

THE *BUCKS HERALD*, ITS POLITICS, SUPPORTERS AND FINANCES, 1832–1867

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This article can be read on its own, but is intended to follow an earlier article by the same author, 'The Bucks Gazette and the Grenville family 1829–32', which appeared in Records of Buckinghamshire, 37.

The early history of the Bucks Herald is described from its foundation in 1832 as a newspaper opposed to parliamentary reform. Its support for the Grenvilles and, later, for the Conservative party under Benjamin Disraeli is demonstrated, as is its rivalry with other Buckinghamshire newspapers, particularly the Bucks Gazette. It is shown that the Herald was originally subsidised by the Grenvilles and that its uncertain financial basis following the bankruptcy of the second Duke of Buckingham, despite support from various local Conservatives, led to its sale in 1866.

The Editorship of Henry Ryde

The *Bucks Herald* was first published on January 7th 1832, with seven agents throughout Bucks – one each in the market towns of Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Buckingham, Wycombe, Marlow, Newport Pagnell and Winslow. The previous year the Whig *Bucks Gazette*, the *Herald's* only competitor, had attacked Lady Verulam for hinting that the Hertfordshire Yeomanry could be used to suppress Reform by violence¹ and it is probably not a coincidence that the only agent outside Bucks was at St Albans, where Gorhambury, the Verulam family mansion, stood. The *Herald* was also 'filed' in London at five City coffee-houses; one, Barker and Co. in Fleet Street, was its London agent, taking advertisements and orders for the paper. Like the *Bucks Gazette*, the *Bucks Herald* cost 7d. The first editor and owner was Henry Thomas Ryde. Ryde may have been intended to be the temporary editor of a short-lived journal when he became editor (see below) but in the event he remained editor for over ten years. It would be interesting to know more about the life which formed this controversial personality but it has proved impossible to glean any significant information concerning Ryde.

The *Herald's* inaugural editorial made the standard pledge of fearless independence:

a distinct pledge to our readers not to swerve from the line we have laid down, either from fear or favour. Independent of party and unbiassed in action . . . Amenable to no secret body nor wedded to any bigotted [*sic*] doctrines . . . (BH 7-1-32)

The *Herald*, however, was clearly going to be an Ultra Tory journal. The editorial went on to state the opposite view to the *Bucks Gazette* on Parliamentary Reform, employing the language and constitutionally-based arguments used by the Tory *Quarterly*, and by the county grandee, the first Duke of Buckingham, head of the Grenville family, and his son, the Marquess of Chandos:

[The *Herald's*] advocacy will be for the nation at large, not calling the excited demand of the lowest and uneducated class . . . the 'Voice of the People' . . . To the Reform Bill . . . we object, . . . Its present tendency is to invert the order of society and . . . destroy its . . . firm foundation. . . . We object, moreover, to the Grey Administration because they seek to destroy the due equipoise, value, and consideration of the British Peerage. (BH 7-1-32)

Almost the only thing, during 1832, to distract

the *Herald* from Reform, was the attack described in an earlier article¹ on the London to Birmingham Railway Bill, which was going through Parliament, fiercely opposed by the Grenville family and other landed gentry in Bucks and Herts.

The inaugural editorial was the first of many in support of the Grenvilles and the Conservative Party.

A triumphant editorial on December 29th 1832 quoted the *Quarterly's* praise for the 'Chandos Clause' and referred gloatingly to the fact that 'the Whigs have been defeated nowhere so completely as in Aylesbury'. The same editorial attacked the *Bucks Gazette* and the *Times* (a Liberal paper at that time and opposed to the Grenvilles). The Grenvilles were major slaveholders in the West Indies and in 1833 the *Herald* opposed the abolition of slavery. It also echoed the 'Agriculturalist' policies of the Marquess of Chandos, in support of British agriculture and landholders. It approved of Chandos' resignation in 1842 over an amendment to the Corn Laws, which supposedly protected British farming from foreign competition, and when Peel abolished the Corn Laws altogether in 1846, in a vain attempt to relieve famine in Ireland, the *Herald* vituperated him as a turncoat. In 1848, when Chandos, by now second Duke of Buckingham, was culpably bankrupt, the *Bucks Herald* gave minimal coverage to the sale of his property, and maintained a tactful silence on the causes of his insolvency. While it did this, the Radical *Aylesbury News* reprinted from the *Times* a swingeing attack on Chandos, which accused him of bringing disgrace to the aristocracy and himself. After Chandos' disappearance from politics, following his bankruptcy, the *Herald* transferred its support to the post-1846 Conservative party rump. In 1859 the *Herald* was one of the few newspapers to support the Tory government's Reform Bill (dismissed as 'absurdly below the wants of the country' by the Liberal *Bucks Free Press* - BFP 4-3-59). In matters of religion also, it spoke for the Anglican Church, overwhelmingly the Church of the Tory Party at that time, disapproving of attempts to abolish Church Rates, and largely ignoring an attack on the Anglican Bishop of Oxford by other papers in 1859.²

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A contemporary reader would have suspected that the close agreement of the *Bucks Herald* with the views of the Conservative Party was not accidental and might have snorted at the phrase 'due . . . consideration of the British Peerage' in its inaugural editorial. Despite its 'distinct pledge' that it was 'Amenable to no secret body', the *Herald*, from its first appearance, was accused of giving away copies, in a loss-making 'gratuitous circulation', in order to publicise the views of the Marquess of Chandos, and later the policies of the Conservative party.

Reports in the *Bucks Gazette* during the *Herald's* first year of publication show who was believed to support the paper and how. The January 21st edition told readers:

How to Circulate Tory Papers

The landlady of an inn at Padbury, near Buckingham, who was recently a subscriber to the *Bucks Gazette*, discontinued to take that paper, in consequence of a magistrate, Capt Dayrell, threatening that he would cease to buy his beer at her house unless she gave it up! The magnanimous justice of peace further promised that another paper should be supplied to mine hostess every week for nothing. And, accordingly, the *Northampton Herald*, one of the new batch of boroughmonger literary crutches, is now regularly forwarded to the little inn at Padbury.

