Anthony Hewitson (1836-1912) was a typical Victorian journalist, working in one of the largest sectors of the periodical press, provincial newspapers. His diaries, written between 1862 and 1912, lift the veil of anonymity hiding the people, processes and networks involved in the creation of Victorian newspapers. They also tell us about Victorian fatherhood, family life, and the culture of a Victorian town.

Diaries of nineteenth-century provincial journalists are extremely rare. Anthony Hewitson went from printer's apprenticeship to newspaper reporter and eventually editor of his own paper. Every night he jotted down the day's doings, his thoughts and feelings. The diaries are a lively account of the reporter's daily round, covering meetings and court cases, hunting for gossip or accompanying public executions and variety shows, in and around Preston, Lancashire.

Andrew Hobbs's introduction and footnotes provide background and analysis of these valuable documents. This full scholarly edition offers a wealth of new information about reporting, freelancing, sub-editing, newspaper ownership and publishing, and illuminates aspects of Victorian periodicals and culture extending far beyond provincial newspapers.

The Diaries of Anthony Hewitson, Provincial Journalist are an indispensable research tool for local and regional historians, as well as social and political historians with an interest in Victorian studies and the media. They are also illuminating for anyone interested in nineteenth-century social and cultural history.
‘My Life’

[Handwritten in a quarto hardback book, this appears to be an unfinished autobiography, written by Hewitson in 1862, when he was 25 years old, shortly after starting as a reporter on the Preston Herald. Some family details are inaccurate—see Maggie B. Dickinson’s forthcoming biography.]

Introduction

All have a history—a life. All have impressions, which when legitimately received produce opinions. But the lives of all cannot be known by all. If requisite and desirable such knowledge would be impossible. The many can only be generally known to a few. The lives of great men force themselves upon the world like the light of Heaven: the lives of ordinary men force themselves upon none but those immediately connected. Great deeds living out great lives; unimportant actions float down the ever-receding tide of life and onward to the dark harbour of the dead. All cannot be great: the history of some must, therefore come under the shroud of oblivion. Yet, if humble life cannot enrol its name on the tablet of the great it may be useful in its sphere and productive of good in the smaller walks of existence. Every man should do something worth remembering—if not by the world at large, at any rate by those who shared his lot in the busy arena of life. To die, to be buried and forgotten, is brutish. Humanity is too great, though only eking out its lowly mission in the garret, to be finally covered over by its own flesh and blood with the ashes of forgetfulness. Oblivion is repulsive if life be but ultimate death in what consists the individual prospects of earth. To my own family I will preserve myself. Those whom I have

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1 ‘My Life’, Lancashire Archives, Papers of Anthony Hewitson, DP/512/2, ACC9939.
loved and lived for shall have, in this, an index of the events which have surrounded me, the thoughts which have influenced my mind, and the sentiments which have, more or less, animated my heart.

Anthony Hewitson

Preston, January, 1862

My Life

There is something peculiarly solemn about the act of writing one’s own life. Like the making of a will, we are reminded by it of our final dissolution. But there are none so well qualified to write our individual history as ourselves. If the work is left to verbal communication or the pen of others either something is omitted or exaggerated—something forgot or misrepresented. Let me commence: I was born at Blackburn in the county of Lancashire on the 13th day of August 1836. The name of my father, like my own, was Anthony Hewitson, who, by trade was a stone cutter. His origin was humble, and his position, generally speaking of the same character. On the whole, however, his life was good, and towards its “sere and yellow leaf” strongly marked by the most rigid sobriety and the most straightforward Christianity. It is said, but for its truth I cannot vouch, that his ancestors—some at any rate—were possessed of considerable wealth. If they had were it must have been either misappropriated or squandered, for he had none but that earned by toil, long and hard. His father was called Anthony, and for some years lived in Yorkshire. I believe the “original stock”—if I may indulge in such a phrase—were of northern extraction, probably Scotch. My father, with his family—which numbered several members—lived in his early days at a small place, not far from Kendal called Hutton Roof. My mother’s maiden name was Alice Moore. Her origin was humble. She was the daughter of Thomas Moore & Dorothy Moore, his wife. She was born at Ingleton,* a small village in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and lived there up to the time of her marriage. Her father lived all his life at, or near

