

ART. XIV – *J. A. Bernard's challenge: journalists on journalism in a Victorian country town*

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A WIDESPREAD debate is under way over how British journalists conduct themselves: their “ethics, working habits, and produce”.¹ Critics refer to reporting that is biased, unfair and sometimes worse, that over-steps the bounds of decency, that is too easily tempted to orchestrate feelings, neglects matters of crucial importance, lacks balance, and is scarred by unapologetic inaccuracies rarely if ever set right.² It is worrying for an allegedly mature democracy. However, debate about the nature of the media is not new, but has, with regard to print journalism, a long history. Were journalists fighters on behalf of liberty, giving people the opportunity to know what was going on, and thus an essential ingredient of emergent democracy? Or were they just tools of their owners’ selfish political agendas, readily prepared to be insulting and disrespectful, thus making an orderly society more difficult to sustain? Or were they more truly businesses that found it useful to pretend to have some kind of moral mandate? Such questions were raised in the 19th century in books, speeches, meetings as diverse as those of trade unions and literary and philosophical societies, and in newspaper correspondence columns.³

Interestingly, two mid-Victorian editors in a small and obscure town in what was then North Lancashire were lively contributors to this debate. The combination of their contrasting characters, each man self-consciously principled, their different missions as editors, and the need to make their papers flourish, interacted to produce a furious controversy over how regional journalists should behave.

On 14 April 1860, the *Ulverston Mirror and Furness Reflector* appeared. Its founding editor and manager was an offcomer, Joseph Alexis Bernard (1807-1880). Capital for the new paper was provided by an anonymous group of four of the town’s businessmen and an accountant. These men and the editor were the proprietors.⁴ The *Mirror* meant unwelcome competition for *Soulby’s Ulverston Advertiser and General Intelligencer*, also twopence-halfpenny unstamped, which a local printer, Stephen Soulby, had begun 12 years earlier.

Able, sincere, and outspoken, Bernard was not forthcoming about his antecedents, even to a close friend. His background was (and remains) largely obscure. He was the son of a wig and perruque-maker, born in Canterbury, Kent. In London he worked as a draper. He came to know the Ulverston area while working as secretary to a businessman. Subsequently, after at least three other jobs, Bernard was employed on the *Ulverston Advertiser*. Here he had felt shackled because his employer believed in “neutrality”.⁵ This was a policy “very much the exception for the provincial press in Victorian England [which] was both politically committed and politically divided”.⁶ Soulby’s policy was the consequence not only of an innate sense of fairness and decency, but also because he did not want to annoy anyone, least of all his customers.⁷ Bernard put it this way: “it was his custom, during the ten years of our servitude on the *Advertiser*, to sanction the insertion, or approve the

rejection of the local matter and correspondence”.⁸ It must have been frustrating for a man of independent spirit. According to his friend Robert Casson, Bernard “did not run well in harness”. Not surprisingly, then, he is said to have “found the ‘scissors and paste-pot’ rather tame work”. Thus, for Bernard to be “given a free hand” at the *Mirror* spelled liberation at the late age of 53.⁹ He could now put into practice his beliefs as to how a newspaper editor should behave.

The *Mirror*’s name signalled its backers had different, superior principles to Soulby. Whereas the title *Advertiser* stood for business virtues and a conservative moderation, that of *Mirror* was about telling things as they were, what “the public” thought, reflecting reality: “truth”.¹⁰ It seems that Bernard, like other newspaper people who, despite knowing they were dealing with mere ephemera, “relished the visual and tactile pleasures of the page and the smell of the ink”.¹¹ It is not possible for us to judge from almost 150-year-old issues (and still less from micro-film copies), but Bernard himself thought his *Mirror*’s newsprint was “good both in colour and texture”, and that the “new” type was “beautifully clear and striking to the eye”. He believed his newspaper, as an artefact, had “an artistic character”.¹² The use of this mid-19th century adjective is significant. It appropriately points up the “imaginative” and “creative” dimensions of the progressive intelligence behind the new paper.¹³ Clearly, for Bernard, the *Mirror*’s artistic quality symbolised, Ruskin-like, the fact that his paper had the moral character that was required and was not part of what he called the “clique of the old school whose motto is ‘things as they are’”! Indeed, it was a rival to it, prepared to shake the clique’s members from a “dreamy ease”.¹⁴ We may be equally sure he was not thinking that this artistic character might also be associated in rival Victorian minds more with the artist than the product – and therefore with behaviour that was deemed less than moral.¹⁵

It would appear apt that his *Mirror* had emerged from the New Patent Ulverstonian Printing Machine, a respectable contribution to the technological improvements behind the post-1855 expansion of the newspaper press. It had been invented by Stephen Soulby. As his ex-employee, Bernard must have been conscious of the irony of the circumspect owner of the blandly-named *Advertiser* playing an important part in producing its discordant rival. The machine’s engineering offered another irony. A Liverpool printer who bought one commented that, “it is almost noiseless in its motions and causes no vibration”.¹⁶ Such characteristics suited the *Advertiser*’s identity, but hardly the *Mirror*’s!

Bernard claimed that his former employer had “offered to double our pittance when on the point of leaving him”, although the latter denied attempted bribery, saying such comments as he had made had been “altogether retrospective”.¹⁷ In the face of the threat, Soulby had turned to his own newspaper’s founding editor, the discriminating and scholarly John Stanyan Bigg, aged 32. Bigg, editor of the *Downshire Protestant*, was a poet and a critic who would enter the *Dictionary of National Biography*. In contrast, his bookseller employer was definitely not bookish. Nevertheless, the genial Bigg appreciated his finer qualities, among them Soulby’s mechanical ingenuity and a love he shared for their native town. Bigg, too, professed a belief in the concept of neutrality, which did not “mean indifferentism”.¹⁸ Soulby’s offer was attractive. Bigg’s return gave Bernard a reputable opponent.

This article explores the debate on provincial journalism which ensued. Because Bernard was the catalyst the accent is on him and thus rescues him from undeserved

obscurity.¹⁹ Although it was not uncommon for 19th century newspapers to abuse each other, the frequent Bernard-Bigg exchanges over a period just short of three years constitute an illuminative case, worth close analysis for several reasons.

Firstly, Ulverston presents a special opportunity to examine what two small-town editors thought, because Bernard was trying to establish an identity and behavioural norms, and Bigg was trying to maintain a paper's tradition. In other words, the former was a "culture founder", the latter a "culture bearer".²⁰ For his adopted town and district, and particularly for the *Advertiser*, the arrival of Bernard's *Mirror* made questions about the nature of journalism clear, present, and urgent. How, therefore, was the debate experienced by these protagonists? This contribution to regional newspaper history is therefore not primarily about the organisation and structure of the press. Nor is it about using newspapers as a source to cast light on other topics. Rather, the theme throughout is – unusually – on the rivals' understanding of what it meant to be a journalist, on their identities as newspapermen. Their controversy may, indeed, be seen as a power struggle about the kind of expertise and moral behaviour necessary to edit a local newspaper.²¹

Secondly, Bernard's criticisms of Bigg's journalism set their controversy within the more general context of male concerns about what it was to be a man, especially when you were a writer. This is an important area of recent investigation by historians of the 19th century. Here, consideration of manliness is extended to the small-town newspaper press, where it arises out of that difficult question – who really counted when it came to editorial decisions? Legally, the owner was in charge, but situations were frequently complicated.²²

Thirdly, the controversy gives us insight into how a fledgling mid-Victorian provincial newspaper could take off successfully in the face of a well-established rival. This obstetric aspect of a newspaper's history is not given the attention it deserves, particularly in accounts of the post-1855 "golden age" regional press. This is because orthodox historical opinion has made it seem quite easy and straightforward in the light of such factors as the revoking of the taxes on knowledge, growing literacy, easier distribution by rail, better technologies, and the attractiveness of newspapers as a potential influence on local politics.²³ Papers did fail.²⁴ Individuals did matter. Launching a newspaper was but the first step; the harder job was getting it securely rooted, particularly when a rival was well-established. To what extent was Bernard's own agency an effective factor in the *Mirror's* success? How did he make his mark?

Fourthly, there's the setting. Cities and big towns have claimed the closest interest of urban historians and those of the newspaper press. Look at indexes in histories of the press; country towns, especially smaller ones, get short shrift compared with larger towns and cities.²⁵ Understandable it may be, but "the several hundred market towns and small regional centres in the countryside, whose basic role was to provide a variety of services for the farming communities, are equally worthy of study. In the Victorian period, as in earlier centuries, the country town was the basic English urban type".²⁶ Moreover, there is also a traditional tendency to link "small town" with "rag".²⁷ This demeans country-town editors of character and calibre, whose papers were not "county organs", and for published studies of whom one would look far and wide. Far from the mainstream in their abode, undeniably – Ulverston was in serious ways unprogressive, not yet locally self-governed, awaiting

the boost of heavy industry, and with a rather static population – but Bernard and Bigg were not nobodies, nor was Soulby.²⁸ The editors' arguments over the nature of their job were timely, occurring at the beginning of a period, "the 1860s and 1870s [by which time journalism] had come to be regarded as a more respectable practice", if not yet truly a profession.²⁹

Sanctioned to *be* different

Bigg saw himself as "a respectable journalist, catering for respectable readers".³⁰ The model he offered had its roots in a small world where a traditional culture of deference had been reinforced by the perceived demands of commercial commonsense. In his first editorship, he had won a reputation for "the judicious treatment in his leading articles, of local subjects".³¹ Now, with the intellectual gravitas of a literary gentleman, he made his position plain: "Local dissensions are, in all cases, greatly to be deprecated".³² In what was "an essentially voluntaristic public culture" (because the state's role was modest and a preference for local control strong),³³ Bigg sought to treat individuals who were in authority with fair-minded generosity.

