

## CHAPTER THREE

### ROBERT GOADBY, THE *SHERBORNE MERCURY* AND THE URBAN RENAISSANCE IN SOUTH-WEST ENGLAND

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One of the more surprising features of the eighteenth-century provincial press was the publication of two newspapers in Sherborne (population 2,000-3,000) and their circulation across the entire south-western peninsula, covering more than 200 miles to the far end of Cornwall, a county without a local paper until 1805.<sup>1</sup> These were the *Sherborne Mercury*, founded in 1737 by William Bettinson, but run from 1749 by Robert Goadby and his family, and the *Sherborne Journal*, founded by William Cruttwell in 1764: both lasted as regional papers (under new titles) into the twentieth century. A weekly magazine produced in association with the *Mercury* (as we shall call it hereafter) for most years from 1763 also circulated very widely. Goadby was a significant printer and publisher, with strong links to the London booktrade, and he is regularly cited to show the scale and prosperity possible for a provincial press proprietor.<sup>2</sup> No personal or business papers survive, but Goadby was an author, translator and editor so his interests and views can be gauged from these publications, as well as those of his closest associates, his brother Samuel, his London co-publisher William Owen, and his apprentice Joseph Towers. Interest in Goadby as an author has been restricted to his role in the ‘memoirs’ of the ‘king of the beggars’, Bampfylde Moore Carew, and its critique of Fielding’s *Tom Jones*. Equally, the *Mercury* is not often used other than by local historians, perhaps because it is not available digitally before the 1790s, and there is no scholarly account of it.<sup>3</sup>

This essay will bring together both the business and intellectual history of Goadby and the *Mercury* to contribute to the debate over the place of the press in the English ‘urban renaissance’. We address the relationship between the exploitation of commercial opportunities posed by the growing ‘consumer society’ (often seen as the underpinning of the ‘urban renaissance’), and the ideological divisions within eighteenth-

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<sup>1</sup> The controversy over its place in Cornwall is discussed in R. Polwhele, *The Civil and Military History of Cornwall* (Exeter, 1806), pp. 91-2. Polwhele regularly cited the *Mercury* as an influence on himself and other south-western readers throughout his writings, for example *The Old English Gentleman: A Poem* (1797). See also I. Maxted, ‘Printing, the Book Trade and Newspapers c.1500-1860’ in R. Kain and W. Ravenhill (eds), *Historical Atlas of South-West England* (Exeter, 1999), pp. 240-5 for Devon and Cornwall newspapers..

<sup>2</sup> He is the only provincial printer among the 25 leading printers of the eighteenth century listed in *Gentleman’s Magazine* 73 (Feb. 1803), 161-70. Previous notices of Goadby include G. A. Cranfield, *Development of the Provincial Newspaper 1700-1760* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 51, 248, 255, 259-60; J. Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 22-3, 65, and 101-4; H. Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 106-7, 115 (based on Feather’s discussion). This article supersedes the biography given in G. Tatham, ‘Goadby, Robert (1720/21–1778)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10850>]

<sup>3</sup> Though it is insightfully cited in R. M. Wiles, *Freshest Advices* (1962), *passim*. Only 2 issues pre-1789 (26 February 1770 and 26 August 1771) and then 3 for 1789 are available online, then another 45 1791-9. The file copies of the *Mercury* are held by the Somerset Heritage Centre, Taunton. A guide to surviving issues of these (and other south-western) papers is available on Ian Maxted’s invaluable website for book trade history: <http://bookhistory.blogspot.co.uk/2009/10/devon-newspapers-1704-2004.html#SHE>

century society – what Barry has labelled (in a related piece on Bristol’s press) ‘the politics of culture’.<sup>4</sup> To what extent was the provincial press simply a commercial venture driven by advertising revenue, and if so, what types of advertising: did the press both create and depend on a new polite urban culture of commercial goods and pastimes? Or was the press largely driven by the demand for news, and particularly ‘political’ news, about war, diplomacy and social policy issues, and not merely about ‘party politics’? If so, was the provincial press largely a scissors-and-paste conveyor of London and international news and comment, or did provincial papers offer their readers either specifically provincial news or a provincial reading of external reports? How far could any specific paper adopt a partisan perspective on the news, without alienating readers and losing both sales and advertising? What are we to make of the growing body of material in the press which offered entertainment and instruction, through essays, poetry, anecdote and potted information, so spreading ‘enlightened values’: was that an expression of an ‘urban renaissance’ which spread metropolitan values into town and countryside, or could it reflect distinctive provincial values?<sup>5</sup>

## The People

Biographical accounts of Robert Goadby are largely derived from an account published in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1784.<sup>6</sup> Abbreviated versions appear in various biographical dictionaries, in the second edition of Hutchins’ *History of Dorset*, and in Nichols’ *Literary Anecdotes*, where an initially brief account of Goadby (claiming his authorship of the Carew memoirs) is then supplemented by a summary of the 1784 article.<sup>7</sup> The 1784 memoir claims Goadby:

<sup>4</sup> J. Barry, ‘The Press and the Politics of Culture in Bristol 1660-1775’ in J. Black and J. Gregory (eds), *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 49-81.

<sup>5</sup> The last fifteen years have seen a welcome influx of studies of specific provincial publishers and papers. In addition to those cited below, see D. Newton and M. Smith, *The Stamford Mercury* (Stamford, 1999); H. Berry, ‘Promoting Taste in the Provincial Press: national and local culture in eighteenth-century Newcastle upon Tyne’ *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25:1 (2002), 1-18; J. Hinks, ‘John Gregory and the *Leicester Journal* [1752-89]’ in B. McKay et al. (eds) *Light on the Book Trade* (Newcastle, Delaware and London, 2004), pp. 85-94; G. Bergel, ‘William Dicey and the Networks and Places of Print Culture’ in J. Hinks and C. Armstrong (eds), *Worlds of Print* (Newcastle, Delaware and London, 2006), pp. 149-62; V. Gardner, ‘John White and the Development of Print Culture in the North East of England, 1711-1769’ in J. Hinks and C. Armstrong (eds), *Book Trade Connections* (Newcastle, Delaware and London, 2008), pp. 71-92; V. Gardner, ‘Humble Pie: John Fletcher, Business, Politics and the Chester Chronicle’ in J. Hinks, C. Armstrong and M. Day (eds), *Periodicals and Publishers* (Newcastle, Delaware and London, 2009), pp. 95-118; V. Gardner, ‘Newspaper proprietors and the social stratification of the news-reading market in North-East England, 1760-1820’, *Northern History* 50:2 (2013), pp. 285-306; V. Gardner, ‘The Communications Broker and the Public Sphere: John Ware and the *Cumberland Pacquet*’, *Cultural and Social History* 10:4 (2013), pp. 533-557; A. F. Parks, *William Parks* (Pennsylvania State University Park, 2012). The most recent general study is U. Heyd, *Reading Newspapers: press and public in eighteenth-century Britain and America* (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> *Gentleman’s Magazine* 54 (1784), pp. 93-5. This was prompted by a passing criticism of his *Illustration of the Holy Scriptures* in issue 53 (1783), p. 832. The memoir is summarized in *A New and General Biographical Dictionary* (1784), vol. 12, pp. 681-5 and another abbreviated version is in C. H. Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing* (1839), pp. 743-4.

<sup>7</sup> J. Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes* (1812) vol. 3, pp. 435, 723-6. Nichols may have written all three (since he was editor of the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1784 and co-editor of the revised Hutchins) though, if so, it seems odd he did not use his long memoir immediately in his anecdotes. Another candidate is his close collaborator Richard Gough, who wrote extensively for the *Gentleman’s Magazine* and co-edited Hutchins with Nichols. But their contributions are normally identifiable, and this article is not (for attributions see <http://bsuva-epubs.org/bsuva/gm2/browse/GM1784.html>). Whoever wrote it clearly expressed a view of Goadby with which Nichols and Gough could agree.

‘carried on a very large and extensive business as a printer and bookseller, at Sherborne in Dorsetshire. Few men have been more generally known in the West than he was, and few had more friends or more enemies. To the freedom of his sentiments on religious and political subjects, and to the openness with which he declared them, he was indebted for both’.

It ignores his literary works (including Carew), focusing on his theological publications, though it adds:

Mr. Goadby was also the conductor of several miscellaneous and periodical publications, which being sold extremely cheap, and very widely circulated, had a considerable good effect, and proved the means of disseminating a great deal of useful knowledge among persons whose opportunities of gaining information were few and scanty. In the West of England, in particular, his publications were read by great numbers who scarcely ever read any thing else, and were calculated to excite a desire of useful knowledge that could not fail to be highly beneficial. To the praise of Mr. Goadby, it should be observed, that he carefully excluded from his publications every thing of an immoral and irreligious tendency.

It also reports his indefatigable industry (which undermined his health) and his benevolence, including much lifetime charity, a bequest of £200 to the poor of Sherborne, and his endowment of an annual sermon in Sherborne Abbey on nature as an expression of God’s benevolence. This was linked to the inscription praising nature as our link to God on his gravestone at Osborne (just outside Sherborne), which was surrounded by specially planted trees and to be maintained with fresh flowers.<sup>8</sup>

The memoir asserts that:

Of liberty, both religious and political, he was a distinguished and consistent assertor ... His attachment to political liberty, and the English constitution, was very conspicuous on many occasions. His weekly paper, intituled “The Sherborne Mercury,” was uniformly conducted in a manner friendly to the liberties of Englishmen. In particular, he had a just idea of the importance of the liberty of the press; and the celebrated axiom of Mr. Hume, “That the liberties of the press and the liberties of the people must stand and fall together,” was a favourite one with him. With a manly boldness he never scrupled to avow his sentiments on important political points, and would frequently, through the channel of his paper, as well as in his other publications, enforce upon his countrymen the importance of a proper attention to the preservation of their liberties from the attacks of those who were hostile to them.

A similar impression is given by a further biography printed in the 1820 edition of the *Mercury*’s associated magazine:

The political principles of Mr Goadby, which possibly were inherited from his father, inclined him strongly to support the measures of the Whigs, and the early numbers of his publications indicate his firm and hearty attachment to the cause. During the disturbances which followed the publication of no 45 of the North Briton, he took care to repeat all the

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<sup>8</sup> One of Goadby and Owen’s publications was *The Universe Display’d or a Survey of the Wonderful Works of Creation* (1763): a one-sheet advertisement for this is ESTC T225599.

arguments which could be promulgated in favour of Wilkes; and subsequently, on the contest of that ultrapatriot for the city of London, hastened to town and gave a plumper in support of his political favourite.<sup>9</sup>

This also noted that his burial was ‘not in consecrated ground’ and that ‘in his private character, Mr Goadby was most amiable and benevolent, but never very popular among his equals; his unwearied exertions in favour of the poor continually embroiled him in disputes with his neighbours.’<sup>10</sup> Hannah Barker’s study of politics in the late-eighteenth-century press, while noting that ‘all newspapers displayed some sort of identifiable political stance’, cited the papers produced at Sherborne among those ‘more generally mute in their politics’, and specifically that (what she calls) ‘The *Western Flying Post*, for example, appeared generally less concerned with politics than other papers, and this lack of interest affected its coverage of the reform movement.’ Compared to the keenly pro-reformist *Cambridge Chronicle* ‘the same level of enthusiasm was not evident in the *Western Flying Post* ... Although generally pro-reform, the paper showed little sustained interest in the issue’.<sup>11</sup> While noting that she is largely dealing with the 1780s (after Robert’s death), how compatible are her findings with the statements above, or what we can establish about Goadby’s life?

Robert Goadby was born in 1720-1, son of Samuel, a London iron-founder, who was the City Measurer at his death in 1753; through him Robert became a member of the Founders’ Company (though he later transferred to the Stationers’ Company).<sup>12</sup> He was the younger brother of Samuel Goadby (1719-1808), a stationer, and Margaret Goadby (b. 1707-8), who married Daniel Lerpiniere. Her son Samuel Lerpiniere (1735-1808, a clerk in the London Excise Office, like his father and grandfather) and Samuel Goadby were given control of Robert’s business by his will of 1778, although his widow Rachel appears as proprietor (as R. Goadby) until her death in 1790.<sup>13</sup> The 1820 memoir states that Robert’s father gave his sons ‘a superior education’ (though it also claims he was ‘apprenticed to a printer’, otherwise unrecorded) and Robert apparently attended Repton School, before setting up as a bookseller in Bath (in Wade’s Passage opposite Morgan’s coffeehouse) by 1741, when his translation of two short novels by Cervantes appeared.<sup>14</sup> How long he operated in Bath is unclear: in May 1744 he advertised his plan to open a circulating library at the Hotwells in Bristol but instead started a printing operation in Yeovil, including a newspaper, *The Western Flying Post or Yeovil Mercury*, whose first issue came out on 30 July 1744.<sup>15</sup> Before 1749 he married Rachel, the daughter of Bristol

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<sup>9</sup> For a typical example of a Wilkite poem printed in the *Mercury*, see that by ‘Anglicus’ printed at the request of ‘a constant reader’, 26 April 1770.

