

ART. XIX.—*Publicity and Power : James Ramsden's experiment with Daily Journalism.* By PETER LUCAS.

Read at Alnwick, September 6th, 1975.

ON 1 May 1871, the *Barrow, Furness and North Western Daily Times* appeared. An interesting experiment, marrying the new journalism of mid-Victorian provincial England and the entrepreneurial capital developing a new community had begun. Barrow had previously been "wholly unrepresented on the daily press of the country", explained Francis Leach, B.A.,¹ poet and editor and mouthpiece of James Ramsden, resident director of the Furness Railway, a leading figure in other local enterprises, and first mayor of Barrow from 1867 to 1872. This would not do for a town so rapidly assuming such importance, so Barrow, in the heyday of its growth, joined in daily journalism the ranks of Liverpool, Manchester, and other cities, and had a regular daily newspaper until 29 May 1875.

The direction of the local economy and the administration of a tumultuous town gave Ramsden and the leading capitalists plenty of problems. Among those which claimed priority was that arising from the juxtaposition of the newness and geographical isolation of Barrow and a booming national economy. As Francis Leach put it, "the one essential to the progress and prosperity of Barrow is that its advantages

¹ *Barrow Times*, 1 May 1871. The role played by newspapers generally in championing their towns has been indicated in my article "Sources for urban history . . . 9 Local Newspapers, in the *Local Historian*, vol. II, no. 6, May (1975), 321-326, in which some of the material in this paper has appeared. See also my "Furness Newspapers in Mid-Victorian England", *Victorian Lancashire* (ed. S. Peter Bell) (1974), 83-102.

... should be widely known and duly appreciated ...". Barrow, they knew, was impressive with its huge steel company, its shipyard, jute works, and potential as a port. But to people outside its limits it was something vague. Possibly they did not know that it existed.²

The tool made to solve this problem was by the standards of the time impressive. Many local newspapers were uncertain, hesitant ventures, launched with insufficient capital to back them, heavily reliant upon scissors and paste, and restricted in their distribution. Anyone buying the *Barrow, Furness and North Western Daily Times*, whether a visitor in Lakeside or a businessman in London would have felt that they were getting something for their money. The *Barrow Herald* was a local paper of a size comparable to prints in Whitehaven, Carlisle, Lancaster and elsewhere, the *Pilot* somewhat smaller. In numbers of stories from regional sources the *Times* was considerably superior, as the table indicates.

Number of stories in three newspapers, February 1875.

	<u>Pilot.</u>	<u>Herald.</u>	<u>Times.</u>
Date:	6 13 20 27	6 13 20 27	6 13 20 27
<i>Source:</i>			
North-west	0 1 1 0	1 6 3 1	18 20 33 27
Barrow	22 25 28 23	26 30 26 30	28 26 31 32
Ulverston	0 2 1 1	3 4 2 9	20 14 19 22
Dalton	0 0 0 0	9 0 7 0	9 3 6 0
*Furness	0 0 0 0	5 1 4 0	1 1 2 3
<i>Average:</i>	26	42	79

* Excludes Barrow, Ulverston, Dalton.

The *Barrow Times* had a comprehensive list of agents, making full use of the Furness Railway network.

² *Ibid.*, 18 February, 27 May 1871.

Barrow Times' Agency List.

Ambleside	Steamboat Pier Master.
Arnside	Railway Station Master.
Askam	Lambe.
Barrow	Railway Station Master, W. H. Smith & Son, G. Crewdson, Jeavons, Lowther Wilkinson, R. Crewdson, Sansom, Lloyd Turley, Maue, Simpson, Williams, Gillam, Fisher Bros.
Bootle	Railway Station Master.
Broughton	Railway Station Master.
Bowness	Steamboat Pier Master.
Cartmel	Brickel.
Carlisle	Arthur.
Cark	Railway Station Master.
Coniston	Railway Station Master, Bowness.
Cleator Moor	Dalziel.
Carnforth	W. H. Smith & Son.
Corkickle	Railway Station Master.
Dalton	Railway Station Master, Blake, Godby.
Drigg	Railway Station Master.
Furness Abbey	Railway Station Master.
Foxfield	Railway Station Master.
Grange	Railway Station Master, Mackereth.
Greenodd	Railway Station Master.
Haverthwaite	Railway Station Master, Brocklebank.
Ireleth	Railway Station Master, Fell.
Kendal	W. H. Smith & Son, <i>Times</i> Office, Atkinson, Pollitt.
Keighley	W. H. Smith & Son
Kents Bank	Railway Station Master.
Kirkby Ireleth	Railway Station Master.
Kirkby Stephen	Bell.
Lancaster	W. H. Smith & Son, Brail, Middlefell.
Leeds	W. H. Smith & Son.
Lakeside	Railway Station Master.
Liverpool Lime St. and Tithebarn St.	W. H. Smith & Son.
Lindal	Railway Station Master.
Millom	Railway Station Master, Fox, Sprague.
Manchester Victoria	W. H. Smith & Son.
Nethertown	Railway Station Master.
Oxenholme	W. H. Smith & Son.
Penrith	W. H. Smith & Son
Preston	W. H. Smith & Son.
Piel Pier	Steamboat Pier Master, Bateson.
Rampside	Railway Station Mistress.
Ravenglass	Railway Station Master.
Roose	Railway Station Master.
St Bees	Railway Station Master.
Sellafield	Railway Station Master.
Silecroft	Railway Station Master.
Torver	Railway Station Master.
Ulverston	W. H. Smith & Son, Stone's Executors, Jack- son, Daniels, W. Atkinson, Dodd.
Whitehaven	W. H. Smith & Son, Fiddler.
Windermere	W. H. Smith & Son.
Woodland	Railway Station Master.