A brand-new paper, and a significant change in his own standing meant Bernard was "sanctioned to *be* different".³⁴ He clearly saw himself as a professional – and with some justice, if only because he was able to make decisions on his own account.³⁵ Was he a gentleman "in the true sense of the word", an attribute thought by the owner of the *Newspaper Press Directory* "most essential" for the conducting of a newspaper? Certainly Charles Mitchell would have acknowledged his gentlemanly qualifications of being "above corruption and intimidation".³⁶ The model of editor Bernard offered was that of a champion of individual liberty and an intrepid "expositor of abuses", i.e. someone who set them out in detail and interpreted them for the public.³⁷

It also seems to have meant that facts and editorial observations were not necessarily separable. For example, he was bringing news in the form of reports, but, in hard-hitting leading articles commenting on the conduct of individuals and bodies, Bernard was also effectively giving his analyses the status of "established truths".³⁸ Readers could check their validity with the reports. This in itself was not enough. For Bernard, it was equally important that he deliberately, publicly, and often, contrasted his understanding of an editor's job with that of his rival. In other words, he was saying, "This is journalism, not that". If the pursuit of truth hurt individual local magistrates or guardians, or vicars, or rival journalists, so be it. Casson did "not remember anyone who was more admired by some, and feared and detested by others, in his capacity as a Newspaper Editor".³⁹

Bernard's vision of what an editor should be, and his energy in acting on it to sustain and keep fresh his own and his paper's distinct identity, were important in the rapidly successful establishment of the *Mirror*. In spite of "a working capital of a few hundred pounds or less" being sufficient at that time for a provincial weekly,⁴⁰ the number of investors in the *Mirror* signals some caution on their part: they could share any losses. In 1864, Bigg noted that "a vast amount of certain expense of which modern projectors know nothing" had been needed to start a newspaper in the 1840s. Notwithstanding that, "Now, it seems easy to start a newspaper", he gave

a warning that it was “especially easily (*sic*) to fail in the enterprize”.⁴¹ During the year the *Mirror* celebrated its first birthday, “it was calculated that the number of newspapers [in England] had virtually doubled from 562 to 1,102, although it was conceded that a substantial proportion of these titles were very short-lived”.⁴² In 1853 the *Ulverston Journal & North Lonsdale Advertiser*, published fortnightly by one of the *Mirror* investors, lasted six months. The *Ulverston & Furness Star* and the *Ulverstone & Furness Times*, managed far less in 1863 and 1864 respectively. In 1860, Bernard said Soulby’s nephew had given him 12 weeks before the *Mirror* would be “crush(ed)”, and that one of his sons was spreading rumours that Bernard was copying the larger advertisements from the *Advertiser* to give the impression the *Mirror* was getting the same degree of backing.⁴³

In his own words, Bernard “got up” the *Mirror* and made it a “very successful” newspaper, selling, he claimed by 4 January 1862, 1,500 copies weekly. Given the inevitable puffing, this figure was surely exaggerated, but we cannot say by how much because “until the 1890s, sales figures for newspapers were not audited or certified”.⁴⁴ A local country paper could survive on a circulation in the hundreds. Whatever the figures, Bernard did what he was required to do by those who put money into the enterprise: his paper proved viable and lasted for a quarter of a century⁴⁵. Six months after its launch he was complimented on the *Mirror*’s “commercial” success by the (friendly) *Whitehaven News*, which said it was “most satisfactory”. In the light of similar experience with a rival, the *News* sympathised with the problems Bernard faced.⁴⁶ Moreover, a thin *Advertiser*, during 1860 to 1862, reveals the pressure under which Soulby and Bigg were being put.⁴⁷ Money had almost certainly been made by the *Mirror*. On 29 September 1860, six months after launch, Bernard was thanking, for their “liberal support”, “the gentlemen and tradesmen of the town and district, who have favoured us with a share of their advertisements”. Tellingly, Bernard himself clearly saw an attractive financial future, but his offer to return the investors’ money was rejected: they wanted their profits according to the original agreement.⁴⁸ The editor’s apparent ambition to be the only owner did not mean his motives were completely financial. “I am afraid one does not invest one’s energies, or one’s capital in any line of life, simply for the public good”, said a solicitor “who dealt with a great deal of press work in his business”.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, such a comment needs qualification. Influence was attractive. Beetham observes that, “The exercise of the power to make one’s meanings stick, the desire to educate the readers – whether in religious truth or political knowledge – could be as powerful as the desire for profit. It is true that these motives could not be indefinitely sustained against economic loss. But they cannot be discounted either”.⁵⁰ For Bernard, happily, the pursuit of profit and principle do seem to have coincided. He was clearly taken up with his role.

He had two other advantages in addition to the factors stimulating press expansion, mentioned in the introduction to this article. One was that “suspicion of the state, the authorities, and the law ran deep in popular culture, . . .”.⁵¹ The other was the reformist tide flowing his way, as was reflected generally in “the peculiar dynamism of mid-Victorian Liberal journalism”,⁵² and more specifically in the obvious estimation locally that the time was ripe for another attempt at a progressive paper. As Fraser points out, “it is clear from the research on individual newspapers and regions that the most common reason for establishing a provincial newspaper

was the perceived lack of journalistic support for a political or religious viewpoint”.⁵³ Taken together, it meant that attacks on the *Advertiser* as representative of the old regime, on the Board of Guardians, and, especially, on the police and magistracy, were likely to play well. Bernard seized the opportunity. In commercial terms, he knew that “good management lay partly in identifying the best readership to court, and in courting it successfully”.⁵⁴ This meant sticking to one’s line: “Maintaining a regular readership means offering readers a recognisable position in successive numbers, that is creating a consistent ‘reader’ within the text”,⁵⁵ in his case, all those irritated by officialdom.

Nevertheless, though confident because he was offering an attractive alternative, Bernard himself, at the beginning at least, regarded his position as risky: unlike the five investors, he had “stood in the post of danger”, “liberal politics not being very fashionable here”.⁵⁶ The validity of this point is underlined by the failure, but a few years earlier, of the “progressive” *Journal*, by a careful positioning in Bernard’s initial address, by the fact that at the beginning the investors were, in Bernard’s view, “exceedingly alarmed lest their names be known”,⁵⁷ and also perhaps by the initial difficulties Bernard had: “we have been unable to obtain a full staff of local and other correspondents, and agents, . . .”.⁵⁸ In other words, he had to get *potential* customers to buy his paper and warm to it, using whatever advantages there were. In the hot seat, he had to make the policy decisions: “The authority to speak for the people . . . has to be established”.⁵⁹

Composing a political melody to attract those for whom the *Advertiser* was unappealing was not quite as straightforward as a phrase like “the Liberal ascendancy” to describe the historical period would make it appear.⁶⁰ The nature of the circulation area had to be respected, and also the fact that there were shades of meaning behind terms like liberal and radical, as well as a variety of individual motives among those customers.⁶¹ Bernard’s adoption of a “strictly constitutional” position, his belief in reform, in the fusion of Christian and journalistic duty in pursuing truth, his acknowledgement of social status, his sense of himself not being inferior to anyone, and his obsession with individual liberty,⁶² harmonizes with that restrained radicalism Trollope identified in his “most detailed . . . study of middle-class life in a small provincial community”, *Rachel Ray*.⁶³ However, Bernard clearly saw dissension as having political and social as well as private commercial value. His concern for the working man, and, more especially, his commitment to “even-handed justice” and the “fearless exposure of abuses” were strong. If, as has been suggested, “the Victorian picture of a free press exploring malpractice proves to be a poor guide to reality”,⁶⁴ Bernard, in *his* particular patch, does have an aura about him somewhat reminiscent of William Hone, the brilliant London journalist and battler against legal abuse earlier in the 19th century.⁶⁵ Casson’s point that “social and official position was nothing to him” is borne out by the *Mirror*’s files,⁶⁶ and has added force given that “for good or ill, with enthusiasm or regret, most Victorians believed that theirs was a viable hierarchical society”.⁶⁷ Moreover, the relentlessness of his stance on the behaviour of police and magistrates revealed a deep understanding of that most fundamentally important of all political questions: how can we curb those who exercise power?⁶⁸ “We will not attempt to deny the radical tendency of our principles”, he wrote over a year after his paper had been established, adding, “but it is the radicalism which conserves the interests of

society”.⁶⁹ It would seem many people were attracted by the notes Bernard struck.