A letter by 'Vindex' in the 4-2-32 *Herald* denied that Dayrell's behaviour bore the construction the *Bucks Gazette* had placed on it, but this seems implausible as Dayrell is reported in the *Bucks Herald* (22-12-32) proposing Sir Thomas Fremantle, the Grenville-nominated MP for Buckingham, as the Tory candidate in the first election to a reformed Parliament.

The 28-1-32 *Gazette* carried a report from the *Bedford Chronicle* (with which it merged two months later):

Among the devices of the Rotten-Borough Faction, [is] that of setting up Newspapers to prop their desperate cause under the mask of "independence". . . . At a moment when, right or wrong, the people of England view the question of Reform with a degree of unanimity unexampled in the history of the country, it is obvious that no individuals would establish anti-reform Newspapers with the ordinary views of profit. All the influence of

Tory magistrates cannot get such papers into more than the most limited circulation . . . a certain, and often very heavy, weekly loss is submitted to, for the sake of the advantages which a hold, however feeble, on that mighty engine the PRESS, is supposed to afford. Within a few months three Tory papers have been started in a circuit of thirty miles round Bedford . . . [including] the *Bucks Herald* at Aylesbury.

Henry Ryde lived at Brook Farm, Aylesbury, a Grenville property. A parody of the previous year's *Bucks Herald* 'Prospectus' slighted the Duke of Buckingham's mental powers, calling Ryde's house 'the sign of the Duke's Head, Brook Farm' (BG 11-2-32). The same day's *Bucks Herald* carried a letter, by 'Amicus', recommending the 'propriety of abstaining for the future from noticing any attack that may appear in the columns of the *Bucks Gazette*' - a suggestion the next *Gazette* concurred with:

we quite agree with the gentleman who parsonifies "Amicus" . . . We think this wisely said. For, though we will never respond, the silly thing [*i.e.* the *Bucks Herald*] may bring ridicule on itself and expose its patrons. (BG 18-2-32)

The use of the word 'parsonifies' shows that 'Amicus' was believed to be one of the numerous Tory Anglican clergymen in the county. The popular perception of their political sympathies, and their role in supporting the *Bucks Herald*, is indicated by a *Gazette* report the next week from Quainton:

More Tory Work - One of the black-coated tribe . . . young in the pulpit, and . . . a political meddler out of it, called lately at the principal public house in that village and having inquired of the landlord what newspaper he took in, and being told it was the '*Bucks Gazette*', said that a new paper called the '*Bucks Herald*' had recently been published - 'a very nice impartial paper' - towards the cost of which, if the landlord would substitute it for the '*Gazette*', this same parson would pay two-thirds. Do these high tory clergymen so conduct themselves because they wish to be relieved from . . . paying for the trashy '*Herald*', which the Chandos party are forcing where they can; or is it because, for the sake of currying favour with the Lord Lieutenant and his heir, they are careless of how odious they render themselves by their political fooleries? (BG 25-2-32)

(The Duke of Buckingham was the Lord Lieutenant and 'young in the pulpit' is a play on the

name of the Rev. Edward Young (1796-1885), Rector of Quainton.)

In early 1832 the *Herald* attacked Chandos' uncle, Lord Nugent, one of the two Whig MPs for Aylesbury, hinting that he was anonymously attacking his Tory nephew in the *Bucks Gazette*³. Later that year, however, an editorial in the *Herald* for April 14th made a complimentary reference to an innocuous Bill that Nugent was sponsoring in Parliament. The next *Gazette* commented disgustingly:

his Grace has desired his hireling journal in Bucks to refrain from making any further attacks on his noble relative. What is the consequence . . . Last week he [*i.e.* Ryde] absolutely complimented the noble Lord . . . whom, he had, up to that hour, flung dirt at . . . We will venture to say that his Lordship never was sensible of any annoyance from that quarter till he chanced to be fouled by the scribbler's praise. (BG 21-4-32)

The following week the *Gazette* predicted Ryde's reaction:

he will, perhaps, obtain permission to renew his abuse . . . to vindicate himself from the charge of being the mere tool or puppet of his party. His Grace . . . the Honourable Mr this or the very Reverend Mr that, gives a pull to the string, and the *Herald* gives a kick.

The editorial continued:

We happen to know that an attempt was made to conciliate the noble Lord's good-will, not only by the fulsome peace-making paragraph, but by sending his Lordship the paper *unsolicited*. . . His Lordship desired, in reply, neither to be considered as willing to be a subscriber to such a paper, nor to be included among the *objects of its gratuitous distribution*. (BG 28-4-32)

(Reynell, the editor, must have had access to Nugent, to know this of course, which suggests that the *Gazette* itself may not have been Simon Pure concerning party political connections.)

The June 2nd *Gazette* claimed the *Herald* had only three paying subscribers in Aylesbury, and in September 1832 an editorial which starts out as an apparently general attack on Tory papers gradually becomes an implicit attack on the Duke of Buckingham:

The Tory papers are constantly blundering themselves,

and misleading the poor boroughmonger, his steward, his butler, his chaplain, and the rest of his in-door and out-door dependents who make it a point of honour to support the broadsheet that champions the personal interests of the great booby whose wealth they all share. . . . And who has a right to complain? Not the public surely, for the public are not the patrons of Tory journals: the public have nothing to do with them. The boroughmonger and his dependents raise subscriptions to keep them going. . . . It may be a costly luxury, but those who have been enriching themselves so long at the public cost can afford a costly luxury. (BG 15-9-32)