Such lists of agents could be impressive, as was appreciated by the *Newcastle Journal* as early as 1739,³ and the *Barrow Times* wanted to make an impression to boost the town. An agency in, say, Carlisle, did not mean that many copies of the *Times* were sold there, but it did mean that Carlisle was among the towns in which the paper could exercise influence and that it might prove a source of advertisements. Indeed, the *Times'* advertisement columns reflected the dreams of Barrow's leading capitalists just as did the list of agents. The *Times* had one advantage: it was the only one that could be bought from Furness Railway stationmasters and thus its distribution was potentially more comprehensive than that of its competition. This advantage irritated the *Whitehaven News*, owned by the thrusting William Alsop.⁴

At the heart of the distribution network, processing the news and the advertisements, was the largest newspaper works in Barrow and one which could be compared to newspaper enterprises in larger places. A. E. Musson has shown how newspaper printing developed in the Industrial Revolution.⁵ In the late 1860's, the reel-fed rotary perfecting press was developed. Leach, in *Barrow in Furness, its Rise and Progress* (Barrow, 1872) gives an account of the printing works in Victoria Buildings, the Strand, which appears to have housed from 50 to 60 hands and fast perfecting machines "with the latest improvements" and an automatic folder.⁶ Contrast this with a traditional provincial printing works with simple machinery used by half a dozen compositors and pressmen.

³ G. A. Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper 1700-1760* (Oxford, 1962), 202.

⁴ See *Barrow Herald*, 19 September 1874.

⁵ A. E. Musson, "Newspaper Printing in the Industrial Revolution", *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. X (1958), no. 3, 411-426.

⁶ Pages 87, 88.

Of the printing and folding, Leach wrote:

"The rapidity with which this work is performed in this office may be estimated from the fact that the first edition, which goes to press at four o'clock in the morning and embraces supplies for 25 railway stations, as well as the newsagents in the various towns on the northern route, is despatched by the mail train leaving Barrow at half-past four. The second edition, which contains the latest intelligence up to five o'clock in the morning, is despatched by successive trains at six, ten minutes to seven, seven, and ten minutes to nine o'clock, to upwards of forty railway stations and a host of agents to the south of Barrow. This edition is also supplied in the town and suburbs, intelligence of special importance being published when necessary in subsequent editions."

According to one John Lawson, who as a boy was apprenticed to the *Barrow Times*, "... the work of apprentices supposed to be learning lithography was to pull a barrow to the station daily with copies of the paper to catch the early train."⁷

A knowledgeable observer of the contemporary newspaper scene, James Grant, wrote in his *The Newspaper Press* (London, 1872) that in the middle of the century small provincial papers had not had a permanent reporter; "now there is no provincial paper of any reputation or influence that has not only its sub-editor, but at least one competent reporter; while all our great provincial papers have regularly retained and well-paid reporters as an essential portion of their literary staff."⁸ In the Victoria Buildings there were rooms for the editor, manager, sub-editors, reporting staff and readers. In addition, there were staff in the Ulverston and Isle of Man branch offices, and reporters in Carlisle, Workington, Cockermouth, Whitehaven, Millom, Dalton, Lancaster, Kendal, Keswick and other towns.

⁷ "Barrow Then and Now", newspaper cutting, source unspecified, dated 1916, in Barrow in Furness Public Library.

⁸ Vol. III, 205.

The Story of the Paper.

In 1865, James Ramsden invited Joseph Richardson, who had published the North Riding's first full-sized newspaper, the *Middlesbrough Weekly News and Cleveland Advertiser*, and was then publisher and owner of the *Kendal Times*, to set up business in Barrow. "Get your plant removed to Barrow, and I will keep you fully employed," Ramsden is said to have written.⁹ Richardson, a restless, outspoken and excitable man began a machine printing works combined with bookselling and stationery in Duke Street in December. On 7 January 1866 he began the first penny weekly in North Lonsdale, the *Barrow Times*. Richardson argued that his *Times* had been from the start the representative journal of the district:

"Throughout its history, the paper has been an earnest and consistent advocate of every measure conducing to the prosperity and progress of Barrow, and has not been slow in encouraging the merits of all who have in any way aided in the advancement of the town and the promotion of the best interests of its residents."¹⁰

Richardson later said it was he who had called for the establishment of the North Lonsdale Hospital, the jute works, the shipbuilding works and the Biggar Bank recreation ground. He did contribute to the call for them but, not being a member of the leading capitalist group, he was not responsible for industrial development.¹¹

The late 1860's was not a good period in which to found a newspaper and, after experiencing some financial difficulty, Richardson sold the paper in 1870, or perhaps earlier, to Ramsden — Richardson continu-

⁹ *Farewell Address to Ratepayers*, August 1886. A leaflet in Barrow Public Library.

