

SOME ASPECTS OF THE PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE *BENDIGO ADVERTISER*

IN CONTRAST TO THE GOVERNMENT SPONSORED INTRODUCTION of newspaper journalism in New South Wales and Tasmania the establishment of the Victorian press was commercial right from the start. This paper recounts the vicissitudes of the pioneering printing houses in these Australian colonies as background perspectives on the discussion of the ownership, technical production and distribution of the *Bendigo Advertiser*, Victoria's premier goldfields newspaper.

The setting up of newspapers was one of the earliest activities in the pioneering settlements. A little over 15 years after the First Fleet had landed on 26 January 1788, newspaper publishing was introduced into the Australian continent with the launching of the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* on 5 March 1803. Published largely to disseminate official proclamations, this paper was financially supported by the Government and printed by George Howe, the Government Printer, whose responsibility was so acknowledged for the first time in the imprint on 23 March 1811. The imprint information changed again to reflect Robert's Howe's inheritance after his father's death on 11 May 1821, further changing to denote his editorship and proprietorship on 3 March 1825. Planning to travel on retirement, the younger Howe, who claimed that 'The Nett Proceeds arising from the Business, upon the lowest Scale, can be stated at a Sum of not less than from £3000 to £3500 annually', tried unsuccessfully in 1827 to sell his property for £6,000 cash or £9,000 in instalments over 'two, four, and six Years, upon unquestionable Security with Interest'.¹ Finding no takers, he carried on until his death on 29 January 1829; Australia's first newspaper itself died on 20 October 1842 after several technical and proprietorial changes.

The competitors of the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* originated as commercial enterprises. Among these ventures was the *Sydney Herald*, founded in 1831 by Ward Stephens, William McGarvie and Francis Stokes and currently (1989) published by John Fairfax Ltd. The successors of the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* were also launched as business speculations — among them, the *Sydney Empire* (1850-1875), edited successively by Henry Parkes and William Wilkes, and the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, initiated by a limited liability company in 1879 and conducted at its inception by Angus Mackay.² After several ownership changes, the *Daily Telegraph* was published by the Australian Consolidated Press Ltd. from 1936 to 1972 and is published currently by News Ltd.

As in New South Wales, the newspaper press was introduced into Tasmania as an official publication. Government needs for a means of distributing official information bulletins led to the founding of two short-lived papers: the *Derwent Star and Van Diemen's Land Intelligencer* (1810) and the *Van Diemen's Land Gazette and General Advertiser* (1814), both printed by George Clark, helped on the latter by Andrew Bent. In 1816, with government support, Bent also started the *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, currently published as the *Tasmanian Government Gazette*; he subsequently owned the paper in 1824-1825.

Following the pattern of establishing newspapers in the mother colony, private enterprise superseded government initiative in the industry in Tasmania. For instance, George Terry Howe and his brother, Robert Howe, published Launceston's first newspaper, the *Tasmanian and Dalrymple Advertiser*, for a little over four months in 1825, and James Ross issued the *Hobart Town Courier* (1827-1859). Ross also

published other newspapers, including the *Tasmanian* (1825-1845). In 1852, the *Hobartton Guardian* was produced as a joint venture between John Davies and Auber George Jones. Merged with the *Hobartton Mercury* in 1854 and published as the *Mercury* since 1868, this paper was later continued by Davies, whose family now owns it. Another important private property was the *Launceston Examiner and Commercial and Agricultural Advertiser*, which was founded by James Aikenhead in 1842 and which has been published by the Rolph family since 1900.³

Unlike any of these colonies, Victoria's first newspaper, the *Melbourne Advertiser*, was started as a private business, on 1 January 1838. John Pascoe Fawcner, its owner, distributed the first nine weekly numbers in manuscript, printing subsequent issues until its suspension in April by the Government for publishing illegally. On securing a licence, Fawcner resumed his publication as the *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser* on 6 February 1839. In the interim, George Arden and Thomas Strode started the *Port Phillip Gazette* on 27 October 1838. After several technical and proprietorial changes, the *Melbourne Advertiser*, which had become the *Melbourne Daily News* in 1848, incorporated the *Port Phillip Gazette* in 1851 before being absorbed by the *Melbourne Argus* in 1852.⁴ Founded by William Kerr in 1846 as the *Melbourne Argus* and subsequently published as the *Argus* from 1848, this paper itself went through several design and ownership changes before ceasing publication in 1957. Among the other important rivals of the *Melbourne Advertiser* was the *Port Phillip Herald*, established in 1840 by George Cavenagh. This paper metamorphosed into the *Melbourne Morning Herald* in 1849; it has been issued as an evening daily since 1869 and is now published as the *Herald* by News Ltd. The *Melbourne Age*, which is also still publishing, is another illustration of a private venture. Established in 1854 by Francis and Henry Cooke, the *Age* was acquired by David Syme in 1856, remaining the Syme family property until the early 1980s, when John Fairfax Ltd. bought a controlling interest in the paper.