<sup>10</sup> *Weekly Entertainer* N.S. 1 (3 January 1820), pp. 1-3.

<sup>11</sup> Barker, *Newspapers*, pp. 159-60, 167.

<sup>12</sup> *London Evening Post* 6 January 1753.

<sup>13</sup> <http://users.adam.com.au/easby/Chapter%208%20-%20The%20Lerpinieres.html#mozTocId167333> gives details of the family histories of the Lerpiniere and their Goadby relatives, with transcripts of their PCC wills (Robert’s is TNA Prob/11/1045/125, Rachel’s 11/1192/112 and Samuel’s 11/1482/301. PROB11/1045/125, Rachel’s 11/1192/112 and Samuel’s 11/1482/301).

<sup>14</sup> *Two Humorous Novels* (1741), signed dedication to the governors and masters of Repton (the second edition in 1742 leaves out Goadby’s name). This states ‘it was under your patronage I imbibed the first principles of learning, and what is infinitely more valuable, those of true religion and virtue; that I was taught to behold vice with contempt, tho’ gilded over with the most glittering outside, and to esteem and venerate virtue, tho’ obscur’d by poverty, with nothing but its own native worth to recommend it’. This book is briefly discussed in Frances Luttikhuisen, ‘Englishing Cervantes’ Exemplary Novels’ in J. Ardila (ed.), *The Cervantean Heritage* (2009), pp. 87-8. Goadby and Owen listed a second edition for 1s 6d in their 1754 catalogue at the end of ESTC N29887.

<sup>15</sup> *London Evening Post*, 19 May 1744. He advertised a sale of his Bath stock in early 1745 on the (mysterious) grounds that he was going to the Hague, but he was still named as a Bath bookseller in book advertisements in London until April 1746

merchant tailor Charles Boshier; in 1776 Goadby obtained the freedom of Bristol by virtue of this marriage.<sup>16</sup> Robert and Rachel baptised a son, Robert, at Sherborne in 1749, but he died in 1756; no other children are recorded.<sup>17</sup>

In January 1749 Goadby moved his printing office to Sherborne and merged his newspaper with the longer-established *Sherborne Mercury*, run since its start in 1737 by the Bettinson family.<sup>18</sup> It became the *Western Flying Post or Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*, formally speaking, on 30 January 1749 (and is sometimes still cited as that by modern historians), but was known to contemporaries as the *Sherborne Mercury*. William Bettinson (or Bettison) had died in late August 1746 of ‘dropsical distemper’, and his widow Hannah had continued the paper.<sup>19</sup> Although the new paper is described as a ‘union’, the firm printing the paper was always ‘R. Goadby and company’ and Hannah disappears, reappearing, sadly, in a debtor’s prison in Nottingham in 1755, though a John Bettinson was one of three journeymen working for Goadby in 1778.<sup>20</sup>

Goadby held a monopoly of printing in Sherborne until early December 1764,<sup>21</sup> when he was challenged by two rivals, a very short-lived *Sherborne Chronicle* and the *Sherborne Journal* printed by William Cruttwell (1741-1804), one of an extraordinary set of siblings from a barber-surgeon’s family in Wokingham, Berkshire. William’s younger brother Richard (1747-1799), apprenticed in London, moved to Bath in 1768, becoming proprietor of the *Bath Chronicle* (and in 1772 married the daughter of the vicar of Osborne, outside whose churchyard Goadby was buried!).<sup>22</sup> William was apprenticed to a Reading printer in 1756, then briefly to a London printer in 1763 (so enabling him to become free of the Stationers’ Company in 1775). He inherited some property in September 1763 and married Martha Wickham (d. 1823) in September 1764, thus joining a prosperous goldsmith’s family in Sherborne, which explains his ability to set up a rival newspaper three months later. Both the *Journal* and *Chronicle* were published on Friday to be available in Exeter on Saturday, whereas the *Mercury* came out on Mondays. We only have the *Mercury*’s hostile references to trace this rivalry, and it is hard to sort out what relationship Goadby had to either. On 24 December Goadby observed ‘Cruttwell knows

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(*General Advertiser*, 2 April 1746). *London Evening Post* 23 September 1746 publishes an apology dated Yeovil 1 September 1746 ‘I R. Goadby having inadvertently printed and publish’d in the *Yeovil Mercury* of August the 18<sup>th</sup> an abridgement of the speech of the Lord High Steward’ in judgement against the Earl of Kilmarnock and other Jacobites, ‘authorised to be printed only by J. Billingsley’. ESTC T171595, a copy of their dying words when beheaded the same day, printed by ‘R. Goadby and comp. at Yeovil’, priced at 2d, survives at Somerset HC T/PH/no.4. Similarly TNA C12/751/10-13 13 Jan. 1746 names Goadby as one of several printers who had infringed the royal printer’s patent for printing a form of prayer to be used at thanksgiving on 9 October.

<sup>16</sup> Boshier (or Busher/Boshier/Boucher) was freed at Bristol in 1696 and is probably Charles Boshier buried at Broadmead Baptist chapel in 1743. Rachel’s sister, Sarah, had married William Douglas, surgeon and apothecary, at Clifton in 1726, and Rachel’s nieces, Katherine (baptized 1728 at Lewins Mead Presbyterian chapel, Bristol) and Sarah Jane Douglas appear in her will: both died as spinsters in 1806 in Bristol, leaving money to the Broadmead Baptists. In his will Robert left Sarah Jane £700 ‘in consideration of the great part of her life she has devoted to the assiduous care of her aunt and myself’. Some Goadby estate papers (probably owned by Sarah Jane) can be found in Bristol RO 5918/18. William Douglas became a controversial physician in London: see James Sambrook, ‘Douglas, William (b. 1710/11)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/68293>] (although Sambrook is unaware of his Bristol period or marriage and incorrectly claims that in 1729 he was in London apprenticed to James Douglas: his proposed birth date is also unlikely, 1705 being a more likely estimate).

<sup>17</sup> A flat stone in Sherborne Abbey records that he died 28 January 1756.

<sup>18</sup> C. H. Mayo, *Bibliotheca Dorsetiensis* (1885), pp. 74-6.

<sup>19</sup> *London Evening Post*, 4 September 1746. Hannah Baugh had married Bettinson (already a widower) on 26 April 1736 at St Luke’s Chelsea. William’s brother Joseph was presumably the J. Bettinson who published the paper for the single issue on 1 September 1746, before H. Bettinson took over from the 8<sup>th</sup>: for Joseph’s relationship to William see Dorset HC, D-SHC/KG/103.

<sup>20</sup> *London Gazette* 3 and 13 May 1755.

<sup>21</sup> The first surviving issue is no 20 of 12 April 1765, implying a first issue in early December 1764.

<sup>22</sup> H. A. Cruttwell, *History of the Cruttwell Family* (n.d., n.p.), pp. 33, 37-40, 64-74; Richard’s marriage settlement Somerset HC DD/s/W1/26. See also G. Tatham, ‘Cruttwell, William (bap. 1741, d.1804)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70548>]

that the very man he now so vilely abuses, he not many months ago repeatedly professed to look upon as a *father*' which might suggest that William was the person referred to on 10 December, when Goadby writes 'that this opposition arises from a late journeyman of our's; towards whom, if the most generous confidence had not been shewn, he would never had it in his power to have made this attempt to injure. But ingratitude is likely to meet with its just reward, in the little encouragement he meets with<sup>23</sup>.' But maybe the *Chronicle*'s printer (unknown) is intended here, and Goadby adds 'some of the hawkers of Cruttwell's Journal, we are told, imposed upon our customers last week, in saying that the MONDAY paper would be printed no more; But as this might probably be their own doing, we lay it not at his door: and only mention it that others may not be deceived'. This might suggest that at this point he was less critical of Cruttwell, but the following week he describes the *Chronicle* as 'the best of the papers set up in opposition', mentioning the 'illiberal abuse thrown upon us by Cruttwell's last Journal', observing that 'when once the human heart gives way to INGRATITUDE, it is capable of everything'. Both then and on 31 December he comments on lack of sales of both rivals around Exeter and Honiton. Finally on 7 January 1765 he writes:

~~'when once the human heart gives way to INGRATITUDE, it is capable of everything'. Both then and on 31 December he comments on lack of sales of both rivals around Exeter and Honiton. Finally on 7 January 1765 he writes-~~ It is amazing that the printer of Cruttwell's Journal does not see that he disgraces himself by staining his paper with such vile scurrility against the printer of this paper: And that in endeavouring to take away a man's character by dark innuendoes when he cannot alledge one dishonourable or disgraceful fact against him, is of all actions the most vile and must render whoever does it odious in the opinion of every good mind<sup>24</sup>.

The Dorset bibliographer, Charles Mayo, claimed that Crutwell's paper was 'supported by the local influence of the Toogood family' and intended to oppose Goadby's 'Whig paper'.<sup>23</sup> Certainly John Toogood's memorandum book shows him irritated with Goadby for printing a letter on 5 September 1757 (which he suspected Goadby had written) criticising local farmers (like the Toogoods) for profiteering in grain, and then failing to publish Toogood's letter of defence, though Toogood noted that 'it had this effect that it put a stop to his course of strife and slander', but the book ends before 1764.<sup>24</sup> But surviving issues of the *Journal* suggest little difference in stance between the two newspapers, and the Cruttwell family were also allied with 'Whig causes'. Richard and his brother Clement (1743-1808) in Bath were friends of Catherine Macaulay and the Rev. Thomas Wilson, strong supporters of Wilkes and radical politics.<sup>25</sup> Cruttwell's decision to set up a paper was probably more commercial than ideological. The *Journal* carried the notice 'Open to all PARTIES but biassed by NONE', and though such claims to impartiality were typical of even the most partisan publishers, this may have been genuine, as well as an implied criticism of Goadby.<sup>26</sup> Over the next two decades both men printed

<sup>23</sup> Mayo, *Bibliotheca*, pp. 77-8.

<sup>24</sup> Dorset HC D/170/1. Goadby went on publishing on the subject: see for example, the summary of laws against 'forestallors, regraters and ingrossers' sent in by 'a friend to the poor' from Ilminster printed 18 March 1765, together with an editorial note welcoming 'any hints or communications that may tend to abolish the extortions of engrossers etc' and noting 'it is our wish and endeavour to make our paper beneficial to the public as well as the conveyance of intelligence. It is a great pleasure to us to find that since the hint given in our paper of entering into associations for prosecuting forestallors etc, associations for that purpose have already been formed in some places<sup>25</sup>.' Cf. the letter of A. B. of Sherborne printed 29 February 1768 regarding 'the excessive profit of the bakers'.

<sup>25</sup> Crutwell, *History*, pp. 52-9, 69, 72, 75; B. Hill, *The Republican Virago* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 89, 112 (though she confuses Clement and Richard Cruttwell). William's will is PROB/11/1422/163, proved 15 March 1805.

<sup>26</sup> *Sherborne Journal* 5 February 1768.

publications from both Anglican and dissenting sources. While Mayo was correct that Goadby's was a 'Whig paper', it is not clear that Crutwell's was a Tory one – its nineteenth-century descendant was a supporter of Whig reform in the conflicts of 1828-34.

Both businesses suffered a crisis in the summer of 1778. Goadby died on 11 August, while Crutwell slipped into bankruptcy, confirmed in October, when his business was offered for sale. The newspaper was temporarily printed by William Grigg in Exeter, while the business was taken over Richard; by January 1779 William was replaced as a governor of Sherborne almshouse and school because 'he has left town and removed to Bath'.<sup>27</sup> However, using his wife's financial resources, William reassumed control (certainly by 1784<sup>28</sup>) although he then suffered a second bankruptcy between April 1790 and January 1791.<sup>29</sup> Despite this, he bequeathed his newspaper, and a considerable fortune, to his son James (b. 1772) in 1804, though from 1794 it became the *Dorchester and Sherborne Journal*, printed at Sherborne but 'published' in Dorchester.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile Rachel Goadby ran her printing business until her death 30 March 1790, no doubt employing the three journeymen whom Robert remembered in his will, and later James Langdon.<sup>31</sup> Then Robert's brother Samuel took over together with his nephew Samuel Lerpiniere, employing Langdon as their Sherborne-based printer and (from 1796) partner; in 1803 Langdon bought out the other partners.

