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 attending 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.

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Cover image: Anthony Hewitson's carte de visite (1860s), by Robert Pateson. Courtesy of The Harris Museum, Art Gallery & Library, Preston. Licence: CC BY-NC-ND. Cover design by AnnaGa...
Family history and brief autobiography

[This genealogy, brief memoir and list of where Hewitson’s children were born, from the back of the 1873 diary (DP512/1/6), was written some time later, as it mentions retiring in 1890. As with the 1862 autobiographical fragment above, some of the family history is inaccurate.]

Mem[orial]s of My Family on Father’s side &c

Name of my great great grandfather was Robert Hewitson. He was a tanner at Kirkby Stephen.

Name of my great grandfather was Robert Hewitson.

Name of my grandfather was Anthony Hewitson

Name of my father Anthony Hewitson

Name of myself Anthony Hewitson

My great grandmother died when my grandfather was an infant & his father (my great grandfather) took as his second wife Dorothy Nelson sister of Parson Nelson of Gressingham; a son Robert being the issue of second marriage.

Isabella, Anthony & Matthew were I believe the issue of my great grandfather’s first marriage.

My great grandfather served his time to a tailor & draper; afterwards began farming at Eskrig End in the parish of Old Hutton. He also farmed Crosslands in the same parish. He was buried at New Hutton close to.

My grandfather was educated for a land surveyor; but he turned out very “wild”, & when about 19 years of age refused to be a land surveyor. His father gave him as his share £800—a sum which he gave to each of his other children with the exception of Robert (issue of second marriage) who received £1400. My grandfather stationed himself at Kendal, as a cattle dealer & hired men to do business for him at Carlisle.
He went through his money—lost it or spent it—in about two years. Then his father was bound with him for £400 or £500 & he lost that. Subsequently he became steward at some place wide of Carlisle for some Satterthwaites, Quakers, of Lancaster. He continued in the service of the Satterthwaites till they failed. Next he became a waller & went to Old Hutton where for a time he carried on walling. For six years after this he was a steward for Mr Gibson, banker & tanner of Kirkby Lonsdale. He then went to Borwick carrying on business there as waller. Having been there for about 12 months he removed to Yealand; stayed three years; returned to Old Hutton; then went to Colne; was there three years; & next proceeded to Ingleton, near Bentham, in Yorkshire where he died & was buried in 1835. By marriage with Nancy Barnes, who sprang from Killington, above Kirkby Lonsdale, he had a family of about six children, my father, who was the second (I think) being born at Greenham or Greenholme in Killington on September 26th 1807. He began work—carrying mortar at Yealand—when seven years old; has had a family of ten children; marrying Alice daughter of Thomas Moore of Ingleton in 1835.

I was born at Blackburn on Saturday August 13th 1836. In a very short time I was taken to Ingleton, living there with my grandfather (Thomas Moore) till 1850, when I was on July 6th in that year bound apprentice to G C Clark, printer & proprietor of the Lancaster Gazette. I served my time on the newspaper, was out of my apprenticeship on July 6th 1857. In about a fortnight afterwards I went as compositor & reporter to Mr Lee, a Unitarian minister, & proprietor of the Kendal Mercury, in Finkle St[ree]t, Kendal. Spent nine very pleasant, contemplative weeks at Kendal; then went—as compositor, reporter, & editor—to the Brierley Hill Advertiser, in South Staffordshire; remained there about three months; then went to Wolverhampton, working at an office kept by one York, in Queen street—working mainly as compositor, occasionally as reporter & editor. Left Wolverhampton in, I think, May, 1858 & came to Mr Livesey of the Preston Guardian, as reporter & compositor.

1 Failed in business.
2 Dry stone walling.
3 I have been unable to trace such a newspaper.
4 Probably William Livesey (1816–1909), eldest son of Joseph Livesey (1794–1884), campaigner against the Corn Laws and the New Poor Law, and for teetotalism and many other good causes. Joseph launched the Radical Preston Guardian in 1844,
Got married in September 1858 (for exact date refer to Family Bible) to Margaret Wilson, daughter of Joseph Wilson, late tailor & draper of Market Street, Lancaster. We were married from her father’s house—Bank House, Carnforth & the ceremony took place at Warton Church. I had, whilst at Lancaster formed an attachment for her, which by an intimation at renewal, in Wolverhampton, was too strong to be married or frustrated by anything else. Subsequent reflection—I am not given to superstition—has induced me to believe, & still does, that there was a higher hand than man’s in the affair. Not long after marriage, I became reporter under Messrs W & J Dobson, on the Preston Chronicle. Some years having elapsed I went to the Preston Herald & became its manager. Then—being dissatisfied—I went back to the Chronicle. Later on, I became chief reporter on the Preston Guardian under Geo. Toulmin. On March 28th 1868 I became proprietor of the Preston Chronicle. Owed a considerable sum upon the concern; but cleared off debt I owed in 1873. Had an awfully hard pull; for had to re-type & re-machine paper, & pay for three removals—first into Gillett’s Yard, between Post Office & Gas Works office, in Fishergate, with works below; then to 24½ Fishergate,
with works at same place; then to 125, Fishergate, with works at 21, Cannon Street. Retired in 1890.

My first child Maggie was born at 5 St Peter’s St[ree]t, Preston when I was reporter for Chronicle.

My second child Ethelind, at a house at bottom of Fishergate Hill, No [sic] nearly opposite Regatta Inn.

My third, Florence, was born at her grandfathers (Wilson’s) house at the north end of Holme Village, Westmorland.

My fourth, Ethelbert, at my own house, 48, Fishergate Hill, Preston.

My fifth, 5th, Horace, at same house.

My sixth, Ada 6th Amy at 24½ Fishergate (now front of Guild Hall Street).

My 7th Ada ditto

My seventh, eighth, Llewellyn, at 125 Fishergate, Preston.

My 9th Mabel ditto

My 10th Rosaline ditto

My 11th Letitia ditto