The country newspapers of Victoria were also set up as entrepreneurial ventures. For instance, Victoria's oldest surviving newspaper, the *Geelong Advertiser*, was founded by J.P. Fawcner in 1840, while the *Portland Guardian and Normanby General Advertiser* was established by James Swords and Thomas Wilkinson in 1842.

The goldfields newspaper proprietors were commercial venturers as well. For example the *Bendigo Advertiser*, the earliest of these papers, was launched by Robert Ross Haverfield and Arthur Moore Lloyd in 1853. In 1855, they sold the paper to Angus Mackay, Joseph James Casey and James Henderson. But the three-way partnership became a two-way partnership when Henderson relinquished his share in 1856. This business remained a two-way partnership with the retirement of Casey in 1867 and his replacement by David Stuart. Following Stuart's death in 1874 and Angus Mackay's in 1886, the latter's sons, Robert Donald, George and Angus Mackay, purchased Stuart's share, which had been held in trust since his death, and thereby turned the business into a family property until 1918. In that year, the owners of the *Bendigo Independent* acquired the *Bendigo Advertiser*, and, because of the latter paper's popularity, continued to publish under its title; the paper is now owned by *Bendigo Advertiser Newspapers Ltd.* The *Bendigo Advertiser's* first rival, the *Bendigo Times and General Advertiser*, set up by Henry William Cook and William Sherbon in 1854,

amalgamated with the former paper after only a little over four months' operation. Another competitor, the *Courier of the Mines and Bendigo Daily Mail* (1855-1857), was founded as a joint-stock enterprise that eventually became the property of Charles Featherstone Mitchell. The *Bendigo Mercury* (1858-1860), another product of cooperative partnership, was subsequently acquired by J.J. Casey, owner of the *Sandhurst Bee* (1860-1861). In 1862, Charles Mackenzie set up the *Bendigo Independent* before selling it to Thomas Wilton after five months' operation. This paper frequently changed hands during this period, going to Webb, Machin & Co. toward the end of the year. The new owners in 1863 were Hartfield, Jones & Co. Further significant changes of ownership occurred the following year with the acquisition by Reddin & Co., who sold the paper to Blackham & Co. in 1865. The imprint records John Gregory Edwards & Co.'s ownership in 1866; not long after, Edwards became sole proprietor and continued as such till 1901. Further changes of ownership led to the acquisition by the *Bendigo Independent Proprietary Ltd.*, which bought out the *Bendigo Advertiser* in 1918. Among the other products of private enterprise was the *Bendigo Evening News* (1862-1893), published by J.M. Harcourt until it was acquired in 1892 and continued until its death by Briggs & Co. There were other commercial publications, like the short-lived humorous newspaper, the *Bendigo Bulletin* (1884), initially printed in Ballarat for W. Rasleigh, among other proprietors.

Before discussing the production of the *Bendigo Advertiser*, it is pertinent to examine the initial capital laid out in establishing these newspapers. There is little precise information about newspaper finance, but clearly the money invested in launching these papers varied according to the size and sophistication of the printing press and its appurtenances, types, furniture, rent and salaries. 'In 1827 the [Sydney] *Gazette's* press and type was [sic] valued at £1,000, and the same figure was given for the *Australian* in 1850. In 1838 the [Sydney] *Colonist* office had two Columbian presses, a demy (£55) and a double demy, (£80).⁵ The wooden press on which Fawcner printed the *Melbourne Advertiser* in the same year would undoubtedly have cost only a fraction of the price of an iron press. In the following year, George Arden, then sole proprietor of the *Port Phillip Gazette*, was expending £33-£50 a week on rent, stationery and salaries.⁶ Bad debts accruing from credit facilities extended to customers by this well-equipped printer, who owned two lithographic presses, amounted to £1,500 in the same year. A little less than a year later, after ownership of the paper had passed to a group of shareholders, the *Port Phillip Gazette's* 'total assets, including £3000 for copyright [were valued at], about £1800'.⁷ However, when, in 1843, the paper was in financial difficulties and the shareholders decided to surrender it to the Port Phillip Bank 'in satisfaction of a preferable claim possessed by that company', Arden was reportedly interested in the printer B.C. Jolly's offer of £850 for the paper's plant.⁸ But toward the end of the next year, the paper was sold to Thomas M'Combie for £80; this ridiculously give-away price is perhaps due to the fact that M'Combie and Thomas Strode were joint owners of the paper and the only bidders for its plant.

