

THE DAILY RECORD: A CENTURY OF SUCCESS AND NEGLECT

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When the **Daily Mail** attains its centenary in 1996, much will inevitably be made of its role in inaugurating the modern era of popular daily newspapers. Another 100th anniversary, one with a strong Scottish accent, is likely to pass with less notice: that of the **Daily Record** on 28 October 1995. By comparison with the **Herald** and the **Scotsman**, established in 1783 and 1817 respectively, the paper is a mere stripling. But of all today's tabloid dailies it was historically the first on the scene, pipping even the **Daily Mail** by several months and providing a model for others to follow.

To mark its own centenary the **Daily Record** has published three compilations, two in book form and one as a CD-ROM. The two volumes comprise sports coverage (Baillie 1994) and cartoons (McLeod 1994) which have appeared in its pages over the years. More technologically advanced and far more expensive is **Scotland in Pictures**, a photographic database billed as covering 'subjects like famous Scots, football and architecture, as well as over 200 **Record** front pages from the last 100 years' (**Daily Record** 20 July 1995). A previous compilation of front pages, **Front Page Scotland**, was brought out in book form by Robert Maxwell in the late 1980s, but was not made available to the general public. It is a matter of regret that in 1995 the occasion of the centenary has been celebrated largely by reissued material - fascinating though this is - rather than by a volume along the lines of Magnus Magnusson et al's **Glorious Privilege: The History of The Scotsman** (1967) or Alastair Phillips' **Glasgow's Herald 1783-1983** (1982). But this absence is nothing new; it merely continues into the **Record's** centenary year a long-standing neglect of the paper by writers and scholars.

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Scottish Affairs

There are some exceptions, of course. Sir Alastair Dunnett has written a chapter-length memoir of his experiences as the **Record's** art and features editor before the Second World War and as its editor from 1946-1955 (Dunnett 1984). More recent events, notably the paper's relationship with Robert Maxwell and its battles with the Scottish edition of the **Sun**, are discussed by Maurice Smith (Smith 1994). Alastair Hetherington devotes a short chapter to the paper of the late 1980s in his study of regional news (Hetherington 1989), and the present author has analysed the **Record's** handling of the subject of death (Meech 1992). There are brief accounts by Hutchison (1987), Meech and Kilborn (1992), MacInnes (1992) and Linklater and Denniston (1992) in their studies of the Scottish press, and the paper's coverage of sport and issues of national identity is treated by Blain et al (1993) and Blain and Boyle (1994). But the **Daily Record** is not mentioned in the books on Glasgow by Jack House (1978), David Daiches (1977) or Allan Massie (1989), and Maurice Lindsay (1972) gives it just two passing references.

This conspicuous gap in the literature is the more surprising given the **Record's** status as a popular cultural institution in Scotland and its contributions to press history. It has been Scotland's highest-selling daily newspaper for half its life, with a current readership of approximately one in two Scots over the age of 15. Judged in terms of its penetration of the market, it ranks today among the most successful papers in the world. Of the **Record's** significance for the launch of the **Daily Mail** a hundred years previously, Lord Northcliffe's biographers remark that:

It has its place in the history of journalism as a stepping-stone towards one of the most influential newspaper developments of the age (Pound and Harmsworth 1959, p.188).

The **Record** went on to become the first Scottish newspaper to use news pictures (Linklater and Denniston 1992, p.128). In 1936 it ran a front page colour photograph, claimed as a world first for a news page, of Emperor Haile Selassie at Wemyss Castle. And when it moved to its present site in Glasgow in 1971, the paper operated what was then the largest web-offset printing plant in the world.