The reference to 'the public cost' almost certainly means the Bucks County Rates. Although it had no proof of corruption, the *Gazette* had warned the previous May of the danger of 'mal-administration' of the County Rates (BG 5-5-32), which were set and disbursed in private sessions by magistrates, under the supervision of the lawyer Thomas Tindal, who was Clerk of the Peace, County Treasurer, and also the Duke of Buckingham's Aylesbury Solicitor.⁴ That November the *Gazette* repeated its claim that the *Bucks Herald* was in the pay of the Grenvilles and came close to accusing the Lord Lieutenant, Tindal and the magistracy, of organised corruption – a Committee of Enquiry into the administration of the rates had been established and a *Gazette* editorial said that Bucks ratepayers were demanding:

some guarantee that a revenue, amounting to *between two and three and twenty thousand pounds*, . . . is not . . . diverted . . . to appease the voracity of a band of hungry Tories, whose gratitude, from the lawyer squire downward, is . . . unbounded to him . . . who has protected them from . . . their just account. (BG 3-11-32)

After acknowledging it could not *prove* corruption, the *Gazette* continued:

But as . . . the *Herald* has said . . . in his eager defence of abuses . . . earning the money Lord Chandos and the parsons subscribe to keep his little vehicle going, we have been . . . afflicted with the jaundice of suspicion.

Three weeks later another *Gazette* editorial addressed to 'His Lordship's minions at the *Bucks Herald*' called the *Herald* ' . . . the unfortunate produce of the money of his Lordship and his friends' and accused it of being controlled informally by whispers from the Duke and his sympathisers. (BG 24-11-32)

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These claims continued in the editorial and letter columns of local papers for many years after 1832 and it would be possible to quote lengthily from savage attacks and biting replies exchanged by the *Herald* and its enemies. Rather than address issues of political principle, Ryde preferred to attack the opponents of Toryism personally, often on the grounds of their low social status, and so seems to have attracted hatred excessive even for a newspaper editor.

A wonderful letter to the Radical *Aylesbury News* on December 23rd 1837 by 'A Looker On' called the *Herald* a 'Boeotian hog . . . in his filthy and prostitute stye' and a 'pimp, pander, and buffoon for Chandos'. 'A Looker On', who gave Reynell permission to disclose his name to Ryde, savagely attacked Ryde by name (a most unusual practice at the time) suggesting he had been a bankrupt, and asking, ' . . . are his morals all in theory like those of his master'. Another letter in the same issue, by 'A Farmer' (one of the group Chandos claimed particularly to represent) also attacked Ryde by name, for a wilfully inaccurate account of a Buckingham Liberal dinner, and called him 'a disgrace to the party who employs him or acknowledges him'.

In 1848 the *Bucks Gazette* valedictory to the year gave a brief history of the local press, saying:

the Tory party of the county was so determined to command the electioneering interest in 1832, that the Tories, headed by the Grenville interest, brought out a rival – *The Bucks Herald* which has maintained its ground, but, it is said, at a very great expense to a certain unfortunate nobleman of this county. (BG 30-12-48)

The nobleman was the Marquess of Chandos, by now second Duke of Buckingham, and 'unfortunate' because of his recent bankruptcy. 'Unfortunate' is a kind word to describe him - his bankruptcy was the result of a lifelong refusal to acknowledge uncomfortable facts and in his bankruptcy he had wilfully pulled people of limited means into ruin with himself. (See Beckett, pp. 222–223, 226).

In 1860 the *Bucks Chronicle* of January 3rd contains a letter declining to enter into controversies with the *Bucks Herald*, which by then had passed under the editorial control of Benjamin

Disraeli (see below), '... knowing the position they hold, under the very thumb of a certain personage'.

In December 1866 the *Bucks Advertiser*, reporting the sale of the *Herald*, called it 'the Conservative organ' and the 'Political trumpet' of 'our three Conservative county members'.

By 1866 local Tories themselves had abandoned the pretence of 'independence' as a sale notice in the *Times* (10-12-66) describes the *Herald* as '... established 36 years [sic], and liberally supported by the Conservative interest'.

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During its early years the *Herald* usually followed the advice of 'Amicus' and ignored or denied claims that it was subsidised. When it had been accused in April 1832 of sending a free copy to Nugent to gain his goodwill, it had plaintively explained that the free copy had been sent as Nugent (at their request) had furnished them with a copy of his Bill:

We have not any "objects" of "Gratuitous distribution" nor did we intend to send his Lordship the *Bucks Herald* regularly". (BH 5-5-32)

The *Herald* made no further reference that year to claims that it was subsidised until the *Gazette* editorial, quoted above, on the County Rates. The *Herald* quoted the editorial satirically, calling it incomprehensible and inelegant in style, but although the *Gazette* ignored this, the *Herald* could not resist returning to the subject, even in the frenzy surrounding the first election to a reformed Parliament, denying the "... grievous charge, brought against us by our rival ... that we are the hired flatterers of Lord Chandos". After denying that it had paid more attention to Chandos than he deserved the *Herald* continued:

In these days of Whiggery, Radicalism and Revolution we fearlessly avow that we are Tories and Conservatives. ... but if it be assumed from this that we are pledged save by the high and sacred duties of public principles to uphold him we repel the accusation with the utmost scorn and defiance. The accusation that we prostitute, our pen for hire, none whose esteem we value will believe for an instant. (BH 15-12-32)

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These denials can be disbelieved with confidence. Some of the *Herald's* correspondents in 1832 *did* flatter Chandos (for example, a letter by 'A Tory' on January 21st 1832 said that Chandos was, 'Loved. . . venerated . . . (and) idolised'). Ryde was beholden to the Grenvilles as Brook Farm was a Grenville property - during the 1840s he corresponded with Mr Beard, the second Duke's agent at Stowe. These letters, now in the Huntington Collection, negotiate with Beard over rent payment, and rebates for repairs Ryde had made to the bridge over the eponymous brook.⁵ More significantly, the first and second Dukes of Buckingham subsidised the *Herald* from its inception. The archives of Coutts Bank for 1833-45 record a payment on August 15th 1833 by Tobias Ledbrooke, from the first Duke of Buckingham's account to H. T. Ryde. Ledbrooke, or Ledbroke, is described by Beckett (p. 180) as 'a sort of factotum' to the Duke. The draft, for £14-12-0, the cost of exactly 500 copies, also survives in the Huntington Collection. The draft shows that payments to Ryde would have been informally known of at an early stage, as the Duke was obliged to bank with the only bank in Aylesbury, Rickford's bank, which belonged to William Rickford, Whig MP for the town, and the Duke's name and Ledbrooke's are clearly visible on the draft from Coutts and Co. which went into Ryde's account.⁶