¹⁰ *Barrow Times*, 29 April 1871.

¹¹ J. D. Marshall, "Earliest Barrow Newspapers", typewritten manuscript, 4.

ing to publish it.¹² Commenting on these events later, Richardson said that "Mr James Ramsden no doubt thought that the *Times* would be better taken out of my hands and, with the aid of Francis Leach, he accomplished his object . . .".¹³ Ramsden may have been exasperated by Richardson's self-opinionated claims or he may have felt that for the ideas he had in mind the more amenable Leach was a better lieutenant. The *Times* was last published by Richardson on 29 April 1871.

Francis Leach became the nominal owner of the *Barrow, Furness and North Western Daily Times* and his imprint as proprietor (including "B.A.") first appeared on 1 May 1871. Little is known of Leach. He helped Richardson with *Furness Past and Present*, wrote *Barrow in Furness, its Rise and Progress*, and published *Echoes of the Sea and other Poems*. It would appear that he was simply the hireling of Ramsden, of whom he was effusive in his praise. Certainly other journalists so regarded him.¹⁴

Ramsden had a different idea from Richardson as to what was meant by the word "representative". The change to a daily reflects the former's energy and drive, his desire that Barrow should not fail to be recognised as the great commercial centre of the district. In 1873 a limited company was formed "with an influential proprietary".¹⁵ This was the Barrow Printing & Publishing Company and was registered on 18 January with a capital of £10,000 in shares of £20 each. The first subscribers were:¹⁶

¹² Richardson says that Ramsden bought the *Barrow Times* after it had been in his family for three years and four months. Autobiographical MSS., p. 5, in Barrow Public Library. Elsewhere it is stated that Ramsden bought it in 1870. See J.G.S., *Joseph Richardson* (Barrow in Furness, no date), 14. Joseph Richardson, *Barrow in Furness, its History, Development, Commerce, Industries and Institutions* (Barrow in Furness, 1881), 49.

¹³ *Farewell Address*.

¹⁴ See *Vulcan*, 6 September 1873; 23 January and 30 January 1875; *Barrow Pilot*, 2 August 1873.

¹⁵ *Barrow Times*, 14 April 1873.

¹⁶ *Printers Register*, 6 March 1873, p. 521. See also *Barrow Pilot*, 1 February 1873.

Sir James Ramsden	50
H. W. Schneider	50
Alex. Brogden, M.P.	50
J. T. Smith	25
John Fell	13
Wm. Currey	13
F. C. Stileman	13

Ramsden, Schneider, Brogden, Fell and Smith were members of Barrow's leading capitalist group, and Fell was the head of a leading gentry family in Ulverston. Currey was a London solicitor, the Duke of Devonshire's legal agent, and had shares in the Hindpool Steel Works and the Flax and Jute Company. Stileman was a London civil engineer who, in 1868, became the Furness Railway (F.R.) Engineer-in-Chief. The company had five directors, including Ramsden, Schneider, Fell and Smith. On 24 March 1873, the *Times* was for the first time printed and published by Leach for the company. The formation of the company increased the financial resources of the paper. This was necessary, claimed Leach, because the paper was to be permanently enlarged to cope with the demands upon its space resulting from the town's growth.

Local journalists saw the new company as a threat. On 19 April, George Carruthers in the *Pilot* criticised the leading capitalist group. Barrovians had, he wrote, been told again and again that they had done the most to make Barrow prosperous. However, some traders thought that the group was selfish enough to act against the town's interest. These traders could exercise influence only through the press. Part of the latter had been controlled

"and the special organ which was to totally extinguish popular feeling and gag the public, having partially failed in the object of its establishment, we are informed will become the sole property (without disguise) of the leaders of the town, so that they may have an advocate, solely dependent, for the purpose of gilding the pills the trading community of Barrow will be compelled to swallow."

Those capitalists had always wanted to take a leading role in everything; not only did they plan to be proprietors, editors and managers of a "public" newspaper, "but they will not refuse to compete with other tradesmen in carrying on the general letter-press printing of the town". This was, perhaps, what most irritated Carruthers.

On 14 April 1873, Ramsden's paper's name was abbreviated to the *Barrow Daily Times*, among other changes. There seems to have been some attempt at rationalisation by the clear division of editorial and managerial functions. On 1 April 1874, and subsequently, it was announced that whereas literary communications were to go to Leach, business communications were to be sent to the manager, Charles J. Roberts. The latter became the printer and publisher for the company, his imprint as such appearing until 29 May 1875.

The Execution of the Policy.

