



# Moruya's Newspapers and the people who ran them. Part 1.

by Wendy Simes

“Australia's earliest newspaper, the Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, was first printed in 1803. Described as '*moral to the point of priggishness, patriotic to the point of servility*', it was the only publication in the colony in a time of government censorship until William Wentworth launched *The Australian* in 1824.<sup>1</sup>

Provincial newspapers in NSW did not start to appear until the 1840's, the first being the Hunter River Gazette, but it only lasted 6 months. A short life was the fate of many early newspapers including that of Moruya's first newspaper the **Moruya Messenger** established by **Edward Wainwright**.

These early newspapers are often all the documentary evidence that remains of the early days of a district. The impression we get of the people and the towns can therefore be influenced by the prejudices or associations of the editor. We see this with the editor of the short lived Moruya Liberal **Robert Burgess** who was a member of the Good Templars temperance movement and described Martin Keating (hotel owner) as a murderous villain versus **Olive Harvison** of the Moruya Examiner in the 1920's who saw the best in people and published Martin's obituary full of praise for his “high principles and integrity of character.” The full story of Robert Burgess will appear in part 3 of this series.

## Moruya Messenger and Edward Wainwright

**Edward Wainwright** already owned the Braidwood Observer when in August 1862 he published a prospectus for his new newspaper - The Moruya Messenger, Miner's Advocate, and Southern Coast Districts Advertiser. In the prospectus he stated the first issue would appear on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October. The Freeman's Journal of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 1862 reported having received the first and second editions of the Moruya Messenger and praised it for its literary matter, paper and typography singling out not surprisingly an article in the paper which supported the continuation of State Aid to religion.

No copies of the Moruya Messenger have survived so we can only assume it may have looked much like the two surviving 1866 copies of the Moruya Examiner.

Edward would seem not to have been a popular proprietor with many of the local population both in Moruya and Braidwood. In February the 11<sup>th</sup> 1864 the Golden Age of Queanbeyan reported an attack on Mr Wainwright by Patrick Flanagan. Edward was at this stage evidently living in Moruya and running the paper according to evidence he gave in court. The case was remanded to the Braidwood Quarter Sessions and was reported in the Empire of the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1864. The altercation was over a letter that was published in the paper which according to Patrick Flanagan vilified his dead father's memory. When Wainwright was riding near the Flanagan land in Mullenderree he was attacked with a stick by Flanagan while they were both on their horses. Wainwright claimed that it was attempted murder. The jury returned a verdict of common assault, with a strong recommendation to mercy in consequence of the great provocation he received at the hands of the proprietor. The judge even remarked “*I certainly think the provocation is such as would have caused me to commit an assault had the matter referred to myself.*” I am not sure what today's lawyers would have made of such a statement from the Judge.

In his evidence at Braidwood Wainwright stated that he no longer lived in Moruya. He also said that he could not say if **William Clements** was at the Messenger office on the day in question. He went onto say that he declined to say if he wrote the letter or not, adding “*newspaper people do generally get into little messes.*”

It would appear Edward was a fairly volatile character as he was involved in numerous court cases frequently for indecent language and once for threatening to shoot the Rev James Allan. The Sydney Morning Herald's

<sup>1</sup> National Library of Australia. [www.nla.gov.au/australian-newspaper-plan/for-researchers/history-of-australian-newspapers](http://www.nla.gov.au/australian-newspaper-plan/for-researchers/history-of-australian-newspapers)

Braidwood correspondent reported 21 October 1863 that the Reverend had bought the Braidwood Observer newspaper at auction for £205 for debt recovery.

In February 1865 Edward Wainwright is advertising that "Parties indebted to the proprietor of the late Moruya Messenger, and whose accounts have been delivered some months, are requested to pay the same to Mr. Charles Knight, Agent for Bega, on or before the 20<sup>th</sup> inst., when the accounts must be closed, and all outstanding accounts placed in the hands of a Solicitor for recovery."<sup>2</sup>

### Moruya Examiner



These early newspapers were very different from today's newspaper with their eye catching headings and many photographs. There were no major sensational headings and no photographs.

