



The 'Daily Herald' Newspaper & Archive

History of the Newspaper

The Daily Herald was launched in January 1911 as a strike sheet for the London printing unions, then involved in an industrial dispute, to support their pleas for improved pay and conditions. So successful was the sheet in helping the unions win their argument, that a movement began for the Herald to be adopted as the daily newspaper in support of the socialist cause.

In April 1912, this mobilisation of effort resulted in the paper being relaunched as a daily dealing with issues directly relevant to the working man and woman. The early days of the paper were, however, beset by lack of money, even though the Trades Union Congress (TUC) took the paper over in 1922. The paper reeled from one financial crisis to another until, in 1929, Odhams Press stepped in to save it.

The financial injection meant that the paper's immediate future was secured and in March 1930 the new Daily Herald was launched. Odhams Press held 51% of the shares, with the remainder owned by the TUC. The immediate priorities of the new owners were to increase the circulation, broaden the socialist profile of the paper and ensure its financial viability.

Late 1929 saw a massive drive to achieve these aims. The size of the paper was doubled from ten to twenty pages; rallies and events promoting the new Herald were held across the country; members of the Labour Party were recruited to promote the paper and a prize incentive scheme was implemented where premium cameras and free gifts were given away on purchase of the paper. These initiatives resulted in a steep increase in the Herald's circulation from 250,000 to a million. This trend continued until, in 1933, the Herald became the world's top selling popular daily newspaper, with certified net sales of 2 million.

The sharp increase in circulation spurred the Herald's rivals into action; they envisaged the erosion of their financial and political powerbase. Soon newspapers from the more conservative Beaverbrook stable (e.g. the Daily Express) began to solicit support for their publications. The ensuing circulation war took both an immediate and long-term toll on the Herald. The paper's circulation declined.

Throughout this period, and for many years afterwards, the Herald continued to espouse official Labour policies, defined by the Labour Party and at TUC conferences. However, whilst its appeal had broadened, Odhams Press felt that the political ties were hampering its growth. Nevertheless, the increasingly uneasy TUC - Odhams relationship managed to last for about thirty years until finally, in 1960, faced with downwardly spiraling sales and the loss of advertising revenue, Odhams persuaded the TUC to relinquish their shares.

The slide had, however, become irreversible and, in March 1961, Mirror Group Newspapers (MGN\IPC) assumed ownership of the paper on taking over the Odhams empire. The company began a massive drive to revive the ailing Herald. After an initial period of assessment, MGN\IPC decided to enliven the image of the paper in order to broaden its appeal.

In September 1964 the paper was relaunched as the Sun with the slogan 'A Paper Born of the Age We Live In'. Despite this change of image, the paper's format remained stale and uninspiring. After an initial upsurge in circulation, sales again declined. MGN\IPC decided to cut their losses and in 1969 sold the Sun to Rupert Murdoch's News International, whereupon its content and message completely altered.

General Information

The photographic archive of the Daily Herald newspaper now resides at the National Media Museum. Comprising over 3 million photographs and covering a period from 1911 to the mid-1960s, the archive includes work by many famous photographers, who contributed assignments to the newspaper, and the staff photographers who worked for the Odhams Press stable, of which the Herald formed a part.

The archive is broadly split into three sections: places, events and people. The latter is further divided into individuals who were alive during the paper's existence and, those who had died (the 'Morgue').

The archive offers a fascinating photographic record of local, national and international events spanning fifty years. It is particularly rich in 1920s and 1930s photojournalism covering such major events as the Spanish Civil War, the rise of fascism, the Abdication crisis, the General Strike and hunger and unemployment marches; and important personalities such as Hitler and Churchill. The archive also strongly represents the monarchy, politics, sport (especially horse racing), the arts and entertainment, science and industry.

The photographs also reveal much of the Herald's editorial and political policy. Close examination of the cropped and shaded images, and analysis of their content and composition, greatly enhance our understanding of the development of press and documentary photography, and the work of the photojournalist.

Access to the Archive

As part of the Museum's role of encouraging the public understanding of photography and its relationship to other aspects of the media, it will make the images within the archive available for examination by students of photography and media communications, social historians, picture researchers and other relevant individuals and institutions.

The Daily Herald Archive is housed in Insight: the Museum's Collections & Research Centre. To make an appointment to see the archive, contact us on 0870 70 10 200.

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