Because they were born of the gold boom conditions of the 1850s, the rivals and successors of the *Melbourne Advertiser* and the *Port Phillip Gazette* cost generally more than their predecessors to set up. In 1853, for instance, Arthur Youngman and William Fuller bought the *Belfast Gazette and Portland and Warrnambool Advertiser* for £350.⁹

What kind of price was paid for the press utilized in the same year by the first printers of the *Bendigo Advertiser*, Cook and Sherbon, to print the paper in unknown. But the *Columbian* press of an uncertain size erected by Haverfield and Lloyd in 1854 would have cost £55 on the shop floor in London if it was a demy (24" x 18") manufactured by Wood and Sharwoods.¹⁰ This press, its accessories, types, etc. cost £150 to transport from Melbourne to Bendigo, and, overall, Haverfield and Lloyd's initial outlay was estimated at over £1,400.¹¹ In 1858, the *Bendigo Mercury* was started with £3,750, although the paper was sold to J.J. Casey for only £1,050 in the following year.¹² Previously, the Cooke brothers had spent £7,000 in the first three months of their operation, though they unsuccessfully attempted to sell the *Melbourne Age* for £3,000 in 1854.¹³

Let me turn to the format and production of the *Bendigo Advertiser*. The first number of this paper was a single sheet of 17 inches by 11 inches, or two pages each of eight columns. Page 1 was made up of a mixture of the prospectus and advertisements, which spilled over to page 2. But the paper was gradually enlarged and the common size ranged from about 27 inches by 18 inches, folded once to produce four pages, and upwards. Like many colonial newspapers, which were modelled on their predecessors, the *Bendigo Advertiser* imitated the format of the *Melbourne Age*, and in these standard issues advertisements occupied the entire pages 1 and 4, while the editorial, local and overseas news plus additional advertisements filled pages 2 and 3. The paper normally comprised four pages, but occasionally six or eight, in addition to supplements and weeklies.

The method of collecting news for the *Bendigo Advertiser* is typical of the news-gathering routine of a medium- or large-size provincial paper. Initially, news was gathered mainly by word of mouth, with supplementary materials culled from Melbourne papers. In 1858, before the appointment of many of the *Bendigo Advertiser's* own regular staff of reporters and correspondents, the *Bendigo Mercury* alleged that Melbourne reporters wrote the editorials of the *Bendigo Advertiser* and other papers: 'Country newspapers, which have no great amount of talent engaged upon them, and which cannot command local talent, contract with clever mercenaries in Melbourne at so much per leading article, or so much per week'. Continuing, the *Bendigo Mercury* revealed that 'the *Ballarat Star*, the *Ovens Constitution*, the *Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser*, and our notable contemporary the *Bendigo Advertiser*, are all, more or less written by hireling pens in Melbourne'.¹⁴ Also, until 1864, when a dispute broke up their news-exchange cooperation, the reporters of the *Bendigo Advertiser* and the *Bendigo Independent* shared news information.¹⁵ But, as the *Bendigo Advertiser* became well established and more and more reporters were recruited, news collecting for each day's paper began each night at around midnight with the entry of the reporters' assignments for the next day in the Duty Book by the Chief of Staff. Spread over day and night, these frequently updated instructions required the reporters to file a variety of stories on court proceedings, municipal council, societal and corporate meetings, mining and sporting activities, soirees, hospital matters and so on. From 1876, the New York correspondent, James Henry Warwick, who syndicated stories to many newspapers, furnished weekly letters under the pseudonym Broadbrim.¹⁶ These reports, and additional contributions from

newsagents, who covered events in their immediate neighbourhoods, were set by day compositors with the advertisements before the commencement of sub-editing of the 'day copy' around 6.30 p.m. Night compositors set the telegraphic and other evening news with the editorial. Decisions were made during the evening on the make-up of the paper, and sub-editing continued as typographical errors were noted and corrected. Thereafter, on a normal day, the revised proof was pulled, but sometimes this schedule was interrupted, usually by mechanical fault or by the composition of late suicide or murder news. Eventually, the pages were filled and the formes locked up and made ready for printing.