If we think of the town and district as an educational setting, *Mirror* and *Advertiser* readers were given a crash course in journalistic morals. Almost to the very end of Bernard’s regime there were no other locally published papers in Furness.⁷⁰ The leading figures were known to many. Issues feeding the controversy on journalism were felt by even more. It therefore exemplified a Victorian characteristic, that “intellectual debate was not abstract, but bound up with day-to-day life”.⁷¹ Part of a movement in Ulverston towards a sounder civil society which the eventual establishment of a local board would reinforce, it is also a reminder to urban historians that even in places where lack of progress seemed the more evident there might have been stirring developments.

Some people read both papers, for example, members of local organizations at times of internal disputes which surfaced in correspondence columns and leading articles, or individuals who were being publicly criticised. Others would have listened to extracts from one paper being read aloud, and in this respect it was not without significance that each editor quoted observations from the other’s leading articles: they were seriously engaging with one another about the nature of their job. Casson, a shrewd and sociable townsman, had a front seat throughout. With several jobs, and secretary of the lecture association in 1860, he knew more people than most individuals. He felt compelled to quote Dickens when recalling in 1889 the “excited feelings of the most intense delight and indignation” experienced by his fellow townsfolk.⁷² Alas, unlike some places, the town’s thriving lecture association did not include journalism among the topics it considered.⁷³ We may regret this. However, had it been included, the middle classes, who made up most of the members in this “subscriber democracy”, would undoubtedly have quarrelled among themselves. In such an intimate urban setting their collective identity, their representation of what has been called “bourgeois civilization”, would therefore have been seriously compromised.⁷⁴ Privately, of course, Bernard’s and Bigg’s utterances would have been chewed over.

For his paper’s benefit, a clear contrast between himself and his rival and a forceful stance identifying whom he perceived to be his “greatest opponents” (Bigg and the *Advertiser*) had been necessary from the start. It was good psychology: “All ‘identities’ require an other”.⁷⁵

Raising the issue of manliness

Bernard gave this need for contrasting identity an unpleasantly personal dimension. Mid-century was a time when manliness was increasingly coming to mean being physically robust and active, resolute, self-controlled, and competitive. Having the imagination and sensibility of a poet could make one’s manliness suspect.⁷⁶ Bigg, as poet, certainly had his decriers: he was linked with the Spasmodic poets who were criticised for “proclaiming their inward wretchedness”, and a later writer not unfairly noted “a morbid strain in him”.⁷⁷ A friend and supporter, the critic George Gilfillan, pointed out that “although social in his habits and most agreeable as well as exemplary in all his manner of life”, Bigg “still emphatically dwelt alone”.⁷⁸ There is scant evidence as to the state of Bigg’s health. He was ill with what was said to be “chest disease” at least from the start of 1865,⁷⁹ and was to die of apoplexy a few

months later. John Collins, who described Bigg as “my dearest friend” had not expected such a “sudden passing”, but saw it as “the natural end of an overwrought mind”. He wrote, too, rather mysteriously, of a “malignant enemy”, “a worn-out toiler”, and of Bigg’s “great earthly trials”.⁸⁰ This hardly pictures a man who had previously been in sound health. Bernard’s criticisms of Bigg’s journalism chimed in with literary criticism of the latter’s poetry, criticism which of course he knew about. By accusing him of using “sham” correspondents to attack the *Mirror* and to publish views he did not care to write himself, and by saying that his journalism contained namby-pambyisms, Bernard was making problematic Bigg’s manliness. The *Advertiser* was not just “modest and timid”, on three occasions at least Bernard called Bigg a coward: “namby-pambyism is not journalism”.⁸¹ The point about the correspondence could be, and was, denied.⁸² However, the other was more of a problem for Bigg: taking a serious, moderate, and restrained line on any controversial issue left himself open to Bernard’s criticism. Such criticism was not easily to be dismissed as exaggerated and rhetorical. Take, for example, a magistrates’ court case involving an allegedly drunken Broughton and Ulverston surgeon.

Anxious not to offend, Bigg, noting the “conflicting” evidence, thought the surgeon should have been let off, but (he said) “with the verdict we have nothing to do”; it was “arrived at and pronounced in a conscientious spirit”. Why then, observed Bernard, commenting both on the case and on Bigg’s editorial, does Bigg “trouble himself about the case at all? Like him, we have no right to question ‘that it was arrived at and pronounced in a conscientious spirit’ by the Bench”. In spite of that, he went on, “we reserve to ourselves the right to deplore the verdict”, which he believed to be “incomprehensible”. Bigg deliberately asked his readers to note “the pertinacity with which the charge has been reiterated from time to time, and the evident intention manifested to obtain a conviction”. Yet, observing that “Policemen are but fallible, after all, like other mortals” – was a “puling cry”, according to Bernard, weak and querulous. The bland conclusion to Bigg’s leading article was: “Let not the policemen incautiously offend the public”.⁸³ One can almost hear Bernard snort with contempt. In that he represented a celebration of toughness, the contrast between the two editors seems to be related to that “marked shift” detected “in the codes of manliness current among the governing and professional classes during the latter half of the 19th century”.⁸⁴

Bernard, himself, claimed the moral high ground as a manly man, declaring what needed to be said (as he saw it) for the benefit of his locality, while the approach of the other (he inferred) was hardly that of an heroic man of letters, a notion promoted two decades earlier by Thomas Carlyle as “our most important modern person”.⁸⁵ Was journalism a masculine profession? Yes, according to Bernard, provided you spoke out against abuses in a candid, forceful way; in other words, acted like “the gentleman (who) spoke his mind and bore the consequences of doing so”.⁸⁶ Customarily, leading articles in newspapers were not signed. It enabled journalists to be outspoken by shielding them from reprisals: “bringing a newspaper rather than a person to book for libel” was troublesome.⁸⁷ However, in the case of smaller provincial papers, such as those published in Ulverston, editors could hardly have remained anonymous. Bernard “was frequently threatened with actions and sometimes served with writs – but he was not to be coerced”.⁸⁸

An important element in this manliness issue was Bigg’s relationship with Soulby.

Inactive owners were thin on the ground.⁸⁹ On the *Advertiser* Soulby was bound to have some influence: he worked in the building. The legal position was that an editor acted for the owner and was therefore merely an instrument: as Fisher and Strachan said, “it follows that he can have no power, as against the proprietor”.⁹⁰ Bernard, addressing Soulby, referred to himself as “an old servant”, as someone who had never “neglected your interest”.⁹¹ Nevertheless, all this does not mean Bigg was a puppet editor. Bernard asserted that Bigg was not in charge of the *Advertiser*, that Soulby was the controlling influence, in other words, *the man*. He assumed this from his own experience on the newspaper in the 1850s. Bigg was annoyed by Bernard’s assertion. “What his (Bernard’s) own position was when he was connected with the *Advertiser*”, he declared, “we do *not* ‘happen to know’, nor do we care to inquire whether he was Editor or sub-Editor, though we do ‘happen to know’ for which of the two posts he was, in our estimation, the better qualified”.⁹²

Whatever the relationship with his employer when he was first editor as an 18-year-old, the mature Bigg was no lackey. His character, his intelligence, would not have permitted it. In 1860 he was no more in debt to Soulby than the latter was to him: he “was tempted back”.⁹³ Crucially, his journalistic philosophy fitted comfortably with his employer’s cautious instincts. Both disliked the stirring up of trouble.⁹⁴ Soulby had “the greatest confidence” in him, and, usefully for an editor’s sense of independence, admired him: Bigg, Soulby wrote, had “gained considerable experience, and no little distinction in the rugged field of politics, and is well-known and distinguished both in the prose and poetic literature of England”.⁹⁵ Bernard, irritated, and ever conscious that his rival was a younger man, expressed disdain at Soulby’s “fanfaranade” for Bigg, “this ‘heaven-born’ genius”, on his return to his chair. But as he put it somewhat bitterly, Bigg’s “authority on all matters, political, literary, and domestic is held to be infallible by the members of his family and those immediately dependent on his professional nod, . . .”.⁹⁶ To them and to his network of friends Bigg was a public person of consequence: a *man* of letters, indeed. Soulby was part of this network. Moreover, for an owner “to publicize the editor’s name was to create a public assumption that the journal’s identity was subordinate to the editor’s, which would greatly lessen the authority of proprietors over editors . . .”.⁹⁷ This would have been the case even though the newspaper’s title was *Soulby’s Ulverston Advertiser*.

Whether perceived as manly or not, Bigg resembled to some extent the kind of prudent “public philosopher” that the 19th century’s more elevated view of journalism demanded, although at times the poet in him may have felt he was not much more than a craftsman serving the demands of business.⁹⁸ We cannot follow Victorian literature’s view of businessmen and condemn his employer as a newspaper proprietor thinking purely in selfish, greedy, commercial terms. The *Advertiser* may have had its origins in business instincts and boasted its strong appeal to the “moneyed classes”, but Soulby was not ruthless or selfishly money-grubbing enough to be a stereotype.⁹⁹ He was hardly likely to have encouraged Bigg to change his moderate approach. Nevertheless, we cannot speak of an “ideal” mix here between different notions of journalism.¹⁰⁰ This is so if only because Bigg would rather have been writing poetry and literary criticism, and, more importantly, Bernard’s “manly” version of journalism was contributing to the undermining of Soulby’s business.

