

## **The Significance of Stephen Soulby, Inventor and Newspaper Proprietor**

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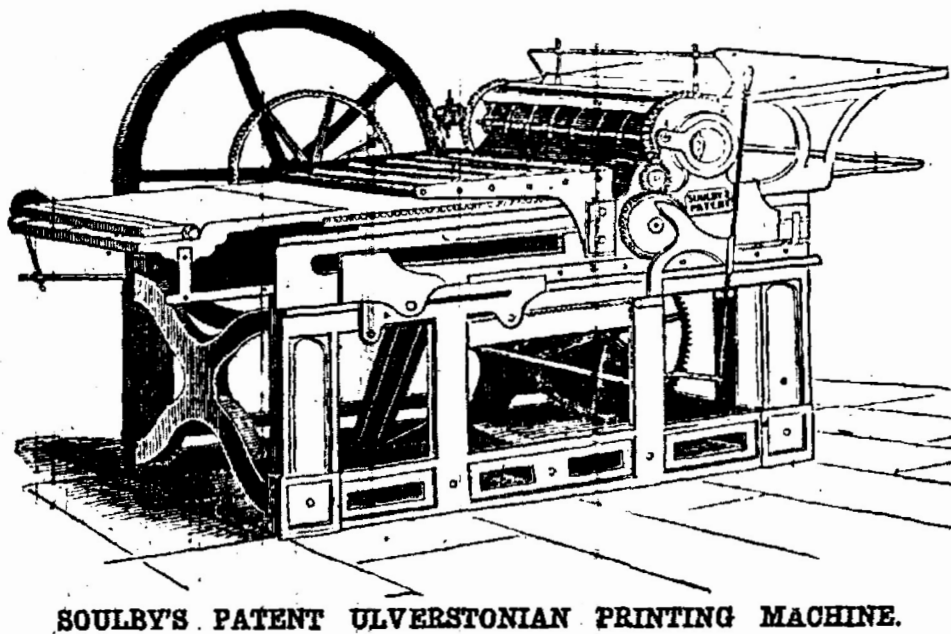
IN 1848, printer and bookseller Stephen Soulby (1809-1864) founded the first successful Furness newspaper in his native North Lancashire country town: the eponymous *Soulby's Ulverston Advertiser* survived until 1914. He also deserves to be remembered as the inventor of the '*Ulverstonian*' letterpress printing machine (Figure 1). His bent was mechanical rather than literary; he 'thought', as J. S. Bigg, who was twice his editor, put it, 'in cogs and wheels'. The son of one of his town's early printers, he knew his craft thoroughly, and was conversant with its history. To emulate other inventors and make his mark 'in the printing world' was his ambition.<sup>1</sup> This paper examines Soulby's significance, first as an inventor, and then as a newspaper proprietor. Unusually in histories of the English newspaper press, it links the two by enquiring into the relationship between his mechanical inventiveness and the character of his newspaper during a 12-year period when, save for six months in 1853, it had no rival in the town. His older contemporary Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), historian and sage, described their times as 'the Mechanical Age . . . in every outward and inward sense of that word'; it was not just a case of machinery being ever more omnipresent, but of the way it was influencing 'our modes of thought and feeling'.<sup>2</sup> It is fruitful to see Soulby as an interesting specimen of this development. In so doing, this article has a particular bearing on the concept of editorial 'neutrality' at a time – today – when a great proportion of the news media are abandoning it.<sup>3</sup>

### **The travelling cylinder**

Print engineering throughout the 19th century fizzed with inventions, adjustments and modifications. So speedy was the advance of the newspaper press that there were always problems being solved, refinements being made in engineering works and in printing shops.<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, impressions were made using two flat surfaces. This was the platen press. The use of a cylinder and a flat 'bed' was a big step forward, but there continued to be difficulties, to do with weight, and the clarity of the impression achieved.

Soulby's name may not rank alongside the greatest names in the history of the printing press in this country. He was not a joiner, cabinet and machine maker like David Payne, nor an engineer like the *Times*' duo Augustus Applegath and Edward Cowper. It seems Soulby 'never studied mechanics as a science at all'.<sup>5</sup> But, if we follow historians of science in seeing it now 'as an open-ended set of practices',<sup>6</sup> we can acknowledge that he did have a good grip on the underlying principles. He devised a machine 'to make comparatively light cylinders pass over the printing table, instead of making the heavy table and types go over and under the cylinders'.<sup>7</sup> Soulby explained this to curious non-mechanical minds by saying it was more effective to 'take the basket to the cart, than the cart to the basket'.<sup>8</sup> Bigg observed that, 'To get at a principle which

everybody else has missed is no light matter, but to get at a sound principle which economises time and labour, belongs only to that inventive spirit which Mr. Soulby possessed in an extraordinary degree'.<sup>9</sup> However, Bigg was exaggerating somewhat, probably without realizing it. The American printing press historian James Moran has observed that this 'travelling cylinder principle had been visualized as far back as the 17th century', and that Edwin Norris, of Walworth, had invented a machine on this basis which was made by Carr and Smith, of Belper, Derbyshire.<sup>10</sup> Soulby, who patented his invention in 1852,<sup>11</sup> may or may not have known of Norris's work. Moran does not say. It is worth noting that unrelated inventions of similar things do occur, and may be expected to do so. In any case, not only was the '*Belper*', as it was called, more limited than Soulby's machine, but the '*Ulverstonian*' proved a far greater stimulant to the improvement of printing.



