



Staff of the *Donald Times* (estab. 1875) in Victoria's Mallee in 1884. Back row (from left): William Willey, William Cameron, Bob Odgers, J. Weblin. Front row: A. Simpson, Godfrey William (Goff) Morgan, Godfrey Morgan, John P. Morgan, George Carr (editor), William A. Morgan. Descendants of founder Godfrey Morgan still run the paper, now the *Buloke Times*. See ANHG 101.4.1 below.

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Ten issues had appeared by December 2000 and the *Newsletter* has since appeared five times a year.



101.1.1 Compelling front page

On 13 December 2018 the hard copy of the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* had an editorial prominently occupying most of its front page. The headline in capitals was: “An awful crime. The person is guilty. You may have read the news already, yet we can’t publish it. But trust us....” Then in huge print “IT’S THE NATION’S BIGGEST STORY”. The Melbourne *Herald Sun* had a front page that day, headed “CENSORED” (see below) with a similar intent: to highlight the big news story being withheld from Australians.

The editorial read: “A high-profile Australian with a worldwide reputation has been convicted of an awful crime. The world is talking about it and reputable overseas news sites have published lengthy stories on the case—but the *Daily Telegraph* and other Australian media are prohibited from telling you about it. The courts demand that you ignore the story totally until they see fit. But we think that would be a disservice to the readers of the *Telegraph* who would expect the same fair and fearless reporting of this case that we’ve delivered on other stories. We are also aware that many of our readers have probably read the international stories written about this person that are accessible online, outside the jurisdiction of the Australian courts. It would therefore be bizarre to publish today’s newspaper without raising what we think is an archaic curb on freedom of the press in the current digitally connected world.

“Our political representatives need to fix those laws which run contrary to the universal privilege of the open administration of justice. We believe you have the right to know this story now and without any further delay. And we believe there are strong grounds to fight the ban. We’ve taken immediate steps to challenge the ban. If we’re successful then you’ll be the first to know.”

By the evening of 13 December, in the online, digital reproduction version this big front-page item had disappeared! Online this huge space was now completely blank. So, too, with the Melbourne *Herald Sun*. The Adelaide *Advertiser* and Brisbane *Courier-Mail* had smaller blank spaces on their digital, facsimile online versions.

101.1.2 A tale of two newspapers

On Monday, 21 January 2019, the *Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* published reports on the latest readership figures from EMMA (Enhanced Media Metrics Australia). The two reports differ widely in the jargon used and the figures reported. If you read the *Australian*’s report, you will be stunned at how wonderful the paper’s readership growth is (it is said to have more than 3.6

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million “monthly readers”). If you read the *Sydney Morning Herald’s* report, you will be told that the paper recorded a 60 per cent lead over its nearest competitor. This occurred after EMMA included previously unreported audience figures as part of its cross-platform readership survey, including mobile audiences under 18.

101.1.3 Sky News and newspaper journalists

Sky News is ramping up its news and current affairs coverage, with new shows hosted by journalists with newspaper expertise, such as Chris Kenny and Peter Gleeson, plus coverage from regional Australian towns ahead of the federal election (*Australian*, 21 January 2019)..Sky News anchor and associate editor of the *Australian*, Chris Kenny, is host for two new programs, *Kenny on Media* and the *Kenny Report*, and former *Sunday Mail* editor Peter Gleeson is the anchor for *The Front Page*. The changes mark the first major programming revamp under the network’s new chief executive Paul Whittaker.

Sky News’s highest-rating program, *Paul Murray LIVE*, is broadcasting from 10 regional locations across Australia, looking at the issues and challenges facing voters. The first stop on the “Our Town, Our Show” tour was Toowoomba, Queensland, on 20 February. Whittaker, who took the reins of Sky News’ parent company, Australian News Channel, in October, said the tour was designed to “tap into the heart of the nation looking at the great things taking place in regional and rural Australia that we rarely hear about as well as discussing the issues facing Australians living outside of the big cities”.

101.1.4 Gordon & Gotch name fades into business history

Gordon and Gotch, a subsidiary company of PMP Limited, was rebranded as Ovato from 7 February 2019. Some history (from the Gordon & Gotch website, 30 January 2019):

The oldest brand in the PMP group, Gordon & Gotch was formed in 1853 when Alexander Gordon, a 63-year-old Scotsman gave 24-year-old Englishman John Gotch a job selling newspapers and drumming up advertisements. Gotch had previously sailed from America to Australia on board the clipper Peytona.

Gordon offered Gotch a partnership if he could sell as many newspapers in the goldfields as he sold from his market shack under which they both slept at night.

The newly formed newspaper-delivery business flourished and they soon became partners as Gordon & Gotch with offices established in Sydney, London and Brisbane as the business expanded before the end of the 19th century. It was not until Gotch was nearing the end of his life in 1899 it was decided to extend the company’s activities to New Zealand. To this end the business of Herbert Baillie & Company in Wellington was acquired. In New Zealand, the business of the Wellington House had flourished from its inception and in view of the distances to be covered it soon became necessary to open additional branches. These were established in 1902 in Christchurch and in Auckland and Dunedin in 1904. Eventually Gordon & Gotch were split up and each country’s division (Australia, New Zealand, UK and Canada) were sold off.

Gordon & Gotch in New Zealand continued to operate as a monopoly until 1989 when a company called Network was established. Gordon & Gotch purchased Network in 1996. In 2003, News Corp sold all its newspaper interests and Gordon & Gotch to an Australian newspaper company John Fairfax Limited who in turn sold Gordon & Gotch to the PMP Group (a publicly listed integrated media services company).

Today Gordon & Gotch distribute around 2500 magazines to more than 7000 retail customers. Gordon & Gotch distribute leading NZ and imported magazine titles from the USA, UK, Australia and Asia. Quite simply Gordon & Gotch are at the heart of one of the most vibrant, competitive and successful magazine markets in the world.

101.1.5 GXpress publishes final print edition

GXpress, a news publishing technology magazine published in Australia for India and the Asia-Pacific, has appeared in print for the final time. *GXpress*, which is 20 years old, will continue to publish online. It is a husband-and-wife business, with Peter Coleman as managing editor and wife Maggie taking charge of administration and contributing elsewhere in the business. Plans for 2019

include a new live app and a rethink of the *GXpress* newsletter policy “to make it more personal; and more relevant for readers”.