Standing up for the Press

Bigg's "respectable" journalism and his generous view of authority is well illustrated by his attitude towards Bernard's struggle, from the very start of his editorship, to secure clear and formal recognition of a newspaper reporter's right to attend and report on its meetings. During the mid-Victorian years elected local bodies' customary arrangements about allowing journalists to report such meetings may have been "reinforced . . . by the dominance of liberal ideas of freedom of information".¹⁰¹ For example, "By the 1860s", Lucy Brown writes, "there could be no practical question about the reporting of town council meetings, . . .".¹⁰² However, Bernard in Ulverston, over a decade before the establishment of a local board, raised serious concerns about the general issue of press access. Contrary to the account in Casson's *A Few Furness Worthies*, which to date has been unchallenged, Bernard did not succeed. An initial decision to admit the press was cancelled, even though Poor Law Board advice had been sought. The chairman, Robert Hannay, a gentleman ironmaster and magistrate, had told Bernard beforehand that should this decision be overturned, "Reporters may still attend the Board meetings; and if a Reporter from the *Mirror* makes his appearance, I do not think anyone will interfere with him, or question his right to be present".¹⁰³ Bernard could not accept this. The chairman's intention, he said, was to deceive. He was treating a reporter "as a hall-porter in a gentleman's establishment . . . to come at his ring, retire at his nod".¹⁰⁴

At this point Bernard's position became more radical. Where hitherto he had seemed content with the idea that his reporter attend for the public business of the board and then retire when "delicate questions involving family matters" were discussed,¹⁰⁵ now he went further. "Mr. Hannay would have no one know of the pitiable and distressing cases that come before the Board, nor how they are entertained, nor the measure of relief afforded. Who, among the Guardians, is for the chastisement of the miserable and unfortunate applicant? who among them dares to sympathise with the widower or widow and orphans; . . . A miner out of work or maimed in the mines – miners discharged through a depression in the trade – would not be pleasant relief cases coming before the Board, for Mr. Hannay to read in the columns of the *Mirror*, and therefore we can understand the opposition on his part to the presence of a Reporter".¹⁰⁶ In other words, he seemed to want access to all the business conducted, delicate or not. Ratepayers needed information to judge the quality of individual guardians, he said, not Hannay's assertions that they were satisfactory: "we want proof – and the proof can only be given by a report in the columns of a public journal".¹⁰⁷ The ironmasters, we may note, were not over quick to protect their miners' health. As Marshall observes, Hannay's partner H. W. Schneider "was still talking about his sick club and 'the course his firm mean to take' in 1861", having mentioned it a good deal earlier.¹⁰⁸

To Bernard, Bigg was failing to defend "the respectability of a profession" by not helping the *Mirror* "to obtain for the press admission to the Board on honourable terms". In fact, Bigg "stood silently by, treating the subject with indifference . . .".¹⁰⁹ Bigg did not accept that he was being "subservient", as Bernard claimed.¹¹⁰ He pointed out that "many people seem to imagine that nothing is easier than the conscientious and efficient discharge of the duties of thankless and gratuitous public

office – duties which have to be fulfilled in spite of obloquy and misrepresentation”. Moreover, he wrote, “We believe that those gentlemen who manage our parochial and other public business for us, without fee or reward, who give time and attention to our concerns without acquiring any advance in social status by so doing, are entitled to our hearty thanks and our respect”.¹¹¹

It was most appropriate, Bigg believed, that the guardians kept a “discretionary power to themselves; and we maintain that the reporter must be vain indeed who supposes that his own individual judgement is better than that of a body of vigilant, intelligent, and responsible gentlemen such as those who constitute our Board of Guardians. We, forsooth, are playing ‘lackey’ to the Guardians, because, . . ., we are supplying the public with information . . ., on terms which we think are fair, honourable, and just. On the one hand, we desire, and are determined, to preserve the honour of the Press; and on the other hand, we desire to serve the public to the utmost, . . .”. Bigg added, “It is all very well to talk about the oppression of the Board; but there is such a thing as the oppression of the Press”.¹¹²

The *Mirror* editor (who did appear to believe “the Press” *was* “capable of judging what is good for the public”)¹¹³ was a hypocrite in Bigg’s eyes. This “purist in journalism”, the latter wrote, “this stickler for the rights and dignities of the Press”, had been habitually, “week after week, . . . clipping local paragraphs out of our paper wholesale, without any acknowledgement whatever; and has, at last, gone to the length of making our reports of the proceedings of the Board of Guardians ‘subservient’ to his own purposes, namely, in furnishing him with materials for leading articles, in which the information communicated scarcely equals the abuse heaped upon ourselves and upon the Guardians”.¹¹⁴

Discretionary power, if unmonitored, undermines faith in decision-making by elected authorities.¹¹⁵ Bigg’s support of and praise for the Guardians, if not naïve was overly trusting: there were many weaknesses to which Victorian boards of guardians fell prey, as Midwinter’s study of social administration in Lancashire indicates.¹¹⁶ Towards the end of 1862 Bigg’s reporter was prevented “from taking a full report” by an ex-officio member without protest from anyone there.¹¹⁷ However, Bigg cannot simply be dismissed as subservient to “high interests”. No less than Bernard, Bigg wanted an honest, efficient, and well-meaning organisation. Being thought of as such is constituent of an organisation’s being so.¹¹⁸ Put another way, “It was important both for respectable individuals and for political leaders to uphold [such ideals as public service], because the reality of much Victorian life fell short of them”.¹¹⁹ Bigg, from his conservative, traditional, and moderate perspective, seems to have understood this intuitively.

His belief that Bernard’s stand was a “foolish” whim was perfectly understandable.¹²⁰ Bernard was trying to effect a change in the way the board went about things. This is where, for all practical purposes, any organisation’s authority is based and where it is exercised. He wanted journalists to be part of the board’s procedures on a formal basis: the *Mirror* reporter’s presence to be what Searle calls an “institutional fact”, and therefore effectively part of the board’s legitimacy.¹²¹ Bernard had some support among a small minority of the guardians, at least in relation to reporters’ presence during public business. One wrote to his paper in May 1860, pseudonymously, noting that “those in favour of the admission of a reporter were considered a step beyond Chartists”.¹²²

Bernard's intention was not to undermine the rights of individuals to privacy, although that was a possible, indeed a likely, consequence of a reporter hearing guardians' reactions to delicate cases. It was a matter of the guardians trusting the journalists. Bernard kept radical company with such views. "There must be an end to every mystery of office", the Administrative Reform Association had declared just a few years earlier.¹²³ "Institutions are like fortresses", says a modern philosopher. "They must be well designed *and* manned".¹²⁴ So you have to get *properly* inside to determine this, Bernard was saying in effect. Nevertheless, it was fanciful to think that journalists, certainly of Bernard's ilk, would have been so trusted by the board that it would have made them privy to all its decision-making processes. Indeed, around this time newspaper threats to privacy were becoming worrying. Only five years earlier, Trollope's *The Warden* had been published, which has been described as "the first sustained howl against the power of the press and its intimidating intrusion into individual privacy".¹²⁵ Bigg himself almost certainly had Tom Towers and the *Jupiter* in mind when he raised the issue of oppression by newspapers. The board's country members, if they were sensitive about their "provincialisms", as was alleged, were unlikely to warm to the presence of reporters.¹²⁶ Bernard's criticism of guardians he identified, among them a Waterloo hero, was unlikely to foster trust in the *Mirror*.

Under a new editor early in 1863, without fuss or comment, reports of the board's meetings began appearing in the *Mirror*. Bigg's pragmatic approach to the issue had thus been adopted. However, Bernard's campaign should not be written off as a failure. His arguments would have found merit among retailers – advertisers as well as voters – and ratepaying owners of other small properties. More significantly, he had exploited the issue to reinforce the identity of the *Mirror vis a vis* the otherness of the *Advertiser*, and also to show that he was more truly a journalist than Bigg.