"More happened, economically and industrially speaking, in the short period 1870-3 than in any other comparable period in the history of Furness," says J. D. Marshall.¹⁷ Haematite output rose and the Hindpool Works was very successful. More iron and steel and more people meant more profits for the railway. The directors built up the docks, established steamer links with Canada and the East, and attempted to broaden the industrial base of Barrow. The "most important local venture" was the shipbuilding company. The arrangements relating to this and the shipowning plans "had the effect of a powerful propaganda offensive" by which "the Barrow group was able to announce its intentions to the world".¹⁸

¹⁷ J. D. Marshall, *Furness and the Industrial Revolution* (Barrow in Furness, 1958), 336.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 339, 344.

This was the context in which the *Barrow, Furness and North Western Daily Times* operated. Ramsden's paper, which can be visualised spread out in the boardroom at St George's Square or mulled over at Abbots Wood, both reflected and contributed to the strategy of the F.R. directorate in charge of Barrow's fortunes. Other papers, and in other communities too, said and did similar things, but in the case of the *Times* the exercise in public relations was systematic and "official". The newspaper spread falsehoods, trumpeted achievements and strengths whilst giving a low profile or perhaps no profile at all, to those things which put Barrow in a disadvantageous light, answered criticisms made by newspapers elsewhere, and printed favourable impressions of the town others had expressed.

When, in 1871, the wire rolling works, a railway inspired company, was opened, Leach exhibited that confidence so distinctive of Victorian towns. Once an enterprise was regarded as practicable, "nothing is wanted which energy and capital can accomplish". Twelve months had not passed, Leach added, since the publication of a remarkable programme, yet some new works were in operation and others were nearly ready.¹⁹ Barrow was officially declared a port in June 1872. Leach, with Liverpool in mind, believed that this would "attract increased trade, and eventually . . . establish Barrow . . . as the port through which the rapidly extending trade of the northern and western counties must find an outlet . . . in consequence of its convenience of access, superior accommodation, and possession of facilities unequalled by those of any port throughout the district".²⁰ Accommodation was extensive, for in 1873 a customs inspector said that "the Bonded Vault is at least ten times as large as

¹⁹ *Barrow Times*, 20 September 1871.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11 June 1872.

necessary".²¹ The *Times*' emphasis on accommodation was against a background in which, "out of thirteen main English ports, Barrow had the smallest tonnage and trade in both 1873 and 1883".²² Leach described the prosperity of the iron trade as "remarkable", and like the *Middlesbrough Gazette* and *Middlesbrough Exchange*, discounted doubts about the continuance of demand. He felt that it was likely that soon the iron and steelworks would be rivalled by the shipyards, the most important project during these years.²³ Leach was satisfied with 1872, after which "there was no great change in the number and variety of Barrow industries".²⁴

Early in 1873 the Buccleuch Dock was opened, increasing by thirty-three acres the dock water area. Leach explained that this must further develop the flourishing timber trade which, next to iron, was likely to become a chief element in the port's trade. During these years of concern with shipbuilding and ship-owning, the newspaper of the F.R. group concentrated on Liverpool; later it would be Middlesbrough. The new dock, said Leach, was not only equal to any Liverpool timber dock, but it had all the latest machinery.²⁵ It is a measure of the confidence of Barrow's leading capitalists that they compared their port with Liverpool, "pre-eminently the seaport of the Victorian age".²⁶ The *Times* reacted purposefully to criticism expressed in Liverpool about the suitability of Barrow as a port, and the steel company co-operated with the paper in an effort to show that their town was capable of handling steamships. This exercise illustrates the close relationship between Barrow enterprises, a

²¹ Marshall, *op. cit.*, 381.

²² *Ibid.*, 381.

²³ *Barrow Times*, 10 July 1872; *Middlesbrough Gazette*, 24 September, 5 October; *Middlesbrough Exchange*, 26 December 1872.

²⁴ *Barrow Times*, 24 December 1872. Marshall, *op. cit.*, 347.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 February 1873.

²⁶ Sir Charles Petrie, *The Victorians* (London, 1960), 71.

relationship attracting adverse comment.²⁷ Ramsden was determined to get a steamship line and ultimately regular services to Canada started in 1872. Parallel with Ramsden's unsuccessful efforts to purchase a Liverpool line in 1871, his newspaper countered the *Liverpool Mercury's* contempt.²⁸ Subsequently, Leach expressed confidence that Barrow would get a steamship line, a confidence that Ramsden meanwhile was expressing to the Duke of Devonshire.²⁹

Barrow's first iron ocean-going steamship was launched in June 1873, and Ramsden and his colleagues, reported Leach, were "sanguine" enough to see Barrow as a great entrepôt for the North and Midlands, or, at least, the nucleus of an extensive trade, by implication a second Liverpool.³⁰ Such ambitious hopes were reminiscent of those of Joseph Pease and his partners setting out to develop Middlesbrough as a rival to Sunderland and Newcastle, who "talked eloquently of taking the lead of both Tyne and Wear".³¹ To counter comment in Ulverston that the town was over-reaching itself, Leach again drew attention to the stability of the iron trade. The town's advantages meant it could survive any commercial disturbance:

"But the unlimited resources, unrelaxing energies and spirited enterprise of its leading men will ensure its exemption from the disasters consequent upon a reaction in trade . . . the basis upon which the town is now built is both broad and solid. . . ."³²

The town had considerable advantages, but it was definitely not the case that the basis upon which it was built was broad. There was too great a dependence upon the enterprises of the leading capitalists.³³

²⁷ *Barrow Times*, 30 November 1871; 15 February, 18 March, 11 June 1872; 15 February 1873; *Barrow Herald*, 22 March 1873.