101.1.6 Australia Day honours to print media people

Christopher John Mitchell, of Manly, NSW, the editor-in-chief of the *Australian*, 2002-15, was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the Australia Day honours for 2019. The award was for “distinguished service to the print media through senior editorial roles, as a journalist, and to indigenous education programs” (*Weekend Australian*, 26-27 January 2019).

Alan Robert Kohler, of Hawthorn, Victoria, was awarded an Order of Australia (AM) for service to the print and broadcast media as an editor, journalist and finance commentator.

OAMs

The following were awarded Order of Australia Medals in the General Division:

Matthew Steven Condon, of Paddington, Queensland, journalist and author, for service to the community.

Brian Francis Hopkins, of Warragul, Victoria, for service to the print media and the community.

Glenda Korporaal, of Rose Bay, NSW, for service to the print media as a journalist.

Graeme Ross McPherson, of Arcadia, Victoria, for service to print and digital media and the community.

101.1.7 RSL award to journalist

In Hobart, **Damian Bester**, a journalist with the *Mercury*, was awarded RSL’s Australia Day achievement medallion for his series reporting on Tasmania’s World War I heroes. Bester’s “100 Days of Heroes” told the stories of 100 Tasmanian who died in World War I. The series was published in print and online for 100 days in the leadup to the centenary of the Armistice, 11 November 2018. Bester, a long-time member of ANHG, did most of the work in his own time.

101.1.8 Deaths

Dunstan, Barrie Thomas: D. 15 January 2019 in Melbourne, aged 80; began career at *Argus*, Melbourne, as a copy boy in 1955; became finance editor at *Age* in 1963, aged 25; went on to become “Australia’s leading writer on superannuation and retirement”, according to Alan Kohler; reported on business until 2018; wrote several books on finance, including *Investment Legends: The Wisdom that Leads to Wealth* (*Australian Financial Review*, 15 January 2019).

101.1.9 Editor leaves the West

The *West Australian*’s editor **Brett McCarthy** has announced his resignation after almost 10 years leading the Perth daily (*West Australian*, 30 November 2018). McCarthy said he was prompted to consider his future while planning changes to the newsroom operations. He told the newsroom he had complete confidence in the future of the newspaper, which has won five Walkley Awards and countless other media awards under his leadership. McCarthy has worked in newspapers for more than 30 years, starting his career as a cadet journalist out of high school in Brisbane in 1984. He had a successful career at Sydney’s *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Telegraph* before becoming deputy editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*. He moved to WA in 2001, working as editor of the *Sunday Times* before becoming editor of the *West Australian* in 2009. He left the Perth daily immediately after his resignation.

101.1.10 Caught in a ‘filter bubble’

The competition watchdog’s investigation into tech titans will focus on the dangers of Australian digital media consumers being caught in a “filter bubble” of fake news and misinformation as distrust of social media platforms rises to record levels perpetuated by the likes of Google and Facebook (*Australian*, 11 February 2019). Australian Competition & Consumer Commission chairman **Rod Sims** told the International Institute of Communication in Sydney on 11 February that the dangers of fake news are growing and require regulator intervention. His comments follow the release of the landmark report into the impact of Google and Facebook on the Australian news and advertising market. In his preliminary report, released in December, Sims proposes a

regulator that would force the tech giants to lift the lid on their mysterious algorithms and provide transparency around how news stories are ranked and served to users.

Sims told *The Australian* he would ask Facebook and Google to conduct experiments with their news algorithms to “see what goes in and then what comes out”. He also said he was increasingly concerned about the effects of the filter bubble on Australia, given journalism’s critical role in a functioning society. The term “filter bubble” describes the intellectual isolation that can result from social media algorithms, which Facebook and Google use to filter news and information based on what they assume about the user. “People using digital platforms rather than traditional journalism for news run the very real risk of filter bubbles,” Sims said.

“It leads to less reliable news. Part of the concern we have is journalism does play a very important role in society, and we’ll be examining exactly how big the social media filter bubble is and how much fake news there is out there. I do think we have a very trusted media in Australia. But to have 64 per cent of Australians worrying about fake news ... that to me illustrates that there’s an issue we all have to take very seriously and get to grips with.”

101.1.11 Digital subscribers boost papers’ revenue

Paid digital subscriptions for newspaper sales are gaining momentum and helped drive a return to profitability for News Corp in the December quarter (*Australian*, 11 February 2019). At News’ publishing arm, which accounts for more than 40 per cent of group revenue, the media company confirmed continued positive trends in paid digital subscriptions, included accelerating gains at the *Wall Street Journal* and stronger digital advertising revenues in the US and Australia. Subscription revenue has become an increasingly important strategy for traditional media companies at a time when half of advertising spending is online. Tech giants such as Google and Facebook last year captured about 80 per cent of growth in digital advertising revenue but for newspaper companies the revenue for online ads remains well short of the print advertisements they have replaced. Subscription revenue is also important for delivering recurring revenue streams for publishers.

Second-quarter earnings figures released by News Corp on 8 February showed digital subscribers at the company’s Australian newspaper mastheads, including the *Australian*, the *Daily Telegraph* and *Herald Sun* at the end of December were 460,300 compared with 389,600 a year earlier. The *Australian* now generates more than half its subscriptions from digital channels and posted 23 per cent growth year on year in the December quarter.

101.1.12 Newspapers join heart campaign

With 51 people dying from heart disease a day in Australia, the Heart Foundation has joined forces with News Corp Australia to raise awareness about the nation’s No 1 killer with a “Serial Killer” media campaign blitz (*Australian*, 18 February 2019). The campaign, which taps into the public’s fascination with true crime stories over four weeks, focuses on educating the public on the warning signs of a heart attack, with a focus on women and heart disease, since nearly three times as many women die from heart disease as from breast cancer. The integrated print, digital and broadcast media and marketing campaign features retired NSW Police assistant commissioner Clive Small, who worked on the Ivan Milat serial killer case in the early 1990s, and Mick Carroll, editor of *The Sunday Telegraph*, discussing their battles with heart disease.