RESEARCHING THE RECORD

It was with the aim of filling this long-standing gap that I began work in late 1990 on a research project which sought to consider the paper as both a

The Daily Record: a Century of Success and Neglect

cultural and a commercial phenomenon. In order to produce a study of this kind, a broad, multi-disciplinary approach was called for, requiring a range of techniques. Archival research needed to be supplemented by textual analysis and qualitative audience research. But above all a study of the newsroom and interviews with **Record** staff were intended to provide the kind of information and insights that would produce an understanding of what made the paper 'tick'. It may be added that theoretically informed ethnographic studies of media organizations, such as Tuchman (1978) in relation to the US press - or those by Elliott (1972) and Schlesinger (1978) of the BBC - have no equivalents at present as regards the press in the UK.

Having been granted unprecedentedly generous access to the **Record** building at Anderston Quay, Glasgow, I conducted my fieldwork there from November 1990 to March 1991. But the newsroom study came to a premature and abrupt halt with the publication in the satirical magazine **Private Eye** of a scurrilous rumour concerning the then editor, which I had allegedly been told by a **Record** journalist. A libel action was started by the paper against the magazine and damages of £100,000 sought. An apology and a lesser sum were eventually accepted in an out-of-court settlement. I not only became persona non grata at the paper, despite repeated vigorous protestations of innocence, but senior management demanded in writing that I cease work on the project. Access to the newsroom having been blocked, there was no option but reluctantly to abort the book timed for the paper's centenary.

Early on in the research period a request for a printed account of the paper's history had produced a couple of typewritten sheets, which were taken from a desk drawer and photocopied for me. The document, I was told, had been produced by a previous managing director in response to a request by schoolchildren. This modest effort, a bare statement of the main facts, nevertheless provided a frame through which to interpret the paper. Here was a commercial organization which had been going about its business for almost a century without ever feeling it appropriate that anything substantial be produced to document its achievements. This may be partly accounted for by the unyielding imperatives of a daily production cycle leaving little time for less 'core' activities. But it may be that, despite its undoubted success with readers and advertisers, and occasional bouts of boastfulness - '[t]he **Record** is not slow in blowing its own trumpet' (Hetherington 1989, p.199) - the paper has lacked a certain self-confidence (Hutchison 1987). If so, this may be linked to a widespread perception of tabloids as ephemeral and 'trivial' cultural products. Or it may owe something to the native self-doubt or Scottish inferiorism discussed, among others, by McCrone (1992) and

Scottish Affairs

empirically demonstrated, with ingenuity, by Cusick (1994). Given the sudden termination of my fieldwork, these possible explanations have had to remain tentative hypotheses.

A BRIEF HISTORY

For many of those in whose lives the **Record** is an essential, though largely unacknowledged, feature, it may come as a surprise that its present character and political orientation are of relatively recent origin. In 1895 the **Daily Record** possessed few of the instantly recognizable characteristics of today's paper. In those days it was an eight-page broadsheet with the grey appearance typical of the period, not simply because of the absence of colour printing. There was no display advertising and above all there were no photographs. The only illustrations appeared in the 'Woman's World' section (one of the features subsequently adopted by the **Daily Mail**), engravings of items of clothing which could be obtained as paper patterns from the **Record's** North Frederick Street office in Glasgow.

Headlines were modest in size and decidedly unsensational in language. Although small ads accounted for four out of the seven columns on the front page and about a third of the paper's contents in total, a confident undertaking was given from the outset that: 'The Advertisements of the **Daily Record** will never be allowed to encroach upon the news space, and reading matter will appear upon EVERY page'. Other differences from today include the extensive coverage of foreign news, reports of the Glasgow and Edinburgh as well as London stock exchanges, and market reports from Scotland and the United States. On the other hand, sport featured prominently, with a concentration - then as now - on football.