## The Business

This section will consider the circulation and distribution of the *Mercury* and its advertisements (both as evidence of its range and character, and as sources of revenue). Listings of agents, showing the development of the *Mercury*'s sphere of influence<sup>32</sup> are available up to 1750, then intermittently between 1753 and 1765, before once again becoming a settled feature. Much of the finer commercial detail and individual involvement of newsmen, hawkers and postboys remains hidden, except for occasional clues. In his first issue Bettinson advertised that 'any honest industrious men of the villages near Sherborne that are willing to carry out this paper, may meet with good encouragement'.<sup>33</sup> These distributors became well-known figures in the region, and both Goadby and Crutwell published 'new year's verses' from them, soliciting an annual tip for their services. In 1786 the death [aged 60 of John Hooper](#) – of a distributor of *The Sherborne Mercury* for thirty years, based at Norton near Taunton, was reported. His round took him from Taunton to Minehead. His successor was Mr A.

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<sup>27</sup> A. Clark (ed.), *Sherborne Almshouse Register* (Dorset RS 17, 2013), p. 56. Goadby had been a governor from December 1759 until August 1766 when he resigned.

<sup>28</sup> Royal Exchange Assurance, policy 90723.

<sup>29</sup> *London Gazette* 10 and 13 April, 1 June and 4 December 1790. See Feather, *Provincial Book Trade*, pp. 95-6.

<sup>30</sup> Crutwell, *History*, pp. 38-42.

<sup>31</sup> Rachel's will ([TNA PROB11/1192/112](#)), made 3 June 1785, left just over £2,000 in legacies, plus a £20 annual annuity to Samuel Goadby, with the residue to her niece Sarah Jane Douglas. James Langdon and Joseph Towers were the witnesses. Langdon took out a Sun Life insurance policy for his stock as a bookseller in 1785 for £200 (policy 500406).

<sup>32</sup> For previous analysis of these see Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, pp. 167-71; C. Y. Ferdinand, 'Local Distribution Networks in Eighteenth-Century England' in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds), *Spreading the Word* (Winchester, 1992), pp. 137-40 and C. Y. Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (1997), pp. 95-7. Maxted, 'Printing', p. 242 reconstructs the newsmen's routes of the *Exeter Flying Post* in 1772.

<sup>33</sup> *Mercury* 22 February 1737. On 29 March 1737 they reported that the distributors of the *Gloucester Journal* 'have endeavour'd to intimidate the hawkers [of the *Mercury*] from supplying gentlemen with it'. See also Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, pp. 120-4.

Pile, printer, bookseller and bookbinder also from Norton who now undertook two rounds and was absent from his business for three days a week.<sup>34</sup>

Before studying Goadby's *Mercury* we need to consider the newspaper he took over. On 22 February 1737, William Bettinson and George Price (who disappears rapidly) published the first issue of *The Sherborne Mercury or Weekly Advertiser* from the printing office in Long Street. Sherborne, although unincorporated, was the second largest inland town in Dorset (population of 3,159 in 1801) and hosted the Easter Quarter Sessions. The agricultural prosperity of its hinterland ensured that the town developed as a service centre as well as market outlet. The textile industry and the manufacture of silk buttons were in decline and Sherborne was becoming a thoroughfare town servicing the growing carrying and passenger trade. As a Royal Post Stage on the road from London to Penryn,<sup>35</sup> conveniently situated on the Bristol to Weymouth road, it was well-placed for receiving and forwarding news and intelligence from London, and across the region. There were also two active booksellers in the town by 1737 – John Cooke and his brother Joshua – reflecting an established network of south-western booksellers able to assist in distribution.<sup>36</sup>

Ferdinand's study of Collins's *Salisbury Journal* establishes that between October 1737 and early 1739 Bettinson was printing both the *Mercury* and the *Salisbury Journal*. He continued to act as an agent taking in advertisements for the Salisbury paper and the two newspapers carved out distinct catchment areas.<sup>37</sup> The first *Mercury* agents to be named were Mr Gould, Dorchester (bookseller) and Mr Stoodley, Weymouth.<sup>38</sup> By January 1738 the network comprised nine agencies (three described as booksellers) at Dorchester, Weymouth, Frome, Beaminster, Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil, Axminster and Honiton, with an average distance from Sherborne of twenty-five miles and a defined area of circulation south and west of Sherborne, distinct from that of the *Salisbury Journal*.<sup>39</sup> The list of agencies in January 1740 remained at nine, but the average distance had expanded to fifty-four miles: Dorchester, Weymouth, Taunton, Bridgwater, Honiton, Tiverton, Barnstaple, Dartmouth (the last three all booksellers) and Liskeard in Cornwall. There is no indication of a London agency although Bettinson probably had access to the London booksellers through Collins.

A dramatic increase in agencies and area covered, particularly in Cornwall, occurred during the 'Forty-Five' rebellion which created 'a surge in the demand for news'.<sup>40</sup> Reports from Scotland began to appear in August 1745, taken from *The Caledonian Mercury* and pro-Hanoverian loyalist addresses were reported from towns including Bideford, Poole, Lostwithiel and Saltash. An adapted extract from a William Warburton sermon, under the title of 'Britons and Protestants' was published in the edition of 3 December 1745.<sup>41</sup> Bettinson drew attention in February 1746 to the enlargement of the newspaper, a new typeface, the 'number of

<sup>34</sup> *Mercury* 28 Oct. 1786 and 5 Aug. 1793. Robert left 'all the news men now employed in circulating the Sherborne Mercury' half a guinea each, but £5 each to any apprentice and £10 each to his journeymen. Samuel Lerpiniere's 1808 probate papers (see n. 13) records £90 from Samuel Goadby to be given to Langdon to share out, with £20 each to three journeymen, £10 'to the person who goes the weekly journey to Exeter' and £20 in total to the men 'who set out from Sherborne with the newspapers'. Samuel's original will names the Exeter carrier as 'John Moore who was John Cox's successor', and gives £5 to each of 'the 7 news carriers who circulate the paper ... and who usually start from Sherborne'.

<sup>35</sup> M. Brayshay, 'Royal Post-Horse Routes in England and Wales', *Journal of Historical Geography* 17 (1991), pp. 373-389.

<sup>36</sup> John Cooke PCC PROB 11/923 and Joshua Cooke PCC PROB 11/899.

<sup>37</sup> Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, pp. 36-7, 97-103, 140-2.

<sup>38</sup> John Gould, bookseller, succeeded by his son Samuel (PCC PROB 11/1103/330).

<sup>39</sup> Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>40</sup> Bob Harris, '"A Great Palladium of our Liberties": the British press and the "Forty-Five"' *Historical Research* (1995), p. 81; id., 'England's Provincial Newspapers and the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745-1746', *History* 80 (1995), pp. 5-21. Wiles, *Freshet Advices*, pp. 129-33 discusses the delivery of the *Mercury* to William Borlase, rector of Ludgvan in west Cornwall.

<sup>41</sup> J. J. Caudle 'The Defence of Georgian Britain: The anti-Jacobite sermon 1715-1746' in K. A. Francis and W. Gibson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901* (Oxford 2012), pp. 245-261.

eminent booksellers' advertisements weekly published in it' and its extensive circulation.<sup>42</sup> By 14 April 1746 the number of agents had increased to 17: Dorchester, Weymouth, Taunton (2), Bridgwater, Honiton, Tiverton, Barnstaple, Dartmouth and Liskeard now supplemented by a further seven in Cornwall at Bodmin, Wadebridge, St Columb, Grampound, Tregony, Foy, and Looe. The defeat of the rebels at Culloden was reported on 28 April 1746 and by the end of August 27 agents were listed: the above list plus Truro, Penzance, Helston and St Austell in Cornwall, Great Torrington, Plymouth, Shepton Mallet and double agencies in Exeter and Honiton, making 12 agents in Cornwall, 9 in Devon, 4 in Somerset and 3 in Dorset, based in 28 towns. Eleven agents were in the book trade, including two at Exeter (Score and Tozer), while others were innkeepers, saddlers, shopkeepers, a schoolmaster, a tobacconist, a merchant, a farrier and a jeweller. The Cornish agencies averaged a distance of 119 miles from Sherborne, and the distance to all 27 agencies averaged 76 miles: a significant commercial network to maintain and service.

So the paper Goadby took over in January 1749 had already established two clear areas of circulation and distribution. One focused on Cornwall and south Devon and the other centred on Sherborne, extending into north Devon and Somerset. His network would receive advertisements and orders as well as commercial, trading and shipping news from the towns and ports. However, the costs and economic benefits of maintaining such an extensive area would be tested by the period of peace after 1748. The list of provincial agencies disappears from 6 February 1749 until 10 December 1753, as Goadby apparently consolidated, while increasing the newspaper's exposure in London, Bath and Bristol. In July and September 1750 notices appeared in *The London Evening Post* and the *Mercury* advising readers of fourteen coffee houses in London, besides one each in Bath and Bristol, where copies of the paper would be available. He highlights the '*considerable advantage* to those who have the occasion to *advertise* ESTATES, HOUSES, GOODS lost, HORSES stolen, etc. And must in all probability answer their *expectation* in *advertising*'.<sup>43</sup> He advised customers in December 1750 that advertisements could be accepted by Mr Newbery, bookseller, St Paul's Churchyard, William Owen at Temple Bar and Samuel Goadby at the Exchange.<sup>44</sup> When the listing of agencies recommenced in December 1753, numbers had contracted (to 18, 12 in the book trade), particularly in Cornwall and Devon where 8 and 5 agencies had been lost respectively, leaving 4 Cornish agents (two booksellers). But this had been compensated with coffee houses in London and Bristol, two agencies in London and one each in Salisbury and Bristol and two either side of and close to Sherborne at Yeovil and Henstridge, serving a more local area.<sup>45</sup>

There is no list of agents from August 1754 until 7 July 1760, when 20 agencies are recorded with an increased presence in Devon (8), Cornwall (7) and Somerset (4) but a corresponding contraction in Dorset (only Sherborne) and no mention of agents in London, Bath or Salisbury.<sup>46</sup> An increased demand for news during the

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<sup>42</sup> *Mercury* 24 February 1746.

<sup>43</sup> *London Evening Post* 21 July 1750 and *Mercury* 17 September 1750.

<sup>44</sup> *Mercury* 10 December 1753. John Newbery bequeathed his wife his shares in 'the Sherborne and Yeovill Mercury' (as well as 'Owen's Chronicle' and other papers) in his will dated 21 October 1767, and in 1774 his nephew sold his son his share of this interest for £200, but, unlike Owen, Newbery was not a significant publishing partner with Goadby: C. Welsh, *A Bookseller of the Last Century* (1885), pp. 161, 336.

<sup>45</sup> Mr Collins in Salisbury, Mr Palmer in Bristol, Mr Hawkins in Somerton, Mr Henley in Weymouth, Mr John Ryal in Henstridge, Mr Woodeson in Yeovil, Mrs Chauklin in Taunton, Mr Parkhouse in Tiverton, Mr Thomas Grover in East Gate Exon, Mrs Rhodes and Mr Whitfield in Plymouth, Mr Nankivell in St Austle, Mr Rogers in Helstone, Mr Allison in Falmouth and Mr Michell in Penzance: Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, p. 114.

<sup>46</sup> Mr Hawkins in Somerton, Mr Sawtell in Langport, Mr Larkham in Ilminster, Mrs Chauklin in Taunton, Mr Pile in Norton, Mr Parkhouse in Tiverton, Mr Salter in Honiton, Mr Grover in Exeter, Mr Adams, printer, and Mr Freno, Haydon and

Seven Years' War (1756-1763) is reflected in the enlarged network in Devon and Cornwall. Reacting to Cruttwell's rival paper, on 3 December 1764 Goadby stresses that he continues to bring down by express from London Monday's post news ('though at an Expence scarce to be borne since the Peace'), 'the most important of any in the week on account of the arrivals of foreign mails; the Saturday's night Gazette and other causes'. He claims that the *Mercury*, 'by many Years establishment is now become the general register of estates to be sold or lett in the counties of Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall; of goods to be sold; sundry things wanted'. A paragraph on 11 November 1765 mentions the encouragement the newspaper has received in Bristol and the hiring of 'several hawkers to distribute the Paper'. A letter reinforces this view drawing attention to the 'commercial and political knowledge' contained in the newspaper and the beneficial reports relating to 'London imports and the early intelligence from the Western ports'.