101.1.13 Nine’s first results since merger with Fairfax

Amid a tough advertising market, Nine Entertainment CEO Hugh Marks is looking to work the enlarged group’s portfolio of broadcasting, digital and publishing assets harder after booking a rise in first-half earnings (*Australian*, 22 February 2019). Delivering the broadcaster’s first set of financial results following its \$4 billion merger with Fairfax Media in December, Marks was upbeat about the group’s outlook, citing its buoyant digital operations. “I think as people get their heads around that, and investors get their head around that and start to look at the components of the business, people will start to see what its potential is,” Marks told the *Australian*. “The notion that ... this is an old television business combining with an old print business — nothing could be further from the truth.”

As well as its Nine Network, the enlarged company consists of streaming video-on-demand service Stan, metropolitan newspapers including the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Australian Financial Review*, and a 54.5 per cent stake in radio network group Macquarie Media, plus a near 60 per cent stake in online property listing group Domain. Marks told his staff that the merger has “fundamentally changed” Nine’s revenue profile and cut its reliance on broadcasting. “A year ago, in our half-yearly results 86 per cent of Nine’s revenue came from broadcasting. Today that figure is 54 per cent,” Marks said in a memo sent to staff.

On a pro forma basis, Nine has posted a 6 per cent rise in earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation of \$252 million, with profit after tax and minority interests up 5 per cent at \$126m. The group expects to deliver EBITDA of at least \$420m for the current financial year, up more than 10 per cent on a like-for-like basis from \$385m last year, bolstered by cost savings of about \$50m. The stock closed 7.2 per cent higher at \$1.57 in a higher market on 21 February. The group’s digital and publishing division, which includes Metro Media, 9Now and digital publishing titles including Pedestrian and nine.com.au, reported a 39 per cent jump in EBITDA to \$60.2m on the back of a 4 per cent lift in revenue to \$327.5m.



101.2.1 Fairfax’s investigative news website

Just months after the Fairfax name was removed from the family’s former mastheads, John B Fairfax will reinvest in the news industry, announcing a new online site for investigative journalism (writes Andy Park for the ABC, 11 February 2019). “It’s not personal,” Mr Fairfax told 7.30. “We are seeing this as an investment and it’s an interesting one, having being involved with the media myself for 50 years. You can’t actually eradicate the ink that runs through the veins.”

For generations, the Fairfax family published the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age* and the *Australian Financial Review*. John B Fairfax sold his remaining shares in 2011. The death of the Fairfax enterprise was slow and painful, with ownership and leadership changes, strikes and downsizing. Nine bought the mastheads and related digital businesses last year.

The new publication will be operated by Private Media’s Crikey, run by Eric Beecher. “We are not saying we are going to reinvent journalism. What we are saying is that the need and appetite for really vigorous, independent, investigative inquiry journalism is always there,” Beecher said. “We think that this is going to contribute to public knowledge and to holding power to account.” The new venture aims, in part, to counter concentrated media ownership in Australia. Fairfax said, “Independent journalism is important for any democracy. The diversity of opinion is also important. You have to be level-headed. There is an attitude that the Murdoch empire, both in Australia and the United States, has a very right-wing tendency which, when I knew Rupert many years ago, it’s quite extraordinary. But we’ll provide a balance that we can be proud of.”

The announcement of the Fairfax website comes after BuzzFeed recently cut 15 per cent of its global staff, 11 positions alone in Australia, providing valuable lessons for the new Fairfax site. “We think that you have to have a paywall — it needs to be paid,” Fairfax said. “There are a lot of issues that are sitting out there, call them stones if you like, and they need to be upturned and examined.” The site, as yet unnamed, is scheduled to launch in April.



3—CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS: COMMUNITY & PROVINCIAL

101.3.1 Townsville: Reporting the flood

During the peak of north Queensland’s “one-in-100-year” flood on 3 February, reporters of the *Townsville Bulletin* sought refuge in their newsroom, sleeping on the floor under the police scanner, when they were woken suddenly by an emergency call, reports Jessica Cortis (*Australian*, Media section, 25 February 2019, p.26). All defence force, emergency and police personnel were told to pull out of their areas and get to higher ground immediately. Things moved fast in the newsroom after that. Local reporters at the paper worked hard to send out breaking alerts as torrential rain fell over the city and the dam gates prepared to open, sending an unprecedented amount of water down the spillway and into the Ross River. Some areas in Townsville received a record-breaking 2000mm of rainfall over 12 days.

Bulletin editor Jenna Cairney said, “There was a press conference that night to announce the worst of it had passed ... but we were told from other sources the rain was coming back and it was going to get really bad.’ Like many Townsville residents, Cairney and her family of three were evacuated from their house, leaving her and the paper’s reporters unable to access their homes. “Most of our reporters, unbelievably, still insisted on working when they could have been protecting their homes,” she said. “They knew exactly where they had to be and when they had to be there.”

In an age of Facebook and Twitter conversations, it fell to local journalists to fully and accurately report the unfolding drama. There were three reporters and photographers in the field at any one time during the course of the floods, with one reporter hitting the phones in the office to keep up with the influx of emergency updates — and there was no shortage of them. As the floods reached their peak the newsroom’s digital editor worked 21 hours straight. Filing stories on the ground from tin boats and in the sky from a chopper, reporters and photographers from the masthead worked to capture every angle. They waded through chest-deep flood waters to reach homes and hear the stories of the townspeople. They reported the horrors of homes that had been destroyed while also saluting a family that took in 63 people affected by the floods.

Reporter Sam Bidey, 26, slept in a swag on the floor of his colleague’s house as the floods raged on. He was one of the few journalists to speak to the families of Hughie Morton and Troy Mathieson, who died after they were swept away by rushing waters. “I have covered stories on murder trials but nothing compared to the intensity of the stories that emerged during those 12 days,” he told the *Australian*. “I spoke to a woman in a wheelchair who had to be evacuated by a military vehicle. She had lost her legs and now her home, but there was no wiping the smile off her face. It taught me a lot about the resilience of the north Queensland people.”