Like many individuals living in out-of-the-way places, Soulby's ambitions were seriously hindered because he did not have the back-up of a locally based and flexible machine-making industry: 'two separate ironworks . . . failed to make the machine for him'.<sup>12</sup> Fortunately, J. M. Powell, who established the *Printers' Register*, enabled him to make contact with William Dawson, of Otley, a machine-maker of growing reputation. Dawson visited Ulverston in August, 1854. How what he had to say must have raised a frustrated Soulby's hopes! Dawson's firm built the '*Ulverstonian*', finishing it in January of the following year.<sup>13</sup>

An advertisement published by Soulby in 1857 is interesting for three reasons. It shows us what his machine looked like; it identifies its selling points; and, most importantly, it gives us an idea as to what buyers thought after they had been using it for a while.

The features were these:

1. The forme [a quantity of type kept tight in a metal frame or chase] and [heavy metal] table remain stationary, the impression cylinder passing over and, printing by lever pressure, taking with it the sheet . . . ;
2. The impression cylinder, to which the ink rollers are attached, can be altered to travel the required distance for a long or short forme, . . . ;
3. The impression cylinder and the composition rollers are easily adjusted to the requirements of the forme . . . ;
4. It produces perfect register, . . . ; [i.e. it prints on both sides of a sheet with exact correspondence. If it did not, material would be hard to read]
5. The 'making ready' for different sized formes is effected with greater facility than at a platen press.
6. The sheets, after having been laid by the 'grippers' on the impression cylinder are brought out to the receiving board 'printed side up'.<sup>14</sup>

The first feature meant that an individual had time to feed sheets in and remove them. The second meant different kinds of jobs could be tackled, including posters, cards, and newspapers, and the whole made life easier for the artisans. Indeed, the machine's ease and facility were what Soulby required.

#### **'All that we can desire'**

The *'Ulverstonian'* was not cheap. Indeed, compared with, say, the *'Main'* machine sold in the 1850s by Harrild & Son, an important firm providing printers with equipment,<sup>15</sup> it seems to have been quite expensive. The smallest machine, the No. 1, which would print a forme 24 ins. by 18 ins. was £90; the largest, a No. 4, printing a forme 51½ by 36, was 256 guineas. The latter was the 'largest News size Machine'; it had a double feeder and printed between 2,000 and 2,500 copies an hour. From Whitehaven to Bristol, from Liverpool and Chester to Halifax, Leeds, Birmingham, and Wolverhampton, apparently well-satisfied customers were prepared to sing the machine's praises.

Scepticism is a natural reaction to the claims of advertisements as evidence of a product's quality, particularly so in Victorian England. However, unlike the archetypical 'Puffery' of, say, Thomas Carlyle's hatter in London's Strand, Soulby's advertisement for the *'Ulverstonian'* did have genuine merit: in Carlyle's terms, it really was about the improvement of a product, and not exclusively concerned with persuasion.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it was substantially based on expert users' evaluations, some of which included critical remarks. Whether editing his correspondence may have caused Soulby to omit other and perhaps more seriously unfavourable opinions, it is not possible to say. Certainly, it is worth noting that buyers quoted were named, and in many cases the name of their office or their address was given, so they could be contacted quite easily by interested parties. Indeed, there is internal evidence of some interaction between them when it came to making a purchase. It is clear they were far from gullible, that they were, like Arnold Bennett's hard-headed Darius Clayhanger, anxious to get value for their money and prepared to put themselves out for the purpose, and were also part of a

communicating network of printers.<sup>17</sup> Soulby was not a quack selling cure-all pills! Moreover, we also have testimony independent of his advertisement.

Messrs. R. Gibson and Son, writing from the *Cumberland Pacquet* office, Whitehaven, bought the '*Ulverstonian*' 'for job work only'. They wrote to Soulby saying, 'The only kind of printing in which the Machine has not come up to our expectations is in posters'; it was 'somewhat slow compared with the capabilities of the Machine in other work'. They had tried it out with both hand and steam power. Unexpectedly (for them) the machine 'excel(led) . . . in rule work and light jobs'. They added, 'For heavier jobs it is also all that we can desire'. It was in their *Cumberland Pacquet* office that a Liverpool printer, James Lonney, of 16 South John Street, first examined the '*Ulverstonian*'. He 'saw at once that it was superior to anything that I had ever seen introduced to the trade for jobbing purposes'. He went to London to see if there was anything better, 'to some of the largest jobbing and book houses': he 'saw nothing' either 'similar or superior in construction'. He had now been using the machine, which 'exceeds the anticipations I had formed of its merits'. C. Kemplay, at the *Intelligencer* office, Leeds, had, like Soulby, 'long thought' the basic principle 'desirable'. He suggested an improvement – 'a scale or index' to show exactly where 'the connecting parts . . . must be shifted' for different sizes of sheets – but he had 'a very high opinion' of the machine. Indeed, it was Kemplay's evaluation of the '*Ulverstonian*' that persuaded the experienced and well-known Wolverhampton printer, Joseph Bridgen, to buy Soulby's No. 1 machine; it was 'going on admirably', he wrote. He could 'recommend it with the greatest confidence to the trade'.