This optimism is reflected in the issue for 26 June 1769 which shows a substantial growth in the agency network with 26 towns listed containing 38 agents (29 in the book trade). Multiple agencies were recorded in London (3), Bristol (4), Exeter (4), Bridgwater (2) and Taunton (2). Devon and Cornwall each had agents in 9 towns, highlighting Goadby's ability to retain a secure and authoritative hold over an increasing geographical region despite competition. Once again agencies were named in London and Bristol strengthening his reputation and connection with the London book trade as the extent of his readership became apparent. In Goadby's final decade there were no substantial gains or losses in the circuit established by 1769, so that his final issue of 5 August 1778 presents a network of 37 agents in 28 towns of whom 25 were working in the book trade.

His successors maintained the same extensive agency. For example on 24 May 1790 'advertisements for this paper, which is circulated every week through all the towns and villages in the extensive counties of Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, the city of Bristol and part of Wiltshire' were taken by 41 agents in 34 towns, 10 in Cornwall, 8 in Devon, 8 in Somerset and 5 in Dorset, plus Bristol (newspaper proprietors Pine and Rudhall), Salisbury ('Messrs Collins and co') and four London coffeehouses, plus William Tayler, who acted as London agent for many provincial papers and, of course, Samuel Goadby.<sup>47</sup> It is a notable achievement when other provincial newspapers, faced with more competitors and increased distribution costs, were concentrating upon a readership surrounding the printing office. The average distance of the towns involved in the distribution of the *Salisbury Journal* in 1783, for example, was only 28 miles.<sup>48</sup> What distinctive factors enabled Goadby to maintain and service his extensive regional network and resist the trend to prune the outlying agencies and focus on a closer, more accessible market?

A crucial advantage that the provincial newspaper could hold over the London press was the inclusion of the latest news from the capital and its appearance on the streets before the London papers. Speed of production was frequently emphasized in advertising 'puffs' in newspapers. Both Bettinson and Goadby, in co-operation with Collins, maintained men and horses in order to expedite the delivery of the *Gazette* and other London newspapers to Sherborne and Salisbury on the post days of Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. This advantage allowed the *Mercury* to be published on Mondays – not a market day in Sherborne – with the proud and oft-repeated claim that it contained all the material news from the Saturday London papers which no other

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Whitfield, Booksellers, in Plymouth, Mr Braund in Menhenniot, Mr Warne and Comp at St Columb, Mr Jewell in Truro, Mr Rogers at Helstone, Mr Steel and Mr Allison in Falmouth, Mr Mitchell, Penzance: *Mercury* 7 July 1760.

<sup>47</sup> The same statement and list appeared on 28 Jan. 1793.

<sup>48</sup> Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, p. 120.

newspaper in the south west could match. It was distributed in Dorset and the towns and villages leading to Exeter by Monday evening and reached the far west of Cornwall by Tuesday evening. Distribution was undertaken by an effective and efficient delivery service comprising a mixture of newsagents, carriers, newsmen, postboys and hawkers. Avoidable delays were considered serious: an apology from three Membury men for obstructing ‘in a wanton and disorderly manner Mr John Cox, the carrier of *The Sherborne Mercury*, from passing on the turnpike road near Beal’s Down’ was published in the newspaper.<sup>49</sup> Given the geography of the south-west peninsula, it seems that a paper printed in Sherborne and then distributed westwards could reach the entire region quicker than could any paper based further into the region which took longer to receive the news.

The speed and reliability of delivery helped to engender readers’ trust in the proprietor, newsagents and the newspaper itself, resulting in growing number of advertisements and the inclusion of local news items from across the south west. In comparison with rural Dorset, the more populous counties of Devon and Cornwall were the key to the growth in advertisements and a strong representation of bookseller-agents increasingly provided service centres for local commerce, taking in advertisements and subscriptions, selling medical products and distributing newspapers.<sup>50</sup> The large catchment area covered by the *Mercury* would have not only encouraged potential advertisers to place advertisements but also appealed to prospective purchasers attracted to the many opportunities presented. As the editors claimed on 1 May 1797:

It is well known that this paper has had no inconsiderable share in increasing the commerce, and consequently the opulence, of the four western counties of England; and that without such a paper, the business of them could not go forward with its accustomed effect.<sup>51</sup>

Circulation figures for newspapers are notoriously elusive. As Cranfield spotted, there may be an indication that Bettinson was printing 2,000 copies in 1739, in a *London Evening Post* reference to 2,000 copies of a notice being sent out with the *Mercury*.<sup>52</sup> Goadby never gives circulation figures, although in complaining about the proposed increases in duty in 1757 he observed that the printers had

proved beyond any denial or objection, that on a newspaper which sells 4000 every week, and has forty advertisements every week, the government receives each week 10l 1s 6d duty and the proprietor gains only 2l 2s 6d (making no allowance for losses by accidents or bad debts, which are often very considerable).

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<sup>49</sup> *Mercury* 23 July 1792.

<sup>50</sup> J. Raven, *Publishing Business in Eighteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 79-84.

<sup>51</sup> One measure of the comparative success of the *Mercury* is provided by the index of all the unique adverts in the London and provincial newspapers printed in the *Public Ledger* 31 January to 12 June 1760. Although not exhaustive (some papers only feature occasionally) this suggests that the *Mercury* carried as many (and often more) advertisements of national interest as its neighbours in Salisbury, Gloucester and Bath, though the two Newcastle papers generally had more. The *Mercury* averaged 11-12 advertisements a week, peaking at 16.

<sup>52</sup> Cranfield, *Development*, p. 171 citing *London Evening Post* 10 April 1739 letter from A. H. of Sherborne of 7 April referring to a bill for a charitable lottery printed in *Mercury* June 7 1737 ‘and above 2000 sold in the counties of Hants, Wilts, Gloucester, Somerset, Dorset and Devon’. It is hard to decide if this means that 2,000 of the paper were sold, or 2,000 lottery tickets.

These figures may not reflect Goadby's own output, but they may suggest an order of magnitude – some other provincial papers reached (but none exceeded) this circulation figure.<sup>53</sup>

The profitability of the provincial newspaper depended on advertising, with a large increase in the volume of advertising decade by decade in newspapers.<sup>54</sup> The following analysis follows that adopted by Ian Jackson (in his work on the *Northampton Mercury* and the *Reading Mercury*) and considers the increase in the number of advertisements, the strategies used to accommodate them, the possible income accruing and their areas of origin. It supports his arguments regarding the importance and nature of advertising revenue, but not his other major finding. Jackson confirms others' findings that the commercial range or 'sphere of influence' was contracting<sup>55</sup> as many newspapers changed from regional newspapers to county ones. In marked contrast the *Mercury* retained its regional importance, with the majority of advertisements from Devon and Cornwall.

In 1738, the first full year of publication, 84 adverts were placed, increasingly only modestly to 102 by 1740. The initial adverts originated largely from Dorset but with some from Somerset, Devon and Wiltshire (but not Hampshire). Links with the London book trade are evident in advertisements for books and magazines while a subscription proposal in 1737 refers to booksellers in Taunton, Tiverton, Bath, Bristol, Bridgwater, Dorchester, Exeter, the printing office in Sherborne and William Collins in Salisbury, indicating an established trade consortium.<sup>56</sup> The cost per advertisement was 2s. 6d. 'if short', including the government duty of 1s. for each item. These costs remained stable until 1757, when the duty was raised to 2s. (and the cost of stamped paper by 1d.). On 27 June 1757, Goadby published a stern leader article addressed to the public, portraying the tax rises as an attack on 'the liberty of the press' reflecting a desire to 'sink the public into that entire ignorance of all public affairs'.<sup>57</sup> He raised the cost of the newspaper by one halfpenny to 'two pence halfpenny' and advertisements by a shilling. By 13 September 1762, 'advertisements, not exceeding 15 or 16 lines are taken in for 3s.6d. Longer ones in proportion, at the rate of six-pence for every five lines exceeding fifteen'. By 3 December 1770 this was 4s for 20 lines or less, reduced to 16 lines by 11 June 1773. By 5 June 1780 it was raised to 4s 6d for 16 lines, reduced to 12 lines by 21 January 1782. The rate rose again to 5s (up to 13 lines) by 5 January 1789 and to 5s 6d on 3 August the same year. The duty had risen to 2s 6d per advertisement in 1787.

The growth in the number of advertisements and the space devoted to them correlates closely to the pattern observed by Jackson and Ferdinand.<sup>57</sup> Figures 1-3 summarize the developments.

**Fig. 1. Average number of advertisements per month in the *Sherborne Mercury* from one year in each decade**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Number of advertisements per month</u>
1730s	40
1740s	60

<sup>53</sup> See Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, pp. 126-30, which suggests a growth in *Salisbury Journal* circulation from c. 2,000 in 1740, to 3,000 by the 1750s and 1760s, and 4,000 by 1780.

<sup>54</sup> I. Jackson, 'The Geographies of Promotion' in J. Hinks and C. Armstrong (eds), *Printing Places* (New Castle, Delaware and London, 2005), pp. 65-80.

<sup>55</sup> Jackson, 'Geographies', pp. 68-9, Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, p. 124; H. Barker, 'Catering for Provincial Tastes? Newspapers, readership and profit in late eighteenth-century England', *Historical Research*, 69 (1996), pp. 42-61.

<sup>56</sup> *Mercury* 30 Aug. 1737.

<sup>57</sup> Jackson, 'Geographies', p. 69.

1750s	120
1760s	140
1770s	300
1780s	320
1790s	420

In the 1740s advertisements were running at 60 per month. By 1750 this had risen to 90 per month, with an average in the 1750s of 120, twice the previous decade. The next major growth was in the 1770s, after which there was only a gentle further increase until the 1790s. Although no account books have survived, two marked-up office copies for the years 1785 and 1786 reveal the number of advertisements submitted and the revenue accruing: in 1785, a total of 3,481 appeared, or around 290 a month, producing a gross revenue of £996 10s. which, after duty was paid, amounted to £648 9s. or £54 a month. This was the equivalent income to the sale of 3000 copies of the newspaper weekly, which only brought 1d on each copy after government stamp duties were deducted. The following year, 1786, witnessed an increase to 4289 generating a net revenue of £907 3s 10d (gross £1336 2s 6d) or £75 per month, equivalent to selling 4160 copies. Of course, neither of these takes account of all the other costs associated either with producing the paper (obtaining the news, printing the paper, distributing it and allowing a share of the price to the distribution team) or with advertising (a share to the agents who took in advertisements). When a further duty rise was proposed in 1797, the *Mercury* reminded its readers that ‘upwards of 60 per cent of the money received for newspapers and advertisements go to pay the several duties’, only leaving forty pounds in every hundred ‘to support themselves and defray the very heavy expenses necessarily attendant on their printing, distribution etc’.<sup>58</sup>

**Fig. 2. Percentage of *Sherborne Mercury* devoted to each type of content in each decade**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Advertisements</u>	<u>News</u>	<u>Commercial data, letters and essays &amp; other</u>
1740s	30%	60%	10%
1750s	45%	50%	5%
1760s	60%	35%	5%
1770s	66%	30%	4%
1780s	70%	25%	5%

<sup>58</sup> 1 May 1797. Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, p. 142 made a similar calculation on a single issue of the *Mercury* in 1756 and reckoned that the advertising revenue after duty was equivalent to the sale of about 3,100 copies.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of advertising increasing by the decade, rising to 70% during the 1780s, and the necessary contraction in the amount of space in news and other content to accommodate this increment. In 1740, a typical issue of four pages and twelve columns (three columns per page) devoted the first three pages to news and other material (75%) and the final page to advertisements (25%). In 1750 advertisements occupied 42% of the space, increasing to 59% in 1770 and to 70% by 1780. By the early 1760s, with the prospect of war continuing, Goadby enlarged the *Mercury* in length and the number of columns to four on each page, and changed to a smaller typeface so it could accommodate more news as well as advertisements. On 23 September 1765 the words ‘AND GENERAL ADVERTISER’ appear under the title and Goadby again enlarged the newspaper. In 1766 he urged potential advertisers to avoid the disappointment caused by postponed or omitted advertisements by ensuring the printing office received them early in the week, while stressing the material benefits that his newspaper offered to advertisers: its contents reflecting the latest news from London, the speed and manner of its dissemination, the number of its readers, its reputation for advertising estates in the four Western counties and its wide circulation.<sup>59</sup> Advertisements now regularly displaced news items from the first page.