The Marquess of Chandos seems to have taken over the *Herald* from his father (who may have originally intended the paper to have been a short-lived phenomenon). Below⁷ is a list of payments by Chandos to Mr Ryde at Aylesbury recorded in Coutts' archives, with the number of copies of the *Bucks Herald* that each payment would have purchased at the then current price:

November 5th 1835	£100	(3,428 copies at 7d)
November 16th 1838	£25	(1,200 copies at 5d)
December 30th 1839	£100	(4,800 copies at 5d)
July 13th 1840	£30	(1,440 copies at 5d)
October 13th 1840	£250	(12,000 copies at 5d)
March 22nd 1842	£30	(1,440 copies at 5d)
March 10th 1843	£200	(4,800 copies at 5d)
January 18th 1845	£25	(1,200 copies at 5d)

These payments amount to the cost of 30,308 copies of the *Herald* during a period of nine years and ten weeks – more than 60 copies per week. Beckett (p. 153) says that Chandos did not keep proper accounts so the surviving recorded payments in Coutts' archives may be an understatement. The payments to Ryde cannot have been for ordinary printing work as the statutory declaration of printer, publisher and proprietor on the back page of the *Herald* shows that, in the early years at least, Ryde used Mr May's press to print the *Herald* and even if Ryde had been Chandos' jobbing printer, payments on such a scale would clearly have enabled Chandos to influence the editorial line of the *Bucks Herald*. The sums recorded in Coutts' archives and the Huntington can only be the subsidy which Ryde denied receiving.

Ryde relinquished the editorship between 1844 and 1847. The statutory declaration stops naming him as the publisher and proprietor at the beginning of July 1844, and James Pickburn, who had printed and published it for Ryde, is named on his own as printing and publishing it 'for the proprietor' thereafter. An inaugural editorial by G. L. Browne, the new proprietor, in January 1848 says that 'Every day brings back to us some of those old and honoured friends, whom the conduct of our predecessor had alienated' (BH 8-1-48), but Pickburn's declaration remains unchanged until July 8th 1848, when it starts being followed by the words, 'George Lathom Browne . . . Sole Proprietor'.

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The Editorship of George Lathom Browne

George Lathom Browne practised law at the Aylesbury sessions of the Norfolk Circuit. Two letters in the Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, show Browne was also the proprietor of the *Britannia Newspaper*, of 141 Strand.⁸ The Middle Temple archives show that Browne was the third son of William Browne, Gent, of Lloyd's Coffee House in London and that he was educated at Merchant Taylors' School and St John's College, Oxford. He was admitted a Barrister of the Middle Temple in 1841 and practised law on the Buckinghamshire Circuit until 1882.⁹ The notes to *Letters*, Volume V

(p. 89), say that he was born in 1815, died in 1892, and was the 'author of numerous books including *Life of the Duke of Wellington* (1853)'.

Browne and Disraeli

Some of Browne's correspondence with Disraeli has survived. The Disraeli Project in Ontario, which is gradually publishing all of Disraeli's surviving correspondence, has replies by Disraeli to letters, lost and extant, from Browne, and the Bodleian Disraeli MSS, in Oxford, England, have replies by Browne, to letters, lost and extant, from Disraeli. Despite these lacunae Browne's correspondence with Disraeli, in the Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, is a fascinating source of information about local society and politics, and proves that the 'gratuitous circulation' did not stop with the disappearance of Ryde.

For the first two years of his editorship Browne comes across, under a bluff veneer of commitment to 'Independent Conservatism' in Bucks, as being quietly ambitious and hoping to ingratiate himself with Disraeli, who was leader of the Tory rump in the Commons and unquestionably the foremost local Tory.

A letter, probably from 1848, asks: 'Would you wish . . . any explanation respecting the articles about Wycombe & you in the Daily News to appear in my paper . . .'¹⁰

Browne also tried to advise Disraeli on how to cultivate the Bucks Electors. He was a Secretary of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, at that time a religiously and socially exclusive organisation, and a letter of April 1849 warns Disraeli to decline an invitation to become a Vice President of the Society as '. . . the low church clergy are the majority in the County and also the most active & they will get at you if you join it'.¹¹

He frequently urged Disraeli to call or attend public meetings. One such letter in December 1849 says:

The effect of these meetings as tending to organise the agricultural voters is universally acknowledged . . . their effect on your future position at an election in the county you must feel the importance [of].¹²

Disraeli was a shrewd politician and had himself, in the not too distant past, been trying to make his position in society by cultivating influential men such as the Marquess of Chandos. His replies to Browne suggest he recognised Browne's motives but could not easily do without the *Herald* as he was using it to explain Conservative policies, particularly rationalisation of the Land Tax and the establishment of a sinking fund.¹³ A letter in October 1848, however, gruffly tells Browne:

I do not clearly see . . . the subject of any public meetings at the present . . . The practical point to wh: we shd. give our immediate attention is pushing yr paper.¹⁴

A letter written after purchasing the *Herald* suggests Browne was unfamiliar with Bucks County society – he introduced himself to Disraeli:

I think it right to let you know . . . that I have taken on myself the proprietorship of the Bucks Herald, and intend . . . as I trust to ensure the advancement of the Conservative Party in the County without condescending to private abuse . . . Pray understand me clearly I want no pecuniary aid. . . I want . . . the confidence of the independent Conservatives of the county . . . to aid me in working for their benefit.¹⁵

Browne and the Finances of the Bucks Herald

During the spring of 1849 it seems to have become obvious to Browne that he *did* want 'pecuniary aid'. That April he wrote to Disraeli saying 'if not assisted by the end of the month I must get rid of the concern as best as I can'.¹⁶ If assisted however, he was ready to continue the free circulation: "All I have asked the [Carlton] Club for is a grant for one year of £150 for which 300 papers shall be sent free."¹⁷