²⁸ *Liverpool Mercury*, 15 December 1871.

²⁹ Marshall, *op. cit.*, 345.

³⁰ *Barrow Times*, 26 June 1873.

³¹ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, 1964, reprint), 249.

³² *Barrow Times*, 26 June 1874.

³³ Marshall, *op. cit.*, 347.

Among the plans of the F.R. directorate was the attraction of independent capital to Barrow. This was a time when more adroit ways of investing money were being sought nationally. "With the coming of the railway, especially from 1840 onward, the relationship between City and country began to alter . . . the City reached out into the country looking for profitable investments," writes S. G. Checkland.³⁴ The Furness developers had to take advantage of this. The *Barrow Times* gave prominence to the existence of good labour relations, as did the *Exchange* in Middlesbrough.

Barrow's advantages would lead to rapid and widespread investment wrote Leach, on 27 March 1872, "if we are able to maintain . . . the enviable reputation of being free from those fluctuations of the labour market which would have so material and prejudicial a tendency in driving capitalists away. . . ."³⁵ The *Times* was attempting to disguise much labour trouble. "Barrow was perhaps the fiftieth town in Britain in respect of population, and was yet *eighteenth* (with 29 strikes) in a list of fifty-five towns which experienced 10 to 85 strikes in the 1870's."³⁶

Leach's leading articles were supported by other articles and reports, often very long, describing the mineral resources of the area and the varied industrial activities. On 25 May 1872, four pages were devoted to the unveiling of Ramsden's statue, including a brief history of the town of over 7,000 words, and on 29 July 1871, nearly 2,000 words were used to describe the "perfect" new steam corn mill, a report which conjured up Barrow as the centre of a complex network involving Northern Ireland, Southern Scotland, and Yorkshire. Letters praising or defending Barrow and

³⁴ S. G. Checkland, *The Rise of Industrial Society in England, 1815-1885* (London, 1964), 203.

³⁵ *Barrow Times*, 1 November, 30 December 1871; 23 and 27 March 1872; 29 January 1873; *Middlesbrough Exchange*, 28 December 1871; 11 July, 18 September, 26 December 1872.

³⁶ Marshall, *op. cit.*, 360 n.

reports and articles of a scientific nature about the iron and coal industries were often published. From time to time, Leach published extracts from other publications in praise of Barrow. Across the Atlantic the *New York Globe* published a eulogy on the town, asking finally: "Why may we not have many iron cities like the English Barrow in Furness?"³⁷ All the extracts were couched in what Asa Briggs has called "lyrical language", just as that language was used in the leading articles.³⁸

The table below refers to words frequently appearing in leading articles which had Barrow as a topic, the number of articles in which the words appeared being in brackets. The articles were written in arbitrarily chosen three-month periods: January, February, March 1872 (*Times*); July, August, September 1871 (*Herald*); and June, July, August 1871 (*Vulcan*). The figures for the *Times*, and the others, show clearly the pride and confidence, the exuberance, exercising the minds of the local journalists who wrote the articles. An emphasis on their town's size was one of a number of similarities between the press of Barrow and of Middlesbrough.³⁹

Key words in three Barrow papers.

	Progress.	Rapid.	Unique.	Increasing.
<i>Times</i>	12(11)	12(7)	18(8)	28(8)
<i>Herald</i>	8(2)	11(9)	8(3)	37(6)
<i>Vulcan</i>	9(3)	—	13(2)	—

N.B. "rapid" includes rapidly, rapidity;
 "unique" includes unequalled, remarkable;
 and "increasing" includes enormous, extensive.

In addition to fresh capital, the leading capitalists wanted skilled labour of which there was a shortage in the North; "and the Furness ironfield had long

³⁷ *Barrow Times*, 5 August 1871.

³⁸ Briggs, *op. cit.*, 250.

³⁹ *Middlesbrough Exchange*, 28 December 1871; 26 December 1872; *Middlesbrough Gazette*, 24 September, 26 October, 11 November 1872.

passed the stage when it could rely on the neighbouring countryside and counties for its supplies of workers'.⁴⁰ As a recruiter of labour, Leach's paper published railway and steamship timetables accompanied by a large map of the district, appealed to employers to try to meet their own demands, discussed suggestions that the unemployed in the South should be moved northwards, and argued that adequate housing should be built to keep the best artisans.⁴¹