Jackson finds that real estate was the most common product advertised and the same is true for the *Mercury* with over half the advertisements devoted to the sale or lease of agricultural holdings, urban property or business establishments. The advertising Jackson describes as ‘administrative’ also features prominently in the *Mercury*, namely notices placed by public bodies or interest groups to inform the readership of meetings concerning turnpikes, clubs, creditors and politicians or forthcoming quarter sessions for example.<sup>60</sup> Advertisements also reflected the mercantilist concerns of those involved with trade and shipping. Numerous sailing vessels and timber suitable for ship-building (oak, ash beech and elm) are listed for auction, while luxury goods from colonial and international markets, including wines, spirits, fruits, sugar and coffee and products for home industrial use, including sealskins and iron appear for sale.<sup>61</sup> Under the heading of commercial data, advertisements appear for grain prices at Bear Key, Warminster and Devizes as well as information on stocks, bullion values and exchange rates. Advertisements for cultural events and products [of the kind highlighted by Peter Borsay](#) occur infrequently, again as noted by Jackson<sup>62</sup>, though regular announcements appear of assemblies, theatrical productions, musical concerts, dancing masters, circulating libraries, lectures and animal sports – predominately cock-fighting and horse racing. And of course Goadby continued to devote extensive space to the publications, patent medicines and stationery items he and his agents sold.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> A similar reminder to submit advertisements early, given the likelihood that ‘important debates in Parliament’ would occupy much space, appeared on 5 Jan. 1795, together with a request for early payment of ‘newsmen and agents’ given the ‘quick succession of heavy payments’ faced by the paper because of ‘the very extensive, expeditious and regular circulation of this paper, which is so essential to its utility’ especially because ‘prompt payment is required at the Stamp Office for the heavy duty on newspapers and advertisements’.

<sup>60</sup> Jackson, ‘Geographies’, p. 71.

<sup>61</sup> *Mercury* 18 March 1782, 28 Jan. 1765,

<sup>62</sup> Jackson, ‘Geographies’, pp. 65-6. Cf. Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, pp. 192-4, who classifies c. 4% of advertisements as for ‘leisure services’.

<sup>63</sup> For example, an advertisement on 6 January 1772 informs ‘gentlemen and others’ that they ‘may be served regularly at their own houses by the carriers of this paper with all the different magazines, reviews, registers and other monthly publications, and also with the several different weekly publications, new books and pamphlets’, then lists a long series of account and memorandum books, books of designs, types of paper and paper hangings, warrant and other printed notices available, and that ‘at his said shop is a collection of above two thousand volumes of the best books, which are lent out to read, by the year, quarter or single book, and sent to any place within the circuit of the Sherborne Mercury’. He then lists 14 ‘useful and entertaining books’ available, including many of his own discussed below, and five books for ‘the entertainment of children ... price 6d bound and gilt, embellished with cuts’ printed by Carnan in London. See John Feather, ‘The Country

**Fig. 3. Distribution of advertisements across the counties of Dorset, Devon, Somerset and Cornwall by decade**

	1740s	1750s	1760s	1770s	1780s	1790s
Dorset	35.5%	19%	11%	13%	10%	12%
Devon	25%	46%	53%	43%	56%	52%
Somerset	39%	22%	19%	21%	11%	15%
Cornwall	0.5%	13%	17%	23%	23%	21%

Figure 3 shows the distribution of advertisements across the south west. Already by 1740, 70 percent of adverts originated outside Dorset, 37 percent of which were from the contiguous counties of Devon, Wiltshire and Somerset, while London supplied one third, reflecting the market for books and medicines. By 1785, the percentage of south-western advertisements originating from Dorset had fallen from 30 percent to 10 percent, with Devon supplying 67 percent and Cornwall 20 percent. If we consider the edition before Goadby's death, on Monday, 17 August 1778, 80 advertisements appear, with over half deriving from Devon (24 from 18 locations) and Cornwall (20 from 16 locations). Somerset and Dorset provide almost a quarter (17), with single advertisements from Bath, Bristol, Gloucester, Wiltshire and London, plus three book advertisements from London, five more promoting Goadby's own publications, and six for patent medicines. Thirty advertisements are concerned with property and 17 are public notices - including the Bath Agricultural Society, turnpike trust meetings, school meetings, a coffee house, and stolen or strayed horses.

Bettinson and Goadby had established a highly successful product, which bucked the national trend to remain a viable regional newspaper by careful selection of news, commercial items and regional issues that clearly appealed to a broad spectrum of readers. Although there is not space here to cover it in detail, Cruttwell sought to copy Goadby's successful example, and succeeded in establishing his *Journal* as another regional paper, also widely distributed in Devon and Cornwall, though with a greater focus on Somerset and Dorset – its rather ponderous title in 1768 was *Cruttwell's Sherborne, Shaftesbury and Dorchester Journal, or Yeovil, Taunton and Bridgewater Chronicle*.<sup>64</sup> Initially its advertising basis was much smaller as well as narrower than Goadby's, though it gradually expanded, helped no doubt by the strong link with Grigg in Exeter. An auction notice in the *Mercury* referring to the household goods, printing materials, shop stock and the 'property' of the *Sherborne Journal* appeared 5 October 1778. The advertisement declares that 1600 were printed weekly and that 'a young man of active disposition, need not fear making a fortune in it.' Clearly the model of printing at the regional location closest to the London news, but then utilising a dense distribution network to reach all parts of the south-west peninsula, was one that could be copied successfully.

## Robert Goadby's contribution

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Trade in Books' in R. Myers and M. Harris (eds), *Spreading the Word* (Winchester, 1990), p. 168 for Goadby's role in the South West.

<sup>64</sup> *Journal* 5 February 1768. J. Black, *The English Press* (2001), pp. 110 and 114 recognizes the continuing reach of both Sherborne papers into Devon and Cornwall into the early nineteenth century. For an example of the Cornish sessions advertising in both Sherborne papers see Cornwall RO QS/1/4/217 14 Jan. 1779, and for other Cornish adverts in both: *General Evening Post* 12 September 1780 (Truro Corporation resolution) and *St James Chronicle* 15 September 1781 (tinners' resolutions at Helston). However, far more Cornish references are to the *Mercury* alone.

The *Mercury* was only part of Goadby's publishing output, and we need to examine his other publications, and the motivations behind these, to understand his editorial priorities. In turn, these may help to explain his choices in running his newspaper. Goadby arguably saw his newspaper, and its distribution network, as a means to disseminate his other publications, whose contents mattered as much to him as his news reportage. Throughout his career he experimented with serial publications which would spread the values he cherished across the region, both geographically and socially. Whereas Benjamin Collins used his newspaper to expand his sale of books and medicines, but then invested his very considerable profits in banking and property, Goadby was more interested in educating his readers, and his more modest prosperity at death, largely held in his publishing business (he had shares in a hotel in Weymouth) reflects his different priorities.<sup>65</sup> Goadby's activities, however, though reflecting his own ambitions, depended on three key partnerships.

The first partnership was with the London publisher William Owen (d. 1793), operating from 1747 at the Homer's Head in Fleet Street.<sup>66</sup> Owen was Goadby's main collaborator until the mid-1760s, and continued to work frequently with him; their most famous joint product was the *Book of Fairs* (1756; retitled *Owen's Book of Fairs* in 1769), which ran to numerous editions, protected by a royal licence. This was a quintessential metropolitan/provincial collaboration, targeted at areas of scattered settlement like the South-West, disseminating information on those occasional fairs in small and middle-sized settlements which still shaped pastoral economies alongside the weekly rhythm of market towns.<sup>67</sup> Owen was (especially in his early career) a constant entrepreneur – involved in publishing well over a thousand editions. From 1747 he experimented with serial publications, including newspapers and magazines.<sup>68</sup> His most famous serial, reflecting his long-term relationship with the scientific instrument-maker and popularizer Benjamin Martin, was the *General Magazine of the Arts and Sciences* (1755-64),<sup>69</sup> but earlier he attempted to do for magazines what provincial newspapers were already doing to the London press, namely produce compilations of all the best materials, launching his *Magazine of Magazines* in July 1750, with Goadby's support.<sup>70</sup> It lasted only ten months (to April 1751), and is chiefly remembered for sparking publication of Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard'. The fastidious Gray was horrified to learn that what he called, sarcastically, 'certain gentlemen (as their bookseller expresses it) who have taken the Magazine of Magazine into their hands' had obtained the poem in manuscript and would be

<sup>65</sup> Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins*, pp. 59-60, estimates Collins was worth over £85,000 at his death. Goadby left Rachel an annuity of £25 and specified about £2,500 of other legacies. The printing equipment was insured for £1,000 by Goadby and Lerpiniere in 1778: see Sun policy 402594. A 1794 policy for Lerpiniere is at Guildhall MS 11936/397/624815.

<sup>66</sup> Owen was apprenticed 5 February 1733, freed in the Stationers' Company 1 April 1740, livery 6 February 1750, court 7 April 1778 and master in 1781, dying 1 December 1793. See Timperley, *Dictionary*, pp. 62, 781. Goadby bequeathed 'my old friend Mr Owen' 5 guineas to buy a ring. Some catalogues of Owen's publications can be found in ESTC T111605 and 202149 (both 1755) and N62531 (1772). Their first joint publication was *The New Pilgrim's Progress: or the pious Indian convert* (1748) by James Walcot.

<sup>67</sup> See the discussion in *Notes and Queries for Somerset and Dorset* 35 (2001), pp. 80-85. In 1777 they also published *Owen's Book of Roads*.

<sup>68</sup> He published Eliza Haywood's two attempts at a *Lady's Weekly Magazine* in 1747, the anti-Court journal *The Remembrancer* (1747-51) edited by James Ralph for George Bubb Doddington, an attempted revival of the *Spectator* (1753-4), *Owen's Weekly Chronicle* (1758-65), and *The Lawyers Magazine* (1761-2).

<sup>69</sup> J. Raven, *Business of Books* (2007), p. 248; J. R. Millburn, *Benjamin Martin* (Noordhof, 1976) – figure 5 shows the location of Owen's shop. One of Martin's periodicals for Owen, *Miscellaneous Correspondence* (1755-63) with monthly issues and biennial collected issues, covering 'natural and civil history, geography, mathematics, poetry, memoirs of monthly occurrences, catalogues of new books, etc' bears a notable resemblance to some of Goadby's serializations discussed below.

<sup>70</sup> ESTC P505109. The chief target of such compilations, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, commenting critically on them all in a notice 'to the reader' for those wishing to bind together all its 1750 issues, described the *Magazine of Magazines* as 'very sick'.

publishing it. He rapidly rushed out his own edition, so it did not appear first in the kind of popularizing commercial venture which Gray despised.<sup>71</sup>

From 1752 Goadby and Owen also published a number of serialized works, under the general heading of 'The Family Library', which re-published the types of non-news material which had appeared in their newspapers and periodicals within themed collections (historical, geographical, scientific, literary and the like), and offered them in serial numbers for 4d fortnightly, leading to complete volumes. They were advertised as 'being calculated to advance the cause of religion and virtue; and to improve in all useful knowledge, the understanding of those who have not time to read, or abilities to purchase, many books', expecting that 'parents will not think it too much to bestow for the benefit of their children' as it was 'of use especially to young minds, by alluring them to a taste for reading and a desire after knowledge'.<sup>72</sup> Titles included *An Entertaining Account of all the Countries of the Known World* (published in 61 parts 1752-5, comprising 4 volumes), *A New History of England* (1752, 2 volumes) and *Miscellaneous Pieces, consisting of Select Poetry, Methods of Improvement in Husbandry, Gardening and Various other Subjects, Useful to Families* (1752-5, in 59 parts), which clearly reproduced newspaper material such as the regular item 'public transactions in Europe since our last'.<sup>73</sup>

It is hard to judge whether Owen's publishing was driven by more than commercial considerations. His output spans the political and religious spectrum (though not evangelical or high Tory), ranging from highbrow works (like the economic writings of Joseph Massie) to controversial pamphlets and sermons, though he never produced mass market items like ballads or chapbooks.<sup>74</sup> From the mid-1760s he published less himself but joined the book-trade syndicates which published major texts like Johnson's *Dictionary* or Shakespeare's works, although he remained involved in both serial publication and newspapers, notably the *Gazeteer*. This was an opposition Whig newspaper, and Owen probably, like Goadby, inclined to this position.<sup>75</sup> He is remembered (if at all) by historians because he was put on trial in 1752 for having published what the government judged a seditious libel by Alexander Murray, on behalf of the Independent Electors of Westminster, a radical grouping which achieved a temporary alliance between opposition Whigs (including those around Frederick, Prince of Wales), country Tories and Jacobites (like Murray himself), all hoping for a 'patriot King' to ally with the people against ministerial oligarchy.<sup>76</sup> The trial became legally famous because

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<sup>71</sup> 'If you held the Magazine of Magazines in the light that I do' (letter to Horace Walpole 11 Feb. 1751): see Sulvir Kaul, *Thomas Gray and Literary Authority* (Stanford, 1993), pp. 155-7. A Limerick imprint, initially of the same magazine, continued publication for many years after 1751. See <http://www3.ul.ie/ecrg/digitisation-magazine-of-magazines>.