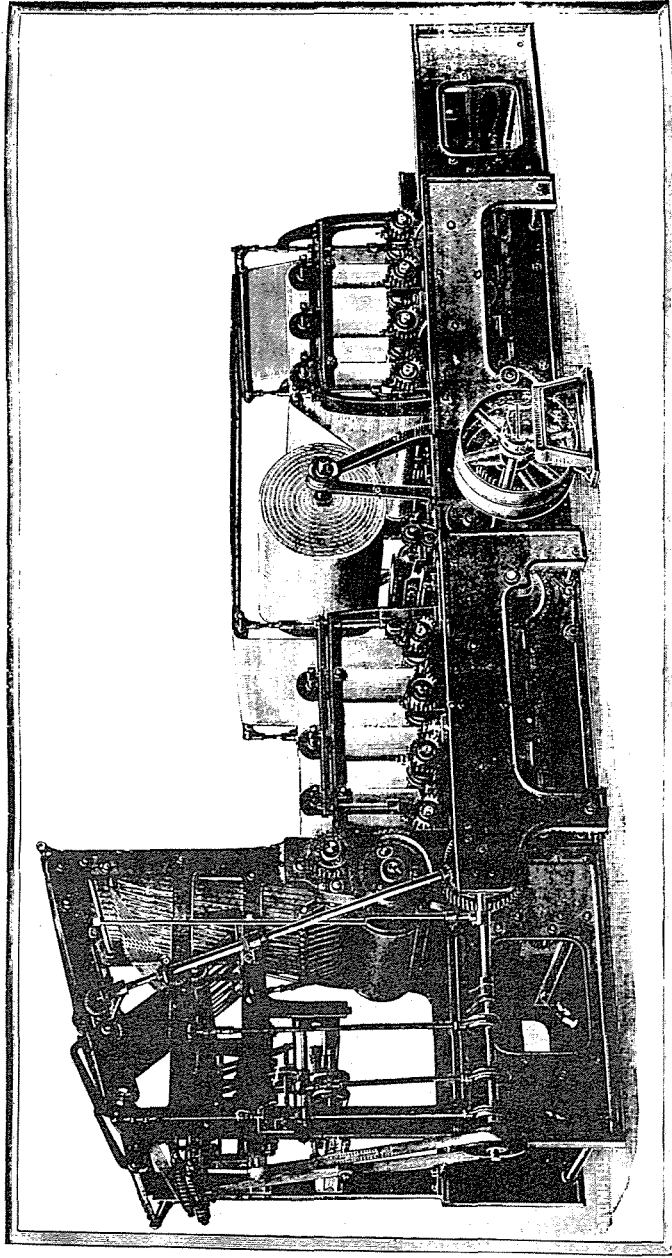
In the early days, printing was slow. Although the actual speed at which the *Bendigo Advertiser* was printed would depend on the skill of the pressman, perhaps 200 impressions an hour were possible on the *Columbian*, two impressions being needed to print the two sides of the sheet. This flow of production necessitated starting composition early in order to ensure that the paper was printed before 6 a.m. However, with the installation of a single-cylinder *Desideratum* printing machine in early 1856, the paper was printed much more swiftly, probably with steam power, at the rate of 1,000 perfected sheets per hour.¹⁷ Harnessing these facilities, the paper, which had been transformed from a bi-weekly into a tri-weekly on 16 October 1855, began publishing daily on 7 April 1856. Previously, the supplementary *Weekly Advertiser* had been launched, on 28 February 1856. Targeted principally at country subscribers, this weekly news summary of eight pages was in the format of the parent paper. On 18 April 1895, it was restyled and renamed the *Bendigonian*, the first country illustrated paper in Victoria.