After more than 80 per cent of homes were cut off from newspaper delivery, reporters took matters into their own hands, packing car boots with hundreds of copies of the *Townsville Bulletin* and dropping them off at emergency centres as well as any homes they could reach. “The look on people’s faces when we handed out the paper was amazing. We were side by side with residents, living it with them,” Cairney said. In a celebration of regional journalism, Cairney made the conscious decision to hand free papers out and remove the website’s paywall for stories that contained information on public safety. “In times such as this people are hungry to get all the information they can. Blood, sweat and tears went into our reporting, so it was more important that people had the news in their hands,” she said. “We threw everything at it. Nothing else mattered but keeping the people informed.” *The Bulletin* has a readership of 77 per cent of the town’s population but as flood waters rose, its journalism attracted a national audience, with the

paper website recording 900 per cent more page views than average as readers across Australia sought out local, on-the-ground voices.

101.3.2 New Norfolk: Changes for Derwent Valley's newspaper

The *Derwent Valley Gazette* returned from the Christmas-New Year break on 13 February with a new publisher and a new editor — long-serving *Tasmanian Country* and *Mercury* journalist Roger Hanson. Hanson has 18 years' experience in the print media, the last eight as a reporter on the rural weekly published by Davies Brothers Pty Ltd, publisher of the *Mercury*. The appointment comes after Davies Brothers Pty Ltd entered into an agreement under which Tasmanian company Font PR will publish the *Gazette* — ensuring its long-term sustainability. First published in 1953, the *Gazette* circulates mainly in the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands municipalities (*Mercury*, 8 January 2019).

101.3.3 Cover prices rise

From Monday 28 January weekday prices of regional daily newspapers acquired by News Corp Australia from APN in Queensland and northern NSW increased from \$1.80 to \$1.90. (The weekday prices are now significantly more than those of the traditional regional News dailies in the bigger Queensland cities (Cairns, Townsville and Gold Coast) and Geelong. These prices remain at \$1.70.)

101.3.4 Sanctuary Cove: Newsletter delivery banned

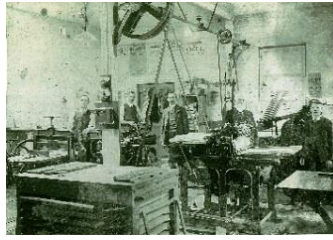
Sanctuary Cove is reported by the *Courier-Mail* (16 February 2019) to be in “uproar” after a long-running community newsletter was banned and accused of devaluing property in the Gold Coast estate. Sanctuary Cove's principal body corporate has ordered the local postie to cease delivering the 20-year-old local newsletter, *Community Matters*. Published by retiree residents Margi and Richard Sherman, the newsletter has been critical of the estate's owners, Malaysian giant Mulpha. In a letter to Margi Sherman in early February, the body corporate said the newsletter did not encourage constructive news and debate and was detrimental to Sanctuary Cove's reputation and property values. Margi Sherman said the letter was an attack on free speech. “We're not stirring the pot. We're trying to provide information to residents,” Margi Sherman said.

101.3.5 Ballarat: New editor for *Times*

Alastair Finlay has been appointed editor of both the *Ballarat Times* and the *Golden Plains Times*. He was previously the associate editor. He has been a journalist for five years (*Telum Media Alert*, 20 February 2019).

101.3.6 Angaston: *Leader* celebrates centenary

The *Leader*, published at Angaston in South Australia's Barossa Valley, issued a 152-page edition to mark its centenary in July 2018. The paper first appeared on 24 July 1918 in the final few months of World War I. The paper is run now by Tony Robinson, a grandson of the founder, William Kirkby Robinson. The *Leader* is now one of only a few not owned by Australia's major groups to have its own production facilities. It has a Goss Community press which has been progressively expanded from the two units in 1981 to the current line which includes three four-colour towers (*GXpress*, November/December 2018, p.32).



4-NEWSPAPER HISTORY

101.4.1 Donald, Vic.: Tradition of long-serving editors

Rod Kirkpatrick writes: The cover picture in this edition of ANHG shows the staff of the *Donald Times* in 1884. The key person in that photograph is Godfrey Morgan, the founding proprietor. The fourth and fifth generations of the Morgan-Letts family are running the paper now. It became the *Donald-Birchip Times* on 9 January 1973, after amalgamating with the *Birchip Guardian*, and the *Buloke Times* on 17 January 1995, after a local government amalgamation. It serves both Donald and Birchip and has full-time offices in both towns, as well as delivering to surrounding communities, such as Wycheproof and Charlton.

A fourth-generation member of the newspaper dynasty, Robin Letts, who will turn 89 on 16 May, is the editor. His father, Godfrey William (Goff) Letts, edited the paper for 66 years, dying in harness on 3 August 1987, aged 89. He wrote his final editorial from his hospital bed. Robin has been editor since. That's 98 years of father-and-son editorship. [I don't know of anything comparable in Australian newspaper history.]

Robin Letts has been working at the paper for the 72 years since he emerged from Naval College at the age of 17. He describes himself as "Australia's oldest newspaper delivery boy". A couple of times a week he does a two-hour drive to deliver newspapers to Watchem, Birchip, Wycheproof and Donald itself.



GODFREY MORGAN

Robin's son, David, fifth generation, is the production manager. The directors of the partnership running the paper are: Robin and David Letts, Shane O'Shea and Brian Bayles (who finished 59 years of work at the paper at the end of 2018). The paper is still printed on the premises, on a Heidelberg press, and never is smaller than 16 pages. It is up around 32 around Christmas. The Warracknabeal and Sea Lake newspapers also print their own publications. The three papers help one another when one has production difficulties. Recently, in a four-day period the Donald press printed two of its own titles, the fortnightly *Murtoa Advertiser*, the *Ouyen North West Express* and the *Sea Lake and Wycheproof Times Ensign*.

In writing this item, I have been hit by the thought that the Morgan-Letts dynasty might now be the longest surviving Australian newspaper dynasty still publishing. Godfrey Morgan started the paper on 29 July 1875.