The issue most fit for purpose

Over-zealous policing was the best issue for the founding editor's purpose. This was particularly so in relation to "drinking – where and how it was done, what was actually drunk – [which] constituted a major 19th century preoccupation".¹²⁷ As it was put in a letter from a hostile correspondent to the *Advertiser*: "there is no other in the town he (Bernard) can so well mount, or which will bide so much tearing".¹²⁸ Only four years earlier the landmark County and Borough Police Act had come into operation. This act meant "centralisation at a county level rather than a national level . . .".¹²⁹ Alternative approaches had proved less attractive than what has been called a "provincial vision of the rural police as a kind of soldiery".¹³⁰ Across the country police chiefs were trying to establish organisations that worked well, and their men were struggling to understand what their work was about.¹³¹ They were doing so when they, and the magistrates who were trying to support them, were under more extensive scrutiny than ever before. The readers of small country weeklies covered a wide social range.¹³² Overbearing and unsophisticated enforcement of the law affected many kinds of people, tradesmen, farmers, and professionals, as well as the working classes, whose interests the *Mirror* had promised to watch. This was especially so if enjoying a tipple with friends was construed by

wary and distrustful authorities to be the preamble to unwelcome disturbances. There were a great many places in Ulverston alone where drink was available.¹³³ Charges of faulty weights and measures hit shopkeepers and potato dealers as well as publicans (“the war against mugs and pots and glasses”), as well as being of interest to customers.¹³⁴

Whereas Bigg took a characteristically restrained approach to the issue of allegedly disproportionate police surveillance of public houses and overly severe definition of the law, Bernard responded differently, making their “tyrannical” activity a frequent editorial topic. Bigg placed his hopes on a combination of police discretion and landlords’ self-interest.¹³⁵ His was an argument for better targetting of police energies, and a recommendation that respectable publicans, who, as he said, would not want their business damaged, be left to monitor their own establishments. For them, external regulation was not necessary to preserve virtue. Bigg, conservatively, was thus defining liberty for such landlords as self-government, and for their customers as self-control, whereas for the reformist Bernard it meant the enjoyment of rights free from arbitrary interference. Bernard reprinted extracts from the *Advertiser* not only to show Bigg had “echoed” the *Mirror*’s position that surveillance was being taken too far, but also to point up the *Advertiser*’s qualified approach.¹³⁶ Bigg’s saying, “If the facts are really so”, or “It is alleged”, Bernard inferred, enabled Bigg to criticise excessive police action without outright condemnation and, without acknowledgement it was, indeed, a problem. Bernard also made clear how Bigg “sticks up’ for the respectability - respectability of bar-parlour customers”, those the *Advertiser* called “substantial tradesmen and well-conducted persons”. It was a fair observation given the tenor of Bigg’s position. In contrast, the *Mirror*, said Bernard, had “advocated the right of all men, whether clothed in fustian, corduroy, or broadcloth, to meet peaceably and enjoy their evening pipe undisturbed by the surveillance of the police”. Bigg was dismissive of Bernard’s leader, but did publish a letter from “Observer”. This noted that “the evils” Bernard complained about, “to a very great extent, exist”. Bernard’s failure was that “with personal sarcasms and biting taunts” he was trying “to coerce the Superintendent and his men to a milder mode of conduct”. Bigg’s “moderate style” was what was needed.¹³⁷

Bernard acknowledged that his *Mirror* was seen as “fomenting opposition to all official power” and acting as “advocates of lawlessness”.¹³⁸ Bernard could legitimately claim that his tough and relentless campaigning style was well justified. Indeed, by continually criticising the behaviour of police and magistrates he was exposing not just particular errors of judgement or behaviour, but, more significantly, their apparent propensity to act unjustly. Evidence was plentiful.¹³⁹ An example: at the county court an Ulverston journeyman shoemaker “recovered damages against a Policeman for false imprisonment”.¹⁴⁰ Many people were there. Bigg, himself, declared unequivocally: “The case . . . clearly proves that, of late, the police have been exceeding their duties”: if this was replicated everywhere, England would be the equivalent of Prussia. He did point out, however, that “were there no policemen, we should undoubtedly have to pass through a period of appalling riot and disorder”.¹⁴¹ Bernard congratulated himself that what he had written about “the unconstitutional stretch of power exercised by the police in Furness” had been “fully confirmed by the verdict”.¹⁴²

Bernard picked up what was actually said during a trial and subjected nonsense and contradiction on the part of authority to scrutiny (made possible by verbatim reporting). For example, he identified a chairman's demonstrably "very silly observations", and noted that the bench remained "silent" when one policeman was denying on oath that "chaffing" had taken place, which his colleague was admitting.¹⁴³ His evident disdain for those abusing their power, the encouragement he gave to mockery, his claim to the moral high ground, to being the representative of the Public, the overall sense of his being an ever-present "recording chief-inquisitor" (to use the poet Browning's phrase),¹⁴⁴ are all to be found in his newspaper. But it wasn't just Bernard's stinging words and analytical detail. Readers understood their world, like we do, by storifying it. Court cases were bread-and-butter news stories. Repeated reference to the behaviour of magistrates and police in his editorials, at times week by week, established a huge metanarrative on the theme of individual liberty which would have appealed strongly to his readers.¹⁴⁵ Such sequential editorials may be likened to the serial publications of contemporary novelists. In them repeatedly were interesting, even surprising goings-on, enigmas surrounding the police force's operational procedure, villains and victims – and Bernard himself was the narrator-hero. There was even "the cliffhanger effect", which "was serial publication's most lasting contribution to the technique of popular fiction":¹⁴⁶ what would happen next in this battle between courageous journalist and the police superintendent and magistrates? Make sure you buy next week's issue of your valiant newspaper! Such an interpretation shows why it can be surprising that provincial newspapers don't figure more than they do in published accounts of relations between the public and the police.¹⁴⁷ We cannot readily say what influence Bernard, or any editor, had on readers' views. That his and their's were "mutually reinforce(d)" seems logical.¹⁴⁸

However, what was seen as Bernard stooping to "personalities" and attempting to bully individuals had an effect: the accusations were proof enough.¹⁴⁹ Like William Hone, Bernard knew the value of tickling readers' fancies with attention-grabbing catchphrases and what an *Advertiser* correspondent called "opprobrious epithets".¹⁵⁰ But it was not just a humorous ploy. Bigg scorned joining Bernard in "vulgarity and coarseness", but the latter believed "personality" journalism encouraged "this wholesome fear of the moral judgment of society that constitutes the safeguard of social intercourse".¹⁵¹ Bernard had a demonstrable impact on other people than Bigg. For instance, he was fond of including in his critiques of the Ulverston police chief, Superintendent William Cooper, the question, "Who rules in Furness?" On 4 August 1860, there was a news item submitted by a correspondent about the superintendent. At Furness Abbey railway station Cooper had got into a private carriage which had been booked by a bowls team on their way back from Whitehaven. The guard forced him to leave it. "Some unfeeling traveller", the correspondent reported, "instead of sympathy with Mr. Cooper's position, halloed, 'Who rules in Furness?' and a host of voices, in concert, rejoined, 'Who rules in Furness Abbey?'" Certainly, there and then, not the police superintendent.

A second significant example concerns magisterial irregularity in a trespass case, involving two miners, on which Bernard commented in three consecutive leaders. The fine imposed was later paid by the complainant. Had this not have happened, Bernard suggested (what the complainant would have realised), sufficient money

would have been raised to take matters to a higher court. This was because “the public” had been so “startled” by a “decision (that) was at variance with the evidence”, that appeared influenced by a magistrate’s “private knowledge”, and that had been given in a case where the magistrate had made “extraordinary remarks”.¹⁵² A third example is the reaction of William Gale, of Bardsea, a leading member of the local gentry. A respected Ulverston chemist and druggist, H. W. Mackereth, had challenged authority, in his case the expertise of the police superintendent who had said he was using defective weights. Gale, the chairman, palely echoed Lord Sidmouth’s fears in 1817 of a “malignant spirit” fostered by radical journalists. He voiced Ulverston magistrates’ worries about a “stirring whereby constituted authority seemed to be set at defiance”.¹⁵³ No reader could have been in any doubt as to the identity of the person Gale believed was behind the stirring.

A parallel devotion

More than any other issue, Bernard’s enthusiastic and frequent grappling with that of people’s right to be free from oppressive authority kept the *Mirror*’s identity well burnished. Curiously, this enthusiasm was paralleled, it may be said, by Bigg’s own devotion to what he was later to call his “cosmopolitanism”. He enjoyed writing on affairs of national and international importance.¹⁵⁴ Anyone with any intelligence would, he believed, be interested in such matters. He did not want to deal with “some passing triviality of the hour of a local character” at the expense of such wider concerns, although the latter would be viewed with a Furness eye.¹⁵⁵ It was far from unreasonable that a man of Bigg’s intelligence, wide reading, and literary and social contacts should act as an interpreter of foreign news for a narrow local world, because its quality in a Victorian provincial newspaper was somewhat uncertain, and vulnerable “to a far wider margin of error than home news”.¹⁵⁶ However, Bernard saw this as Bigg “dishing up leading articles on great political subjects which have been discussed in the leading metropolitan and provincial journals”; they were “jumping-up-behindisms”. His rival was “mak(ing) a great show of political knowledge”.¹⁵⁷ Although he himself did not ignore “foreign themes”, the primary thrust of his leading articles was local. This was symbolised by their heading: “Local Notes”. “What shall we write about?” he pondered. Parodying Bigg, he went on to mention over 20 topics, including “Prussia and politeness” and “Ireland and contentment”. However, using the occasion of a vestry meeting, he preferred Light, a metaphor to focus on various challenges Ulverston faced if it was to see its way forward more clearly, from “erecting a fire-bell” and “a covered market” to achieving “a right form of local government”.¹⁵⁸ Bigg said Bernard “takes care not to give too much strong food to his own readers”.¹⁵⁹ Typically, he suggested but did not bluntly say, this was because Bernard’s knowledge was beggarly. Whatever cosmopolitanism did for the *Advertiser*, Bernard knew his thoughts on the “Serfdom of Russia” were not going to sell his *Mirror*.