Leach published a Manxman's letter answering rumours in the Isle of Man — where a special edition of the *Times* was published — of low wages, excessive rents, and high living costs, and criticised Manxmen for not coming to Barrow, "where wages are so good, and work so abundant".⁴² Such strictures may have contributed to the arrival, reported by the *Barrow Pilot* eight days later, of Manx miners, nearly all of whom were said to have got jobs in the district.⁴³ Writing of the late 1860's, Marshall says Barrow prices were higher than Ulverston's. "The differences in the cost of living within so small an area of England go far to explain why Barrow rapidly developed a reputation as a place of unrest and strife"; in 1872, prices "of nearly all commodities" rose sharply.⁴⁴ In the same month that the Manx letter writer was saying that good cottages could be obtained cheaply, the *Barrow Herald* declared that "good cottages, we are sorry to say, are the exception not the general rule, at the present time".⁴⁵

Leach argued that Barrow offered other advantages to Manxmen: their women could find work in the jute mill. Two advantages had encouraged the establishment of the mill in 1870: the stimulation of additional trade

⁴⁰ Marshall, *op. cit.*, 354.

⁴¹ *Barrow Times*, 19 December 1871; 12 February, 4 March 1872.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 12 July 1872.

⁴³ *Barrow Pilot*, 20 July 1872.

⁴⁴ Marshall, *op. cit.*, 312, 359.

⁴⁵ *Barrow Herald*, 20 July 1872; *Barrow Times*, 12 July 1872.

and the use, at lower rates than men, of the as yet unemployed women.⁴⁶ Ramsden felt particularly that the works would cause "heads of families of the working classes to make this town their home".⁴⁷ Leach's efforts to recruit jute workers continued over a period, and the works seem to have had some difficulty in getting women and children. Leach's campaign went through three distinct phases: description of the good things about the work; removal of misunderstandings about the difficulties; and, finally, criticism of the potential employees for staying at home.⁴⁸ Perhaps the conditions in the mill were not so good and the women were sensible. Leach's efforts included giving publicity to the ancillary benefits of being a worker in Barrow, cheap dining-rooms and excursions.

Between industrial town and neighbouring small town or village there was a chasm.⁴⁹ The *Barrow Times* wanted Barrow to be given the regard it felt the town's pre-eminent position merited. Ulverston was most closely involved here, and indeed one of her leading men, John Fell, was a close associate of Ramsden in both industry and publishing. Early in 1871, Leach welcomed the establishment of the Barrow and North-West Pure Linseed Oil-Cake Company. Leach felt that this company, which was railway inspired, would more closely integrate Barrow with its agricultural environment. He felt its establishment indicated that Barrow was being recognised by its rural neighbours as the great commercial centre, and, in fact, such recognition was forthcoming from the Ulverston press.⁵⁰ However, Leach accepted that intimacy was lacking, and occasionally this caused exchanges

⁴⁶ Marshall, *op. cit.*, 338.

⁴⁷ R. Casson, "Sir James Ramsden", in *North Lonsdale Magazine*, vol. 2 (1897), no. 5, 100.

⁴⁸ *Barrow Times*, 28 October, 4 November 1871; 6 April 1872.

⁴⁹ Asa Briggs, *Victorian People* (Harmondsworth, Pelican reprint, 1970), 13.

⁵⁰ *Barrow Times*, 11 January 1871; *Ulverston Advertiser*, 2 March 1871; *Ulverston Mirror*, 8 March 1873.

between the press of both towns. One such occasion is interesting because it illustrates the polarisation of views at a time when Ulverston seemed to be on the threshold of great things. Early in 1872, Ramsden planned to take a single line from Barrow via the South Furness coast through Bardsea to join the main line at Treadlea Point.⁵¹ The *Mirror*, whose publisher, Kitchin, had long dreamed of the industrialisation of his native town, felt that this plan threatened Ulverston's prospects at the very time when plans were afoot there. The anti-Ramsden standpoint was that if an ironworks was ever established in Ulverston then the harbour would be required, but if the Treadlea line was built the effect would be to close permanently the canal because it would be cut off from the sea by an embankment.⁵² In answer to an alleged accusation by the *Barrow Times* that it was twisting the proposal into a grievance, the *Mirror* declared that to those who believed Barrow should be successful there was nothing wrong with the plan: Barrow would not be sad if Ulverston were swept away. The *Mirror* believed that Ulverston might still have a future, and that although Barrow might laugh, Ulverston must take care that her chances were not spoiled.⁵³ Leach's opinion was:

"Every intelligent resident in this locality must come to the conclusion that the interests of our neighbouring towns are identical, and that we shall mutually benefit by sinking all petty jealousies. . . ."⁵⁴

It has been written of Joseph Cowen of the *Newcastle Chronicle* and Edward Baines of the *Leeds Mercury*, two defenders of urban virtues:

"These men did not argue on the defensive. They persistently carried the attack into the countryside, comparing contemptu-

⁵¹ *Barrow Times*, 17 February 1872.

⁵² *Ulverston Mirror*, 10 February 1872.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 24 February 1872.