The first edition of the **Daily Record** appeared on 28 October 1895, as a continuation of the **Glasgow Echo** (1893-95). At half the price of the **Glasgow Herald**, it boasted of being 'THE BIGGEST 1/2d PAPER IN THE WORLD' on its front page and, more modestly, expressed the hope in its first leader of becoming the best halfpenny newspaper in the world. It was owned by Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) and his brother Harold (later Lord Rothermere), publishers also of the Glasgow-based **North British Daily Mail** (founded 1847). The new paper circulated in Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, Stirlingshire, Ayrshire, and the Clyde coast generally. A Noon Edition, devoted mainly to racing, became an independent publication in 1923 and survived until 1968. In 1901 the **Daily Record** amalgamated with the **Glasgow Daily Mail**, which the **North British Daily Mail** had

The Daily Record: a Century of Success and Neglect

meanwhile become. By 1900, by which time there were seven daily newspapers in Glasgow, the paper was already boasting the 'Largest sale of any morning or evening newspaper in Scotland'. This circulation claim subsequently became 'The All-Scotland Newspaper. Sale Twice That of Any Other Morning Paper' at the end of the First World War, rising to 'Three Times' in the period up to the mid 1920s. It was to be almost another 50 years before the **Record** could make the comparable claim of being 'SCOTLAND'S BIGGEST DAILY SALE' (12 September 1973), for the reason that most of the intervening period coincided with the presence in Glasgow of the **Scottish Daily Express**.

Politically the **Record** began life as a Liberal paper, but then moved to the right and became a staunch supporter of the Union after being bought in 1922 by Allied Newspapers (owner Gomer Berry, later Lord Kemsley). Before long the **Scottish Daily Express**, Beaverbrook's Scottish off-shoot, had 'mischievously published a front-page endorsement of home rule' (Kemp 1993, p.83). The **Daily Record** duly responded 'by giving home rule enormous and enthusiastic coverage' (ibid) in a determined effort to compete. But the **Scottish Daily Express** overtook the **Record** to become the market leader in Scotland. In 1955 the loss-making Kemsley group Associated Scottish Newspapers, sold its Glasgow papers (the **Daily Record**, **Sunday Mail** and **Evening News**) to the International Publishing Corporation, owners of the **Daily Mirror**. Sir Alastair Dunnett has claimed that the **Record**, which was under his editorship at the time, reflected 'the aspirational intellectualism of even our under-privileged', referring to it as 'a working-class **News Chronicle**' (Dunnett 1984, p.117). Nevertheless, in the General Election of that year the paper had recommended its readers to 'Vote Tory', while doubting that 'either party has given Scotland a fair deal' (26 May 1955). Dunnett promptly left for the editor's chair at the **Scotsman**.

Under new ownership the paper was transformed into the Scottish equivalent of the **Daily Mirror**, then the world's best-selling daily. At the time, sales of the **Record** averaged 350,000 copies a day, whereas the **Mirror** had a UK circulation in excess of 4.5 million. From that point on the paper became a champion of the Labour Party and saw its sales figure rise significantly as support for the Conservatives in Scotland began its long decline. So faithful a supporter of the Party did it become - Shadow Cabinet member Gordon Brown MP writes a regular column today, as the late John Smith did before him - that it can be regarded in some respects as the mouthpiece of the political consensus and, as such, a conservative force in Scottish politics. The **Sun**, by contrast, has always prided itself on its irreverent attitude to the establishment, even when supporting successive Tory governments.

Scottish Affairs

Meanwhile the **Scottish Daily Express**, despite sales of over 570,000, was losing money, a situation only exacerbated by dire industrial relations (McKay and Barr 1976, p.18). As a consequence, it was forced to close its Glasgow base in 1974 and move south to Manchester, from where it served a dwindling band of Scottish readers. Before the **Express's** departure, sales of the **Record** had already overtaken those of its rival, but from this point on it increased circulation substantially. It is during this period that the paper became the daily paper of choice for most working class readers in its sales area, a situation unrivalled even by the **Sun** in the UK as a whole. In 1984 the **Record**, which as part of the Mirror Group had been taken over by the Reed Group in 1970, was acquired by the late Robert Maxwell from Reed International (as the group had become in the meantime). At the third time of trying, the tycoon experienced success at last in adding national newspapers to his media empire. It remains a Mirror Group Newspaper (MGN) title, together with the **Sunday Mail** and the free newspaper **The Glaswegian**, despite the changed ownership of the group following Maxwell's death.