Bernard was not just an effective journalist. For all that a small circulation was practicable, there were various non-editorial problems to be faced – for example, not getting enough staff and distribution agents, making sure machinery was reliable, being paid promptly for advertisements, and making sure costs did not get out of hand. Running a newspaper meant more than handling news.¹⁶⁰ Although they were

penny weeklies, the five-issue lives of the *Ulverston and Furness Star* and the *Ulverstone and Furness Times* are instructive. The *Star*'s printing machinery proved unreliable at the start (and Bigg helped out). Preparations had not been thorough and correspondents as well as agents were still needed. The *Times*'s eight leaders neglected local issues, and in its news columns in its last issue Ulverstonians were expected to appreciate such items as the purchase of a living in Westmorland and more than half a column on Whitehaven shipping. It was printed not in Ulverston but in Whitehaven. All this indicates inadequate planning, management, and resources. In other words, the papers had gone off half-cock.¹⁶¹ However, it dramatically resonates with Lee's observation that "standards of management were universally poor".¹⁶² A prospective founder of a newspaper was given "very sound advice in 1874 . . . it was essential to have a first-class book-keeping system, with double entry, and a comparatively continuous audit by a first-class accountant".¹⁶³ Bernard came to the job with editorial experience on the *Advertiser*. Equally pertinently, from his time in London, and from previous work locally, he was conversant with secretarial responsibilities, book-keeping, and office management. Bernard knew what he was doing. In the successful establishment of a newspaper individual agency mattered, whatever the external, structural advantages.

End game: bloodshed, failure, and tragedy

Real life followed art. Just as the "happy ending" was at this time being threatened in Victorian fiction, with "the psyches of (the) characters" under observation,¹⁶⁴ the story here of the editors' controversy was touched by bloodshed, business failure, and tragedy. Soulby "was no financier, and knew not the value of money", said Casson. "His paper and purse were alike open to the poor and needy. He was however generous to others before he was just to himself, . . .".¹⁶⁵ Soulby had a large household to support.¹⁶⁶ That the competition with the *Mirror* caused the family much stress is suggested by an incident which happened after the end of a dinner for the town's volunteer riflemen. One volunteer, an occasional reporter for the *Mirror*, was, it seems, bloodily beaten up by Soulby's younger son. To Bernard's chagrin, it was settled with an apology, seemingly for the good name of the corps.¹⁶⁷ Less than a year later, Soulby's business was put in the hands of administrators.¹⁶⁸ He died in 1864, aged 55. The *Advertiser* was bought by Bigg, who died in 1865.¹⁶⁹

Bernard's regime ended in early 1863 in two events: a "peaceable" seizure by the five investors of the Market Street newspaper office, and two court cases. Although he had added the role of publisher shortly after the *Mirror* was founded, Bernard had not been able to use this to establish himself as the sole proprietor: it meant "nothing" in terms of ownership.¹⁷⁰ On 14 February 1863, the *Mirror* declared the investors had registered themselves as proprietors "in the place of the former editor". After he ceased to be editor, Bernard became a cashier for a local ironmaster. He died in Ulverston, aged 72. Whereas Bigg had received fulsome eulogies (almost entirely about his poetry and literary criticism) when he died, Bernard's death was recorded in both the newspaper he edited and the newspaper he attacked, in a brief and colourless paragraph.¹⁷¹

Notes and References

- ¹ A. Marr, *My Trade. A Short History of British Journalism* (London, 2005), xiv. Journalism, of course, now includes that of radio, TV, and the internet, as well as print. Other recent contributors to the debate include: M. Buerk, *The Road Taken* (London, 2005), 409-421; Channel 4, "Tony Benn: Interviewing the Interviewers", broadcast on 12 August 2006; "Between Ourselves", BBC Radio 4, broadcast on 22 August, 2006 (Elinor Goodman and Trevor Kavanagh on the political editor's role).
- ² Marr, who is as well-informed as anyone, spells the weaknesses out very forcefully. See *My Trade*, 379-385.
- ³ See A. Jones, *Powers of the Press. Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996).
- ⁴ See *Ulverston Mirror*, 14 February 1863. The investors were: John Case, wine and spirit merchant, William Dilworth, dyer, William Kitchin, printer, bookseller, and stationer, Joseph Knowles, hardware dealer and auctioneer, and Reuben Pearson, accountant and assistant overseer. Until 2 June 1860, the *Mirror* was printed and published "for the proprietors" by Kitchin, of Market Street. Bernard, based in Soutergate and then Cavendish Street, took over the imprint.
- ⁵ Bernard's biographical details are from Canterbury Baptism Index and Index of Canterbury Freemen (kindly supplied by Peter Ewart of Canterbury Cathedral Archives), and from R. Casson, "Joseph Alexis Bernard", in *A Few Furness Worthies* (Ulverston, 1889), 83-87. The businessman was John Whitwell, who later became Liberal MP for Kendal, for whom see R. K. Bingham, *Kendal, A Social History* (Milnthorpe, 1996), 278, 279.
- ⁶ D. Fraser, "The Editor as Activist: Editors and Urban Politics in Early Victorian England", in J. H. Wiener (ed.) *Innovators and Preachers: The Role of the Editor in Victorian England* (Westport, Conn., and London, 1985), 124.
- ⁷ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 5 April 1860.
- ⁸ *Ulverston Mirror*, 10 November 1860.
- ⁹ Casson, *op. cit.*, 84, 85.
- ¹⁰ Jones (1996), *op. cit.*, 33, 34, and 89, 90.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 29.
- ¹² *Ulverston Mirror*, 14 April 1860.
- ¹³ R. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London, 1976), 33.
- ¹⁴ *Ulverston Mirror*, 29 September, 1860. P. Quennell, *John Ruskin, The Portrait of a Prophet* (London and Glasgow, 1946), 69, 118.
- ¹⁵ A. Briggs, *The Age of Progress* (London, 2002), 427.
- ¹⁶ See advertisement, "Soulby's Ulverstonian Printing Machine", *Ulverston Advertiser*, 17 December 1857.
- ¹⁷ *Ulverston Mirror*, 10 November 1860; S. Soulby, "The *Mirror* and the Proprietor of this Journal", letter in the *Ulverston Advertiser*, 15 November 1860.
- ¹⁸ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 5 April 1860; 30 April 1863; 15 September 1864. See also "Stephen Soulby" in Casson (1889) *op. cit.*, 65, 66.
- ¹⁹ He is referred to in J. D. Marshall, *Furness and the Industrial Revolution* (Beckermest, 1981), 294, and is mentioned, simply as editor of the *Mirror*, in H. F. Birkett, *The Story of Ulverston* (Kendal, 1949), 132.
- ²⁰ The terms are drawn here from educational research: see J. Nias, G. Southworth, and R. Yeomans, *Staff Relationships in the Primary School* (London, 1993), 116.
- ²¹ M. Philp, "Michel Foucault", in Q. Skinner (ed.), *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* (Cambridge, 1991), 65-81, esp. 74, 75.
- ²² N. Clarke, "Strenuous Idleness: Thomas Carlyle and the Man of Letters as Hero", in M. Roper and J. Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London, 1991), 25-43; M. Roper and J. Tosh, "Historians and the Politics of Masculinity", *ibid.*, 1-24; J. Wood, *Passion and Pathology in Victorian Fiction* (Oxford, 2001), ch. 2, "Nervous Sensibility and Ideals of Manliness"; J. H. Wiener, "Sources for the Study of Newspapers", in L. Brake, A. Jones, and L. Madden (eds.) *Investigating Victorian Journalism* (Basingstoke, 1990), 155-165, esp. 157, 163; L. Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford, 1985), 89; C. Kent, "The Editor and the Law", in J. H. Wiener (ed.), *Innovators and Preachers: the Role of the Editor in Victorian England* (Westport, Connecticut and London, 1985), 99-119.
- ²³ Lee, doyen of newspaper press historians, seems to ignore individual agency. See A. J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England 1855-1914* (London, 1980), 50, 78. First published in 1976.