Browne's letters suggest that the *Herald's* financial problems were one of the many local indirect results of the second Duke of Buckingham's bankruptcy. One letter, probably written in 1849, confirms that the Duke had underwritten the *Bucks Herald's* circulation:

The circulation I keep up to 500. This is a heavy drag, but it would be suicidal to reduce the free list. . . . in one part of . . . Aylesbury, *Ten* are sent free. The Duke used to pay, now no one pays – so it falls on me, if I were to drop it, in would step the Whig Chronicle, . . .¹⁸

The free circulation which Ryde had denied existed is referred to again in July 1849 – 'I have been unwilling to trouble you again about the free subscription to the Bucks Herald'¹⁹ – and Browne ends a letter in April 1849 with:

Pray remember to look up a Tory or two to subscribe for the maintenance of the free circulation of the B.H. . . . and lastly . . . lend me the £10-10 you kindly promised to the Free Circulation list, as I am fairly aground though not disheartened'.²⁰

Another letter, probably from April 1849 also, shows the second Duke had underwritten just over 50% of the circulation:

At Christmas I found that nearly three hundred were never paid for. In the good old days the Duke looked after this, It is not so now . . .²¹

Browne says in another letter written in April 1849 that he had an income of £200 from a subscription list of 220 during the previous year.²² This and his other statements – that he maintained the circulation at 500, that the previous Christmas nearly 300 were not paid for, that the Duke had previously 'looked after' the cost of this shortfall, and that he was willing to maintain a free subscription of 300 if the National Party at the Carlton Club continued the subsidy – are all consistent with each other and indicate that in the 1840s Ryde, with assistance from the second Duke of Buckingham, had been distributing between 50% and 60% of the *Bucks Herald* circulation free of charge.

If he was unaware of what he was taking on when he purchased the *Herald*, Browne's situation may not have been entirely of his own making. Another letter, probably written in 1849, suggests he was not well-known in local society. In it Browne tells Disraeli: 'I see that many believe me to be a nominee of Mr Tindal. May I ask you to disabuse them of this. I am working for "*self & principle*".'²³

Browne seems to have had some idea of the *Herald's* parlous financial position from the start of his editorship, however:

When I rescued the paper the advertisements were calculated at £13-0-0 and the circulation at £4-0-0 per week – Total £17-0-0. The expenses were and *are* wages

£7-15-0 Paper and stamps £4-8-0 Reporters, Agents & rent £3-0-0 Total £15-3-0 showing an average gain of £2-0-0 per week or thereabouts. This gain I at once sacrificed to secure the aid of a resident sub Editor.²⁴

A long letter by Browne, from April 1849 again, shows the *Herald* was still in crisis a year later: 'On Thursday I shall go to Aylesbury to investigate matters I hope to save at least £100 by amendments'.²⁵ He goes on to describe how during the year 29-4-48 to 21-4-49 he had made £678-17-1 from advertisements and that 220 subscribers had brought in £200 in subscriptions – a total of £878-17-1. During the same period the running costs of the business were £1066-0-0. Obviously the *Herald* had made a loss of almost £190 in the year ending 21-4-49. Subscriptions were £100 in arrears on 27-4-49. (The £200 referred to above appears to take account of this.) Even if the £100 of arrears were to have been paid, Browne's economies of £100 would barely have enabled the *Herald* to break even.

Disraeli promised Browne help for the ailing paper, and by July 1849 Browne had devised a subscription scheme which, with assistance from Disraeli, would mobilise support for the *Herald* from the gentry throughout the county. On the 9th of that month he wrote to Disraeli asking him about the scheme:

It is . . . of very great importance to me and my plans to know what is to be done in the matter . . . If the sum you mentioned can be found before the End of this month things will go Very well.²⁶

On August 11th 1849 Disraeli wrote to the Reverend Anthony Chester of Chicheley Hall asking him to help Browne:

Some day or other we must have an organ . . . Colonel Brownlow Knox, M.P. for Marlow has undertaken to speak to the gentlemen of the South . . . but we sadly want an influential gentleman in the North to stir the elements.²⁷

The same day Disraeli wrote to Browne urging him to:

. . . get a person of activity & influence to work the North & middle as Colonel Knox will the South – a person like Mr Lowndes of Chesham for example . . . but a very great

prejudice exists against the paper throughout the county.²⁸

In October Disraeli told Browne, ' . . . I have enlisted one or two subscribers to your fund wh[ich] we must bring to a focus at the Q[uar]ter[Sessions]'.²⁹

It rapidly became clear that the subscription scheme was not working. A letter of 1849–50 tells Disraeli:

. . . my scheme of a subscription has realised just £25 . . . many of the party to whom I wrote merely asking them to take the paper have refused or not favoured me with any reply.³⁰

In August 1850 Disraeli told Browne:

I have not received one shilling towards the projected subscription, nor do I see the slightest hope of obtaining any assistance for the paper. . . . I regret, that it is not in my power to repeat the aid wh. I was glad to be able to give last year.³¹

Disraeli often ended letters to Browne with the initials 'D' or 'BD'. This one, however, finished more formally, 'Yours very faithfully B. Disraeli'.

A year later Browne had apparently given an ultimatum regarding the *Herald's* finances to Disraeli, to which Disraeli replied imperturbably, on August 24th 1851:

I am very sorry at yr: intelligence, tho' I was prepared for the contingency. I should recommend you to take that course most conducive to your own interest, & not to disturb yourself by any consideration of the interests of a local party wh: has not supported you. I am dear Sir Yours faithfully B. Disraeli.³²

Browne waited almost a year longer, until one of Disraeli's short intervals in office, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, to quit the *Herald* editorship. A letter of June 7th 1852 asks:

May I solicit the favour of a letter from you recommending me to Mr Walpole as a candidate for some small place consistent with my professional position . . . You well know what it has cost me to maintain, as I still do, the Conservative paper in the County . . . I ask no great reward, but do trust, that now it is in your power, you will give me a chance of obtaining a slight return for my heavy losses.³³

(Spencer Walpole was Home Secretary in the 'Who? Who?' Ministry of February 1852 – see Blake pp. 312–314.)

