

Daily Mail

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The Daily Mail was founded by two brothers (known in later life as Lord Harmsworth and Lord Rothermere, in 1896, and was an immediate success from the start. It was priced at just one halfpenny (when other newspapers cost a penny) and it was more populist in tone and concise in its coverage than its rivals. The initial print run had been set at 100,000 but the actual print run on the first day was just short of 400,000 copies, and it had risen to 500,000 the next year.

Despite the jibes of well-read people (Lord Salisbury described the paper as being written by office-boys for office-boys) circulation continued to rise, and was over a million in 1902, making it the largest newspaper circulation in the world.

Harmsworth ran the business and production side, with Northcliffe as editor.

From the start, the paper adopted an imperialist political stance. It also set out to entertain its readers, with human interest stories, serials, features and competitions. It was the first newspaper to recognize the potential market of the female readers, and had a women's interest section.

The paper took an early interest in aviation, and offered a £10,000 prize for the first flight from London to Manchester. (Punch thought the whole idea preposterous, and offered the same amount for the first flight to Mars.) Their interest in aviation continued through to 1930 when they gave a prize of £30,000 to Amy Johnson for her solo flight over the Atlantic.

According to the historian Piers Brendon "Northcliffe's methods made the Mail the most successful newspaper hitherto seen in the history of journalism. But by confusing gewgaws with pearls, by selecting the paltry at the expense of the significant,

by confirming atavistic prejudices, by oversimplifying the complex, by dramatizing the humdrum, by presenting stories as entertainment and by blurring the difference between news and views, Northcliffe titillated, if he did not debauch, the public mind; he polluted, if he did not poison, the wells of knowledge".

The Daily Mail began the Ideal Home Exhibition in 1908, and by 1922 the paper was fully engaged in promoting the benefits of modern appliances and technology to free female readers from the drudgery of housework.

In 1922, Lord Northcliffe died, and his brother, Lord Rothermere took full control of the paper. Rothermere's elitist conception of politics, believing that the natural leaders of Britain were upper-class men like himself. This led him to oppose giving women the vote, and the ending of the franchise requirement which required voters to own property, on the grounds that these people were not really capable of understanding the issues. This led on to his losing faith in democracy, and supported Mussolini's fascist dictatorship which had saved the Italian social order.

Rothermere was generally supportive of Mosley's British Union of Fascists (Blackshirts) and encouraged Daily Mail readers to join. This support ended in 1934 after violence at a BUF rally, which many thought had been triggered by Jewish businessmen threatening to withdraw their advertising. Even after that, the paper continued to oppose the arrival of Jewish refugees from Germany. In the years before the war, the paper was generally pro-appeasement.

A new editor, David English, transformed the paper after the war, when it was selling only about half as many copies as the Daily Express. By 1980, its circulation had increased to surpass the Express. The Mail on Sunday was launched in 1982.

The Daily Mail is owned by Daily Mail and General Trust plc. The 4th Viscount Rothermere (great-grandson of the founder) is the chairman and controlling shareholder of the company.

(Editorial note: Every current newspaper has been asked to provide the masthead from their first issue and a 500-700 word article outlining their foundation, significant turning points in their history, and anything else they consider an important aspect of their development. Some, like this newspaper, have not yet been able to respond to this invitation, which is still open for acceptance at a later date.. In the interim, we provide some information gleaned from Wikipedia.. org and other sources as noted under the masthead current in 2022)



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Additional notes

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