John Buckingham, of Gloucester, bought one to print 'common work, such as Tea and Tobacco Papers, Bags, &c., but after a little practice, we find it capable of doing fine work, and producing perfect register when required with much less trouble than by points, as at the hand press'. He thought that, 'For working Bills containing large letter, I do not consider it so well adapted, as the Ink requires to be thinned too much to allow the grippers to lift the sheet from the forme. To work properly, therefore, a person is required to take them off, instead of their being delivered in the usual way, but even after allowing for this, they are printed much faster than at the press'. James Upton, of the *Baskerville* offices, Birmingham, had some kind of altercation with Soulby – 'some little unpleasantness', the former called it. Clearly, after it had been set up there, the '*Ulverstonian*' was presenting a challenge. However, Upton came to put the blame on himself and his men 'not fully understanding the Machine'. He went on: 'It has been tested with almost every description of work in the jobbing line, and also a newspaper, and now with our present experience I can safely say that there are very few jobs which we could not work at it both well and quickly. . . . when I require another Machine you will certainly have my order'.

'Ours was obtained to print a Newspaper', Messrs. H. Smith and Co., of the *Observer* office, Chester, informed Soulby, 'but we find it equally well adapted for the finest and smallest jobs'. Charles Simms and Co., after producing their *Railway Guide* for five months using the '*Ulverstonian*', said it 'thoroughly realizes the expectations we had formed of it at the time of purchasing'. Six months' 'constant use' of a double-demy machine led Thomas Bean, at the *Albion* office, Liverpool, to conclude, 'we consider it

to be one of the best Machines for general jobbing purposes we have seen; and we have no hesitation in saying that its use saves time and gives a finish to work only attainable by the most careful and skilful pressmen with the best description of hand-presses'. Other satisfied customers included Alex. Ireland and Co., *Examiner* and *Times* Office, Manchester, and Frederick Dunsford, of South Castle Street, Liverpool.

By the end of 1857 it could also be seen working at the offices of named printers in London, Manchester, Preston, Cheltenham, Newcastle-under-Lyne, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Glasgow, and 'shortly' thereafter, it was anticipated, in offices at Carlisle, Darlington, and Goxwell, Lincolnshire.

There was separate testimony. In 1858 in their own advertisement in the *Ulverston Advertiser*, Dobson and Son, booksellers, stationers, and account book manufacturers, at the *Chronicle* office, Preston, reckoned their '*Ulverstonian*' was capable of a quality and speed 'altogether unattainable at the ordinary press'.<sup>18</sup> We might note the words of a man who was hostile to Soulby. The proprietors of the *Ulverston Mirror*, founded in 1860, printed it on an '*Ulverstonian*': it 'works admirably', said the paper's editor and manager.<sup>19</sup> The *Mirror*'s '*Ulverstonian*' is said to have been bought by S.S. Lord, the Furness newspaper proprietor of the late Victorian period. Eventually, it seems to have ended up in Leeds.<sup>20</sup> In 1863 James Waddington chose an '*Ulverstonian*' to establish Barrow-in-Furness's first paper, the *Barrow Herald*. In 1889 Robert Casson, a contemporary of Soulby, understood the latter's machine was still being 'used in many large establishments'.<sup>21</sup>

Printers' observations are telling evidence of the '*Ulverstonian*'s worth. However, sadly for Soulby, his window of entrepreneurial opportunity proved very narrow. Ironically, his saviours proved to be the curtailers of his ambition, his link with them ending in 1859. It 'would probably have continued longer', says Moran, but for David Payne, one of Dawson's workmen, later a partner and then a competitor.<sup>22</sup> Payne had made some modifications to Soulby's 'travelling cylinder machine', for which the latter thanked him with an inscribed presentation copy of Thomas Beck's *History and Antiquities of the Abbey of Furness*.<sup>23</sup> But Payne disliked the principle. He saw a more effective way forward, initially effecting 'a compromise by making the cylinder and type-bed each travel half-way'.<sup>24</sup> Three years after the building of the first '*Ulverstonian*', and when the latter had sold less than 60 machines, 'the first "*Wharfedale*" type machine was constructed, and [then] known only as "Our own kind"'.<sup>25</sup> It worked on the 'stop-cylinder principle'. '... the cylinder rotates in unison with the type bed on the printing stroke and remains stationary when the bed returns on the non-printing stroke. The impression or printing stroke takes place when the type bed is travelling from the feed board end to the ink end'.<sup>26</sup> By 1871 it was said that more than 600 Dawson '*Wharfedales*', of varying sizes, were being used in this country, to say nothing of those making their way abroad, and others whose makers took advantage of 'the absence of any registered patent for the original developments'.<sup>27</sup> Thousands were to be sold: it proved 'a model'.<sup>28</sup> The process of making the '*Ulverstonian*' had helped give birth to the '*Wharfedale*': Soulby's role was rather like that of the midwife.