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2 1808–1889.
3 1811–1894.
4 1771–1854.
5 1773–1841.
Ingleton. When about 18 months old, I was removed from my home—then at Lancaster*—to the house of my grandfather,* at Ingleton. By my grandfather I mean my mother’s father—in learned dictum the maternal grandfather. How well I recollect him. Plain and honest, of stern integrity and iron will, he feared none and was respected by many. He had his faults, of course—didn’t think it a frightful piece of immorality to get moderately drunk now and then, and to give way to the bluster of a strong temper. But on the whole he was a thorough Englishman, and for honest straightforwardness I have rarely, if ever, met with his equal. I do not say this cantingly or swaggeringly: it is the truth and therefore it needs no suppression. He was a shoemaker by trade. Sometimes, in his earlier days he worked as an agricultural labourer. For 50 years he was the first mower at a large farm in, I think, Wensleydale. Such an onerous position he occupied for a month each year of the period named. Good wages, no doubt, he got for his labour. Each year, after “hay-timing”, he returned to his home & his shoemaking. On the death of a certain Miss Sill, who resided in Dent-dale, near Sedbergh, in Yorkshire West his wife became the possessor of about £1,500 in money and land—principally in land in Dent. Others with her also became similar possessors. This welcome event, which occurred I think about the year 1835 rendered my grandfather “independent” and he ceased the poor but honest vocation of making shoes. It may be true that “there is nothing like leather” in some men’s eyes: he thought differently and let other parties contend for the manufacture of shoes and the stitching of skin. In 1841 or about 1839 his wife died. I remember her when she was in good health. She loved me much—it is said so—and I loved her. Not that my grandfather had at that time, so much affection for me, as that he respected the object of his late wife’s feelings, he consented to keep me as the term goes.

[Next sentence added in pencil:] My aunt Jane* used to nurse me and I can remember, when she was rocking me to sleep, her singing “The Rose of Allandale.”

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7 See Introduction.

8 Jane Green, née Moore (1814–1878).
I was sent to school at an early age. To one of the village schools. Strong associations were first formed there; innocent amusements there first participated in. When about three years of age I met with an accident. A lad called Atkinson—“Jack” Atkinson—ran at me with an umbrella stick, capped with brass, which was fractured & torn. We were both running behind a turf cart, and I presume because I would not allow him to take possession of my place, he ran the end of this same stick into my left eye, the pupil of which was much injured & the result was partial & permanent blindness of the left eye. The accident however occurred whilst I was so young that I never seemed to sustain any particular inconvenience from it. One may become habituated to anything almost. For ever afterwards, as if the lad Atkinson had severed the thread of my equanimity, I quarrelled with & disliked my injurer. In 1842 I was sent to the regular village school kept by a little industrious, pompous, considerably learned man named Danson ([printed:] Danson). It was at his school where my moderate abilities were developed. Ordinarily he charged 1/-d a week for tuition; but as a special favour to my grandfather, who knew the full value of money, he got me into this academy for 10d a week. That was an extraordinary sum, considering that Danson’s school was nothing better—hardly so good—as a common National school. But things were different in those days from what they are now, & especially were they different—from the outer “outer” & more civilized world—at Ingleton. In a few years after my initiation into the old school, near the church & looking into the church yard, the “seat of learning” was removed to a large, well-finished government-aided school in the centre of the village & on an elevated portion of land called “Ash green”—or in the patois of the villagers “Eshy (Ashy) Green”. A large ash tree used to grow on this plot of land & hence its name. Prior to the erection of schools on this ground—for the building in question comprised an upper & a lower room, one for boys, the other for girls—the children and youths of the village of Ingleton used to assemble on it & play. How often I have toiled myself to death in the gambols of youth on this place—how often have my companions indulged in the peaks and nonsense of juvenility

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9 Robert Danson (d. 1855) was also Ingleton correspondent for the *Lancaster Gazette* (*Lancaster Gazette*, 24 November 1855, p. 5).

10 A basic elementary school run by the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church in England and Wales.
thereon. Happy were the days when mirth & sport and happy blissful frivolity reigned supreme on “Eshy Green.”

There were no gas & no policemen in Ingleton then. Those were “good old times.” The people of Ingleton had sufficient light to do what they wanted. “Fast” life was not known there. “Balls” and “parties” & “converzationes”, and operatic theatres & “sensation” generators were unknown. Happy in their ignorance, the good people of Ingleton were content with things as they found them. Like the Bourbons they learned nothing and forgot nothing. Simple and contented, easy and unambitious, they remained for ever social & domestic Tories. The inhabitants knew each others affairs, and a kind of respectable “communism”—not of the French order—prevailed in their midst from the youngest child to the oldest “pedlington.”

