lloyd’s Chronicle on the three other days. Non-subscribers could enjoy the same privilege by paying a penny “upon every Perusal of the Papers.”

9. For details about these several papers published by Robert Walker, see items 6, 75, 76, 77, 78, 86 in the Register at the end of this book.


11. This particular London Post is now represented only by the title page of its first issue (7 January 1716), in the Bodleian Library.

12. Additional MS 27,980. There are many other written newsletters at the British Museum, and extensive collections are in the Bodleian Library, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the library of the University of Minnesota. There are some interesting ones in the library of the Press Club in London.


14. A Descriptive and Historical Account of ... Newcastle upon Tyne (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Mackenzie and Dent, 1827), II, 727. Note also the statement by J. Collingwood Bruce in A Hand-Book to Newcastle-on-Tyne (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Reid, 1863), pp. 148 f.: “The earliest instance of the printing of a newspaper in any provincial town in Great Britain occurred in Newcastle, during the sojourn of Charles I in the North, in 1639. He was attended by Robert Barker, the royal printer, who issued a news-sheet from time to time.”


16. This is the title of the issue for the first week (from Sunday, 1 January, to Saturday, 7 January 1643), now in the Yale University Library. The imprint of this eight-page pamphlet is: “Printed by Henry Hall, for VVilliam VVebb. An. Dom. M.DC.XLII.”


19. For details see Peter Fraser, The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State & Their Monopoly of Licensed News 1660-1688 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1956).


21. See item 142 in the Register at the end of this book.


23. See items 3, 9, 11, 16, 17, 22, 42, 47, 50, 128 in the Register.

24. Dr. G. A. Cranfield in his *Hand-List* has drawn attention to the passage. See the note in item 42 of the Register.


26. An earlier item in the record of Welsh journalism is a paper dated 5 December 1643 and entitled *Mercurius Cambro-Britannus, The Brittish Mercury, or the Welch Diurnall, Communicating remarkable Intelligences, and true Newes to oyle the whole Kingdom*. A copy is in the University of Texas library.


28. See *The History of the Four Last Years of the Queen*, ed. Herbert Davis, Introduction by Harold Williams (Oxford: Blackwell, 1951), pp. xxii, 103-6. Under the heading “The Secret Reasons for first laying a Duty upon News-Papers,” the whole section of this work dealing with official control of the press was reprinted in the *Ipswich Journal*, number 1003 (1 April 1758), shortly after the whole work had been printed in London by Andrew Millar.


30. Hodgkinson’s earlier paper, the *Derby Post-Man*, may have collapsed because of the re-imposed Stamp Tax in 1725, but no issue later than that dated 18 May 1721 has survived.

31. See the passage quoted in item 143 of the Register.
32. A comprehensive account of the early newspapers in Newcastle is Richard Welford's "Early Newcastle Typography, 1639-1800," in *Archaeologia Aeliana*, Ser. 3, III (1907), 1-134.

33. Browne Willis's observation in *Notitia Parliamentaria*, II, 292, that there were two printing houses at Plymouth in 1716, both of which subsisted "chiefly by publishing News-Papers," is puzzling, for there is no other record of newspapers printed in Plymouth before W. Kent established the *Plymouth Weekly-Journal* in 1718.

34. For evidence that there actually was a *Durham Courant*, see item 40 in the Register. It is probable that all references to a Boston paper are really to a paper printed in Massachussetts rather than in Lincolnshire. *Henry's Winchester Journal* (item 141 in the Register) was printed in Reading, not in Winchester. *The Oxford Journal: Or The Tradesman's Intelligencer*, advertised in 1736, was probably printed in London. For reference to a printing press in Gosport and possibly to a newspaper printed there, see above, page 32 and note 40.

35. The short-lived *Leverpoole Courant* (1712) was mentioned above.

36. Examples of their animosity against printers of newspapers are the attack upon Sam. Farley of Bristol in the *Gloucester Journal*, number 8 (28 May 1722) and the following number, and upon Stephen Bryan of Worcester in number 53 (8 April 1723).

37. William Chase on 29 August 1752 printed in his *Norwich Mercury* "A Parochial List of the Number of Houses and Inhabitants within the City of Norwich . . . Taken in the Month of July, 1752 . . . ; To which is annexed . . . the Number of Inhabitants in the said City, . . . in the Year 1693." According to this list, the number of souls in Norwich in 1693 was 28,881; the number given for 1752 was 36,169.

38. In the *Norwich Gazette*, number 63 (10 January 1708), Hasbart denied Mrs. Burges' charge that he was a periwig-maker.

39. The full text of this letter is reproduced in facsimile by Mr. M. Payne in *The Norwich Past: Its Contemporaries and Successors* (Norwich: [Norfolk News Co.], 1951), p. 10, and most of the text of Hasbart's letter in the *Norwich Gazette* of 20 December 1707 is reprinted there.

40. Although Parks and Kinnier seem to be referring to newspaper presses, no evidence has emerged to confirm the implication that Gosport had its own newspaper.

41. William Parks subsequently crossed the Atlantic. The story is told by Lawrence C. Wroth in *William Parks, Printer and Journalist, of England and Colonial America* (Richmond, Va.: William Parks Club, 1926).

42. Three of the most detailed are the introductory paragraphs in *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, number 1 (28 May 1756), the separately printed prospectus of the *Union Journal: or, Halifax Advertiser* (1759), and the declaration of policy in the first issue of John Grabham's *Bristol Chronicle* (5 January 1760).