### The inventor as newspaper proprietor

A description by a printer of his '*Ulverstonian*'s engineering has special resonance: 'It is almost noiseless in its motions and causes no vibration'. This would have delighted him, for it chimed so well with his approach to the responsibility of newspaper proprietorship.

Soulby was a prominent figure in his native town. Far more so than that of the fictional Clayhanger, his business in King Street comprised 'a channel through which the life of the town had somehow to pass'.<sup>29</sup> He handled the multiplicity of items characterizing the expansive new paper world in which the mid-Victorians found themselves living: posters, hand-bills, book-work, catalogues, railway and other blank forms, circulars, cards, invoice heads, book headings, note headings, cheque books, tradesmen's lists of articles, tea and tobacco wrappers, '&c. &c.'. <sup>30</sup> To his newspaper came news of births, marriages, and deaths, reports of meetings, accidents, lectures, and correspondence. People left curiosities in his front office for others to see. Ungossipy and generous, an apparently decent master, and, according to a former employee, drily funny, Soulby took pride in his inventions. Once, he demonstrated to an interested lady his speaking trumpet connecting his front and printing offices. She spoke into it, and was roughly answered by a workman who thought an apprentice was messing him about.<sup>31</sup> We are left to imagine her reaction.

Soulby's greatest machine was the *Advertiser*. He founded it on what we now know was the cusp of change between the economically and socially difficult 1840s and the more harmonious relations of the 1850s. It was a financial risk he took on alone, so naturally he proceeded cautiously. His 'principal object' in creating it was 'utility' (which equated to the publishing of as many letters and as much local news as possible). Like a machine, its way of working was to be 'strict neutrality'.<sup>32</sup> There is a curious resonance here with '“disinterestedness”, [which] was perhaps the most highly prized public virtue within elite political circles'; it was the period of the 'relatively neutral state'.<sup>33</sup> Amidst the stresses of social and political transformation, an Arnoldian 'steadying idea' was needed.<sup>34</sup> This was Soulby's version. His target audience included the gentry, farmers, tradesmen, hoteliers and innkeepers, although he wanted to serve the community at large, including honest artisans and domestic servants seeking jobs. No mention of a utilitarian target of happiness and pleasure, just the practical printer's genuine belief that people would benefit from the avoidance of 'bitter controversy' and 'animosity',<sup>35</sup> and, naturally, from advertisements, placed and read. This meant, at a time when his small and remote country town was having to come to terms with the prospect of being improved, opened up, and quickened, he denied himself the power his journal offered him truly to take an interventionist stance and shape opinion. It is clear he had no wish, on his lesser stage, to emulate provincial middle-class reformers such as the *Manchester Guardian*'s John Edward Taylor and Jeremiah Garnett or the *Manchester Times*'s Archibald Prentice.<sup>36</sup>

However, the *Advertiser*'s strict neutrality did not prevent Soulby from being, it was said, 'identified with every scheme which had for its object the improvement of Ulverston, or the advancement of the interests of its inhabitants'.<sup>37</sup> Bigg's judgement here was later echoed by another contemporary, who was also well-versed in the town's

affairs.<sup>38</sup> It is easily illustrated. In its local news reporting, the *Advertiser* consistently encouraged the literary, philharmonic and horticultural societies, noting the way these organizations tried to work across class lines.<sup>39</sup> It applauded the ‘manly’ and socially inclusive game of cricket, backed the merger of the town’s two clubs, gave advice to the players, supported the idea of employing a professional to match rival clubs, and asked the public to help fund the new ground.<sup>40</sup> The paper enthusiastically joined in the countrywide movement for a volunteer rifle corps, having earlier promoted the rifle club. It was pleased that not having to bring one’s ‘own rifle’ opened it up to ‘all classes’. All men, it believed, should ‘learn the use of fire-arms’ because it nurtured loyalty and prepared them to fight for their country.<sup>41</sup> The *Advertiser* praised the ‘real practical Christianity’ of the Dorcas Institute’s regular clothing bazaars, work it felt must not be ended even if the ‘undeserving’ and ‘worthless’ took advantage of the ladies’ charity.<sup>42</sup> It endorsed the importance of art education when reporting the sending of equipment and materials from the Department of Practical Art, Marlborough House, London, to the proprietary school,<sup>43</sup> and wholeheartedly approved the vicar’s work, which all classes could support, to establish securely his special project, the infants’ school.<sup>44</sup> It agreed with dealers that fortnightly cattle fairs in Ulverston should replace the traditional two.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, in the arts, Soulby’s paper previewed with high hopes, and reviewed generously, entertainments in the Theatre Royal and the Victoria Concert Hall. Here, too, was an arena providing an opportunity for the whole community to come together; on one occasion, indeed, spectacularly so: ‘The performance may be said to have been under the patronage of the whole of our town’.<sup>46</sup> In its feature articles, the newspaper sought systematically and comprehensively to educate farmers, and gave them much advice to digest.<sup>47</sup> In its correspondence columns, it published letters urging better housing for the working classes,<sup>48</sup> seeking open sittings in the parish church to make things more comfortable for ‘the working population’,<sup>49</sup> and (more commonly) demanding the surveyors clean and upgrade the town’s roads.<sup>50</sup>