EDITORIAL AND MARKETING APPEALS

Seen from a marketing perspective the **Record** has successfully established and maintained itself as a brand in the highly competitive newspaper market in Scotland, where five indigenous titles compete daily with twelve London titles, several of which now publish Scottish editions. Brand commitment and loyalty on the part of readers, individuals' motivations and regular purchasing decisions, depend on many factors: the paper's editorial content and advertising, its availability, its promotional activities, and, not least, its pricing policy. What is striking about the **Record** is that it can charge a premium price, relative to its rivals, in the knowledge that its substantial core of loyalists are not price sensitive (to use the relevant jargon). By comparison with the MGN's flagship, the **Daily Mirror**, readers of the **Record** have kept faith over the years with the paper, including those of economic recession. Circulation figures for the ten-year period July-December 1984 to July-December 1994 show a decline of 28.6% in the **Mirror's** sales, compared with one of only 0.1% for the **Record** (Audit Bureau of Circulation figures). More recently, the launch of the **Scottish Daily Mail** in February 1995 has so far failed to dent the Scottish market leader's position, despite vigorous promotional activity, including free and heavily discounted copies. Indeed, (unaudited) sales of the **Record** during the first three months of 1995 show a modest increase (1.1%).

The Daily Record: a Century of Success and Neglect

Much of the **Record's** continuing success as a brand can be put down to the relationship it has built up with its readers over the years. It addresses them first and foremost as Scots and makes Scottishness the most important of its own credentials, in terms both of editorial content and of marketing platform. The principal aim for **Record** journalists and editors is to find specifically Scottish news and features or those that can be presented with a Scottish angle. This can even extend to preferring a mediocre Scottish story to a good English one, as a senior editorial executive admitted to me. Typical of the tabloid press, there is a high frequency of human interest stories, representing as they do 'the world of experience, the world of individuals, as opposed to the impersonal abstractions of institutions' (Curran et al 1980, p.308). This emphasis on personalization and on private concerns helps to distinguish a paper like the **Record** from the broadsheet press, and aligns it more with the melodrama of theatre, film and television with its appeal to 'a popular resistance to abstract, theoretical ways of understanding society and history' (Gripsrud 1992, p.88).

The **Daily Record's** institutional links with the **Daily Mirror** make possible the joint selling of advertising space and the sharing of news items. In practice, this reciprocity mostly works in one direction, given the **Mirror's** greater editorial resources and its limited interest in Scottish affairs. The frequency with which the **Record** adapts stories from its sister paper passes largely unnoticed by the public, since there are few readers who make a habit of buying both papers and making comparisons between them. It is, however, a practice that calls for independent monitoring, as the Scottish title has been under threat on more than one previous occasion of becoming merely a Scottish edition of the **Mirror** - and thereby of adding to Scotland's branch-plant status in the UK economy.

Together with the **Daily Mirror**, the **Daily Record** shares many of the characteristics of tabloidese, 'that tough-guy, hat-on-the-back-of-the-head talk that makes newspapers sound like James Cagney' (Waterhouse 1989, p.225). This language variety affects a vernacular character in contrast to the more restrained and formal prose of the broadsheets. In reality it is largely the product of sub-editors obliged to reconcile information with impact, especially in headline writing. The **Record** has an advantage over its London-based rivals in its use of Scots, the spoken language of most of its readers. There may be no columns or even extended passages written wholly in Scots, and it is rare to find examples in straight news items, where Standard English, the 'language-of-power' (Anderson 1991, p.42), remains the norm. But in those sections of the paper where the address is more informal, for example readers' letters, sports coverage and the speech bubbles

Scottish Affairs

of certain cartoons, Scots words and phrases come into their own. When used by columnists such as Joan Burnie they help to achieve a printed 'voice' which suggests the colloquial register of their spoken language. This aspect of dialogic style (Fowler 1991, p.40) proposes a down-to-earth affinity between journalist and reader, thereby heightening a common Scottish cultural identity which the paper is keen to promote in a number of ways. By contrast, Gaelic is denied even the meagre weekly column it receives in certain other papers.