The population numbered about 1,300 [in pencil above: 1200], and not above half a dozen of them “took in” a newspaper. Friends at a distance used to send journalistic literature, and it was borrowed and read around to those who desired to know the sayings and doings of the great world at a distance. When the railway was made in 1848–9 through Ingleton the sensations of a new and enlightened age were first experienced. Up to that time market carts and old tall stage coaches were “the order” of both day & night & when they were superseded a kind of insipid melancholy at the decadence of old world systems affected all. With the railroad came “navvies” and policemen, bad women and drunkards, and to this day their influence is felt. Civilization & invention, however great and good in the abstract, often bring with them evils. Somewhere about 1846 or 1847 a new school, which I have before referred to, was erected on “Ashy Green” which I and the old scholars at the old school attended. The rules were new, novel, somewhat arbitrary, and yet calculated in a far higher degree than the primitive regime to facilitate mental and moral culture.

At the end of May 1850, a letter was received from my parents, at Lancaster, to the effect that there a trade, to which I was to be apprenticed, had been found for me.12 In a day or two I proceeded to


12 [In margin between pages, in Hewitson's handwriting:] What is it Today? Wages 1/- per week for first year and + increase of 1/- per y(ea)r af(terwar)ds.
Lancaster—walked half the way and rode the rest on a luggage train—and was bound, after six weeks’ probation, on the sixth of July 1850, for seven years to Mr G C Clarke, [sic] printer. My place was the Gazette office in Anchor-Lane, of which Mr Clarke was the absolute proprietor. There I had to learn the “art and mystery” of printing. Old associations had now gone for ever. How I often wished for them. How I have since often longed for their resuscitation. Gone! did I say? Yes, gone, fled, for all time. Old comrades, old places, old scenes vanished. The boys whom I delighted to play with in the warmth of young uncontaminated blood; the games in which I used to revel with boisterous happy glee: the woods with their brambles and brown nut trees and blackberries; the brooks with their rippling music and tiny silver fish; the old slate quarries with their geological trees and quaint crevices; the lanes with their swinging gates, tall trees, and bird-nests, the valleys with their flowers and bleating sheep and lowing kine; the meadows with their lovely footpaths and genial springs; the mountains—Ingleborough in chief—with their sweet heather and long strata of stones, and curling mist—all had gone to be again either only dimly embalmed in memory or fleetingly visited as a stranger. New men and things were now around me—strangers who knew me not, and streets and alleys and dirty hovels and fine buildings with which I had no human sympathy. The Gazette office—although I now look upon it as one of the most infinitesimal of printing shops—seemed to be a great and overwhelming establishment. Its printing resources wonder-struck me and its ancient “Belper” mangle-turned machine appeared to be a world of inventions in itself. As time proceeded I became more familiar with both the office, the men, & [the] boys working therein. The problems and singularities which at first beset me gradually waned down into ordinary routine matters and became a part of that professional nature and efficiency which I was cultivating. The “hands” in the establishment were good humoured and intelligent; but in many respects were, I am sorry to confess not over scrupulous in the virtue of their actions or the purity of their par lance. There were the same noises, vulgar tales & dodges that prevail in most offices where strict supervision on the part of the proprietor is not carried into operation; and, on the whole

13 George Christopher Clark (d. 1873), Conservative town councillor.  
14 Lancaster Gazette (1801–1894), a Conservative paper.  
15 Cattle.
the Gazette office was anything but than a likely taste place in which to cultivate chaste feeling & lofty sentiment. Still, it was the birth-place of my profession, as a printer and, therefore I respect it and cherish a fond recollection of the many incidents wh[ich] transpired (of an innocent character) within its old open-roofed work-room. Things have changed marvellously, happily, painfully, since then. Not one hand now works in the office who was there when first I entered it. All have gone—some are dead, some abroad, some in far better circumstances, others perhaps in worse. The great “tide” which Shakespeare tells us is “in the affairs of man” has been taken advantage of by some and has “led on to fortune”; by others it has been neglected and has resulted in “shoals & quicksands”. Towards the middle of my seven years’ apprenticeship I became strongly involved with the sentiments of religion. I had frequent intercourse with an eccentric but good man named Thomas Johnson, solicitor, who is now living, and through whose example the elements of independence of thought, decision of action, and purity of conduct within me—and naturally within all more or less—were developed. I however believe that my religion was too Puritanical and my principles too severe. I did not grasp with the truth of religion, its freedom & intellectual liberty. This, however, was ultimately counteracted—perhaps in too great a degree. Whilst attending the class of Mr Johnson, as a Sunday scholar in the High Street (Independent) School, I became a member of an essay class, formed by young men in connection with that denomination. The class met in one of the ante-rooms of the Oddfellows Hall in Mary Street. At first the essays were—it is my impression at any rate—of an absolutely religious character, but as some of the members (myself amongst the rest) got simultaneously connected with an essay class, in wh[ich] secular or worldly questions were discussed, the tone and spirit of the meeting changed gradually until at length the subjects for treatment became general and promiscuous, instead of exclusively religious. Much good, however, resulted from this class. At the secular class Goodwin Barmby the Unitarian Minister and poet was an attendant. The members generally were well educated,

