

## News from Fakenham

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, education became generally available prompting the requirement for communication by the printed word. With the limited circulation of newspapers some thought it useful to have a local newspaper.

Thomas Miller came from Wells, where as a young man he had some experience of printing. He set himself up as a grocer in Exchange Street in Fakenham (now Lower Market). By 1854 he had moved to Norwich Street and had become a Bookseller and Printer. He produced 'the Fakenham Advertiser' which was probably short on editorial which may have been Church news in a town with an abundance of Dissenting churches. It is not known how many editions it lasted.

Once his son Thomas Jr had settled in to the new Printing Office that his father had built for him in Norwich Street, he was joined by a cousin by the name of Southwood who introduced a Newspaper called the 'Fakenham & Dereham Times'. It is not known if it was printed by Miller, probably not.

Later Southwood moved on into selling groceries and general merchandise but the newspaper kept going with another agent. In fact, with a few temporary title changes it is still going as the 'Dereham & Fakenham Times'.

In 1910 Samuel Pratt, seedsman and nurseryman set up as a printer and produced a newspaper called the 'Lancaster Press', Like the earlier 'Advertiser' it may have been low on editorial and only lasted until the July although the printing business continued. The current printers of the 'Fakenham & District Sun' can trace their origins back to then.

By this time national papers and the 'Eastern Daily Press' were coming into the town.

The multi-edition 'Norfolk Chronicle' was first published in Norwich in 1761, it later moved to Holt and North Walsham before being bought by Thomas Cook of Sennowe Hall near Guist. He built a dedicated print shop in Fakenham and the first edition to come from there was at Whitsun, 1936 with a print run of 4,200 copies.

A late edition printed the only known photograph of Fakenham's second world war statue pillbox (then being demolished). This stood in the Market Place and, by good fortune, was never used but locals considered it a nuisance. Thomas Cook was one of those responsible for building the pillbox and so he considered it wise to record its demise! By 1955 the paper had a circulation of 14,000 and was bought by the Norfolk News company and production then moved back to Norwich where it was then incorporated into the 'Dereham & Fakenham Times'.

Since then there have been other newspapers in the area but most were printed in King's Lynn. Today's 'Fakenham & District Sun' can boast 300 editions under its belt and goes to every household in the district.