The Tories were out of office again before the end of the year and there is no record that Browne, who continued to practise law at Aylesbury for another thirty years, ever received patronage from Disraeli.

* * *

The *Herald* changed ownership officially in January 1856. As an era of cheap newspapers, Darwinism and the end of agriculture's economic primacy began to dawn in Britain, the *Bucks Herald* for January 12th 1856 avowed its continued support for the eternal verities of the country gentlemen:

On Saturday 19th of January, the Bucks Herald will be issued . . . under new and spirited management . . . the agriculture . . . of the county will receive special attention . . . [and] under the head [*sic*] of ecclesiastical intelligence, which will be a leading feature . . . it is intended to present a general synopsis of all matters relating to the Church.

The Editorship of William Reed

The July 12th edition thanked Pickburn, Browne's printer, for his prolonged co-operation in allowing the *Herald* to be printed under his name while the change of proprietorship was being accomplished. Finally, on July 26th 1856, it is, 'Printed and Published (every Friday for Saturday) by the Proprietor William Reed'.

* * *

The *Bucks Herald's* financial troubles did not disappear with Browne and the surviving correspondence monotonously outlines a decade of financial crises. Within less than twelve months Reed was in trouble, as the sale report, referred to elsewhere, in the *Bucks Advertiser and Aylesbury News* for December 12th 1866 refers to:

a deed of assignment, dated the tenth day of December 1856 . . . between William Stewart Reed, Edmund John Brown, and Milford Reed, of the one part, and William

Lowndes Esq, (since deceased), of the other part; whereby the property was assigned to the said William Lowndes by way of mortgage;

By June 1857 the problems of the paper must have seemed insoluble. A letter that month to Disraeli from E.R. Baynes shows the Carlton Club had decided to stop supporting the paper: 'It so happened that I saw the person who had knowledge of the paper being abt [*sic*] to close, the N[atational] Party . . . had resolved to throw it up . . .'.³⁴

Baynes was willing to launch a strictly temporary scheme to keep the paper solvent:

By this day's post I have written to Sir Philip Rose [Disraeli's neighbour and Solicitor] urging him to assist in . . . procuring as a temporary loan a sum of £200 which will enable Mr Lowndes to make arrangements for having the paper . . . carried on I have suggested to Sir P Rose that he should apply to the Conservative Members for the County and the Boroughs . . . for this temporary loan of £200 . . . my idea is that some 10 to 15 of the leading Gentlemen in the County that are interested in the Conservative cause, should be asked to lend £50 or £100 each to form a capital to work the Paper . . . I have entered into this matter fully with Sir P. Rose . . . literally at this moment the paper is dependent on Mr J. Parrott and myself giving our personal guarantee to the bank for its coming out next Saturday . . .³⁵

(Among other things Joseph Parrott was an Aylesbury Attorney of Conservative opinions.) A letter from Parrott, in January 1858, indicates how successful Baynes was: '. . . by a good deal of Exertion about £500 . . . has been got together during the last year . . . at the present time the debts on their books . . . amount to between £1,000 and £1,100.'³⁶

Parrott also explains how the December 1856 mortgage had become necessary:

. . . Mr Lowndes, when the paper first stopped owing to want of means on the part of the proprietors was induced by Mr Smith of Buckingham to give a guarantee to the Bank to the extent of £1,000 to enable the paper to be carried on, he taking a mortgage on the property of the Concern which he has power to sell or dispose of in any other way for securing the money the bank advanced upon his guarantee. Owing to the state of the Money Market the Bank has been pressing Mr Lowndes for the

money and he is now required to close the account by the end of the month.³⁷

Lowndes was unwilling to sell the paper to repay the £1,000 to the bank at the end of the month, because, under Reed's management, the *Herald* was apparently making a profit at last. (In any case selling the paper would not have discharged the £ 1,000 as elsewhere in this letter Parrott says the paper's assets were only worth 'several hundred pounds'.) Lowndes' idea was to pacify the bank with an immediate payment of £500 and pay off the remainder of the money over a period of time. Lowndes could not do this, however, because, as Parrott explained:

he has not at this moment £500 . . . but he is prepared to give his Bond for the amount to anyone who will advance it for a year . . . there can be no doubt to the Conservative Party that the Paper should now go on as it is making its way.³⁸

The following month Parrott listed ten gentlemen from all over the county who between them had contributed £550 to prevent the paper becoming insolvent. Most of the sponsors gave £50; two, including Lowndes, gave £100. One £50 sponsor was John Gellibrand Hubbard of Addington Manor, Conservative MP for Buckingham the next year. (The *Herald* in January 1859 seems to have repaid part of the debt by fulsomely complimenting Hubbard for funding the controversial restoration of Addington Church.)² Parrott's letter says:

Where . . . a concern is . . . bankrupt in reputation [?] it requires a considerable capital to carry it on and Mr Lowndes was pressed by the bank for an amount which . . . it is hoped and believed may be liquidated gradually – The Resident Proprietor here considers that he shall have no difficulty in paying off something during the year . . . a subscription has been set on foot for . . . funding the necessary capital and continuing a control over the Paper.³⁹

Despite this Parrott wrote on August 9th 1862, to Lowndes, to tell him the paper owed money to the bank, the newsprint suppliers and various private individuals. Parrott warned Lowndes:

I have been making enquiries as to disposing of the Bucks Herald . . . it has been advertised in the Times . . . but cannot get a purchaser . . . the concern is in a very

serious state indeed and one which entails upon you a responsibility of a very serious character . . . you are liable to about £2,500.⁴⁰

Ten days later the third Duke of Buckingham, son and grandson of the paper's first two sponsors, and a Tory like them, wrote to Disraeli telling him:

I see no alternative but for some fresh person to obtain the copyright – start *de novo* – free from all the old debts and costly stock – This would put an end to further increases of debt . . . The next thing is our friend Lowndes' position – So far as I am aware he undertook this without any consent [?] with friends and might therefore . . . share the loss at least – but I think as he did it, however ill-advised for a good motive . . . the conservative party might contribute something towards him – I have told Parrott generally the above . . .⁴¹

Lowndes wrote to Disraeli on August 28th and told him that the newsprint suppliers had become ' . . . very pressing and I fear will stop supplying the paper if something is not soon done'.⁴² (Disraeli almost certainly knew this already through his communications with the third Duke and with Parrott.)