The *Advertiser* supported the Sir John Barrow project for the Hoad, not only because it honoured the town’s greatest son, but because it believed the monument would make Ulverston attractive to ‘the Lake Tourists’ and ‘create for the locality a tone which it has never yet possessed’.<sup>51</sup> In its earlier years certainly, leading articles from time to time challenged the ratepayers to act to solve the town’s very poor sanitary condition. For example, it supported the idea of a parish board with a permanent surveyor of the highways (although the initial suggestion seems to have come from a correspondent),<sup>52</sup> backed the idea of a water company (although was not prepared to select one of two alternative schemes to support),<sup>53</sup> and wanted less ‘capricious construction’ of houses and more attention to their sewerage.<sup>54</sup> It offered a supplement, free to subscribers, on the report of a Board of Health inspector’s inquiry into the state of Ulverston.<sup>55</sup> It made and repeated an admonition that the ratepayers should rouse themselves and avoid the imposition of the Public Health Act of 1848, which would be expensive,<sup>56</sup> and it supported a correspondent’s idea of a commercial association so that ratepayers could influence the public authorities.<sup>57</sup>

However, the *Advertiser* did not offer its readers regular weekly editorials on one or more of the range of problems facing Ulverston and district. In the mid and late 1850s there were long intervals when there was no local leading article, indeed, no leader at

all, merely a summary of national and international news. This was a significant loss of opportunity. How appropriate, therefore, that on one occasion, as early as July 1853, a correspondent actually urged the editor to write 'a leader'. By this time, Soulby was probably beginning a period of reliance on an offcomer, J. A. Bernard, a man he seems to have (sensibly) trusted less than his native-born first editor.<sup>58</sup> The correspondent urged support for the notion of improved cottages for the working classes. The writer even offered 'some hints and suggestions': 'Come, Mr. Editor, agitate! Agitate!'<sup>59</sup> Soulby knew there had to be changes. In 1849, a Bigg leader had declared, 'a man . . . must battle with the world'.<sup>60</sup> However, agitation could be dangerous. Soulby was wary of things going out of gear, becoming disordered.<sup>61</sup> True, comment might mingle with news: for example, the paper might make, in perhaps a single sentence, a suggestion at the end of a report, or indicate its own position. However, it cannot be claimed that this was a consciously crafted strategy to put over a coherent viewpoint because it was neither consistent nor uniform.<sup>62</sup>

Other significant characteristics marked the *Advertiser*. Following one fatal road accident, in 1854, the paper made an impassioned attack on the 'eternal grumbling' of 'apathetic' ratepayers who failed to attend public meetings. It defended the gas company and the lamp inspectors and blamed the ratepayers 'for the disgraceful state in which the town has been kept, both as regards its thoroughfares, and its sanitary condition'.<sup>63</sup> To a jury recommendation for more extended lighting of lamps, the paper added a picture of rescuers struggling in the dark with candles, concluding, 'Further comment on this disgraceful state of our public thoroughfares is needless'. However, this powerful stance was in response to no less than eight (unpublished) letters – a clear sign of local anger – and furthermore, it appeared under the rubric, 'To Correspondents', not under its own banner. In other words, it was not perceived by the proprietor or editor to be a leading article. It is not the only example of a statement of some significance made to particular correspondents rather than all its readers.

The practice of neutrality made the paper from the start vulnerable to charges of indifference, a lack of 'firmness and boldness', even 'cringing servility'.<sup>64</sup> In 1854 it took no sides in a serious dispute over a shop extension which interfered with the public highway and in which public and private rights clashed.<sup>65</sup> In 1855 it made no observation in its report of the failure of a motion at a vestry meeting to elect a highways board, although a report about a dispute over surveyors' accounts in 1852 had included judicious advice that the town should have one.<sup>66</sup> Note, too, that the *Advertiser* took a hands-off approach to the Board of Guardians, for long usually recording simply that a meeting had taken place and providing some basic statistics on inmates and out-relief, while occasionally including items such as nuisance cases being brought to court. Unsurprisingly, questions about the Guardians, including their relationship with the press, asked by a ratepayer in 1856 were answered, not by the paper, but by another correspondent – and this a month later.<sup>67</sup> An entrenched belief among some at least that negative attitudes hindered Ulverston certainly demanded, but did not get, authoritative discussion as to causes and remedies.<sup>68</sup>

Neutrality meant no public figures could be built up by the *Advertiser* as Ulverston's much-needed leaders,<sup>69</sup> lack of whom became a source of regret. Socially tricky issues



were neglected as leading-article material, and this meant a pushing away rather than an encouragement of public debate. Regularly reported accidents to workers, cases of drunkenness, and assaults on the police did not seem to prompt journalistic analysis. Victims' carelessness, or failure to follow rules, were often said to be the cause of the first, although the *Advertiser*, in reporting two such accidents, did express regret, cursorily, 'that there is no sick fund', and this where 'so many men' were 'daily and hourly' vulnerable.<sup>70</sup> It would be a doctor in the next decade who would (successfully) push for a hospital. In 1854 it was left to a magistrate to draw attention to the frequency of assaults on the police.<sup>71</sup> Attention to the frequency of cases of drunkenness was presumably seen as a matter for temperance advocates and their meetings: Soulby, himself, certainly did not want even more regulation of the licensing trade.<sup>72</sup>