The printing of the *Bendigo Advertiser* was greatly speeded up with the acquisition of more sophisticated machinery. In 1873, the paper was being printed on a new perfecting machine, a two-feeder *Wharfedale* manufactured by William Dawson & Ashfield, Otley with a capacity of 4,000 sheets per hour, and folded on a Foster's folder with a capacity of 2,000 sheets per hour.¹⁸ For greater efficiency, the steam engine was replaced by an eight-horsepower Otto gas engine ten years later. In 1893, Mackay & Co. purchased a *Lancashire*, a flat bed web perfecting machine, made to order by T. Coulthard & Sons of Preston (Figure 1). 'This machine, which is . . . the second of its kind, was completed this year [1893], and arrived in Victoria in May', being installed by Thomas Halliday of Preston.¹⁹ To print four pages of the *Bendigo Advertiser*, the inner and outer formes were imposed separately on two flat tables at opposite ends of the machine. Instead of separate sheets, a continuous web of paper, dampened to make it soft enough to take a good impression, was loaded into the centre of the machine over the formes. When the inking arrangements were completed and the machine set in motion, the paper was carried first to a set of four impression cylinders, which printed one forme. A wooden bridge then reversed the paper to another set of four impression cylinders, which printed the other forme and then took the paper through a set of cutting rollers to the folder. That way, the *Bendigo Advertiser* was printed and folded, probably at the rate of about 4,000/5,000 sheets per hour.²⁰ In 1898, mechanical typesetting technology was introduced and the *Lancashire* started to print from *Linotype* — the last in a series of innovations which considerably increased the speed

June 27, 1895.

THE BENDIGONIAN.

THE RECENTLY INVENTED 'LANCASHIRE' PRINTING MACHINE.



NOW IN USE AT THE OFFICE OF THE BENDIGO ADVERTISER AND BENDIGONIAN.

FIGURE I

and quality of technical production and greatly reduced the number of execrably printed copies.²¹

This rapid application of modern technology to the production of the *Bendigo Advertiser* helped to sustain burgeoning circulation, which led to a progressive reduction of the paper's cover price. On 1 April 1865, the price was halved to 3d, and it was further reduced to 2d on 1 July 1871. On 1 April 1882, the *Bendigo Advertiser* became a penny daily, several years after the *Bendigo Independent* had become Victoria's first penny daily, on 1 January 1862.²²

How was the *Bendigo Advertiser* distributed?

During the early days, direct cash sales were not accepted; circulation was by subscription only, delivered on a door-to-door basis by runners. But, with increased demand, the runners were allowed to sell the paper as they distributed subscription copies to homes, offices, confectioneries, restaurants and hotels. Copies could also be obtained from booksellers and at railway stations. By 1894, the *Bendigo Advertiser* was extensively circulated via a northern-Victoria-wide network of 116 agents in addition to about 13 in Bendigo itself, three in Ballarat and four in Melbourne.²³ An 1891 letter to the editor from J. Liddle of Wellington indicates that the paper was indeed posted to 'all parts of the AUSTRALIAN COLONIES and TASMANIA and NEW ZEALAND'.²⁴ Furthermore, the *Bendigo Advertiser* was sent free to various cultural organizations, especially newly established mechanics' institute libraries, as well as being widely exchanged among newspaper houses. An advertisement appearing in 1894 indicates that deliveries reached most colonial agents by post transmitted daily by coach and rail.²⁵ Nevertheless, some vendors, like Kamarooka newsagent M. Miles, received deliveries thrice weekly, and there were perennial complaints of subscriptions which never reached their intended destinations. Attempting to eliminate such bottlenecks, Mackay & Co. launched their own daily coach service in 1858 to transport parcels, subscriptions, etc. between Bendigo, Eaglehawk, Epsom and Elysian Flat.²⁶

The *Bendigo Advertiser* was also passed on to readers in various parts of the continent. In 1897, for instance, Fred Clark of Bendigo sent a supplement of the paper to his daughter in South Australia. In a letter of commendation to the editor, he enthused: 'I sent the highly appreciated copy to my daughter, a native of Bendigo, and now living in a remote corner of South Australia'.²⁷ In the same year another odd issue was reported to have been read in India.²⁸

As previously remarked, the *Bendigo Advertiser* was distributed overseas too. By 1894, Mackay & Co.'s agents, Gordon & Gotch, who regularly circulated the paper after introducing it gratuitously to Londoners in 1869, sold it at four different addresses: 30 George Street, Cornhill; Walbrook; 7 Gracechurch Street; and 3 Clement Lane, Lombard Street — all in the heart of the financial business district of London. A fifth depot, at 15 St. Bride Street, was also an important office, being located close to the centre of newspaper publishing in Fleet Street.

Among the London buyers of the *Bendigo Advertiser* was the British Museum (British Library). At the instigation of Richard Garnett, Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum and a firm believer in the documentary value of newspapers, G.F. Walter of Bendigo forwarded nearly 31 years' backfiles of the *Bendigo Advertiser* (1863-November 1894) and miscellaneous collections of the *Courier of the Mines* and

the *Bendigo Mercury* to the British Museum in 1894.²⁹ Overseas subscriptions also reached a former Bendigo resident, T.A. Rickard, in Victoria Hill, Colorado.³⁰

Thus newspapers were introduced into the older colonies as instruments of government. But individual entrepreneurs soon transformed such official organs into private concerns or set up new papers entirely on their own initiative. The printing and distribution of the *Bendigo Advertiser* demonstrate that its continuing existence is the consequence of its extensive circulation network and its willingness to adopt new technology, thus enabling it to survive while many of its competitors died.