[I have interviewed Robin Letts on 3 October 2000; face to face at Donald on 12 December 2001; 23 February 2010; and 22 February 2019. What a delight it is to talk to him!]

101.4.2 Leon Oberg's reflections (3): Some questions answered

This is the second in a series of reflections by Leon Oberg, of Goulburn. The first appeared in ANHG 99.4.2 and the second in 100.4.6.

Leon Oberg writes: Here are some questions I have been asked over the years, and my considered answers:

Have the *Goulburn Post* owners over the years placed any restrictions on its employees?

In my 44 years at the paper, I worked under five owners and nine general managers. While I cannot speak for my earliest days on the paper for I was a junior in the scheme of things, I can categorically say that from 1985 when I started editing publications which over the course of the next 24 years also included stints as chief of staff (before the paper became a tri-weekly); editor of *Post Weekly* and relief editor when required of the *Goulburn Post*, at no time did any manager or owner dictate what and how a story should be presented.

Even when I made some mistakes (headlines spelled wrongly, or I occasionally attracted the wrath of some lawyer or public official), management generally shared my guilt and was supportive. The important thing was to genuinely correct things that needed correcting such as errors and stand by the content of our stories when the facts were on our side.

How many years did you work as a journalist?

I am still working as a journalist, despite retiring from the Post in January 2009 after 44 years there. I am the volunteer Australian editor for the globally-circulating rail e-magazine, the *Railway Herald* published weekly out of London and am the associate editor for the Australian glossy rail industry publication, *Track and Signal Magazine*, which is published in Melbourne.

Rate your most hazardous assignments and elaborate on any of them?

Over the years I developed a tenacious penchant for bringing the news from exactly where it was happening and having good relations with the local emergency services and tended to join them where it mattered, right on the front line. I recall the evening a prominent clothing store was burning, I shot pictures from right inside the ground floor as firemen played water on the floor above as people scurried in and out salvaging floor stock.

Then there was the monster 1970s Southern Ford car dealership fire and despite the building being ablaze from stem to stern, I noticed men were inside the shimmering haze rolling oil drums out of harm's way and that was where I had to be with my camera. Should the full drums have been left inside and exploded, the result would have been devastating so I wanted to give full marks to those fearless passers-by through imagery.

Just hours after the 30 July 1997 Thredbo landslip disaster, my company hurriedly assembled a core of what they described as "specialists" from across the state to travel to the scene and produce a large special wraparound for the mastheads. I went as the photographer and have to say I witnessed some of the bravest emergency services people I have ever met. The urgency and desperation were clearly in their voices as they yelled into the mangled rubble seeking signs of life, their heads right inside broken concrete and building matter which threatened to slip down the terrible, steep waterlogged embankment at any moment.

Sometimes early in my photographic career, Goulburn detectives would be short a photographer within their forensic unit (sick, away at another job, etc.) and my company would release me to help them gather evidence for the Coroner or court cases from some of the most horrific scenes imaginable. Yes, that was hard, particularly when you knew the subjects of the photographs, none of which of course made it into the papers.

How did you cope with this constant trauma?

It was hard at times but I always felt that if you could not handle the work such as those just described, fatal plane crashes (and we seemed to cover many) and terrible accidents on the old Hume Highway, then you were in the wrong job. Counsellors base entire careers today on "helping" people get over trauma. In my day there was none of that and looking back, I don't believe I ever needed it. It's how you approach the work. If you want to stand around and gawk it will affect you. By viewing the subject through a viewfinder the situation seemed slightly unreal and did not affect me as much as it otherwise might have done.

101.4.3 Archibald Meston and the ‘oldest editor’ in Queensland

Archibald Meston started an argument in 1923 when he asserted that among those still living he had become the editor of a Queensland newspaper before anyone else. He said this in a letter in the *Brisbane Courier* on 6 September 1923. Others disputed it. R.P. Adams said in a letter on 13 September the oldest editor was Rev F.T. Brentnall, who, he said, edited the *Queensland Evangelical Standard* which started on 10 June 1875.

Here is Meston’s second letter, published in the *Brisbane Courier*, 17 September 1923, p.4: Our old friend, R.P. Adams, has kindly undertaken to make “confusion worse confounded”. The old *Evangelical Standard* had no editor in my time, but was managed by a council of clergymen of four different churches. At the time of my becoming editor of the *Ipswich Observer* in December 1875, the Rev. F. T. Brentnall was the active minister of a handsome church, and a big congregation, and had no time for editing any newspaper. He was minister of the church for a long time after my editorship of the *Observer* began. Every journalist will consider an editor to be a man who is constantly in his office and has no other occupation. How could Mr. Brentnall be an editor in that sense any more than the other three clergymen who, with himself, took a very active interest in the *Standard*, and contributed liberally to its columns.

It was my fate at one time, as *Observer* editor to call down the *Evangelical Standard*, and Mr Brentnall smote me with the sword of Gideon, even denounced me once from the pulpit, but he was a fair and honourable foe who never forfeited your respect, though, of course, it was necessary for me to throw one or two boomerangs as a set-off to the sword cuts. But we have long been good friends, and that old combat is forgotten. A correspondent, “B.J.T.”, with neither the courtesy nor the courage to give his name, doubted my being a partner with Mellefont, in calm defiance of the fact that “Mellefont and Meston” were the registered proprietors, and our names were on the billheads and letters.

When the *Observer* was sold to Morehead and Perkins, I resigned as editor, and was succeeded by R. Spencer Browne, the “gallant General” of the present *Courier* staff, myself leaving for the North in the following week to edit the *Townsville Herald*. So that “B.J.T.” and my old friend R.P. Adams are hopelessly wrong on all counts, the natural result of meddling with a subject of which they know only enough to confuse themselves and their readers. *Courier* readers can be assured that I am too old and experienced a campaigner to attach my name to any statement concerning whose accuracy there is any visible doubt. My very harmonious relationship with the *Courier* began in 1874, with the series of shooting articles by “Ramrod” and Major A. J. Boyd and myself are today the oldest living contributors, but that will probably be contradicted by someone who knows nothing about the subject.