No editorial comment was forthcoming even when a correspondent observed that following the 'dismembering' of the Athenaeum (the literary society of the late 1840s and earlier 1850s), and the 'lingering natural dissolution' of the mutual improvement society, the lack of a literary institution 'of any kind' was 'a disgrace',<sup>73</sup> This despite the facts that contemporaries regarded 'the lecture' as 'now almost a necessity of modern civilization',<sup>74</sup> and that at this very time a lecture series was under way as a deliberate if uncertain preparation for 'the establishment of a literary and scientific Institution'.<sup>75</sup> Analysis would have been too sensitive. In late 1858 a series of thoughtful letters on public health, ending with a brief contribution from the registrar saying he would be reporting 'the present visitation of small pox in this town, of which, there has since May last, been 19 fatal cases', still did not prompt editorial observation.<sup>76</sup> Ironically, the paper received 'a formidable bundle of letters' (not published) about a proposal by a writer that the day of the annual holiday be changed to Monday because New Year's Day fell on a Saturday. On this, although again confined to the 'To Correspondents' item, the paper did comment.<sup>77</sup> Above the registrar's letter, it also responded to a correspondent critical of original poetry the paper published.

It is hard not to conclude, therefore, that, more especially during the mid- and late 1850s when he kept his second editor under tight control, Soulby demonstrated no real understanding of, or simply rejected, any responsibility on the part of his newspaper to try to guide his readers in understanding how to deal with the requirements of the new society that was emerging. The 'neutral' *Advertiser* presented itself, and was seen, as, essentially, a conduit for advertisements, news, and opinions.<sup>78</sup> His King Street office was Ulverston's centre for 'local intelligence', but it did not offer the town that 'pervading consciousness' a contemporary believed was required for thorough reflection on society.<sup>79</sup> Soulby's proprietorial impulse was rather mechanical: we are back to cogs and wheels. To use Mill's criticism of Jeremy Bentham, Soulby could not see that a 'more important principle . . . supersedes' his pragmatic goals. He thus showed 'what Carlyle called "the completeness of limited men" to which all men were frighteningly liable'.<sup>80</sup>

Nevertheless, Stephen Soulby was a serious agent of change. Even if he was a reluctant solvent of traditional attitudes and social structures, his doctrine of neutrality weakened the *status quo*. This was because the very existence of his newspaper led, just as did the process of building the '*Ulverstonian*' in the development of print engineering,

to a raising of the bar for what was desired. It strengthened the demand for a journal operating according to different principles. How that panned out is told elsewhere.<sup>81</sup>

## Acknowledgement

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## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> 'The Late Mr. Soulby', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 15 September 1864. The writer was J. S. Bigg. Soulby's father, John, married the widow of the first printer in the 1790s. F. Barnes, *Barrow and District. An Illustrated History* (Barrow-in-Furness, 1951), 118.
- <sup>2</sup> T. Carlyle, 'The Mechanical Age', in C. Harvie, G. Martin and A. Scharf, *Industrialisation and Culture 1830-1914* (London and Basingstoke, 1970), 21 and 24; from *Signs of the Times* (1829).
- <sup>3</sup> R. Sambrook, 'Holding on to Objectivity', The Poliak Lecture, Columbia University, 27 October 2004; [www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/speeches/stories/sambrook\\_poliak.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/speeches/stories/sambrook_poliak.shtml).
- <sup>4</sup> G. A. Isaacs, *The Story of the Newspaper Printing Press* (London, 1931), 23.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ulverston Advertiser*, 15 September 1864.
- <sup>6</sup> I. R. Morus, 'The Sciences', in C. Williams (ed.), *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain*, (Malden, MA, Oxford, and Melbourne, 2004), 457-470, 458.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ulverston Advertiser*, 15 September 1864.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> J. Moran, *Printing Presses. History and Development from the Fifteenth Century to Modern Times* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1973), 124.
- <sup>11</sup> *London Gazette*, 15 October 1852, 2688; [www.gazettes-online.co.uk](http://www.gazettes-online.co.uk).
- <sup>12</sup> Moran (1973), *op. cit.*, 135, 136. Soulby may also have been hindered by the death much earlier of a Tom Quilliams. Bigg refers to a widespread assumption that Quilliams was, as the editor put it, Mephistopheles to Soulby's Faust. Bigg wanted to put the record straight. Quilliams had made real 'some of his [Soulby's] earlier inventions', including a machine for setting up type, 'however the ideas themselves were those of Mr. Soulby'. The latter had got the idea for the "'Ulverstonian'" after Quilliams had died. 'The Late Mr. Soulby', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 15 September 1864.
- <sup>13</sup> P. Wood, *Otley & the Wharfedale Printing Machine* (Otley, 1985); Moran (1973), *op. cit.*, 135.
- <sup>14</sup> Unless otherwise cited, details about his invention, and reactions to it among purchasers, are taken from 'Soulby's 'Ulverstonian' Printing Machine', an advertising feature, in *Ulverston Advertiser*, 17 December 1857.
- <sup>15</sup> 'Prices' for the Main 'ranged from £70, for a fast jobbing machine, to £220 for one of newspaper size'. Harrild & Son 'in 1860 were claiming that nearly 400 were at work in different parts of Britain'. Moran (1973), *op. cit.*, 134, 135.
- <sup>16</sup> Carlyle is quoted by N. J. Hall, in the introduction to his edition of A. Trollope's novel mocking advertising, *The Struggles of Brown, Jones, and Robinson* (Oxford, 1992), which began appearing in serial form in 1861 in the *Cornhill Magazine*. Carlyle denounced 'Puffery'. See Hall, *op. cit.*, vii and x.
- <sup>17</sup> See also A. J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1855-1914* (London, 1976), 84.
- <sup>18</sup> Dobson and Son's assessment was contained in an advertisement for steam printing they had placed in the *Ulverston Advertiser*, 7 January 1858.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ulverston Mirror*, 14 April 1860. The *Mirror* editor was Joseph Alexis Bernard.
- <sup>20</sup> W. White, *Furness Facts and Figures* (Ulverston, 1930), 81, 82.
- <sup>21</sup> R. Casson, *A Few Furness Worthies* (Ulverston, 1889), 65.
- <sup>22</sup> Moran (1973), *op. cit.*, 136, 137; Wood (1985) *op. cit.*, 6.
- <sup>23</sup> Wood (1985), *op. cit.*, 5.
- <sup>24</sup> Wood (1985), *op. cit.*, 5.
- <sup>25</sup> 'Early Wharfedale Preserved at Otley', *Vickers News*, 1968, Otley Museum. 'There seems little doubt',