- ²⁴ Lee notes that, "It was calculated, one does not know how accurately, that between 1860 and 1863 £250,000 was lost in newspaper bankruptcies". *Op. cit.*, 90.
- ²⁵ See e.g. G. Boyce, J. Curran, and P. Wingate (eds.) *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (London, 1978); L. Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford, 1985); even Lee (1980), *op. cit.*
- ²⁶ C. W. Chalklin, "Country Towns", in G. E. Mingay, ed., *The Victorian Countryside* (London, Boston, and Henley, 1981) i, 275-287, esp. 276.
- ²⁷ For example, A. Lee, "The Structure, Ownership, and Control of the Press, 1855-1914", in G. Boyce, J. Curran, and P. Wingate, eds., *Newspaper History: from the 17th Century to the Present Day* (London and Beverly Hills, 1978) 117-129, 123. Even the gentler phrase, "the modest status of the local newspaper" seems condescending; see M. Harris, "London's Local Newspapers: Patterns of Change in the Victorian Period", in Brake *et al.* (eds.) (1990), 104-119, esp. 105.
- ²⁸ A "host of nobodies" was a phrase used by H. Whorlow, *The Provincial Newspaper Society 1836-1886* (1886), 53-5, quoted by Lee (1980), *op. cit.*, 53. The Society "refused to admit as members proprietors whose papers depended on partly-printed sheets on the reasonable grounds that they could not be expected to be entirely independent agents". *Loc. cit.* Both the *Mirror* and the *Advertiser* used partly-printed sheets. For Ulverston, see Marshall (1981), *op. cit.*, *Furness and the Industrial Revolution*, 245, 417, 418. Also, P. Lucas, "The dialect boom in Victorian Furness", *CW3*, v, 199-200.
- ²⁹ Jones (1996), *op. cit.*, 122.
- ³⁰ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 22 November 1860.
- ³¹ Anon, "John Stanyan Bigg", *North Lonsdale Magazine*, 1, 1, July 1866, 2-10, esp. 3.
- ³² *Ulverston Advertiser*, 31 January 1861.
- ³³ D. Eastwood, "A very long century", *TLS*, 12 May 2000, 31, reviewing R. Price, *British Society, 1680-1880. Dynamism, Containment and Change* (Cambridge, 2000).
- ³⁴ A. Strauss, "Transformations of Identity", in A. M. Rose, ed., *Human Behaviour and Social Processes. An Interactionist Approach* (London, 1971. First published 1962), 63-85, esp. 79.
- ³⁵ See Lee (1980), *op. cit.*, 117.
- ³⁶ C. Mitchell, *Newspaper Press Directory* (London, 1846), 104, qu. by Lee (1980), *op. cit.*, 53.
- ³⁷ *Ulverston Mirror*, 24 August 1861.
- ³⁸ "Those opinions which he [the journalist] had defined, and, so to speak, created, slip from him in the moment of their triumph and take their stand among established truths". R. Lowe, *Times*, 6 February 1852, qu. by P. Elliott, "Professional Ideology and Organisational Change: the Journalist since 1800", in Boyce *et al.* (eds.) (1978), *op. cit.*, 183.
- ³⁹ Casson (1889), *op. cit.*, 83.
- ⁴⁰ Lee (1978), *op. cit.*, 119.
- ⁴¹ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 17 November 1864.
- ⁴² Jones, *Powers of the Press*, 23, 24.
- ⁴³ *Ulverston Mirror*, 10 and 17 November 1860. Soulby's nephew was J. Soulby Sykes, clerk to the Board of Guardians and superintendent registrar.
- ⁴⁴ Wiener (1990) *op. cit.*, 158.
- ⁴⁵ It was the *North Lonsdale Mirror* from 10 October 1885, to 13 February 1886, when it was merged with the the *Ulverston News*. F. Barnes and J.L. Hobbs, *Handlist of Newspapers Published in Cumberland, Westmorland, and North Lancashire* (Kendal, 1951), 12.
- ⁴⁶ "The Press in Ulverston", *Whitehaven News*, reprinted in *Ulverston Mirror*, 24 November 1860.
- ⁴⁷ The years 1860-1862 are on one microfilm at the Cumbria Record Office, Barrow-in-Furness.
- ⁴⁸ *Ulverston Mirror*, 7 February 1863.
- ⁴⁹ A. K. Rollit, of Hull, in 1879, qu. by Lee (1980), *op. cit.*, 77.
- ⁵⁰ M. Beetham, "Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre", in Brake, Jones, and Madden (1990), *op. cit.*, (19-32), 21. She cites a "discussion" in A. J. Lee, "The Management of a Victorian Local Newspaper", *Business History*, XV, 1973, 140, and F. Leary, *History of the Manchester Periodical Press*, 1903, unpubl. MSS, Manchester Central Reference Library Archives.
- ⁵¹ J. Belchem, *Popular Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke and London, 1996), 125.
- ⁵² Jones (1996), *op. cit.*, 151.
- ⁵³ Fraser (1985), *op. cit.*, 123.
- ⁵⁴ Lee (1978), *op. cit.*, 124.
- ⁵⁵ Beetham (1990), *op. cit.*, 28.

- ⁵⁶ His solicitor was speaking for him in a county court case in which Bernard was seeking payment for advertising from F. J. Blacklock, *Ulverston Mirror*, 28 February 1863.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.* This point was not challenged.
- ⁵⁸ *Ulverston Mirror*, 14 April 1860.
- ⁵⁹ J. Street, *Politics and Popular Culture* (Cambridge, 1997), 22, qu. by M. Conboy, *The Press and Popular Culture* (London, 2002), 20.
- ⁶⁰ T. A. Jenkins, *The Liberal Ascendancy 1830-1886* (1994, Basingstoke). See Lee (1980) *op. cit.*, 74.
- ⁶¹ R. D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas* (London, 1974), 115; Jenkins (1994) *op. cit.*, ix; Belchem (1996) *op. cit.*, 5, 6.
- ⁶² *Ulverston Mirror*, 14 April and 20 September 1860; 13 April 1861.
- ⁶³ A. Trollope, *Rachel Ray* (Oxford, 1991), 340, 341; *Ulverston Mirror*, 29 December 1860.
- ⁶⁴ Brown (1985), *op. cit.*, 255.
- ⁶⁵ B. Wilson, *The Laughter of Triumph. William Hone and the Fight for the Free Press* (London, 2005).
- ⁶⁶ Casson (1889) *op. cit.*, 86.
- ⁶⁷ D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London, 2000), 104.
- ⁶⁸ K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 2, *The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath*, 133; *Ulverston Mirror*, 29 December 1860.
- ⁶⁹ *Ulverston Mirror*, 1 June 1861.
- ⁷⁰ Barrow's first newspaper, the *Barrow Herald*, did not appear until 10 January, 1863. See P. Lucas, "Profit, Principle, and Perspective: The Case of George Carruthers and his 'Pilot'", *CW2*, lxxxv, (229-244), 229.
- ⁷¹ J. Garnett, "Religious and Intellectual Life", in C. Matthew (ed.), *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000), 195-227, esp. 196.
- ⁷² Casson (1889), *op. cit.*, 85.
- ⁷³ Jones (1996), *op. cit.*, 191-201; A. Briggs, *Victorian People. A Reassessment of Persons and Themes 1851-1867* (Harmondsworth, 1970), 12.
- ⁷⁴ S. J. D. Green, "In Search of Bourgeois Civilization: Institutions and Ideals in Nineteenth-Century Britain", *Northern History*, XXVIII, 1992, Review Article, 228-247. The term "subscriber democracy" was coined by R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect, and Party. The Making of the British Middle Class: Leeds 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990), 184, qu. by Green, *op. cit.*, 235.
- ⁷⁵ R. D. Laing, *Self and Others* (Harmondsworth, 1978), 82; A. Storr, *Human Aggression* (Harmondsworth, 1979), 51 and 83; *Ulverston Mirror*, 2 February 1861.
- ⁷⁶ N. Clarke (1991), *op. cit.*, 23-43; M. Roper and J. Tosh (1991), *op. cit.*, 1-24; Wood (2001), *op. cit.*, 59-109.
- ⁷⁷ See P. Lucas, "The dialect boom in Victorian Furness", *CW3*, v, (119-215), 201-203; H. F. Birkett, *The Book of Overton* (London, 1928), 195.
- ⁷⁸ G. G., "Death of John Stanyan Bigg", *Dundee Advertiser*, reprinted in *Ulverston Advertiser*, 1 June 1865.
- ⁷⁹ Anon, "John Stanyan Bigg", *North Lonsdale Magazine*, 1, 1, July 1866, 10.
- ⁸⁰ J. Collins, "John Stanyan Bigg", *Ulverston Advertiser*, 22 June 1865.
- ⁸¹ *Ulverston Mirror*, 24 August 1861; see also 23 February and 8 June 1861.
- ⁸² *Ulverston Advertiser*, 29 August 1861.
- ⁸³ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 28 August 1862; *Ulverston Mirror*, 30 August 1862.
- ⁸⁴ Roper and Tosh (1991), *op. cit.*, 3.
- ⁸⁵ Quoted by N. Clarke (1991), *op. cit.*, 40. Carlyle's "On Heroes" was "a series of lectures . . . delivered in 1840 and published the following year". It "was enormously popular" and "repeatedly reprinted"; *ibid.*, 41.
- ⁸⁶ Kent (1985), *op. cit.*, 113.
- ⁸⁷ Lee (1980), 107.
- ⁸⁸ Casson (1889), *op. cit.*, 86.
- ⁸⁹ L. Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford, 1985), 89.
- ⁹⁰ J. R. Fisher and J. A. Strachan, *The Law of the Press* (2nd. edn., London, 1898), qu. by Kent (1985), *op. cit.*, 104.
- ⁹¹ *Ulverston Mirror*, 10 November 1860.
- ⁹² *Ulverston Advertiser*, 22 November 1860.
- ⁹³ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 25 May 1865.
- ⁹⁴ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 31 January 1861; 15 September 1864.