101.4.4 Early printing: a book from 868

Extracts from Mark Kurlansky, *Paper: Paging through History* (New York, 2016), which your editor has recently read:

The oldest printed book in the world that has yet been found is called the Diamond Sutra, a Chinese Buddhist prayer book printed in 868. The quality and sophistication of the printing and woodcut illustrations suggest that it was not the first such book printed but simply the oldest we have found. It was discovered along with numerous other archaeological treasures in 1907 by the famous Hungarian-born British archaeologist Marc Aurel Stein. [p.100]

The Diamond Sutra is a perfectly preserved six pages of printed text with one elaborate woodcut showing more skill in woodcutting and in printing than Europe would demonstrate for another six centuries. Not only the illustration but also the pages of text were carved with a single block per page, a technique that came to be known in fifteenth-century Europe as a “block book”. At the end of the text, also printed by woodblock, are the words “Printed on May 11, 868, by Wang Jie, for free general distribution in order in deep reverence to perpetuate the memory of his parents”. We know nothing of his parents or of Wang Jie himself, the first known book printed in history. And he might not even have been first. He might just have been the first to have a work wrapped in cloth and carefully placed in a sealed cave in the desert. [p.102]

In fact, the Koreans may have been the first to print a book. A scroll of a block-printed sutra dated to about the year 700 was discovered in 1966. It consists of twelve sheets of mulberry paper bound together, and is therefore older and longer than the Diamond Sutra. Bi Sheng, an eleventh-century commoner, may have been the inventor of moveable type, which would make him one of the greatest inventors of all time. Yet we know nothing about him. Because of his low social status, there are no records of his life. The type Bi Sheng used was made of clay baked into porcelain. The type was laid into an iron plate with a paste of pine resin, wax, and ashes of burned paper. When the type was completely set, he heated the iron plate to melt the paste and then pressed the type with a board so that the individual types would all be of even height. [p.104]

101.4.5 Extracts from *Cowan's*, the printers' journal

Richmond, Melbourne (*Cowans*, Vol. XII, No. 46, April 1927, p.47): ... we have received the first copy of *Richmond Weekly*, a 16-page paper of local news and interesting reading matter. The pages are Intertype set and interspersed with numerous illustrations. The advertisements are well sett, and the whole issue, on a good paper, is well printed. *Richmond Weekly* should command strong support from residents of Richmond and district. The principals are Mr H.L. Roberts, late editor and sporting writer of the *Richmond Guardian*, Mr D. Hinsley, late machinist in charge of the *Guardian* Office, and Mr J. Page, secretary of the Richmond Football Club.

Coffs Harbour, New South Wales (*Cowans*, Vol. XII, No. 46, April 1927, p.45): Some 20 years ago a young comp in the employ of Mrs E.M. Campbell, then proprietress of the *Raleigh Sun*, helped her to establish the *Advocate* at Coffs Harbour, NSW. As young Jimmie Sawyer filled his stick on the first issues of the new paper, he probably dreamt of the day when he would own a paper of his own. If so, the dream has eventuated, as we have to congratulate Mr James Sawyer on his enterprise in purchasing the Coffs Harbour and Dorrigo *Advocate*. In the six months since he took over, Mr Sawyer has made much improvement. His first act was to consult a Cowan's representative about a new plant, and as a result Mr Sawyer bought a composing machine, taken from another nearby town where an Intertype with "C" equipment was installed to replace the machine sold to Mr Sawyer. Then followed a general re-organisation of the machine room and office.

101.4.6 Ballina: Where the *Beacon* went up in flames

Daily Examiner, Grafton, 4 August 1931, p.4: Mr. G. D. Toogood, late proprietor of the *Wee Waa Herald* and the *Collarenebri Gazette*, has purchased the *Ballina Beacon* and was to take over on 3 August.

Townsville Daily Bulletin, Tuesday, 6 September 1938, p.11: Extract from *Ballina Beacon*, 5 September—A fire early on Sunday morning gutted the premises of the *North Coast Beacon* newspaper, causing extensive damage to the printing machinery and paper stocks. The local fire brigade had the outbreak under control in half an hour, but not before damage, was also caused to a laundry occupied by A. Ajuta and to A. Hair's two-storey bakery. The *Beacon* premises were first used for the production of the newspaper, the *Pilot*, in 1888 and at present is the property of G. Toogood.

101.4.7 Campaign to complete digitisation

The Dandenong Ranges Historical Council and residents are campaigning for historical local newspapers digitised, including the *Mountain District Free Press* that has been already mostly funded by a Council grant and community donation. It simply needs to crowdfund a small amount more to see it fully digitised in 2019. The following is from Council sources:

Authoritative sources are essential for reliable historical research. One type of source that can be consulted is historical newspapers, although many of these are only accessible from one location and require travel and much time to consult. Trove's digitisation of historical newspapers makes the valuable sources of historical local newspapers accessible and readily searchable anytime and anywhere, with quick research being possible in moments of typing in words to the platform.

In partnership with community groups, research and cultural organisations, private donors and crowdfunding across Australia, the National Library of Australia has now digitized around 1500 Australian newspapers to Trove. However, there are still thousands of historical newspapers yet

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to be digitised. Some areas are under represented on Trove. Almost all the Knox and Dandenong Ranges area newspapers aren't yet on Trove. With more funding it will be possible to see Knox and the Dandenong Ranges historical local newspapers digitised on Trove.

These include five microfilmed out-of-copyright newspapers, which are the *Mountaineer* (1920-1921); the *Pilot* (1921-1922); *Fern Tree Gully News* (1923-1947); *Mountain District Free Press* (1946-1954) and *Ferntree Gully and District Times* (1953-1954).

A grant has been provided by the Shire of Yarra Ranges municipal council to the Dandenong Ranges Historical Council to help towards seeing the *Mountain District Free Press* (1946-1954) digitised and made searchable on Trove in 2019. We have signed the Memorandum of Understanding, which means that progress has begun on digitising the newspaper, but unfortunately we don't have all the funding to see the full run of the out of copyright portion of the newspaper digitised in 2019, so we are crowdfunding on GoFundMe to hopefully fund the small remainder of the newspaper yet to be funded. We have signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the National Library of Australia, which means we have only a couple of months to fundraise the remainder of the amount for the *Mountain District Free Press*.