<sup>72</sup> *Old England* 23 September and 12 November 1752, which also record the royal patent for sole printing for 14 years. The same advertisement appeared in the *Mercury* itself on 24 September. A fuller account of the intended audience is offered in the preface to *The Family Library, or Instructor in Useful Knowledge* (1752) (ESTC T190847).

<sup>73</sup> Their output suggests a substantial qualification to the claims by William St Clair in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge, 2004) that the English publishing industry prior to 1774 made little effort to reach wider audiences except with 'obsolete' pre-Enlightenment materials: his exclusion of periodical publications and relative neglect of serial publishing is problematic, although one might see Goadby's rationale as being precisely to overcome the barriers of cost and price for ordinary readers accessing recent knowledge which St Clair documents.

<sup>74</sup> Even Owen and Goadby's most popular sounding work, *A Warning Piece against the Crime of Murder* (1752?), a collection designed to prove that 'however secretly they are committed, Providence will interpose, and bring them to light and punishment', turns out to be a refined collection, as suggested by the opening piece 'The History of Victorina and Syponthus'. As ever the publishers hope (p.vi) 'parents and masters of families will not be wanting in making this collection to be frequently perused in their families. The expense is but small and the time requisite for the perusal now and then will not be much'.

<sup>75</sup> L. Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England 1792-3* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1967), pp. 34, 168, 342.

<sup>76</sup> Owen may himself have had Jacobite connections as his first known publication in 1746 (under a false imprint) was *Ascanius or the Young Adventurer* for which he and others were examined in January 1747: TNA, State Papers 36, vol. 93, fols. 68, 72, 74 and 159. Intriguingly, Goadby also published *A Brief Account of the Life and Family of Miss Jenny Cameron, the young Pretender's reputed mistress*. 'London printed and sold by R. Goadby at the Printing Office in Yeovil' (c. 1746).

the jury insisted, against judicial direction, in judging not merely the fact of publication but also whether the publication constituted a seditious libel or not. News of Owen's acquittal by the jury was celebrated in the *Mercury*, drawing comparisons with the acquittal of John Lilburne 'an advocate for English liberty' under 'Old Noll' and of the bishops in 1688, and on the streets of Sherborne with a large bonfire, bells and toasts 'to the glorious twelve, assertors of British liberty', the liberty of the press and so on, while 'as great rejoicings in most of the towns in the west of England' were predicted.<sup>77</sup> The decision sparked ongoing controversy, being defended in two tracts on the subject of jury powers written in 1764 and 1778 by Joseph Towers, discussed below.<sup>78</sup> During a parliamentary debate on the subject in 1771 one government speaker, attacking the populist rhetoric of the opposition press, singled out the *Mercury*, claiming that the late Duke of Bedford had been 'hooted from the country' during a visit to the west country in 1769 'intirely owing to a paragraph in Goadby's Sherbourn newspaper' asserting that Bedford was hoping to promote a loyal address attacking Wilkes.<sup>79</sup> A constant theme in Goadby's papers and magazines was the dependence of political liberty on the freedom of the press, and over the door of his office was the inscription: THE SHERBORNE PRINTING HOUSE. THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS AND THE LIBERTY OF THE PEOPLE FALL TOGETHER MAY HEAVEN LONG AVERT IT'.<sup>80</sup>

Owen and Goadby were also jointly responsible for the publications which have attracted attention to Goadby as an author, namely the 'memoirs' of Bampfylde Moore Carew, and the related controversy with Henry Fielding.<sup>81</sup> Carew's memoirs were first printed at Exeter in 1745, but a much enlarged version was published by Owen and Goadby in 1749 and then reissued in 1750 with further revisions and a polemical preface which attacked Fielding and his *Tom Jones*, based on the fictional conceit that Carew had been the 'gypsy king' portrayed in the Gloucestershire barn wedding scene.<sup>82</sup> The nine editions during Goadby's lifetime

<sup>77</sup> *Mercury* 13 July 1752. A lengthy poem celebrating the jurymen in the Owen trial as 'the great assertors of British liberty' was published on 31 August 1752. For Owen's trial see J. Black, 'George II and the Juries Act' *Historical Research* 61 (1988), pp. 359-62; R. Harris, *Politics and the Nation* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 51, 54, 75.

<sup>78</sup> J. Towers, *An Enquiry into the Question, whether Juries are, or are not, Judges of Law, as well as of Fact* (1764); J. Towers, *Observations on the Rights and Duties of Juries* (1784), pp. 127-32.

<sup>79</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine* 41 (October 1771), 435. The incident is discussed in R. Newton, *Eighteenth-Century Exeter* (Exeter, 1984), p. 78. The *Mercury* of 24 July 1769, while explicitly supporting pro-Wilkite meetings in Exeter and Cornwall, also noted 'We are sorry to hear that a person of high rank has met with some insults in a western city. Let the friends of liberty stand firm, manly and spirited, against whomsoever attempts to violate it, but let them not do anything that may disgrace that noble name; nothing licentious, nothing illegal, nothing low and mean; let them not furnish the enemies of it with even the least pretence of complaint against it, but by their behaviour force them to confess that the true spirit of liberty is the noblest principle that the great father of the universe has given to man; infinitely beyond riches, or titles, or the most despotic power'. On 9 February 1767 Goadby had printed a letter from Tavistock by 'a Friend to the Poor' praising the Duke for his bounty in providing bread for several months 'at a reasonable price', contrasting this, as a reward for the 'past good behaviour' of Tavistock's poor, with 'the deplorable state of those miserably deluded wretches, who in divers parts have been drawn in and hurried on the headstrong rabble to set all laws in defiance' and justly punished. 'Let this impress on your minds a deep sense of the advantage arising from proper behaviour in a time of general distress.'

<sup>80</sup> G. Pitman, *Sherborne Observed* (Sherborne, 1983), p. 130.

<sup>81</sup> C. H. Wilkinson (ed.), *The King of the Beggars* (1931); R. Paulson and T. Lockwood (eds), *Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage* (1969); J. A. Stevenson, *Real History of Tom Jones* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 125-58; J. Berson, 'Memoirs of Bampfylde-Moore Carew' *Notes and Queries* 54:4 (2007), 456-64; E. T. Bannet, *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading 1720-1810* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 93-8; E. T. Bannet, 'Robert Goadby' in *The Encyclopedia of British Literature 1660 -1789* (Oxford, 2015) vol. 1, pp. 541-3. J. Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2006) notes 'respectable sales' (p. 88) and borrowings of Carew, though (implausibly) assuming these are of the 1745 edition.

<sup>82</sup> The second edition has a slightly revised 'to the reader' dated 10 February 1750 and was advertised in *London Gazette* 10 March 1750 as due out at the beginning of April 'with very considerable additions and improvements and a dedication to Henry Fielding esq.' The 1820 memoir and an 1857 contribution to *Notes and Queries* both report that Goadby's wife Rachel had written Carew's memoirs from his dictation – see W. H. Allnutt, *Notes and Queries* 8<sup>th</sup> ser 1: 20 (1892), p. 393. Even if true, that need not make her the author of the preface. Another possible author, either for this or for the other attack published by Owen (*The Examen of the History of Tom Jones a Foundling* (1750) by 'Orbilius') would be Rachel's brother-

retained this preface, then it was dropped. The grounds on which the preface criticizes Fielding certainly fit perfectly with Goadby's publishing persona. It attacks *Tom Jones* as a betrayal of the moral and religious purposes of the novel (as exemplified by Cervantes), lacking in decency and taste, and rewarding vice and deception.<sup>83</sup> It lambasts Fielding for holding his readers, or at least his ordinary readers, in contempt, citing passages where they are implied to be vulgar and ignorant, compared to a supposed elite who will appreciate Fielding's superiority. This is associated with Fielding's betrayal of his former oppositionist politics, by accepting office and defending the ministry. Fielding's encomium to an elective monarchy among the gypsies (often seen as a utopian contrast to Whig oligarchy) is criticised as pro-Stuart in sentiment.<sup>84</sup> In many ways this critique prefigures the later attacks by Joseph Towers on literary figures who betrayed true Whig values, discussed below.

It seems ironic that Goadby's most long-lasting legacy, and one of his most successful publishing ventures,<sup>85</sup> should have been a celebration of the trickster Carew, whose lifestyle formed the antithesis of the respectable middling-sort values which Goadby generally championed. His efforts to present the text as a warning-piece to readers against trickery, while probably sincere, did not prevent Carew becoming a popular role model to readers.<sup>86</sup> But there was also an anti-establishment strand to Goadby's thinking, especially his championing of the poorer consumer against the profiteering of the powerful, and he probably shared the view he attributed to Carew in the 1749 preface, namely that Carew's trickery was no more culpable than that practised by all the professions, or even by the book trade itself, puffing its products as more valuable than they were.<sup>87</sup> Goadby, like many other respectable reformists, was a stout champion of the profligate Wilkes in his fight for 'liberty' and popular rights, while no doubt also valuing the extra sales which his many controversies generated for the press.

Robert's second partner was his brother Samuel, apprenticed to the London stationer Simon Vertue (from the Drapers' Company), then going into business with Vertue's widow Hannah after Simon's death in August 1742 and eventually marrying her.<sup>88</sup> Their shop in Sweeting's Alley under the Royal Exchange was in a

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in-law Dr William Douglas, who engaged in several controversies at this period, one of which, against Dr Richard Mead, involved both him and then Smollett (in a satirical response) adopting the pretence that they were republishing lost works by Cervantes, in a similar meta-fictional exchange as that over *Tom Jones*. Douglas was also a supporter of the Independent Electors.

<sup>83</sup> Goadby and Owen's ideal is clear from the title of their *Winter's Evening Entertainment consisting of the Best Novels and Histories that have been Written in Most Languages, being such as at the same time they most agreeably amuse, enlarge the ideas of the mind, set virtue before the eyes of the reader in all its loveliness, and excite an almost irresistible emulation of great and good actions* (2 vols, 1752, originally in 29 parts). Its preface again cites Cervantes as the model (p.viii) for conveying instruction as well as amusement 'however vilely some modern writers have dirtied the spring' (p. iv).

<sup>84</sup> *An Apology for the Life* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 1750), pp. iii-xx.

<sup>85</sup> Another Goadby and Owen success was *The History of the Long Captivity and Adventures of Thomas Pellow in South-Barbary* (1751) but this tale of exotic travels carried the clearer message, as stressed in the preface, of 'the exceeding happiness ... in living under an English government' revealed by the 'true picture it gives of arbitrary government (which must naturally raise in our breast the most utter detestation of it, and put us upon our guard against every encroachment on publick liberty)' (p. 2). Readers of the *Mercury* on 8 July 1751 were given an extract from a Portsmouth man's letter corroborating Pellow's memoirs, noting that those disappointed because the first edition has been 'all disposed of, may now be supplied, by giving speedy notice to the newsmen'.

<sup>86</sup> Indeed, Goadby and Owen published another account explicitly intended to arm readers with knowledge about gamblers, sharpers and thieves, namely *The Discoveries of John Poulter, alias Baxter* (1753), an autobiographical account 'of all the robberies he has committed, and the surprizing tricks and frauds he has practised for the space of five years past'.

<sup>87</sup> *An Apology for the Life* (1749), pp. iii-iv.