The modern idea of running an edition with a wrap around advertisement is however not much different to treatment of advertisements in some early Moruya Examiners where the whole front page was devoted to advertisements which appeared regularly in each edition. The news section however was very different with close written new items with only the paragraph space to alert the readers' eye to a separate news item.

Right is part of the front page of the Moruya Examiner from 1878 showing the advertisements



The early Moruya Examiners were 45cm by 41cm only moving later to the broadsheet size which was the equivalent of our A1 size paper. The frequency of the Moruya Examiner has varied over the years between being printed weekly and twice a week.

The Moruya Examiner filled the vacuum created by the demise of the Moruya Messenger and was run by William Clements.

<sup>2</sup> Bega Gazette 26 Feb 1865

## William John Clements

It is surmised that **William John Clements** (1821-1877) had started working for Edward Wainwright at the Moruya Messenger as a printer and compositor. William had arrived in New South Wales in December 1853 with his family, he was listed in the shipping records as a compositor and printer and spent the first years in Sydney.

After an altercation and court case in March 1864 involving Edward Wainwright and Patrick Thomas Flanagan Wainwright appears to have decided to sell the business to his employee William John Clements who purchased the paper with the help of Abraham Emmott and William Burns and relaunched the paper as the Moruya Examiner in November 1864. The earliest edition that remains of the Moruya Examiner is that of March 1866 the mast head of which is shown on the previous page. It was published weekly and available by subscription for £1 with single copies purchased from Mr Dansey the Chemist. The charge for advertising was 3s for 1" space and 1/6 for every additional inch. The front page of the paper in March 1866 was a continuation of an article 'Memoires of the Confederate war for independence'. This article was from Blackwoods Magazine, which was a British Magazine published in Edinburgh. The article seems to have been run by most newspapers of the day. Items of 'Local Intelligence' did not appear until the 3<sup>rd</sup> column of page 2. The State of the Araluen Road featured in 'Letters to the Editor' so somethings have not changed much. At the end of the paper it states *printed and published at the Examiner office, Vulcan Street by William John Clements, residing in Campbell Street Moruya.* You can download the full edition of this newspaper from our web site [www.mdhs.org.au/pdfs/References/MoruyaExaminer\\_2\\_March\\_1866.pdf](http://www.mdhs.org.au/pdfs/References/MoruyaExaminer_2_March_1866.pdf)

An article in the Goulburn Herald and Chronicle of the 5<sup>th</sup> December 1868 claims that the "Newspaper Tax" which was brought in under the Newspaper Postage Act caused the demise of a number of regional newspapers. The article claims that circulation of newspapers in the colony dropped from 3,551,984 in 1863 to 2,982,928 by 1867 despite a rise in the population. Among the papers it lists to have disappeared is the Moruya Examiner. Though whether this was the only reason for the disappearance of the Moruya Examiner is not recorded.

In December 1868 it was reported "*an effort is about to be made to re-establish a newspaper at Moruya.*"<sup>3</sup> The article was referring to the **Moruya Telegraph** which came into existence in December 1868 or January 1869. Details of this paper appear in a following article.

A report from the Moruya correspondent of the Bega Gazette<sup>4</sup> may explain what had happened to the Moruya Examiner and William Clements.- "*There is a report that our old friend the Moruya Examiner is going to return. It went through the forms of transmogrification and came out a "Protectionist;" but not being big enough, or old enough, or having such a shocking bad constitution, it could not protect itself in Sydney, and so thinks of again trying the bracing and refreshing air of Moruya. It is surprising how old faces do turn up in Moruya. They to wither and thither, still keep turning up, acknowledging there's nothing like home.*"

There is only one report I have found mentioning a weekly newspaper being started called "The Protectionist" and that was in May 1868,<sup>5</sup> but articles from The Protectionist did appear in other papers after this date and then it appears to cease. Presumably with Clements return to Moruya.