There are four other microfilmed historical local newspapers that are ready to be digitised with funding. We hope to receive an additional grant from Knox City Council in the future to help fund most of this, but not all that is needed is possible. Grantees that can provide part of the cost of their projects have a better chance of receiving grants, so any additional funds raised beyond the required amount for the *Mountain District Free Press* will help see these four newspapers digitised. Your support for our campaign will help make this possible.

You can donate to the GoFundMe campaign at [GoFundMe.org/digitiseKDRnews](https://www.gofundme.org/digitiseKDRnews)

101.4.8 Responses to issue 100 of ANHG

Dr Gavin Ellis, Auckland, NZ: Warmest congratulations, Rod, on an invaluable service to journalism.

John Myrtle, of Canberra: Many thanks for your interest and scholarship. As is usually the case the 100th edition is a rich harvest.

Professor Emeritus Steve Stockwell, Griffith University: Congratulations on the 100th issue of ANHG newsletter. I always learn something I didn't know. A great service to humanity... or at least journalism academics.

Professor John Henningham, J-School, Brisbane: Congratulations Rod. Brilliant work as usual.

Barry Blair, Uralla, NSW: Congratulations on a job well done!

Patricia Clark, Canberra: Congratulations to you, Victor, for starting this wonderful resource and Rod for your great dedication in developing the newsletter and keeping it going through all the years and all personal disruptions and moves.

Tom Darragh, Melbourne: Congratulations Rod on the 100th edition. I remember the Chiltern conference very well as I was recovering from a knee operation and couldn't walk very well. At least I could get up to give my paper. Best wishes for the future.

Lloyd Jenkins, of Leopold, Victoria: Thank you for the 100th issue of the newsletter. I haven't read it all yet but know it will be overflowing with valuable information about Australian media. You have made a magnificent contribution to recording the history of the press and I hope you can continue at least through 2019. The email format is most satisfactory for me.

I can assure you that 75 is not too old! I am now 85 and feeling some strain. At the annual conference of Victorian Country Press Association last month I retired as a director after 53 memorable years. Brian Hopkins of *Warragul Gazette* also stood down after 47 years. We are life members so can still take an interest in the affairs of the association. Our combined 100 years in the administration earned some applause from conference delegates.

I know I am getting old when my son Ken, who is editor of the *Gannawarra Times* and *Loddon Times* at Kerang has decided he will retire in June next year after 48 years in journalism.

Greg Wane, Victoria (former editor *Queenscliff Herald*, the *Bush Press*, and the *Whistler*, Ocean Grove): Congratulations on the 100 issues. I have read every single one from the paper version to the digital issues. Fond memories of the newspaper conference in Chiltern all those years ago. I am now retired from all the newspaper nonsense but still enjoy reading about it and wonder where it will all end up.

Professor Bridget Griffen-Foley, Macquarie University: This is a major achievement and milestone—congratulations and thank you!

Graham Gardiner, Bundaberg (former Bundaberg *News-Mail* production employee): Congratulations Rod on the 100th edition of the *Australian Newspaper History Group Newsletter*. What an achievement and to anyone who has been connected with newspapers or who have, in my case, printer's ink in their blood, the content of your newsletters keeps the dream alive. However, when I first started in the industry in 1963, I never would have dreamt that newspapers would have changed to the extent they have today.

John Hoey, Melbourne: Thank you for yet another very interesting edition of ANHG. There's a lot of work involved in its production... I was especially interested in Michael Macgeorge's story. Bill Hoey was my father Tom's cousin. I keep in touch with Bill's family and have forwarded this edition to his daughter, Janine. She was very keen to see it. If you are able to let Michael know that his story has reached Bill's family, I would be quite grateful. Thanks again to you and Victor for your labour of love. It is greatly appreciated.

101.4.9 Forever, or 100 *Eternities*

Eternity, the Bible Society's monthly newspaper in Australia, will publish its 100th issue in March 2019. Noting this, in its 99th issue columnist "Obadiah" wrote: "For the first time in nearly 10 years Obadiah looked at *Eternity* edition number 1 as part of getting ready for our 100th edition next month. One double-page spread asked, "Does Australia need a charter of human rights?", with human rights activist Angus McLeay vs the Australian Christian Lobby's Jim Wallace. Seems the religious freedom debate has been with us forever—or rather for a hundred *Eternities*."

101.4.10 Both sides now, and no clouds at all: A follow-up

Michael Macgeorge writes from Melbourne: Kevin Davies, a long-standing friend and former union secretary who became a senior executive with the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd, has contacted me to express his special interest in my article in the December issue of this newsletter (see ANHG 100.4.1). His interest, he explained, was aroused by my reference to the prolonged and bitter strike in 1975 which led soon after to the appointments of Bill Hoey and me as the first industrial managers for the Herald and Weekly Times and for the *Age* respectively.

At the time of the strike, Kevin Davies was Federal and State secretary of the Photo Engravers' Union, one of the five unions involved. In a note to me, he writes:

The year 1975 is burnt into my brain as the worst I ever had as secretary of the union. I played a major role in the settlement of that awful strike due to my good relations with Sir Phillip Jones, then the Herald and Weekly Times chief executive, its general manager, Dick Sampson, and also with Bill Bland, general manager at the *Age*...

I think the only person still alive who would be aware of the wash-up would be the then chief executive at the *Age*, Ranald Macdonald.

A week or so after the strike ended, I was approached by a young lady, whom I took to be a lecturer in journalism at the RMIT, who asked me about my role in settling the dispute. I told her that best remains a secret.

And a secret it remained for 32 years, until Kevin told the bizarre tale in his book of reminiscences, *Fishing Antics and Other Anecdotes*, self-published in 2007 and now out of print (but see note below!).