<sup>88</sup> Samuel was originally apprenticed to Richard Gawthorne of the Drapers' Company 19 February 1735, but he died in 1737 and Samuel was transferred on 27 January 1738 to Vertue, also a member of the Drapers' Company, and obtained his freedom 13 October 1742. See [items DREW 4427-9 at http://www.londonroll.org/home/event/2company=drp&event\\_items=DREW\\_4427-9](http://www.londonroll.org/home/event/2company=drp&event_items=DREW_4427-9). Vertue invented and sold paper hangings, so linking drapery and stationery; he married Hannah Roberts 23

prominent position; Samuel took his apprentice Cornelius Berry as partner and retired in 1803 leaving the firm to Berry and his son.<sup>89</sup> Samuel's training as a stationer probably encouraged Robert to set up in the book trade, although Samuel only published occasionally, mostly to support causes he backed. He helped establish the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor, a nonconformist equivalent to the Anglican SPCK.<sup>90</sup> Shortly after this, Robert published in 1751 his *Christian's Pocket Companion and Instructor Extracted from the Holy Scriptures*, a duodecimo work of 1s 8d bound, 'published at a very cheap price (for the number of sheets it contains) that the poorer sort of well-disposed Christians may afford to purchase it' with a special price of 18s per dozen for 'charitable persons who buy books to give to their poor neighbours'.<sup>91</sup> Samuel and Robert also supported the spread of Sunday schools.<sup>92</sup>

A long obituary throws light on Samuel's (and Robert's) attitudes.<sup>93</sup> We learn that their father was a Whig dissenter, that Samuel inherited this tradition and that his life was one of sober devotion to his principles of religious and civil liberty, together with a strong social conscience and support for the common people: all attitudes shared with Robert.<sup>94</sup> He 'dressed very plain; but had made no change in the cut of his coat for near fifty years'. His shop 'was, for many years, in an evening, the meeting-place of a select party of men of superior abilities, for the purpose of conversation, and they had a very different effect upon the members of this friendly circle, to that produced by convivial meetings, where wine and riot preclude sentiment, and destroy reason'. Specific mention is made of his sympathy for Elizabeth Canning, whose (alleged) kidnap and confinement, possibly by 'gypsies', was a cause célèbre in 1753-4, when Canning herself was eventually tried and found guilty of false accusation. Numerous pamphlets were published, some in serial form as the case unfolded, including at least one by Robert Goadby.<sup>95</sup> This episode led to an unusually explicit editorial intervention by

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February- 1733 at Allhallows London Wall. See *London Evening Post* 3 June 1736, 18 October 1737, 7 August 1742, *General Evening Post*, 9 August 1743.

<sup>89</sup> *London Gazette* 9 August 1803. Their business was insured in 1788 LMA MS 11936/351/540279.

<sup>90</sup> For example, in 1801 he republished a 1736 manual of piety *An Help in Devotion*: see *Monthly Review* 41 (May 1803), pp. 92-3. For his work with the Royal Humane Society and the Sunday School Society see *True Briton* 10 Mar. 1795 and 8 August 1797. His will ([TNA PROB 11/1482/301](#)) dated 7 June 1808 gave £300 to 6 charities including the 'Book Society for the Poor', 'Sunday School Society', 'Small Tracts Society' and 'Bible Society', plus two medical charities, and £30 to the morning preacher of the Salters Hall dissenting meeting.

<sup>91</sup> *Magazine of Magazines* (April 1751), p. 380. The 1784 memoir noted: 'This had the good fortune to meet with the approbation of Bishop Sherlock, and was very well received by the public' repeating a claim made regularly in Goadby's advertisements for the volume.

<sup>92</sup> The 1820 memoir claims that Robert was a friend of Robert Raikes, the *Gloucester Journal* proprietor usually credited with starting the Sunday School movement, and suggests that Goadby may have given Raikes the idea. The *Mercury* supported the movement strongly: see the letter of 'W' of Sherborne 'on the utility and lawfulness of Sunday schools' printed 10 July 1786. This may be the source of Feather's incorrect statement that Goadby belonged to the 'evangelical wing of the Church of England', like Raikes (*Provincial Book Trade*, p. 65).

<sup>93</sup> See Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes* vol. 3, p. 431 summarized in Timperley, *Dictionary of Printers*, p. 833, and in the Sherborne miscellany *The Weekly Entertainer* (24 July 1809) pp. 581-5 with a footnote by the editor noting that Samuel occasionally visited his brother in Dorsetshire, and on one occasion, meeting an evicted woman and her naked begging children when out for a walk, he had promptly found the landlord and paid their year's rent. For overt editorializing in the *Mercury* demanding such behaviour of all Christians, see the news item under Sherborne and then the article 'The Observance of Christmas' on p. 3 of the *Mercury* 27 December 1784.

<sup>94</sup> Goadby and Berry republished (at 2d, or 2s 6d for 25) Jonathan Shipley's pro-conciliation *Speech intended to have been spoken on the Bill for altering the Charters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* (published first in 1774, but this edition (T049622) is undated), suggesting pro-American sympathy.

<sup>95</sup> *Full and Authentic Account of the Strange and Mysterious Affair* (1754) (ESTC T141543), advertisement to the subscribers after p. 215. The *Mercury* advertised the first number (costing 2d) on 13 April 1754, assuring readers that it was selected 'from all the different writers ... without any partiality', and that if more than 8 numbers were required to complete it, the charge would be capped at 16d. The *Mercury*'s coverage on 20 and 27 April clearly supports Canning's innocence of perjury. On the case see J. Moore, *The Appearance of Truth* (Delaware, 1994); J. Moore, 'Elizabeth Canning and Mary Squires' in K. Kittredge (ed.) *Lewd and Notorious* (Michigan, 2003), pp. 197-209; K. Straub, *Domestic Affairs* (Baltimore, 2009), pp. 66-82.

Robert in the *Mercury*. Crucial to the case was evidence from Abbotsbury that the woman accused of holding Canning in London had actually been travelling in Dorset at the time. The clergyman of Abbotsbury told one of the *Mercury* newsmen that Goadby was ‘a scoundrel and a villain’ for his support of Canning and that if Goadby had not had good friends he would ‘have been sent to Newgate’ while in London attending the trial. Goadby wrote twice to him demanding an apology and, when none was forthcoming, published both letters in the *Mercury*, together with a self-justification.<sup>96</sup>

Perhaps Samuel’s most significant impact on his brother’s publishing career, however, came when he employed the 12-year old Joseph Towers as an errand boy. Five years later, in 1753, when Robert needed an apprentice, Samuel recommended Joseph, the son of an obscure London second-hand bookseller.<sup>97</sup> Under the Goadbys Towers mastered the learned languages and began a distinguished writing career, both as a controversialist in support of political and religious liberty and reform, and as a historian and biographer.<sup>98</sup> His first publication, an anti-Calvinist tract, appeared in 1763<sup>99</sup> and in the mid-1760s he moved from Sherborne to London, originally as a journeyman printer, but in 1769 he took over a bookshop at 111 Fore-Street, Cripplegate, which had been run since 1764 by William Lee followed by his widow Joanna, younger sister of Robert and Samuel, whom Lee had married in 1749. Presumably the Goadbys set Towers up in this bookshop, and Towers replaced Lee as a regular London agent for Robert’s Sherborne publications.<sup>100</sup> Towers devoted most of his energies to writing and in 1774 he gave up his bookshop, becoming minister to various London dissenting congregations until his death in 1797. He was a leading figure in London reformist/radical circles, such as the Society for the Bill of Rights and the Society for Constitutional Information, and was targeted by the government during the 1790s’ attacks on ‘sedition’. His scholarly work continued the same fight, as his series of

<sup>96</sup> 23 September 1754. Goadby was at pains to stress his attempted impartiality in the case, and willingness to publish on both sides, noting that ‘I inserted in my paper a very long letter of the Rev. Mr Rhudde’s in vindication of the gypsy, without any premium, tho’ upon another occasion I would not have inserted it under a guinea; had anything else been offered, wrote in a rational and gentlemanlike manner, I should readily have inserted it ... I have always looked upon it as a point of justice that a newspaper should be open to everyone, within the bounds of decency’. Rhudde’s letter appeared as the first item on 20 May 1754, occupying about two-thirds of the front page.

<sup>97</sup> Towers was apprenticed (without fee) to Goadby as a member of the Founders’ Company in 1753 and the following year Peter Gordon was also apprenticed: [http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=fnd&event\\_id=FDEB1567](http://www.londonroll.org/event/?company=fnd&event_id=FDEB1567) and 1586. Goadby took five later apprentices through the Stationers Company: John Shorthouse 1757, Benjamin Dodge 1764, Israel Watts 1766, James Watts 1768 (paying a premium of £105- IR/1/25/152) and William Justins 1769. Israel Watts died in Sherborne Almshouse in 1836, aged about 90, so he could have supplied some of the later memories of his master (Clark (ed), *Sherborne*, p. 127).

<sup>98</sup> James Lindsay, *A Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Joseph Towers* (1799), pp.32-40; *The Monthly Visitor* 7 (June 1799), pp.112-25; *Gentleman’s Magazine* 69 (1799), pp. 529-30; *Monthly Magazine* 16 (December 1803), pp. 438-44 and January 1804, pp. 541-5 and 670-4; T. W. Davis, ‘Joseph Towers’ in *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals* (Atlantic Highlands, 1979) vol. 1, pp. 493-6; F. K. Donnelly, ‘Joseph Towers and the collapse of rational dissent’, *Enlightenment and Dissent* 6 (1987), pp. 31-39; A. Gordon, ‘Towers, Joseph (1737–1799)’, rev. M. J. Mercer, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27588>]

<sup>99</sup> *A Review of the Genuine Doctrines of Christianity*.

<sup>100</sup> Joanna’s daughter, also Joanna, received £600 in Robert’s will and in a codicil his share in the Weymouth hotel. The 1766 first volume of Towers’s *British Biography* was ‘Sherborne: Printed for R. Goadby; and sold by Richard Baldwin and William Lee’, whereas later volumes and the new 1773 edition were ‘Sherborne: Printed for R. Goadby; and sold by R. Baldwin and J. Towers’. *Monthly Magazine* 16 (Dec. 1803), pp. 438-44 specifies: ‘In 1765, his late master, Mr. Robert Goadby, formed the design of bringing out a series of volumes on British biography, and turned his thoughts to our author, as a person well qualified to be employed in the work’ and that to assist his researches ‘Mr. Goadby was at the expence of purchasing some scarce and valuable books’. Regarding the bookshop it notes: ‘By the fortune he had recently received with his wife [Margaret Lomas, a relative of Rev. Caleb Fleming, whom he married in 1767], he was enabled to purchase a considerable stock of books and other effects, and enter on these premises, where the sister of Messrs Samuel and Robert Goadby had resided, and sold the publications of Mr. R. Goadby, of Sherburne, with whom he had lived’.

British biographies published by Goadby in Sherborne portrayed those he saw as heroic figures in the development of British liberty, from Wycliffe onwards, while liberally denouncing those who stood for persecution or absolutism.<sup>101</sup> His political writings generally begin with a critique of how Tory or ministerialist writers (including Dr Johnson) were abusing history, in particular the history of resistance to Stuart tyranny.

It is tempting to see Towers as substituting for Goadby's dead son; he clearly became part of the family.<sup>102</sup> He probably played a key part in Goadby's two major publishing ventures. The first is his *Illustration of the Holy Scriptures*. This Goadby announced in March 1754, just after Towers had joined him, and it appeared in weekly numbers at 3d each from December 1754.<sup>103</sup> The 1820 biography, after describing Goadby writing this in his summerhouse, reports that the 'first edition expressed opinions completely Calvinistic; but as the correction of the Illustrations was the constant employment of Mr Goadby during the remainder of his life, those sentiments were gradually altered and others substituted, which strongly inclined towards Socinianism'. This memoir regretted this change, unlike the 1784 memoir which had championed Goadby's Unitarian rationalism. How far the change was influenced by Towers, who made the same transition from a Calvinist upbringing, is unclear. Towers's biography suggests that Goadby made Towers 'an Arian', while the 1784 memoir insists that authorship of the *Illustration* was Goadby's alone, denying an earlier suggestion that 'he received considerable assistance from a very intelligent studious young man who was apprentice to him and much better qualified to comment on the sacred writings than most of our present race of pseudo-apostles'.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps both Goadby and Towers gravitated towards Unitarianism as they shared their new learning.<sup>105</sup> The 1820 memoir claimed it was 'the first Bible published at such an easy rate as to enable the lower classes to furnish themselves with a guide towards the right understanding of the Scriptures, and its sale was extremely extensive'. So far *Illustrations* has only been considered by historians as a commercial ruse to get round the monopoly on publishing the authorized Bible by offering the full text with commentary in serial numbers at cheaper rate than official Bibles, but to see Goadby sacrificing his health to successive revisions of a massive work of Biblical scholarship merely to make a profit seems implausible.<sup>106</sup> The hostile tract by the Calvinist

<sup>101</sup> 'The deformity of vice, as well as the beauty of virtue, is best exhibited in real characters ... We cannot read the lives of Bonner, of Gardiner, or of Jeffries, without feeling a just detestation of bigotry, religious persecution, injustice and cruelty ... We would wish to be impartial; but we cannot suppose that commendations are due to the oppressors of mankind, to those who have been employed in trampling on the rights of human nature, however dignified by royal favour, or however elevated by title or by station.' *British Biography* vol. 1 pp.v-vi.

<sup>102</sup> He appeared (with Cornelius Berry, Samuel's partner) to confirm Robert's writing in his codicils in 1778 and witnessed Rachel's will made in 1785.

