

ESSAY associated with oral history tape  
of Mr. J. Ittammurru.

THE NEWCASTLE HERALD NEWSPAPER

Student - Carmel Moran

Open For date.

Aus. War History.

Wednesdays.

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The Newcastle Herald dates from 1876 when two earlier newspapers combined successfully to produce a daily newspaper which has continued uninvited and has had many refinements and improvements made to its pages and has attempted to keep in tune with the needs of the community.

Printing began in the colony of New South Wales with 'The Sydney Gazette and the NSW Advertiser' of 1803; a semi-government publication communicating official and general information and subject to censorship. Governor Darling was rather sensitive to criticism in the press and wanted to impose licensing and stamp duty on the press but was unsuccessful. In the 1830's newspapers went on to develop widely and in 1840 the Sydney Herald began a daily publication which <sup>still</sup> continues on <sup>to</sup> <sup>2</sup>

Our small populations of long distances apart had created a very large number of papers with low circulation and high prices on a scale unlike other countries. Four country newspapers in 1849 in New South Wales became at least twenty by 1859. <sup>3</sup> The collection of accounts had always been difficult and the system of restrictive practices through newsagents began as early as 1860's. <sup>4</sup> Another feature was rivalry between the provincial city and its neighbouring capital city such as between Melbourne and Geelong.

The leading paper in the Hunter Valley in the first place was the Maitland Mercury.

1. Henry Mayer. The Press in Australia. Melbourne 1964 p. 10.

2. Robin Walker. The Newspaper Press in NSW, 1803-1920. Sydney 1976 p.

3. 11.1.176

from the 1850's onwards, it became a daily in 1894. It was not until <sup>the</sup> 1900's that Newcastle could rival Maitland when the coal production, export and growth in population put it ahead. Even the first Newcastle paper 'The Newcastle Telegraph' of 1855 was soon absorbed by 'the Northern Times of Maitland'.<sup>5</sup> Many papers were launched in Newcastle and strongly 'the Newcastle Pilot' became the first daily to be published outside Sydney in 1874.<sup>6</sup>

Two papers have links with the Newcastle Herald. The earlier one, from 1858, called "The Newcastle Chronicle and Hunter River District News" was founded by John Sweet with a small capital of £100 and a hand printing press. The other was the 'Miners Advocate' founded in 1873 and owned by Sweet's father-in-law James Fletcher. The two amalgamated and formed the "Newcastle Morning Herald" in 1876. The Miners Advocate as the name suggests began with vigorous support for workers' rights. A successful daily paper emerged in the Herald. Later on James Fletcher sold, in 1889, to a syndicate of four persons namely Berkeley, Johnson, Palmer and another. Later Palmer sold out. A limited company was formed in 1908 and went on to be controlled exclusively by the Berkeley and Johnson families.

Mr. Sydney Warsey was to become prominent in the future of the paper through the Berkeleys. He had become as of ~~them~~ adopted son from their neighbouring farm and ~~beekind~~ ~~in~~ the Berkeley estate, as

5. Robin Walker. The Newspaper Press... p 169

6 Ibid

residuary beneficiary of their shares in the Herald in 1953. Wansley left and settled in Bermuda.

Next the company, John Fairfax Ltd, became interested in the paper and in the acquisition of shares. By then the Newcastle Herald was shareholder in the recently set-up television channel NBN 3.

Fairfax offered to buy out the Johnson shares but this required approval from the Berkeley-Wansley estate so representatives flew to Bermuda to approach Mr Wansley who approved of Johnson's selling out.

At the same time the Packer Consolidated Press group was involved and had made similar approaches to Wansley who had not been forthcoming but Fairfax feared that he might be swayed. Fairfax represented covered this by returning to Bermuda to obtain a legally binding agreement from Wansley to secure a takeover. Another matter was the links with television and the difficulties that arose when outside interests, namely of Fairfax Ltd, became involved in ownership that was <sup>officially</sup> restricted to local interests. The problem was got round by those ~~to~~ interests going to Wansley together with arrangements which hardly supported the spirit of the restrictions of ownership. Wansley returned and took up as chairman.

As time went on the widowed Mrs Wansley, in 1977, gave Fairfax total ownership of the Herald. By 1979 the Herald was the most technologically advanced paper in Australia after two years of changeover to the Harris computerised production system. The afternoon daily, The Newcastle Sun was discontinued in 1980 having been

acquired in 1936. Other provincial newspapers have continued to be acquired by the Herald. Special commemorative editions have been published in 1933, (the 75th anniversary) 1958, 1966 and in 1983 to name a few. The 1933 was a twenty four page edition and wrote of one Hoe press and production of a 24 page paper at the rate of 36,000 copies an hour, sorted into bundles of 50. A new development was the making of half tone blocks and a process engraving plant that had been installed and the employment of a photographer. In the 1966 historical survey edition mention is made of two Hoe presses having speeded up production. Prior to the turn of the century linotypes and rotary printing presses and a lettered keyboard that casts a line of type were reported as producing 7,000 an hour. This contrasts with the latest editions featuring coloured highlights.