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NOTES

1. *Sydney Gazette*, 10 February 1827, p.4 col.1. For the importance in printing history of George Howe and his paper, see, for instance, Frank S. Greenop, *History of magazine publishing in Australia* (Sydney: K.G. Murray, 1947), chapter 1; Phyllis Mander Jones, 'Australia's first newspaper', *Meanjin*, 12(1953): 35-46; R.B. Walker, *The newspaper press in New South Wales, 1803-1920* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976), chapter 1; Sandy Blair, 'George Howe and early printing in New South Wales', *Wayzgoose/The Australian Printing Historical Society Journal*, 1(1986):2-15.
2. *Bendigo Advertiser (BA)*, 4 July 1879, p.2 col.4.
3. See, for instance, *The Australian encyclopaedia*, fourth edition, 12 vols. (Sydney: Grolier Society of Australia, 1983), 7:146-149; D.H. Borchardt, 'Printing comes to Australia', in *The book in Australia: essays towards a cultural & social history*, edited by D.H. Borchardt & W. Kirsop (Melbourne: Australian Reference Publications in association with the Centre for Bibliographical and Textual Studies, Monash University, 1988), pp.1-15.
4. Lishi Kwasitsu, 'Establishing a colonial society: the *Melbourne Advertiser* and the *Port Phillip Gazette*, 1838-51', *The Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, 10:2 & 3 (1986): 46-60.
5. R.B. Walker, *The newspaper press in New South Wales, 1803-1920*, p.47.
6. *Port Phillip Gazette*, 16 October 1839, p.3 col.4.
7. *Port Phillip Patriot*, 29 August 1842, p.2 col.4; *Port Phillip Gazette*, 31 August 1842, p.2 col.1.
8. *Port Phillip Patriot*, 20 February 1843, p.2 col.2; *Port Phillip Patriot*, 3 October 1844, p.2 col.2.
9. *Argus*, 3 September 1853, p.5 col.5.
10. James Moran, 'The Columbian press', *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, 5(1969):1-23 (p.12).
11. *BA*, 22 April 1889, p.3 cols.2-3; *BA*, 12 December 1891, p.3 col.2.
12. *BA*, 9 April 1860, p.3 col.1.
13. C.E. Sayers, *David Syme: a life* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1965), pp.27-28.
14. *Bendigo Mercury*, 26 July 1858, p.2 cols.3-4.
15. *Bendigo Independent*, 2 April 1864, p.2 cols.2-3.
16. *Bendigonian*, 3 September 1896, pp.9-10.
17. *BA*, 12 February 1856, p.3 col.3.
18. *BA*, 28 October 1873, p.2 col.6.
19. *BA*, 21 August 1893, p.3 col.2. Cf. James Moran, *Printing presses: history and development from the fifteenth century to modern times* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), p.206, where Moran dates the introduction of the *Lancashire* as 1898. This date is clearly wrong in view of the testimony of the *Bendigo Advertiser*.
20. Moran, *Printing presses*, p.206. Moran also notes that the *Lancashire* could print up to 6,000 sheets per hour.
21. *Australasian Typographical Journal*, 29:341 (November 1898): 5; 29:342 (December 1898): 4.
22. The *Bendigo Independent's* cover price was raised to 3d on 13 May 1862 before being reduced to 1d on 15 September 1862. The price was raised again to 2d on 2 January 1865 and reduced again to 1d on 2 January 1882.
23. *BA*, 16 June 1894, p.7 cols.5-8; *BA*, 16 June 1894, p.8 col.8.
24. *BA*, 15 June 1887, p.3 col.7; *BA*, 2 December 1891, p.2 col.8.

25. *BA*, 23 June 1894, p.7 cols.7-8.
26. *BA*, 3 June 1858, p.3 col.6.
27. *BA*, 26 June 1897, p.3 col.7.
28. *BA*, 4 November 1897, p.4 col.7.
29. *BA*, 5 May 1894, p.8 col.4; *BA*, 23 November 1894, p.2 col.5; Personal communication, E. Dyas (British Library Information Officer), 12 May 1987.
30. *BA*, 17 November 1894, p.3 col.8.

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