<sup>103</sup> *Read's Weekly Journal* 23 November 1754 carries a long advertisement, reproducing the royal licence and emphasizing the small price for the 'benefit of the poorer sort so they can afford to purchase it' though 'a few will be printed for the curious on a large superfine paper for 6d a number'. An appreciation of the book and its author appears in *Unitarian Herald* 11 July 1873, pp. 221-2. Intriguingly the ECCO copy of the 1754 edition (ESTC T220878) has extensive handwritten corrections in the preface, as if being amended for a new edition.

<sup>104</sup> W. E., *Gentleman's Magazine* 53 (December 1783), p. 990. Possible evidence that they collaborated may be found in the printed prospectus advertising a new edition 'much improved by the light which many learned men have given by their labours since the first publication of the work, and by a renewed application to the subject': *An Address to those who Consider the Holy Scriptures as a Rule of Conduct given them by God, as a Display of his Perfections, and a Manifestation of his Will* (ESTC T220648). Although ESTC dates this 'on internal evidence' as 1762, given that the edition advertised was to be 'printed for R. Goadby and sold by J. Towers' at his Cripplegate bookshop, it must date from after 1769, probably referring to the 1770 edition.

<sup>105</sup> Goadby's final position is presumably expressed by his republication of Daniel Scott's Unitarian work, *An Essay towards a Demonstration of the Scripture-Trinity* (Sherborne, 1775, printed by R. Goadby and sold by Goadby and Berry stationers at the Royal Exchange London), whose preface begins 'Religion supposes reason, and revelation addresses itself to rational beings, requiring not only a reasonable service but a reasonable faith too.'

<sup>106</sup> Raven, *Business*, p. 199. In 1762 Goadby also published *A Concordance to the Holy Scriptures* (in 16 parts), which not only enabled words to be searched but 'all the texts relative to every Christian virtue or doctrine are pointed out at one view ... and the most remarkable parallel texts'.

clergyman Walter Sellon denounced the work as Unitarian propaganda, intended to undermine popular orthodoxy, not even suggesting that it was driven by commercial aims (though he objected to its royal licence, which he thought gave gullible readers the impression that it had official approval).<sup>107</sup> Goadby's new attitude is well-reflected in the title of his last religious publication, again aimed at youth, *Religion Display'd: or, the Principles of it, Drawn from the Mind Itself* (1772).<sup>108</sup>

The second venture where Towers may have been ~~critical~~ vital was Goadby's decision in 1763 to launch his first weekly magazine in conjunction with his newspaper, *The Weekly Amusement or An Useful and Agreeable Miscellany of Literary Entertainment*.<sup>109</sup> This ran until the end of 1767 then lapsed until 1772, when it started again, initially as 'An APPENDIX to the Sherborne Mercury or the WEEKLY MAGAZINE' and then from 1773 as a distinct serial publication, entitled *The Weekly Miscellany: or Agreeable and Instructive Entertainer*. In 1783 it was renamed *The Weekly Entertainer, or Agreeable and Instructive Repository* which ran until 1820, when a new series commenced. The 1820 memoir noted:

it had been his object, from the commencement of his editorial career, to combine, with the usual contents of a newspaper, such historical and miscellaneous information as would be useful and acceptable to those who had not the time or means of deriving it from other sources. Finding however an accumulation of advertisements and the importance of public events trespassed too much on this plan to render it available to his original purposes, in 1763 he resolved to devote his paper to such articles entirely and to publish weekly the little work of which this is the continuation. His plan was completely successful, beyond even his own anticipations. The excellence of its selection and the smallness of its price carried his little miscellany not only to the cottage of the peasant but to the library of the scholar.

The stated aim of these magazines (as of his earlier 'Family Library' series), was to offer provincial readers and their families a carefully selected miscellany of improving materials at low cost. Like the *Mercury*, they became a byword in the South-West, with various tributes to their influence, for example from the Cornish self-educated intellectual Samuel Drew, a cobbler's son.<sup>110</sup> Scholarly attention has focused on tracing the London periodicals from which the moralizing and improving short stories and verses were selected, but these were complemented by a range of non-fiction, some scientific, some practical tips in health, agriculture or household management,

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<sup>107</sup> W. Sellon, *Remarks upon Certain Passages in a Work entitled Illustrations of the Holy Scriptures* (1765), preface and pp. 149-54.

<sup>108</sup> The 1784 memoir (wrongly entitling it *A Rational Catechism*) states 'In this Catechism he has endeavoured, and not without considerable success, to impress upon the minds of his readers, particularly young persons, the strongest arguments in favour of natural and revealed religion; and this he does, agreeably to the title which he has given to his Catechism, upon such principles as are calculated to give the most amiable, and consequently the justest ideas of the Supreme Being, and of his dispensations, and to make scripture and reason perfectly consistent.'

<sup>109</sup> This promised 'such choicest pieces both prose and poetry as are worthy of notice either for usefulness or entertainment. The best political pieces of the times; new improvements in husbandry gardening &c The finest parts of the most celebrated prose and poetic writers Tending to inform the judgment instruct the understanding improve the heart & correct the taste Together with an historical detail of the publick transactions & occurrences of the year.' ESTC P001997. The main section was 16 pages each week, supplemented by a fortnightly 8-page summary of 'most remarkable occurrences and the newest political intelligence': the latter was indexed annually, but not the former.

<sup>110</sup> Variants of Drew's story can be found in R. Polwhele, *Biographical Sketches in Cornwall* (Truro, 1831), p. 98 or S. Drew, *An Essay on the Identity and General Resurrection of the Human Body* (Brooklyn, 1811), pp. vii-viii. For a Milverton Quaker of 'middling station' born in 1773 reading the weekly miscellany when aged 6 see George Peacock, *Life of Thomas Young M.D. F.R.S.* (1855), p. 3.

and in particular historical information, often in the form of ‘anecdotes’ or mini-biographies.<sup>111</sup> There are also some, though limited, religious and political items, almost all inculcating reformist attitudes: in the early 1780, for example, items from the proceedings of the Society for Constitutional Information. In short, the content reflects exactly the interests and expertise of Joseph Towers.<sup>112</sup> Their timing suggests that they began in 1763 as an outlet for Towers’s literary ambitions, that his move to London might have been to locate himself better to obtain copy (lapsing when he married in 1767 and during his peak period of writing and running a shop) and that he was the continuing force that kept the output and nature of the weekly publications essentially unchanged by Robert’s death in 1778.

Stressing the cultural, even ideological, motives for these publications does not mean that they were not also shrewd business decisions. By distributing his serials and magazines along with his newspapers, Goadby reached an exceptionally broad clientele at little extra cost in a region of dispersed population where there were no real competitors.<sup>113</sup> He could recycle materials between his newspaper, magazine and book publications, as well as copying liberally from other publications (as was normal practice) and items regularly reappeared, not least Goadby’s favourite nostrum from Hume about the liberty of the press. But the publications remain true to Goadby’s initial assurance that everything would be morally improving and suitable for a family audience: he avoids sensationalized stories of crime or passion and only reports scandal or gossip when it performs the higher duty of exposing the immorality of the aristocracy and ministerial corruption. Provincial distrust of metropolitan vices combines with oppositional distrust of a government manipulating power using oppressive tax revenues (often wasted on pointless wars such as that against the Americans), set against the presumed virtues of the countryside and the middling ranks of society. Considerable sympathy is expressed for the plight of the poor, who are entitled to just prices and to their share of the liberties of Englishmen, and liable, like others, to be mistreated by agents of the establishment, but limited trust is placed in popular action such as rioting.<sup>114</sup> Goadby expresses broad acceptance of the social status quo and a nostalgic hope for an enlightened monarch to curb aristocratic excess, but he consistently champions the claims of virtue and merit over wealth and birth (as he had in his first preface in 1741).<sup>115</sup> Though Protestant, these publications avoided denominational disputes (except

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<sup>111</sup> Black, *English Press*, p.51 urges more study of these miscellanies and discusses their production by both Sherborne newspapers, noting that in 1782 the *Weekly Miscellany* cost 1d with the *Mercury*, or an extra halfpenny by itself. Novel extracts in the Sherborne miscellanies are identified in R. D. Mayo, *The English Novel in the Magazines 1740-1815* (Evanston and London, 1962), pp. 217-18, 229-30, 675-6. I have not been able to consult Edward W. R. Pitcher, *The Weekly Miscellany Sherborne 1773-1783: A Register of Prose Articles, with Notes on Sources and Authors* (2 volumes, 2002-3), one of his series of studies in British and American magazines.

<sup>112</sup> The *Mercury* 5 January 1795 summarizes the contents of the ‘Entertainer for the present week’ as ‘the trial of the Rev. Mr Wooley for a most extraordinary libel of that excellent character Sir Richard Hill, Bart; original remarks on Paine’s Age of Reason; an account of the storm in Cumberland; continuations of the life of George Leslie and of the trial of Thomas Hardy; original pieces of poetry etc’.

<sup>113</sup> These texts clearly circulated beyond the south-west, as they are recorded among the magazine subscriptions taken by the Clays of Daventry before 1780 (11 subscriptions, just under 1% of all recorded): Fergus, *Provincial Readers*, p. 281. Versions were printed in London as well as Sherborne, presumably aimed at a national audience, namely *The Weekly Miscellany* (1772-6) and then *The Moral and Entertaining Magazine: or a Literary Miscellany of Instruction and Entertainment* (April 1777 to December 1780) which both reprinted the same novels as the Sherborne titles: Mayo, *English Novel*, pp. 668, 675-6.

<sup>114</sup> See n. 79. Typical of his attempts to ‘plead the cause of the wretched and miserable’ is a letter to the printer from ‘Philanthropos’ (30 March 1752) regarding ‘the accumulated miseries of almost all our gaols and houses of correction’ denouncing ‘the tyranny, the barbarity, the extortion of many of the keepers of them’ as a disgrace in ‘the land of liberty and Christianity’, and appealing in Biblical language ‘O ye, who sit in the seat of justice, in vain do ye hold the balance, if through indifference and inattention, ye leave the iron rod of oppression in the hands of cruelty’.

<sup>115</sup> Reflected in his *New Display of the Beauties of England* (1773) which concentrates on ‘public edifices, royal palaces, and noblemen’s and gentlemen’s seats’, although even here he begins by praising England as ‘the favourite residence of plenty and of freedom, of wealth and of commerce’ thanks both to nature and ‘the indefatigable industry of the inhabitants’ (p.3).

against Popery), drew heavily also on classical humanism, and (at least implicitly) favoured a religion of reason and nature, distrusting either enthusiasm or priestly power in the church. These same values undoubtedly permeate the *Mercury* (and many other provincial papers, including Cruttwell's), but they are much clearer in distilled form in the weekly magazines.

The sheer scale of the contents of eighteenth-century provincial newspapers, and their lack of any overt claim to originality, has made it hard for historians to gauge their role within provincial culture in general or the urban renaissance in particular. This case-study has not attempted an in-depth content analysis of the *Mercury* or its associated publications, which would be required fully to test their impact. However, the evidence presented has suggested several conclusions which do not sit easily with conventional accounts of an essentially commercialized and non-controversial press, one of whose major impacts was to spread demand in the provinces for lifestyles based on a polite metropolitan culture. As contemporary testimony suggests, Goadby was a controversial publisher who intended his publications to reach a broad audience and inculcate in them both the values of religious and political liberty and a moral code which had little time for gentility (or genteel pastimes) but rather extolled virtue among all classes; he cared little if he offended others in pursuing these ends. His newspapers prospered because of their expert (and expeditious) compilations of national and international news (selected and interpreted through a 'country' and oppositionist perspective), but equally importantly by becoming the medium for a regional advertising network, based largely on property and public notices and other commercial information, with relatively little relationship to a new culture of leisure, except in relation to books and medicines. Goadby himself had no interest in such a polite world, devoting himself to printing and writing, while finding relaxation and inspiration in the world of nature, not of urban company. Sherborne's influence on the South-West, while undoubtedly spreading London-derived news and ideas, was equally to articulate a regional consciousness suspicious (like many Londoners) of metropolitan corruption, championing the independence and virtue of middling provincials, whether urban or rural. Furthermore, Goadby used every means possible to overcome the obstacles of cost, space and time to bring writings that reflected his values into the hands of ordinary people right across the south-western peninsula. Goadby was probably not a typical press proprietor (though his friend Robert Raikes Junior of the *Gloucester Journal* may have shared his priorities), but his regional and national standing make his example an important one.

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Cf. B. Harris, 'Praising the Middling Sort? Social identity in eighteenth-century British newspapers' in A. J. Kidd and D. Nicholls (eds), *The Making of the British Middle Class?* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 1-18.