⁵⁴ *Barrow Times*, 17 February 1872.

ously the passive with the active, the idlers with the workers, the landlords with the businessmen, the voluntary initiative of the city with the 'torpor' and 'monotony' of the village, and urban freedom with rustic 'feudalism'."⁵⁵

Leach behaved similarly. Ulverston hiring fair had to stop, for if Furness was to rival South Lancashire, "it must modify certain of its old usages and abolish certain of its old customs to suit its anticipated change of status and condition".⁵⁶ Grange was "disgracefully laggard". It had the chance of becoming a fashionable spa and it, and other somnolent places, must be up and doing.⁵⁷ If the *Ulverston Mirror* feared that Barrow might eventually swallow its neighbours, Leach thought that his town's progress was encouraging others to adapt "themselves to the progressive character of the times". He believed that if all that was offered from Morecambe Bay to Silloth was used, "the day is not far distant when it will take a prominent position among the manufacturing districts of England".⁵⁸ Cockermouth's plans to build blast furnaces won support; Maryport's leaders were rebuked for being unbusinesslike; and Leach looked with favour upon the extension of dock accommodation at Whitehaven and the opening of new industries at Keswick and Appleby.⁵⁹ Ramsden and Leach saw these places as the economic hinterland of their rapidly growing town, and their paper, as a daily carrying more area news than any other Barrow one, circulated in them.

Postscript and Evaluation.

Historians must handle the word "depression" cautiously. However, the years after 1873, during which period editors wrote of depression, were trouble-

⁵⁵ *Victorian Cities*, 65.

⁵⁶ *Barrow Times*, 2 June 1871.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 January 1872.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 24 May 1871.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 January, 6 January 1872.

some, with lower prices and profits, unemployment, wage reductions, and longer hours. It was

"... a period of anti-climax; not only because of Ramsden's (and Barrow's) failure to eclipse Dundee and Glasgow as well as Sheffield and Liverpool — or, more accurately, to make Barrow into a combination of all these — but because even those industries truly basic in the local economy began to show signs of strain, and because the population growth of the district fell away seriously."⁶⁰

Behind the ambitious leading articles of the daily, losses were made. In 1873, the hostile *Vulcan* referred to the Barrow Printing and Publishing Company as "the unfortunate fraternity" and said: "We fear many schemes will have to be tried before our daily 'behind-the-times' can get the wind to its back".⁶¹ On 22 May 1875, Leach admitted that the paper had made a loss, "which it would be in vain to attempt to disguise".

"Not that we regret the labour and money which have been expended; convinced as we are that public service has thereby been rendered. But now that some of the original purposes which we had in view have been accomplished, it is fitting that commercial considerations should be allowed to have due weight."

At this point, further changes were made because of the paper's difficult financial position. The name was again abbreviated, to the *Barrow Times*, and the paper became a weekly. Roberts left the company and in July brought out his own short-lived paper, the *Barrow Daily News*. "Tommy Dodd", probably George Carruthers playing one of those character roles so beloved of Victorian editors, commented: "People seemed to take the stoppage of the Daily with considerable equanimity. You could see them going to breakfast much as usual, and quite as cheerful as every [*sic*] they did."⁶²

⁶⁰ Marshall, *op. cit.*, 393.

⁶¹ *Vulcan*, 6 September 1873.

⁶² *Barrow Pilot*, 5 June 1875.

Precisely when Leach ceased to edit the *Times* is not known: it may have been sometime in 1875, perhaps coincident with the changes in that year. In its later years, the *Times* became a bi-weekly, and it was as such that it was taken over after January 1885, by S. S. Lord, of the recently established *Barrow News*, with which it was incorporated. Lord had been on the staff of the *Daily Times* and had subsequently edited the *Herald*.

Journalistically, then as in other respects, the later seventies were a period of anti-climax. The manager of the Barrow Printing & Publishing Company in those years was Thomas Bailey Bourne, and his job seems to have been a trying one. The year 1878, for example, was a difficult one economically and perhaps the outstanding feature of such company correspondence as survives for that year is the non-payment of accounts by the newspaper.⁶³ One creditor applied for settlement for the fifth time. Other creditors became very annoyed. A Salford firm had asked for payment of its account which was "very much overdue" but, when the money was sent (£3. 8s. 6d.), it was four shillings short. The firm's head sent a further note underlining the fact that he could not give any discount and pointing out that the account was very old and had been applied for both personally and by letter. Criticism was not confined to the non-payment of accounts. A Barrow firm accused Bourne's company of supplying inferior material and of over-charging. Individual experience indicated that the management was not as efficient as it might have been. In the newspaper's last years it was claimed that it was the largest and most popular family newspaper in Furness, Westmorland, Cumberland, and the Isle of Man and that it had the widest circulation in the district. However, it is perhaps significant that a letter survives

⁶³ *Barrow Times* Letter File in Barrow Public Library.

from the Cartmel bookseller, printer, and stationer, William Brickel, who wrote in 1882: "There are a large quantity of unsold copies of the *Barrow Times* at Cartmel . . ." ⁶⁴

In narrowly defined commercial terms, the *Barrow, Furness and North Western Daily Times* was not a success. Its ultimate failure symbolised the failure of James Ramsden's dream. However, confining attention to the hectic years, for the paper's role as publicist continued in the difficult later 1870's even if in more restricted fashion, how successful was Ramsden's experiment in terms of the wider goal? This is a very difficult question to answer. There were limits to the influence a newspaper could reasonably be expected to have, as contemporaries were aware. Moreover, the knowledge any individual might have had of Barrow could have been derived from the impressions of visitors, from talk among working men or businessmen, or from the fortunes of the Hindpool Works ascertained from sources other than a newspaper. But some pointers — they are no more than that — can be made about the particular effect of the daily.

