

The



Star

Largest Circulation of Any

Evening Paper in the Kingdom

VOL. 2 - No. 14

THE HERITAGE of FLEET STREET

LONDON 2022

The Star sold 126,000 on its first day, 17 January 1888. A world record that confirmed the founder's belief in the demand for a radical evening newspaper. A four-page broadsheet, published 6 days-a-week, it cost a halfpenny.

The front page editorial expounded its cause: "The rich, the privileged, the prosperous need no guardian or advocate; the poor, the weak, the beaten require the work and word of every humane man and woman to stand between them and the world."

Thomas Power O'Connor (1848-1929) was the founder and first editor of the Star. An Irish Nationalist MP and journalist, his constituency between 1885 and his death in 1929 was Liverpool Scotland Division. He is the only British MP from an Irish nationalist party ever to be elected to a constituency outside the island of Ireland.

The Star's first year coincided with a thirst for news of two big stories. Running in parallel with the chilling murders in Whitechapel 1888, was what the Star called 'the Times Conspiracy,' a campaign to discredit Charles Stewart Parnell the MP and leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party who looked capable of delivering Home Rule for Ireland.

A Special Commission opened 17 September 1888 to look into 'Fenian' atrocities in which, according to letters published by the Times, Parnell had been involved. Over the next 16 months judges would sit for 128 sessions, during which 150,000 questions would be asked of 445 witnesses. Parnell was proved innocent. The Times had to admit that the letters were forgeries and Piggott, the man who supplied them, was found dead in a Madrid hotel room with a suicide note. "Nothing can add to the disgust and reprobation with which the conduct of the Times is regarded by all decent and honest men," raged the Star.

Ernest Parke took over as editor in 1889 and George Bernard Shaw was a regular contributor. "Mainly About People," "Notes of the Day" and "What We Think" columns were popular features. By the summer of 1895 The Star was achieving a daily net sale in excess of 150,000 copies.

The Star was one of the few papers to oppose the Boer War and its circulation suffered. However the paper survived and was vindicated for the position it had taken against the imperialists and the gold and diamond exploiters.

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 portraits of twenty-five LEADERS OF THE
 IRISH PEOPLE. This distinguished group is repre-
 sented on the floor of the IRISH HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT,
 DUBLIN. GRANT, BRYCE, and includes the following
 names:—

WHAT WE THINK

There are two subjects which we must
 let drop in Parliament. We must raise the
 again and again until we have brought
 Government to bay upon them. The one
 the share of the Ministers in the Times
 conspiracy; the other is the treatment of
 political prisoners. With regard to
 first there is a natural inclination
 go for the ATTORNEY-GENERAL
 once, especially in view of the dan-
 gerous facts we set forth on Saturday
 reference to his connection with the case. If
 some people think—and, perhaps, they
 right—that we should wait until we have
 face the House of Commons the report we
 regard to these letters which the Judges
 probably give in a few days. We cannot thi-
 that their lordships will require much time
 prepare the document on this particular poi-
 The evidence as to the forgery of the letters
 of course, is now clear beyond the possibil-
 of doubt; and to set forth that fact will
 require any great length of words. We should
 hope it would seem good to Sir JAMES HAN-
 and his colleagues to spread accusations

Mr Gladstone proposed his 'Home Rule Bill' in 1910. Interviewed in 1912 TP O'Connor said that was when the Star really came into its own. In December of 1913 the paper was enlarged to eight pages and in the following January to twelve pages.

But in 1914 came the Great War and censorship. Like all papers the Star had to be submitted to the Press Bureau before publication. Newsprint was rationed and by 1916 the paper was reduced to four pages. Then in January 1918, with the rise in the cost of paper, the price of the Star had to be raised from a halfpenny to a penny.

However, by 1926 the 16 page Star had been taken over by Cadbury's, the owners of the Daily News. The Star moved from its original offices in Stonecutter Street to a grand new building on the corner of Tudor and Bouverie Street.

Even the General Strike of 1926 could not check the paper's steady growth. On 15 November 1926 it was enlarged to 20 pages including two pages of news pictures, a feature never before attempted by any London evening newspaper.

In 1932 the paper initiated a campaign against the 33% tax on Insulin. In May 1934 the duty was removed and the influence of the Star was acknowledged in the House of Commons.

On 30 June 1936 a bust to TP O'Connor was unveiled on Chronicle House, 72-78 Fleet Street. The tribute on the base: "His pen could lay bare the bones of a book or the soul of a statesman in a few lines."

Jubilee Celebrations at the Savoy Hotel commemorated 50 years of the paper in 1938 and looked forward to its centenary celebrations in 1988. Its chief concerns: defense of freedom and peace in Europe.

But on 3 September 1939 Britain declared war with Germany and the paper was once again back to 4 pages and censorship. Newsprint rationing started in 1939 and didn't end until late 1958.

Despite paper restrictions the Star achieved its greatest ever sales in the late '40s: daily sales in 1947 exceeded a million. On 20 November 1947, the day Princess Elizabeth married Prince Philip, the paper sold 1,414,660 copies.

And then, on 17 October 1960 the Star disappeared, along with its sister paper the News Chronicle. Both papers, their Bouverie Street offices and plants had secretly been sold to second Viscount Rothermere. The Star was merged with the Evening News, a paper with the opposite political views.



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Additional notes

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