Reports in other newspapers from the Moruya Examiner start reappearing in August 1870. Thomas Edward Walter records in his diary of the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1870 *The "Moruya Examiner" was republished today by the original proprietor W J Clements after having been dead for about a couple of years.*" (Editor's Note: Slight grammar problem here – Mr Clements is cleverly publishing the newspaper after he is dead.)

In 1872 William Clements with his paper re-established again, ran for the electorate of Bega against Henry Clarke. In his letter to the electors he says he is little known in Bega but well known in Moruya through his writings in the Moruya Examiner and had advocated the interests of Moruya whilst conducting the above paper. He made the usual political promises to bring about necessary improvements to the area which in the last few years he considered had been almost ignored. He informed the electorate he was resolutely opposed to the Protestant Political Association and all such societies and he believed in religious equality. He called himself a thorough Protectionist and would oppose the Martin Government which he believed to be corrupt. He would however generally support a Government composed of Foster, Parkes etc.

<sup>3</sup> The Empire 12<sup>th</sup> December 1868

<sup>4</sup> Bega Gazette 17<sup>th</sup> October 1868

<sup>5</sup> South Australian Advertiser 30<sup>th</sup> May 1868

Needless to say Henry Clarke was returned as the member for the region, a position he had held since 1869 and continued to hold until 1904 with only once losing his seat for a year in 1894.

By 1874 the masthead had changed to that shown below with the start of the use of the phrase established 1863.



Presumably the date 1863 was used as William had been working at the Moruya Messenger from this time and may have been virtually running it for Edward Wainwright whose time was spent between Moruya and Braidwood.

Frequently with small country newspapers family members would also be involved. It was certainly the case with the Clements family where daughters **Emma and Annie** assisted with the printing and were both said to be excellent typesetters.<sup>6</sup> Both Emma and Annie married in Moruya, Emma to John Luck in 1873 and Annie in 1876 to George Luck the son of John Luck by his first marriage.<sup>7</sup>

## Robert Henry Harvison



After William Clements death in July 1877 his wife sold the business to **Robert Henry Harvison** who had been a mounted police constable. He was said to be backed by Bernard Tier and John Delofski.



Robert was born in January 1848 in Kiama, the son of James Harvison, shoemaker and his second wife Mary Jane Armstrong. He married in Moruya in 1874 to Henrietta Pomphrey. They had 7 children 3 of whom died in infancy and were a very prominent family in

in the Moruya area. He ran the newspaper from 1878 until 1913 when his daughter **Olive Constable** took over as editor, though he did not completely relinquish control.



For a short time he had some competition in the form of the Moruya Liberal in 1879-80. This paper was run by Robert Burgess and later John Thomas Hobbs. Details will be dealt with in a later article.

<sup>6</sup> Obituary Moruya Examiner 4<sup>th</sup> January 1936

<sup>7</sup> Moruya Pioneer Directory. MDHS

He was noted for forthright views and he was not afraid to express them in his newspaper, it was not advisable to get on the wrong side of the local newspaper editor. Though he finally met his match when he overstepped the line with comments on local Solicitor Edwin A. H. Shepherd.