- says the writer, 'that it was during this project that Payne's fertile brain conceived the stop-cylinder principle', which he calls 'the real breakthrough'. [www.otley.co.uk/Museum/PrintingPress.htm](http://www.otley.co.uk/Museum/PrintingPress.htm). See also, Moran (1973), *op. cit.*, 136.
- <sup>26</sup> Wood (1985), *op. cit.*, 5, 'quoting the *Wharfedale Instruction Book* of a century later'.
- <sup>27</sup> Wood (1985), *op. cit.*, 5.
- <sup>28</sup> Moran (1973), *op. cit.*, 137, 138; Wood (1985), *op. cit.*, 8ff.
- <sup>29</sup> These words of A. Bennett, describing Darius Clayhanger's premises in *Clayhanger* (Harmondsworth, 1975), Ch. 12, 'Machinery', 103, seem beautifully appropriate for Soulby's.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ulverston Advertiser*, 17 December 1857.
- <sup>31</sup> Geordie, 'Knew Iverything', in 'Alde Oostan Yarns', *Furness Year Book* (1905), 102. Geordie was James Roper Robinson, a former apprentice compositor with Soulby, and later editor of the paper. Robinson says Soulby 'hed a lot ov dry humer in him', and illustrated this. See 'He Gat 'Em O In', *Furness Year Book* (1906), 106.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ulverston Advertiser*, 6 January 1853.
- <sup>33</sup> P. Harling, 'The State', in C. Williams (ed.), (2004) *op. cit.*, 113.
- <sup>34</sup> P. Davis, *The Victorians*, The Oxford Literary History, 8, 1830-1880 (Oxford, 2002), 38.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ulverston Advertiser*, 6 January 1853.
- <sup>36</sup> See D. Read, *Press and People, 1790-1850. Opinion in Three English Cities* (1961).
- <sup>37</sup> 'The Late Mr. Soulby', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 15 September 1864.
- <sup>38</sup> R. Casson, *A Few Furness Worthies* (Ulverston, 1889), 65.
- <sup>39</sup> The Athenaeum, especially. See e.g. *Ulverston Advertiser*, 4 January, 24 and 31 May 1849, 23 May, 13, 20, and 27 June 1850. For the philharmonic society, see e.g. 7 February, 30 May 1850; 17 and 24 July 1851; and 28 July 1853. For the horticultural society, see e.g. 1 July 1852.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ulverston Advertiser*, 31 July, 1851; 5 August 1852; 21 May 1857; 4 August 1853; 18 November 1852.
- <sup>41</sup> See e.g. 'The Ulverston Rifle Club', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 4 January 1853; 1 March 1855, and 'To Correspondents', 24 November 1859.
- <sup>42</sup> 'The Dorcas Society', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 4 January 1855.
- <sup>43</sup> 'Church Walk Proprietary School', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 15 September 1853.
- <sup>44</sup> See e.g. 'Infant Day and Town Bank Sunday School', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 4 August 1853.
- <sup>45</sup> 'Ulverston Fair', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 9 April; 'Broughton and Dalton Fairs', 30 April 1857.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ulverston Advertiser*, 12 December 1850.
- <sup>47</sup> On 18 April, 1850, a feature called 'Agricultural Memoranda' was introduced. The paper was always alert to what was likely to interest farmers.
- <sup>48</sup> An Inhabitant, untitled, *Ulverston Advertiser*, 14 July; A.B.C., untitled, 28 July, both 1853.
- <sup>49</sup> F.L.T., 'Church Accommodation in Ulverston', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 15 September 1853.
- <sup>50</sup> See e.g. B.D.B., 'Improvement of Ulverston', 24 May 1849; H. K., untitled, 17 July 1851; anon., untitled, 1 February, 1855; A Ratepayer of Ulverston, 'The Streets and Footpaths of Ulverston', 14 May 1857; A Pedestrian, untitled, 9 April 1857.
- <sup>51</sup> 'The New Year', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 3 January 1850.
- <sup>52</sup> For example, 'Permanent Surveyor for the Highways in Ulverston', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 22 February 1849.
- <sup>53</sup> 'Supply of Water for Ulverston in Connection with the Improvement of its Sewerage', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 4 December 1851; and 'The Ulverston Waterworks Bill, the *Lancaster Guardian and Ourselves*', 22 April 1852; also 30 October, 6 and 13 November 1851.
- <sup>54</sup> 'Improvement of Ulverston', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 16 September 1852.
- <sup>55</sup> See 'Sanitary State of Ulverston', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 30 June 1853.
- <sup>56</sup> For example, 'Removal of Nuisances and Prevention of Disease', 'Improvement of Ulverston', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 23 August 1849 and 16 September 1852.
- <sup>57</sup> 'Public Authorities and Management of Our Town', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 18 November 1852.
- <sup>58</sup> See P. Lucas, 'J. A. Bernard's Challenge: Journalists on Journalism in a Victorian Country Town', *CW3*, vii, 193-213. Bernard's history prior to his arrival in Ulverston was something of a mystery to his fellow townsfolk. He had been involved in various businesses in the south-east, latterly as a chemist and druggist in Canterbury. I am indebted to Mr W. G. Wiseman for drawing my attention to an entry on Bernard in the *London Gazette*, 4 June 1833, 1102.
- <sup>59</sup> A.B.C., untitled, *Ulverston Advertiser*, 28 July 1853.
- <sup>60</sup> 'Tendencies of the Times', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 8 February 1849.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ulverston Advertiser*, 10 August 1848.