It is noteworthy that currently one third of the **Record's** readers are middle-class - 608,000 out of Scotland's 1,862,000 ABC1 newspaper readers (National Readership Survey figures, January-December 1994). A long-standing corporate policy has been to position the paper as a 'respectable, responsible tabloid' (in the words of one of the company's directors). 'Wholesome' was the term used in its first editorial in 1895. This has involved a deliberate avoidance in recent years of some of the worst excesses committed elsewhere in the tabloid press, such as attacks on gays and lesbians. One measure of the policy's success is Professor Tom Carbery's surprise at the low incidence of complaints made against the **Record** during his period of office in 1990-91 as its first and only readers' representative or ombudsman. In no case did he find it necessary to rule against the paper (interview with the author). Similarly, the Press Complaints Commission, the industry's self-regulating body, upheld only two complaints against the paper, as compared with eighteen against the **Sun**, during its first four years of existence (Press Complaints Commission Reports 1991-95, *passim*).

Evidence of the would-be family values of the paper is provided by the fact that, unlike its sister paper the **Daily Mirror**, the **Record** has not run ads for telephone sex lines or sexually explicit videos. In addition, more than one researcher has been struck by a previous editor's desire to claim moral credit for the removal in 1987 of topless models, previously introduced to compete with the **Sun's** Page 3 girls. The paper, however, continues to print conventional pin-ups, usually under the guise of news stories about showbiz personalities or new lingerie products. Simultaneously with dropping its nudes, the **Record** started two services that were more in keeping with a publicly caring persona. Its 'Helpline' provided a daily space for readers wishing to trace long-lost acquaintances or for those enquiring from others how to obtain awkward-to-find objects. The accompanying 'Cheerline' (till November 1992) typically carried expressions of thanks to hospital staff from former patients or to honest folk who handed in lost property. To the more hard-bitten of tabloid journalists these must have seemed curiously old-fashioned additions. But the **Sunday Post** has long demonstrated that such

The Daily Record: a Century of Success and Neglect

couthy sentiments satisfy a need among many Scottish readers to believe in a community where good-neighbourliness prevails, particularly when this is perceived to be under threat.

Further evidence of the paper's claim to social responsibility and its ability to empathize with its readers may be found in its periodic charity appeals and campaigns. One outstanding appeal for a Children's Hospice, for example, raised a UK-record £4 million in a year; another was launched in 1995 as a tribute to the memory of the football star Davie Cooper. The paper also campaigned vigorously on behalf of the purchasers of Hoover products over the company's misjudged free-flights promotion (successfully) and for the retention of the Ravenscraig Steelworks and Rosyth Dockyard (unsuccessfully). Such ventures simultaneously provide the **Record** with a regular flow of editorial copy, often of a heart-gladdening variety, as well as with a marketing opportunity in the form of solidarity-inspiring car stickers.

A subject on which the caring **Record** might be expected to campaign with conviction, given the generally poor state of the nation's health, is diet. There are occasional features and wallcharts on healthy eating, but the credibility of anti-junk food copy can find itself compromised. It may be juxtaposed with an inappropriate photo such as a large close-up of munching children captioned 'Burgers beat the lot... they may not be tops for nutrition, but Harvey and Laura would choose fast foods like burgers over more traditional meals every time' (1 September 1993). Alternatively, the advice to 'Buy fewer bags of crisps and chocolate' (ibid) may be contradicted later by a week-long offer of free potato crisps ('Scotland's biggest-ever crisp giveaway promotion'). Prominently displayed on both front and inside pages in December 1993, this particular promotion coincided with the announcement by the Secretary of State for Scotland of a new campaign to improve the Scottish diet. The **Record** chose to ignore the launch, unlike the **Herald** and **Scotsman**, just as it had ignored an authoritative report the previous year highlighting Scotland's poor health record, which had also been covered by other papers (Meech 1992). The fact that such inconsistencies and omissions do not appear to affect the **Daily Record's** popularity is further evidence of the paper's keen awareness of its readers' values.