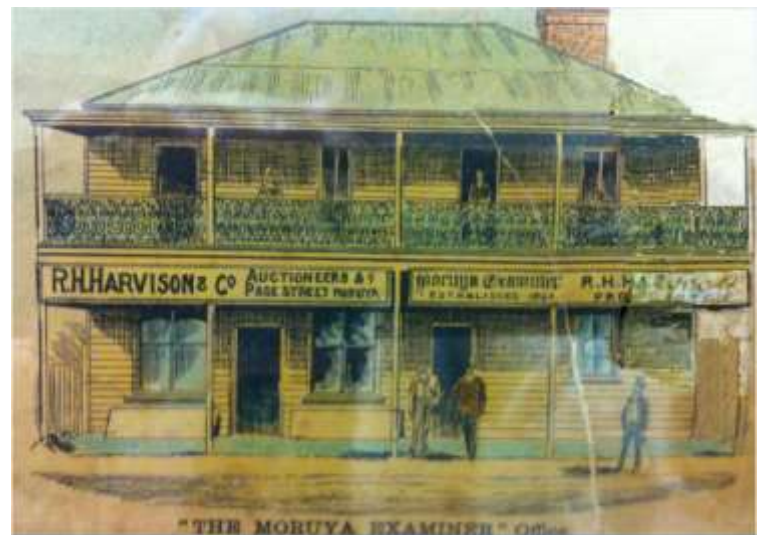
Mr Shepherd had bought the legal practice from D.A.B. (Dave) Pollock and as part of the agreement Pollock was not to open a practice in Moruya for 10 years. When Pollock eventually returned the first of the defamatory comments began with *“As Dave was never a blackmailer, he will be welcome back by many”* implying Shepherd was a blackmailer. Next came the comment *“Moruya is behind in many things, she can now boast the possession of an honest lawyer...”* This was followed by *“Mr E.A.H. Shepherd, solicitor, and his immoral spotted dog have cleared out from Vulcan Street and are now boarding with the little maidens who conduct the private school in Page Street, and the housemaids of the Shamrock are smiling all over their faces ever since losing the spotted dog, but all trust the doggie at least is now being taught to conduct himself with proper decorum.”* Finally *“We are copying the following in the hope that someone will be good enough to tie it round the spotted dog’s neck so that it may reach home. Why is a newspaper like a woman? ...Because every man should have one of his own and not run after his neighbours.”*<sup>8</sup> Mr Shepherd won his case of libel the jury finding all the words complained of were defamatory and Harvison was fined £100 plus considerable costs.

He was very much involved in the activities of the town particularly horse racing and the Jockey Club. The newspaper was not his sole source of income, he also had a successful auctioneering business and was involved in land sales and development.

The name of the paper continued to be the Moruya Examiner but the sub-title had many variations over the years.

The sketch to the right below shows Harvison’s establishment in Page Street. The building still remains today though it has had many different uses over the years.

In 1913 Harvison built a new stone building for his newspaper and a new home next door at 65 Campbell Street.



<sup>8</sup> Bega Budget 21<sup>st</sup> September 1907

## Olive Estelle Henrietta Constable (nee Harvison)



After her father's death in 1925 Olive ran the paper for a further 14 years until 1939. Under Olive the paper became "a chronicler of events, gone was the thunder and flourish of words"<sup>9</sup> of her father. She always found something nice to say about people particularly when writing their obituaries.

Olive ran the paper until the time of her death on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 1939 having produced the issue the week prior to her death. The editor of the Cobargo Chronicle writes that "*she set a high standard in her publications, displaying at all times a kindly feeling towards her fellow creatures*". He also praises her as a business woman saying she "*had a thorough grasp of modern business methods.*"



Olive and Arthur Constable

After her death, her husband Arthur Constable sold the business. Arthur had worked for Olive's father in the printing works of the Examiner Office but was said to have eventually spent most of his time in caring for Mr Harvison's race horses.<sup>10</sup>

The receipt below dated 1924 is from our Archive collection it is signed by O.E.H. Constable. General printing also provided a source of income for the newspaper proprietors.

Subscriptions to "Examiner," £1 per Annum.		Job Printing Best & Cheapest in the State.	
Established	<b>"Examiner" General Printing Office</b>		Year 1864.
	Campbell Street, Moruya.		
M. <i>Shelton</i>	<i>30th June</i>		1924
<b>Dr. to R. H. HARVISON.</b>			
Cash Rendered			
Subscription	<i>2.00</i>		<i>10</i>
Advertising:			
<i>Received payment -</i> <i>O.E.H. Constable</i>			

Our current One Hundred Years Ago series comes from information in the Moruya Examiner during Olive's time as editor.

<sup>9</sup> 16 Women of Eurobodalla by Noel Warry. MDHS

<sup>10</sup> Moruya Examiner 10<sup>th</sup> April 1959 Obituary