- ⁹⁵ “To Our Subscribers”, *Ulverston Advertiser*, 5 April 1860.
- ⁹⁶ *Ulverston Mirror*, 14 September 1861.
- ⁹⁷ Kent (1985), *op. cit.*, 111.
- ⁹⁸ Lee (1978), *op. cit.*, 118.
- ⁹⁹ D. Throsby, “Still Filthy”, *TLS*, 23 November 2001, 27, reviewing A. Pollard (ed.), *The Representation of Business in English Literature* (London, 2001); Casson (1889), *op. cit.*, 65, 66.
- ¹⁰⁰ See Lee (1978), *op. cit.*, 118.
- ¹⁰¹ L. Brown (1985), *op. cit.*, 168.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰³ *Ulverston Mirror*, 23 June 1860. Bernard had commented on the issue on 21 and 28 April, 5 May, and 16 June 1860.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ulverston Mirror*, 23 June 1860.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ulverston Mirror*, 21 April 1860.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ulverston Mirror*, 23 June 1860.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ulverston Mirror*, 23 June 1860.
- ¹⁰⁸ Marshall (1981) *op. cit.*, 246 fn.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ulverston Mirror*, 16 February 1861
- ¹¹⁰ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 7 March 1861.
- ¹¹¹ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 4 April 1861.
- ¹¹² *Ulverston Advertiser*, 21 February 1861.
- ¹¹³ *Ulverston Mirror*, 23 February 1861.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 7 March 1861.
- ¹¹⁵ K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 2, *The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath* (London, 1996), 133. First published in 1945.
- ¹¹⁶ E. C. Midwinter, *Social Administration in Lancashire 1830-1860* (Manchester, 1969), 26-44.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ulverston Mirror*, 20 December, 1862; see also Fairness, “Doings at the Board of Guardians and Magisterial Dictation”, *ibid.*
- ¹¹⁸ J. R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London, 1996), 34.
- ¹¹⁹ J. Parry, “Behind the project”, reviewing J. Gardiner, *The Victorians. An Age in Retrospect* (Hambledon and London, 2002), *TLS*, 9 August 2002, 22.
- ¹²⁰ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 7 March 1861.
- ¹²¹ Searle (1996) *op. cit.*, 115-118.
- ¹²² A. G., “The *Mirror* and the *Guardians*”, *Ulverston Mirror*, 5 May 1860. The final vote was 11 in favour of rescinding the decision to admit reporters, four opposed, and others “neutral”. *Ulverston Mirror*, 30 June 1860.
- ¹²³ Administrative Reform Association, Official Papers, no. 1, May 1855, 7, qu. by A. Briggs, *England in the Age of Progress* (London, 1999), 394.
- ¹²⁴ K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. 1, *The Spell of Plato* (London, 1995), 126.
- ¹²⁵ Jones (1996), *op. cit.*, 41.
- ¹²⁶ *Ulverston Mirror*, 28 April, 16 and 30 June 1860.
- ¹²⁷ K. T. Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886* (Oxford, 1998), 353.
- ¹²⁸ Observer, “Police v Public”, *Ulverston Advertiser*, 14 February 1861.
- ¹²⁹ D. Taylor, *The New Police in Nineteenth-Century England. Crime, Conflict, and Control* (Manchester, 1997), 37.
- ¹³⁰ C. Steedman, *Policing and the Victorian Community: The Formation of English Provincial Police Forces, 1856-80* (London, 1984), 27, qu. by Taylor, *op. cit.*, 37 and 38.
- ¹³¹ Taylor, *op. cit.*, 6 and *passim*.
- ¹³² A. Jones, “Local Journalism in Victorian Political Culture”, in Brake, Jones, and Madden (eds.) (1990), *op. cit.*, 63-70, esp. 66.
- ¹³³ “Ulverston in 1854 had one (place of refreshment) to 129 inhabitants, Plymouth had one to 152 in the same year, and Middleton, near Manchester, had one to 137”. Marshall (1981), *op. cit.*, 327.
- ¹³⁴ *Ulverston Mirror*, 8 June 1861.
- ¹³⁵ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 31 January 1861.
- ¹³⁶ *Ulverston Mirror*, 2 February 1861.
- ¹³⁷ Observer, “Police v. Public”, *Ulverston Advertiser*, 14 February 1861.
- ¹³⁸ *Ulverston Mirror*, 19 January 1861.

- ¹³⁹ *Ulverston Mirror*, 1 June, 10 August, 16 November 1861, 10 January 1863.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ulverston Mirror*, 1 June 1861.
- ¹⁴¹ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 30 May 1861.
- ¹⁴² *Ulverston Mirror*, 1 June 1861.
- ¹⁴³ *Ulverston Mirror*, 9 February and 16 November 1861.
- ¹⁴⁴ R. Browning, "How it Strikes a Contemporary", in D. Karlin (ed.) *Robert Browning Selected Poetry* (London, 1989), 108-111, esp. 109.
- ¹⁴⁵ See Jones (1996), *op. cit.*, 83, 84.
- ¹⁴⁶ R. D. Altick, "The Curse of the Cliffhanger. Rewards and Tribulations of the Victorian Serial Novelist", *TLS*, 9 February, 2001, 5-6, esp. 6. He draws on Margaret Oliphant's criticism, at this time, 1862, of serial publication's influence on novelists; she saw it as a "violent stimulant".
- ¹⁴⁷ See e.g. D. Foster, "The East Riding Constabulary in the Nineteenth Century", *Northern History*, xxi (1985), 193-211, Section 2; Taylor (1997), *op. cit.*
- ¹⁴⁸ V. Berridge, "Content Analysis and Historical Research on Newspapers", in M. Harris and A. Lee (eds.), *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (London and Toronto, 1986), 201-218, esp. 206, 207; Lee (1980), *op. cit.*, 18.
- ¹⁴⁹ See e.g.: *Ulverston Advertiser*, 15 November 1860; 22 November 1860; 16 May 1861; 3 October 1861.
- ¹⁵⁰ Wilson (2005), *op. cit.*, 147. Letter from Inhabitant, *Ulverston Advertiser*, 8 November 1860.
- ¹⁵¹ *Ulverston Mirror*, 16 August 1862.
- ¹⁵² *Ulverston Mirror*, 27 October 1860. See also, 13 and 20 October.
- ¹⁵³ Bernard commented on Gale's observation in *Ulverston Mirror*, 2 March 1861. The case was reported on 23 February. Sidmouth is qu. by Wilson (2005), *op. cit.*, 153. For Mackereth see Casson (1889) *op. cit.*, 89-91.
- ¹⁵⁴ In the last quarter of 1862, for example, Bigg wrote 16 leading articles on national affairs (from prisons to artillery experiments and distress in Lancashire), nine on foreign issues (Greece and America were the foci), and six on local matters. There was also a Christmas editorial.
- ¹⁵⁵ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 30 April 1863. See also 29 August 1861.
- ¹⁵⁶ Brown (1985), *op. cit.*, 241.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Ulverston Mirror*, 23 February 1861.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Ulverston Mirror*, 3 November 1860.
- ¹⁵⁹ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 29 August 1861.
- ¹⁶⁰ Lee (1980), *op. cit.*, 84-6.
- ¹⁶¹ *Ulverston Star*, 16 and 23 May 1863. *Ulverstone Times*, 9 April 1864. Michael and William Alsop, of the *Whitehaven News*, were behind the *Times*, with Joseph Dodd, of Ulverston. The brothers' partnership ended on 9 July 1864, so presumably their attention was not fully engaged; J. R. Williams, *The Whitehaven News 1852-1952* (Whitehaven, 1952).
- ¹⁶² Lee (1980), *op. cit.*, 85.
- ¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 85.
- ¹⁶⁴ See Introduction to J. Halperin (ed.), G. Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel. A History of a Father and Son* (Oxford, 1990), vii, x. This novel was originally published in 1859.
- ¹⁶⁵ Casson (1889), *op. cit.*, 66.
- ¹⁶⁶ According to the 1861 Census, two sons, three daughters, three step-children, and three servants. In his business he employed 10 men and nine boys.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Ulverston Mirror*, 9 November 1861.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 9 October 1862.
- ¹⁶⁹ For the story of his widow, who became proprietor of the *Advertiser*, see P. Lucas, "The Regional Roots of Feminism: a Victorian woman newspaper owner", *CW3*, ii, 277-300.
- ¹⁷⁰ The final period of his editorship can be traced in *Ulverston Mirror*, 7, 14, and 28 February 1863. For the position of the publisher, see also Kent (1985), *op. cit.*, 99.
- ¹⁷¹ *Ulverston Mirror*, 17 January 1880; *Ulverston Advertiser*, 22 January 1880.