- <sup>62</sup> See A. Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power, and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996), 175 and 178.
- <sup>63</sup> 'To Correspondents', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 24 August 1854.
- <sup>64</sup> See 'The Lancaster Gazette and Ourselves', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 31 October 1850.
- <sup>65</sup> 'Vestry Meeting' and 'The Adjourned Meeting', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 7 December 1854.
- <sup>66</sup> 'Vestry Meeting', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 29 March 1855; 'Surveyors of Highways', 1 April 1852.
- <sup>67</sup> A Ratepayer, 'Board of Guardians', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 17 April; One Rated to the Poor at Upwards of £20, 'The Board of Guardians', 22 May, both 1856.
- <sup>68</sup> Pure Water, untitled, 8 January 1852; A Poor Man with a Large Family, 'Nuisances of Ulverston', 7 September 1854; X, 'Public Health', 18 November 1858; U.V.R.C., 'Rifle Corps', 22 December 1859. See also 'Vestry Meeting', 26 October 1854; 'Adjourned Vestry Meeting', 10 April 1856.
- <sup>69</sup> See Jones (1996), *op. cit.*, 154.
- <sup>70</sup> 'Accidents at the Lindal Moor Iron Ore Mines', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 8 May 1856; see also e.g., 'Serious Accident' (Lindale Cote iron ore Mines) (*sic*), 7 November 1850; 'Accident' (Penny Bridge Flax Mill), 24 July 1851; 'Accident at Ronhead Hematite Mines' (*sic*), 14 December 1854; 'Severe Accident' (Kirkby Quarries), 25 January 1855; 'Accident' (Tramway), and 'Fatal Accident on the Ulverston and Lancaster Railway', both 15 March 1855.
- <sup>71</sup> 'Magistrates' Office', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 21 September 1854. C. S. Kennedy, after case against Henry Bonsfield.
- <sup>72</sup> 'Future Closing of Public Houses on Sundays and the Licensing System', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 20 July 1854.
- <sup>73</sup> Effort, 'Lectures', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 27 October 1859.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, Effort quoting 'one of the Quarterlies'.
- <sup>75</sup> See speech by Revd F. Evans in report of 'The Soutergate Lectures', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 29 September 1859.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ulverston Advertiser*, 18 November, 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 December 1858, all headed 'Public Health'.
- <sup>77</sup> 'To Correspondents. The Annual New Year's Day', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 23 December 1858.
- <sup>78</sup> Note how a letter-writer phrases it: 'It was through the *Advertiser* that the attention of the inhabitants of Ulverston was first called to the desirableness of establishing a "Building Society", and one is now prosperously working'; A Member of the Building Society, untitled, *Ulverston Advertiser*, 24 October 1850. In like vein, A Sincere Well-Wisher to the Town said, the paper was 'only properly and legitimately labouring in its vocation when it gives insertion to them and other remarks weekly'. 'The Public Streets', *Ulverston Advertiser*, 12 June 1856.
- <sup>79</sup> See Davis (2002), *op. cit.*, 38-43. The phrase is from Dr James Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (2nd edn., 1832, E. J. Morten (ed.), (1969)), quoted by Davis, 32.
- <sup>80</sup> Davis (2002), *op. cit.*, 174.
- <sup>81</sup> Lucas, 'J. A. Bernard's Challenge', *op. cit.*, 193-213.