At this point there is a gap of almost a year in the correspondence until Milford Reed, who was facing the prospect of bankruptcy and unemployment, wrote (with icy control) on June 3rd 1863, to tell Lowndes:

. . . matters in connection with this paper have assumed a rather serious aspect . . . unless some step is taken *immediately* the consequences will be very injurious, not alone to myself but to the reputation of the *Herald* and the party it represents . . . the bank has taken proceedings on . . . debt amounting to £278 . . . they have judgement and may at any moment issue execution – an act that would have the effect of throwing affairs into bankruptcy.⁴³

Reed concluded by recommending a meeting of the County Conservative Party. Lowndes immediately forwarded the letter to Disraeli, with a covering letter of his own,⁴⁴ endorsing Reed's recommendation.

Nothing happened, as five days later, on the 9th, Reed wrote to Lowndes:

Mr Parrott has been made fully aware of the position . . . of this paper, but . . . in the absence of the cooperation of the Conservative Party . . . is helpless

... I see no alternative – unless immediate steps are taken ... but bankruptcy.⁴⁵

Lowndes immediately forwarded this letter to Disraeli as well, explaining he had not brought the matter up at a County Conservative meeting the previous day as there had been insufficient members present.⁴⁶

The surviving correspondence does not show how the *Herald* remained solvent but it did so, as Lowndes was writing a letter to Disraeli in the New Year of 1864 containing the (familiar-sounding) phrase, 'The Herald will go immediately if something is not done for it'.⁴⁷

Lowndes may have been unwell – he had less than a year to live – and he seems to have become dispirited, as another letter from him, on March 14th 1864, told Disraeli bluntly:

... the Bucks Herald newspaper has for a long time been on my hands, and I have really been keeping the paper on its legs for several years at my own cost ... I have tried every means to find a purchaser ... without success ... I propose to sell the type ... collect the debts and discontinue the paper ... Before taking these steps I think it ... should be again mentioned to the leading members of the Conservative Party in the County ...⁴⁸

Lowndes proposed a meeting the following Friday in London to discuss the matter.

Once again there is no indication in the surviving correspondence how the *Herald* remained solvent, but a few months later Reed was proposing to redeem the paper from Lowndes and become the proprietor, using £800 of borrowed money. The moment passed though – a letter from Reed to Lowndes in July explained:

... although at the time I offered to give £800 for it, I was in a position to do so, circumstances arose between the period of the offer and its acceptance, some six weeks, which prevented my carrying my proposal into execution – in fact the friend who would have assisted me in the interval placed his money in a different direction & I have failed elsewhere to obtain the required amount.⁴⁹

Reed sympathised with Lowndes for the way he had been left to shoulder the burden of subsidising the *Herald* almost single-handedly, 'knowing as I

do that in other counties in England Conservative papers are actually in receipt of annual aids',

Lowndes continued to support the paper, with or without help from the national Conservative party. In February 1865, however, he died⁵⁰ and his executors had no patience with the ailing newspaper. That May the third Duke of Buckingham wrote to Disraeli:

I understand ... the executors will sell the type – and peremptorily – on Saturday week unless they get £700 ... The only way I can see to keep the paper afloat and it would be unfortunate and ill-advised to let it drop on the eve of a general election appears to me to be for Mr Reed [the Editor] to find say £450 and for the party to endeavour to raise the remainder.⁵¹

Lowndes' executors were kept at bay and the following month Parrott, perhaps acting under the influence of Henry Ryde, wrote to Disraeli⁵² suggesting that a new Tory journal could be established in Bucks. In August Ryde wrote to Disraeli from a north London address, offering his services as *Herald* editor once more.⁵³ This too came to nothing and the *Herald* was finally sold from under Reed by Lowndes' executors a week before Christmas 1866 to a representative of Mr Gurney, landlord of the 'Star' Inn at Aylesbury.

* * *

The printing machinery and other fixed assets had been valued at £277-13-0 and the purchaser had to purchase these assets at that price, if he purchased the paper at all. The *Herald* was sold for £180 plus the assets at £277-13-0 – a total of £457-13-0. This price is smaller than the sums of money county gentlemen were raising to maintain the paper earlier in the 1860s, and smaller also than the £700 Lowndes' executors had wanted in May 1865. Unless the money which the paper owed to Lowndes and others had been substantially reduced by the time of the sale, Gurney's purchase would seem to be an insolvency sale, the 'start *de novo* free from all the old debts', wished for by the third Duke of Buckingham, and paid for by Lowndes' estate.