Despite advances the paper has declined in size and circulation if its advertising campaigns and associated competitions are any indication of a problem. There should be little excuse for problems or short changing when the high standard and competence of the Fairfax company is taken into account. The paper has been slow to respond to consumer demands but some attempts are being made to be innovative and maintain a good standard of reporting of more of local issues in keeping with <sup>the</sup> growing importance of these issues and their singular nature.

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1803-1920, Sydney. 1976

Interviewee: James Edward Hattam  
Interviewer: Carmel Noonan  
Subject: The Newcastle Herald  
One tape recorded on 2 September 1987  
at Merewether.

1 James Edward Alfted Hattam, retired of 27 Merewether Street, Merewether. Born at Carrington and later moved to Wickham. Attended school and when 14 years secured work with the Daily Guardian. The branch office was at Scottish House now the T and G Building on the corner of Hunter and Watt Streets. His task was to meet the half-past six Sydney train at Newcastle station to collect the Sydney newspapers for distribution to agents.

50 He transferred to the Newcastle Sun.

54 1935 transferred to Newcastle Morning Herald building in Bolton Street.

59 His earlier clerical work in the office of the Daily Guardian. He remained alone in the office while the staff were out on business in the district. There was a manager Mr Sharp and a reporter.

87 Clerical work with the Sun earned him 32/6d per week. Later the award was £3.5.0. which was not a high pay. He was a pay clerk for the industrial employees.

96 The advent of new technology. The redundancy of The Sun workers for it was not paying its way.

117 Retraining in 1979 for new technology. Hot metal work was abolished. The linotype operators had to change to the typewriter type keyboard. Production was speeded up to beat the Sydney editions.

168 The Fairfax takeover led to the editor making changes such as the new masthead and the placement of the editorial on page four.

189 Mention of company owners.

219 Worked under seven managers: Morris, Flower, Johnson, Hallett...Bornfield, Leck, Knight.

248 Women were not accepted in the printing industry, it was not looked upon as work for the girls.

271 Industrial disputes have occurred over the years, but strikes were brief.

292 Importance of team work and speed.

318 In an emergency the staff are able to print an edition with the new technology.

336 His wide involvement with Rugby League since 1930. Has held many honorary positions and life memberships.

362 Worked fifty years with NMH and only lost one week's work.

370 Earlier printing methods were slower. Typesetters were paid for piece work.

387 NMH has been a workers paper. These days has an open mind on politics. A paper can ruin a party.

A side ends

James Edward Hattam  
Newcastle Morning Herald

B side

- 10 Mr Les Lumsdon's popularity is mentioned along with other cartoonists
- 48 Importance of circulation figures and advertising. Claims about the great length and great strength of the paper use to print on.
- 68 Role of current free press  
The Star and other newspapers being printed in Sydney to cut costs.
- 106 Cycled to work on his first job and has aimed to live close to work-place. Employees living in Cessnock spent a great deal of their time traveling to and from work which seemed at odds with their fight for the forty hour week
- 124 He has lived in Merewether for thirty years. Present changes at the Junction shopping centre have not concerned him because he is not a shopper but would think that his wife realizes the convenience of the development.
- 138 John Fairfax Retired Association was set up four years ago by Mr Nicol. Mr Hattam is secretary. Social activities for members numbering eighty two and partners in addition. District Park Tennis Association is the venue. Planning an outing to Lostock Dam. The Association is subsidised by NMH.
- 191 Employees Christmas club once cost 6d per week. Christmas party was held at the dog track at Broadmeadow. Another time a dance in the Masons Hall in Union Street.
- 216 Superannuation favour the younger generation. He paid 3/4 week for many years.
- 233 Many unions were involved in work at the NMH.
- 250 Arrangements could be made to view the disused printing press along with the new at the NMH.
- 276 Linotype process involved copy being set using brass moulds, molten metal and other techniques. The metals were recycled.
- 312 Risks from dangerous metals. Use of Lead, Antimony and Tin.
- 344 Hot metal process.
- 362 No knowledge of lead poisoning. Hearing impairment was a problem from noise.

End

Mr Hattam did not supply the date of his birth.  
He said he retired in July 1979.  
It had been decided to exclude other topics about his life.



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1987

I, JAMES HATTAM..... give my permission  
to CARMEL THERESE NOONAN..... to use this  
interview, or part of this interview, for research,  
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researchers.

Signed J. Hattam.....

Date 2.9.87.....

Interviewer C Noonan.....