The public standing of the paper received a remarkable, explicit endorsement in 1986. The occasion was the dispute between the paper's then owner, Robert Maxwell, and its journalists and print workers over suspected plans to reduce the Scottish content of the title. During the three weeks of the ensuing strike, a diverse group of public figures lent their support to the **Record** as an 'irreplaceable' Scottish institution - a rare public acknowledgement of its

Scottish Affairs

status and an action hard to imagine occurring in the case of any other UK tabloid newspaper, least of all a Labour-supporting title. Politicians across the political spectrum, including the then Scottish Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, joined forces with senior clergy, educationalists, sports personalities and rockstars openly to urge a resolution of the dispute. And once production resumed, ordinary readers expressed their loyalty to the paper in the most practical way. Far from switching to other titles - in line with the conventional wisdom of the newspaper industry regarding strikes - circulation in fact increased over the previous year (763,025, March 1986 as compared with 761,885, March 1985) and continued to do so for a further six months.

A NATIONAL TITLE?

Since the 1960s many theorists have focused attention on various alleged ideological effects of the mass media. Most of this work has dealt with television, which, according to one influential account, 'functions as a social ritual, overriding individual distinctions, in which our culture engages in order to communicate with its collective self' (Fiske and Hartley 1978, p.85). Given the fragmentation of national audiences brought about by the ever-increasing number of television channels, such a view would need to be heavily qualified today. But while television viewers may zap promiscuously, they are far more culturally monogamous as readers of a daily paper, particularly of the **Daily Record**. This has allowed the marketing of both the **Daily Record** and the **Sunday Mail** to make explicit appeals to a sense of national community among their readers. Addressed in the second person, for example, the reading public has been reminded for several years that these are 'Your papers - made in Scotland'.

In turn, the act of newspaper reading can be considered at one level as having an almost mystical aspect. For Benedict Anderson, newspaper consumption is an 'extraordinary mass ceremony', with each 'communicant' aware that every day a private act is being 'replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he [sic] is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion' (Anderson 1991, p.35). In the case of the **Record** the imagined community thus conjured up may be Scottish, but the individual-collective act itself is not restricted to Scotland. It takes place elsewhere in the UK on a daily basis and in North America on a Thursday (for Wednesday evening's football matches). In addition, since February 1994 a weekly edition of the **Daily Record** and **Sunday Mail** has been published for Australia and New Zealand, where its penetration of the expatriate market comfortably exceeds that of equivalent versions of London-based titles.

The Daily Record: a Century of Success and Neglect

That the **Record** is Scotland's best-selling daily is common knowledge, outstripping as it does the circulation north of the border of all its rivals put together. But two points need to be made here. The Scottish edition of the English **Sun** in a comparatively short period and with minimal staff has succeeded in increasing its sale in Scotland to between a third and a half of that of the **Record**. While this does not appear to have been at the expense of the latter, it calls for a revision of the conventional view that all 'English' titles are doomed to fail in Scotland. Secondly, the **Record**'s implicit boast of being the paper for the whole of Scotland must be treated with a little caution.