The *Bucks Advertiser* reported the sale. The *Advertiser* had been a Radical Liberal enemy of

the *Herald*, since its establishment in 1836 by the youthful auctioneer and printer John Rolls Gibbs, described in the *Bucks Gazette* valedictory editorial to 1848 as "the Great Republican Dissenter of Aylesbury". After Gibbs' death in 1845, his brother Robert⁵⁴ had assumed the editorship and had maintained the *Advertiser's* politics as well as its antagonism to the *Bucks Herald*. The *Advertiser* drew attention to the fact that Lowndes' executors had prevented any purchaser from discovering the past history of the paper by imposing conditions on the sale:

The auctioneer commenced by reading the conditions, which . . . stipulated that 'the title shall commence with a deed of assignment dated the tenth day of December 1856 . . . no earlier title shall be required, nor shall the purchaser be at liberty to investigate in any manner the title which the mortgagors had to the property so mortgaged'. (BA 21-12-66)

At first the bidding was slow and the *Advertiser* could not resist gloating – after a first bid, of £10, there was a long pause:

. . . it really seemed probable that the Conservative organ, which has for 32 years piped to the tune of the Buckinghamshire Tories, was going! going!! for the miserable sum of ten pounds! (*ibid.*)

After describing how Mr Gurney's representative had completed the purchase, the *Advertiser* concluded:

It is gossiped about town that the "rabids" are very indignant that their organ should fall into "such" hands, and they talk of starting another Conservative paper. If so it has been suggested to name it the "Buckinghamshire Blusterer," and it doubtless would give due attention to the Cock and Hen interest. (*ibid.*)

At this point the trail ends – the Disraeli Project has no letters from Disraeli to Gurney⁵⁵ and the Bodleian Library has none from Gurney to Disraeli, so it is impossible to prove the *Herald* was still controlled by local or national Tories. Commonsense suggests it was, however, and that local gossip about the mortification of the 'rabids' was wrong. It is unlikely that a businessman like Gurney would have ventured into newspaper publishing without careful consideration, perhaps discussing the move with leading local Conservatives. This suspicion is supported by the fact that Gurney's proprietorship began with an almost unbroken silence on the troubled passage into law of the Second Reform Act – a measure created and amended on an *ad hoc* basis by Benjamin Disraeli. While the *Herald* was silent, local Liberal papers abandoned themselves to hilarity and scorn for the Act and its creator. On the few occasions the *Herald* broke its silence it supported the Tories and explained Disraeli's motives. (I suspect, on grounds of style and vocabulary, that an editorial in the *Bucks Herald* of March 9th 1867, justifying Disraeli's behaviour and the conduct of the Tories in general, following the resignations of Cranborne, Carnarvon and Peel, was by Disraeli himself.)⁵⁶

As late as 1913, the final edition of the moderate Tory *South Bucks Standard* acknowledged, as one Conservative paper to another, past assistance from the *Herald*.⁵⁷ For the time being, however, the jubilant *Advertiser* report at its apparent demise is a convenient point at which to leave the fortunes of the *Bucks Herald*.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr Chris Day of Oxford University and Mr David K. Dean of the Museum of Texas Tech University for their practical assistance in getting this article finished.

I would also like to thank the Bodleian Library for permission to quote Disraeli MSS. deposited there by the National Trust, Hughenden.

Notes

- 1 See 'The Bucks Gazette and the Grenville family: the first years of an Early County Paper' *Recs Bucks* 37, pp. 127–137.
- 2 See 'The Bishop and the Editor' *Recs Bucks* 34, pp. 78–86.
- 3 BG 28-1-32 and BH 28-1-32.
- 4 Beckett, p. 180, refers to Tindal as the Duke's Aylesbury Solicitor.
- 5 Microfilm copy of Huntington Collection MS STG Box 281 (15) in the author's possession.
- 6 I am most grateful to Ms Mary L. Robertson, Curator of Manuscripts at the Huntington Library, for supplying me with a photocopy of the Duke's draft (Stowe Grenville Accounts Box 180, Bundle for 1830–39).
- 7 I am most grateful to Ms Tracey Earl, Coultts Bank's Archivist, for making this information available to me.
- 8 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/9 & /10. Many of the letters to Disraeli in the Bodleian MSS are undated and erratically spelled and punctuated and I have reproduced them unaltered.
- 9 I am most grateful to Ms Lesley Whitelaw of the Middle Temple Library for details of Browne's professional career.
- 10 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/2.
- 11 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/5.
- 12 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/7.
- 13 *Letters*, V, letter 1881.
- 14 *Letters*, V, letter 1723.
- 15 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/1.
- 16 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/8.
- 17 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/8.
- 18 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/11.
- 19 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/6.
- 20 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/5.
- 21 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/8.
- 22 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/12.
- 23 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/11.
- 24 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/11.
- 25 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/12.
- 26 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/1.
- 27 *Letters*, V, letter 1865.
- 28 *Letters*, V, letter 1866.
- 29 *Letters*, V, letter 1891.
- 30 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/8.
- 31 *Letters*, V, letter 2025.
- 32 *Letters*, V, letter 2172.
- 33 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/10.
- 34 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/24.
- 35 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/24.
- 36 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/25.
- 37 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/25.
- 38 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/25.
- 39 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/26.
- 40 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/16.
- 41 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/27.
- 42 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/17.
- 43 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/18.
- 44 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/19.
- 45 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/20A.
- 46 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/20.
- 47 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/21.
- 48 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/22.
- 49 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/23.
- 50 Bucks Record Office Probate Records.
- 51 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/30.
- 52 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/34.
- 53 Bodleian Disraeli MSS, box 88, B/XX/A/32.
- 54 'The Gibbs Family of Aylesbury', 1979 (computer typescript in Bucks County Reference Library).
- 55 Personal communication with Professor M. Wiebe of the Disraeli Project, October 24th 1997.
- 56 This is not an improbable idea. Like all politicians Disraeli was fond of manipulating the press—*Letters*, II, p. 203, says that in 1832 Ryde published parts of Disraeli's 'The Crisis Examined' as leading articles in the *Bucks Herald* and the notes to letters 1833 and 1881 (*Letters*, V) show that *Herald* editorials paraphrased Disraeli's ideas, as expressed in private letters to Browne and Lowndes. The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals also suggests that in 1827 Disraeli anonymously reviewed his own writings in 'The Continuation of Vivian Grey', in *The New Monthly Magazine* (XIX p. 297).
- 57 Microfilm copy in High Wycombe Reference Library.

Abbreviations

- BG *Bucks Gazette*.
BH *Bucks Herald*.
DNB *Dictionary of National Biography*.
Letters see 'Disraeli' in Bibliography.
M&B see 'Money Penny' in Bibliography.

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