As Donald Read has emphasised, "range of circulation needs to be borne in mind when assessing newspaper influence". ⁶⁵ The *Times* was on sale throughout the North-west and also in London. Both Liverpool and London were targets for the local capitalists' propaganda offensive. Chronology is also important.

During the autumn of 1871, Barrow had many new works in the planning or erecting stage and its capitalists were seeking to buy a Liverpool shipping line. During the last three months of 1871, Barrow was mentioned in thirteen issues of the *Liverpool Mercury*, the paper

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 April 1882.

⁶⁵ Donald Read, *Press and People* (London, 1961), 202.

contemptuous of the town as a port, and information which had been extracted from the *Barrow Times* was published by the Liverpool paper on four occasions.⁶⁶ Even if the knowledge generated was not always flattering, the town was being talked about. During this period, there was no mention of Barrow in the *Daily Courier*, but during the same three months a year later, reference to Barrow was made in fourteen issues. The *Daily Courier* began, apparently in November 1872, to publish on Mondays in its commercial page an account of trade at Barrow. Reading these accounts is like reading the *Barrow Times*. The writer repeatedly mentioned the labour question there. He said "the best of understanding exists between masters and men", that though the labour question elsewhere was likely to interfere with trade, masters and men in Barrow understood each other so well that there was no need to fear anything.

The "capture" of significant *national* organs, too, was important. Just a few months after the start of the daily, the *Iron and Coal Trades Review* stated: "In Barrow we have an instance of what may be done in the development of trade and manufactures when spirit and enterprise are brought to bear; and wonderful as has been the progress in the Middlesbrough district, we have no hesitation in asserting that had the same spirit been shown in Cleveland as there has been in Barrow, the position of Middlesbrough would have been far superior to what it is at the present time."⁶⁷ The *Printers' Register*, less than a year after the daily appeared, had an article about the *Barrow Times* in which it was said that "the rise and progress of the borough of Barrow in Furness has been perhaps more remarkably rapid than that of any other town in the

⁶⁶ *Liverpool Mercury*, published information from the *Barrow Times* on 17 October (twice), 6, 13 and 21 November.

⁶⁷ *Barrow Times*, 11 August 1871.

United Kingdom".⁶⁸ An article on Ramsden in the *Mining World* was alleged by *Vulcan*, Joseph Richardson's satirical local print, to have actually originated from the *Barrow Times*' office.⁶⁹ Griffiths, who thought the *Times* a "well-conducted newspaper", and who had visited Barrow in 1854 and 1872, said in his *Guide to the Iron Trade of Great Britain* in 1873: "It would be impossible to express the surprise and admiration felt on the last visit, at the truly marvellous progress made."⁷⁰ It seems reasonable to believe that his acquaintance with the daily helped to form his opinion.

The Situations Wanted prove indicative, when it is remembered just how young was the town. People from many places used the *Times* to seek jobs; people from Ambleside, Blackpool, Bridgeton (Glasgow), Carlisle, Castleford, Cleveland, Cockermouth, Crewe, Kirbymoorside (North Yorkshire), Liverpool, London, Manchester, Oxford and Sheffield. William Alsop offers yet another indication. Alsop, of the *Whitehaven News*, it may be recalled, was annoyed at the fact that F.R. stationmasters only sold the *Times*. He bitterly attacked the *Times* as being full of inaccuracies and poorly managed. His paper confessed surprise at this since the *Times* was owned by some of the leading shareholders in the F.R. Company and magistrates of Barrow, "where everything is said to be perfection . . .".⁷¹

Barrow's increasing visibility was reflected by the *Kendal Times*. The local and district news columns of 1872 contrast sharply with those of 1870, the year before the daily was born. In a sample of 20 issues during the first five months of 1870 there were only three stories of Barrow interest. In no case was the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 April 1872.

⁶⁹ *Vulcan*, 20 December 1873.

⁷⁰ W. K. V. Gale (ed.), *Griffiths Guide to the Iron Trade of Great Britain* (Newton Abbot, 1967), 41.

⁷¹ See *Barrow Herald*, 19 September 1874.

source Barrow. During the same period in 1872 there were four times as many stories of Barrow interest, and this greater interest was paralleled elsewhere in the editorial columns. The Barrow daily was the given source of information on two occasions, and at other times in the year, too. True, the readers would have got a good impression of a rough and dangerous town, but more positive points were made respecting Barrow's trade.

Asa Briggs' verdict, expressed in *Victorian Cities*, is that Ramsden's town "left a less vivid impression on contemporaries" than its rival Middlesbrough.⁷² That that verdict is not entirely acceptable is due partly at least to the activities of Ramsden's daily.

⁷² Page 247.