Recounted as briefly as I can, Kevin's bizarre part in the future conduct of the dispute began when the photo engravers returned to work after voting to accept the terms of settlement in a private conciliation by Arbitration Commissioner Alan Vosti. The Vosti recommendations included substantial rises both in pay and in loadings for night work. The Victorian Printers' Operative Union, whose members covered clerical areas and the press rooms, also voted to accept the Vosti terms and return to work. The same terms, or their equivalents, would have been available to the other unions still on strike, notably the main union involved, the Printing and Kindred Industries Union, and the two metals trades unions.

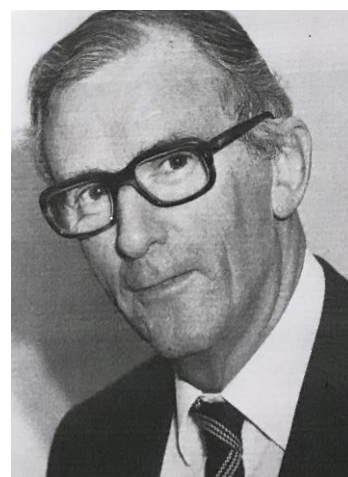
With the unions now split, the danger of bitter inter-union strife soon became a reality when the VPOU secretary, Alby Bonser, went to the *Age* to talk with his members and was king-hit from behind by an organiser from another union not involved in the dispute.

A few days later, Kevin received a call from Dick Sampson, asking if he would come to a meeting of the Newspaper Publishers' Association in the Herald board room to see if "we could work out some form of strategy". Kevin agreed, but for this and subsequent meetings, it was necessary for him to enter the building by little-known back doors to avoid the PKIU picket lines.

Among those awaiting him at the NPA meeting were Dick Sampson, Curly Briden, the HWT assistant general manager, with Ranald Macdonald and Bill Bland, from the *Age*, and a reluctant Geoff Gleghorn, president of the Australian Journalists' Association, whose members had taken no part in the strike.

Serious violence entered the scene the following week, when a bullet was fired into the window of a Herald truck leaving the building. Soon after, Kevin received a call from Sir Phillip Jones, asking him what could be done.

Kevin told Sir Phillip he had a plan that might work. Kevin knew he had the support of the secretary of the Trades Hall Council, Ken Stone, and a sort of understanding with the PKIU secretary, Frank Pedersen. After checking matters were in place, Kevin rang Sir Phillip and asked him to have Dick Sampson and Bill Bland in his union office at 4 pm and for them to come up the back stairs. He also arranged for Ken Stone and Frank Pedersen to use the lift.



**MICHAEL MACGEORGE IN HIS
WORKING DAYS**

The strike ended when the employers offered to cut the number of exemptions from PKIU membership they had been aggressively demanding from 40 to four and also assured the union it would apply the terms of the Vosti formula, plus a couple of weeks retrospective pay.

Four years later, in 1979, we were able to obtain agreement with all the unions, with minimal disruption, allowing us to begin the inevitable changes that new technology would bring.

In the same year, seeing the writing on the wall for the future of his own trade, Kevin Davies announced his retirement from the union. Within a couple of weeks, he received a call from Sir Keith McPherson, the new chief executive at HWT, asking him to lunch, at which Sir Keith asked Kevin if he would like to join HWT as its safety officer. By the time lunch was over, the matter was settled and sealed. A couple of years later, Kevin became the company's personnel manager and, in 1990, on the retirement of Bill Hoey, its industrial manager. By this time, News Ltd had taken control of the company. Kevin retained his position until his retirement six years later.

Note: Anyone who would like a photo-copy of the 30-odd pages dealing with this saga in Kevin Davies' book should contact Michael at michael.macgeorge@gmail.com



5—RECENTLY PUBLISHED

101.5.1 Books

Hobbs, Andrew, *A Fleet Street in Every Town: The Provincial Press in England, 1855–1900*, Open Book Publishers, in free PDF and online editions, plus paperback, hardback, e-book. <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/product/835>

At the heart of Victorian culture in England was the local weekly newspaper. More popular than books, more widely read than the London papers, the local press was a national phenomenon. This book redraws the Victorian cultural map, shifting our focus away from one centre, London, and towards the many centres of the provinces. It offers a new paradigm in which place, and a sense of place, are vital to the histories of the newspaper, reading and publishing.

Young, Sally, *Paper Emperors: The Rise of Australia's Newspaper Empires*, UNSW Press, 2019, 654pp. ISBN 9781742234984. RRP \$39.99.

This is a powerful new history of a major segment of the Australian press up to 1941. The author is a professor of political science at the University of Melbourne. In the first half of the 20th century, Australians were unaware that they were reading newspapers owned by secret bankrupts and failed land boomers, powerful mining magnates, Underbelly-style gangsters, bankers and corporate titans. Newspaper owners were hidden behind elaborate company structures, shadowy trusts and proxy shareholders.

101.5.2 Articles

Canberra Times, “Making his mark”, *Canberra Times* Panorama section, pages 1, 6-7 and 10-11 Saturday 29 December 2018. Commemorates ten years of David Pope as the *Canberra Times* cartoonist.

Downie, Graham, “Ken Kennedy 1929-2018. Newsman who led paper through change”, *Canberra Times*, Saturday 22 December 2018, p.26, Obituary of the *Canberra Times*’ former production manager.

Evans, Steve, “Diligent readers find a way into treasure called Trove,” *Canberra Times*, Saturday 12 January 2019, p.16. A description of the National Library’s Trove resources, its users and correctors.

George, Patrick, “Facing up to the truth and trolls”, *Weekend Australian*, 23-24 February 2019, p.22. Existing defamation laws were not designed for the social media age. [The author is a senior partner at Kennedys and author of *Defamation Law in Australia* (it is now in a 3rd edition).]

Leak, Johannes, “Zealots too quick to draw their long bows”, *Australian*, Media section, 18 February 2019, p.24. A defence of the newspaper cartoonist’s art and humour.

Legge, Kate, “Drawing fire”, *Weekend Australian Magazine*, 19-20 January 2019, pp.12-16. It’s a cartoonist’s job to poke the bear. But is everyone fair game?

McDuling, John, and Duke, Jennifer, “End of an era: Hywood’s complex legacy”, *Age*, 3 December 2018, p.22. Greg Hywood led Fairfax through a tumultuous time in publishing.

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