16 Thomas Johnson (1818?–92). A ‘cosmopolitan Protestant, and in politics a Radical’ (obit, Lancaster Gazette, 29 June 1892, p. 2).
17 Connected to a Nonconformist independent chapel.
18 John Barmby Goodwyn (1820–1881) claimed to have introduced the word ‘communism’ into the English language, and founded the Communist Church before joining the Unitarians, a theologically liberal Nonconformist denomination (ODNB).
self-taught men. Good, strong, intellect was prominent amongst them, and if subjects were not written and submitted clearly, logically and in accordance with facts, some rude hand would be laid upon them and they would speedily undergo that process known to scholars as the reductio ad absurdum. The test was severe and tended much to cultivate strength of judgement, soundness of reason, extension of general practical knowledge, and purity of logical power. The benefits of this society I feel to this day. On the 6th of July, 1857 I was “loose” —out of my apprenticeship. After staying a week as a journeyman compositor at the Gazette office I proceeded to the Kendal Mercury where I worked as compositor and reporter. I had learned Pitman’s graphic system of short-hand writing whilst an apprentice—learned it myself without any instructor. I soon became acquainted with the sights and picturesque places in and around Kendal.* A lovely place—but emphatically dull in society—is Kendal. I formed no very particular acquaintance with anyone in Kendal—I knew no one particularly; and generally I took my walks alone and contemplatively. The season of the year was the very finest when I went to Kendal; it was summer and one too of a most beautiful character.

Kendal is situated partially on a hill side and partially in a hollow. It is sequestered in appearance and nestles lovingly amongst & at the foot of high hills and fine woodland scenery. On one side there is “Bensons Knott” on another “Scout Scar” from which places scenes of the most beautiful character present themselves. From Bensons Knott the visitor may see the hills of Yorkshire; Dentdale, the northern range of hills known as Shap; the Lake mountains; Morecambe Bay and many other places lovely in nature and beautiful in appearance. Oh how varied, how comprehensive, how charming is the view!

[Text ends here, after 22 pages. Most of book is unused]

[Near back of book, on one page, using book upside down:]

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19 A journeyman was a craftsman who had completed his apprenticeship. A compositor was a typesetter, at that time selecting and placing individual metal letters to ‘compose’ the words, sentences and columns making up each newspaper page, ready for printing.

20 The Liberal Kendal Mercury (1834–1917) was then owned by Unitarian minister Rev George Lee (1805–1862).
Preston Herald Newspaper Company

D[ebit] to

Anthony Hewitson\textsuperscript{21}

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[Last page, on paper taped into book:]  

Inscription on tombstone over grave of my grandfather and grandmother in Dent Churchyard immediately east of chancel end

Sacred to the memory of Dorothy wife of Thomas More, who died at Ingleton, April 18\textsuperscript{th} 1841 aged 68 years.

\textsuperscript{21} This appears to be money owed, or more likely paid, to Hewitson for wages at £2 6s per week, plus occasional reporting expenses (about the same as the highest paid cotton spinners: David Chadwick, ‘On the Rate of Wages in Manchester and Salford, and the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire, 1839–59’, Journal of the Statistical Society of London 23, no. 1 (1860): Table N p. 24, https://doi.org/10.2307/2338478). In his next job, reporting for the Preston Guardian, his wages were raised to £3 per week after one year (diary, 23 Dec 1865). Reporters were usually paid weekly, so if he was owed wages for a whole quarter, the publishers (a limited company set up by Preston Conservative Association) may have been in financial difficulties.
also

of Thomas Moore, husband to the above, who died February 25th 1854, aged 83.

[Inside back cover: calculations in pencil, totalling £30 8s 6d, same figure as Preston Herald payments]