Table 1

Readership Data, In 1000s (January-December 1994)

	Scotland	Strathclyde	Lothian	Grampian	Tayside
Total	4066 (100%)	1869 (46.0%)	608 (15.0%)	404 (9.9%)	319 (7.8%)
Record	1862 (100%)	1117 (60.0%)	218 (11.7%)	82 (4.4%)	68 (3.7%)
Sun	907 (100%)	420 (46.3%)	112 (12.3%)	99 (10.9%)	71 (7.8%)

	Fife	Central	Highlands and Islands	Dumfries and Galloway	Borders
Total	274 (6.7%)	222 (5.5%)	163 (4.0%)	121 (3.0%)	*86 (2.1%)
Record	133 (7.1%)	130 (7.0%)	*54 (2.9%)	**41 (2.2%)	**19 (1.0%)
Sun	*77 (8.5%)	62 (6.8%)	**28 (3.1%)	**20 (2.2%)	**18 (2.0%)

* *small sample size*

** *very small sample size*

Source: National Readership Survey

Scottish Affairs

The circulation of the **Daily Record** is less geographically restricted than those of the **Scotsman** and the **Herald**; nevertheless, its readers are still disproportionately concentrated in Strathclyde. So, whereas the region has 46% of Scotland's total newspaper reading public, as many as 60% of the paper's readers live there (see table 1). In most other regions the situation is reversed. In Tayside, for example, the **Record**'s readership figure is 3.7% of its total, whereas the region has 7.8% of the nation's readers. The corresponding figures for Grampian are 4.4% and 9.9%. In the latter cases competition from local papers, the Dundee **Courier** and the Aberdeen **Press and Journal** respectively, accounts for markedly reduced sales of the **Record**. More surprising is the fact that the **Sun**, though selling fewer copies, has a readership distribution which more closely parallels that of the population in these areas. In the case of Tayside the proportion of its Scottish readers (7.8%) is identical with that of the region's share of total newspaper readers in Scotland; in Grampian the equivalent figures are 10.9% and 9.9%. And Strathclyde's 46.3% of **Sun** readers matches that of the region's share of the total Scottish newspaper readership (46%) almost exactly. The same discrepancy between the two titles is repeated in most of the other Scottish regions.

The conclusion that may be drawn from these data is that, while the **Record** continues to enjoy healthy sales throughout the country, its long-standing perception as a Glasgow/Strathclyde title has been a factor in skewing its nationwide appeal. A policy of increased regional editionizing has been introduced to overcome this market barrier, but it will take time for the benefits, if any, to register. Meanwhile, the relative success of the **Sun** in Scotland has provided other 'English' titles with the necessary encouragement to launch Scottish editions, or in the case of the **Scottish Daily Mail** and the **Scottish Daily Express** to return after a generation in limbo.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is a rare fictional reference to the **Record** - a back-handed compliment, in a sense - in William McIlvanney's novel **The Big Man**, when the working class Dan Scoular comments that, 'There are people around have trouble readin' the **Daily Record**' (McIlvanney 1986, p.268). Such a remark depends heavily on the paper's cultural familiarity in Scotland. But the association with low intelligence or poor reading skills also suggests a certain disapprobation, even contempt. If we are to believe Dan Scoular, this curious mixture of taken-for-grantedness and disparagement may be one reason why so little serious attention has been devoted to the **Daily Record** over the

The Daily Record: a Century of Success and Neglect

years. The fact that tabloid newspapers in general have increasingly become targets for hostile criticism may have played a part too, although, as has been noted, the **Record** itself has encountered little of this. Or it may simply be that a perception of newspapers as a medium in decline makes them of lesser attraction as an object of study, though in the case of the **Record** at least its circulation figures would seem to belie this. But none of these is a valid reason for the relative lack of interest by scholars in such papers, as compared with their vigorous engagement with popular film and television.

In their book on the **Sun**, Chippindale and Horrie maintain that:

it is wrong for critics ignorantly to write the paper off as rubbish churned out for morons. Rather, it should be recognised as a sophisticated and extremely high-quality product, carefully tailored for its market' (Chippindale & Horrie 1990, p.xi).

This article argues that a critical appreciation of the **Daily Record**, an equivalent newspaper institution north of the border, is long overdue, together with a detailed assessment of its contribution to Scottish cultural and national identity.

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Scottish Affairs

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