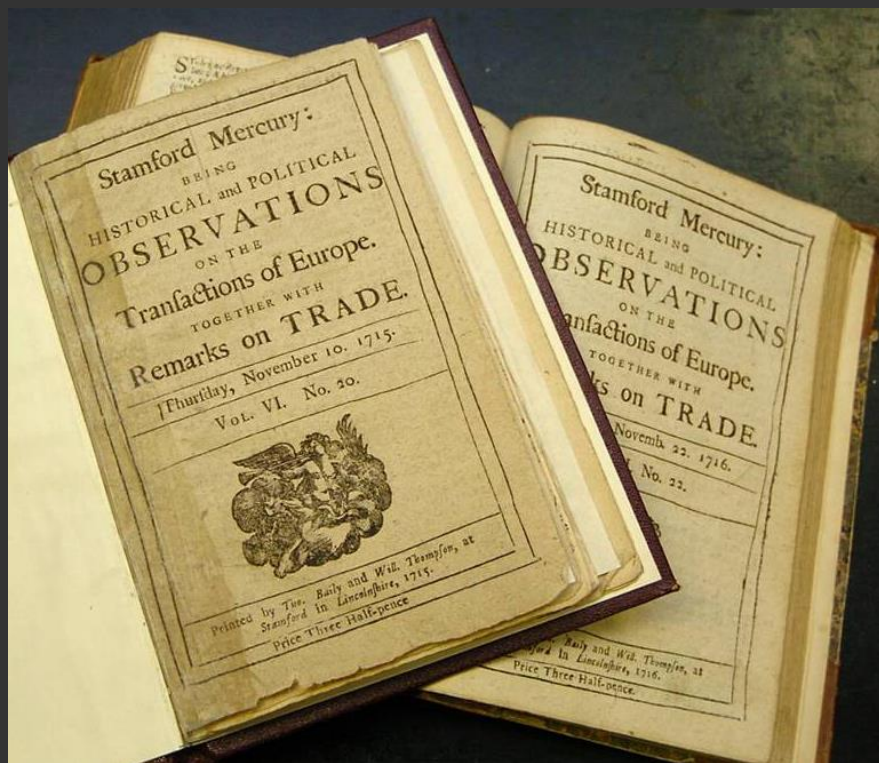


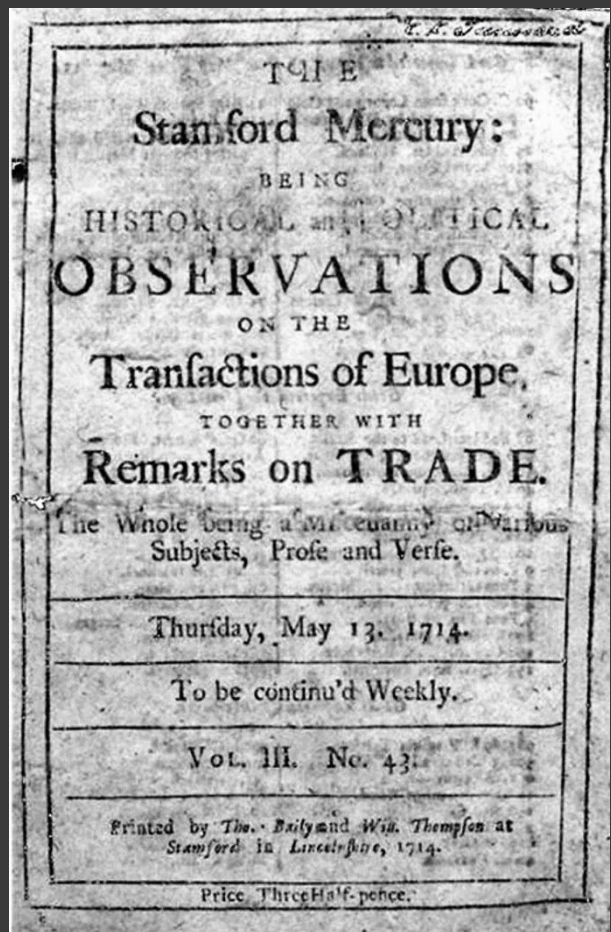
Stamford Mercury Archive Trust

# The Stamford Mercury

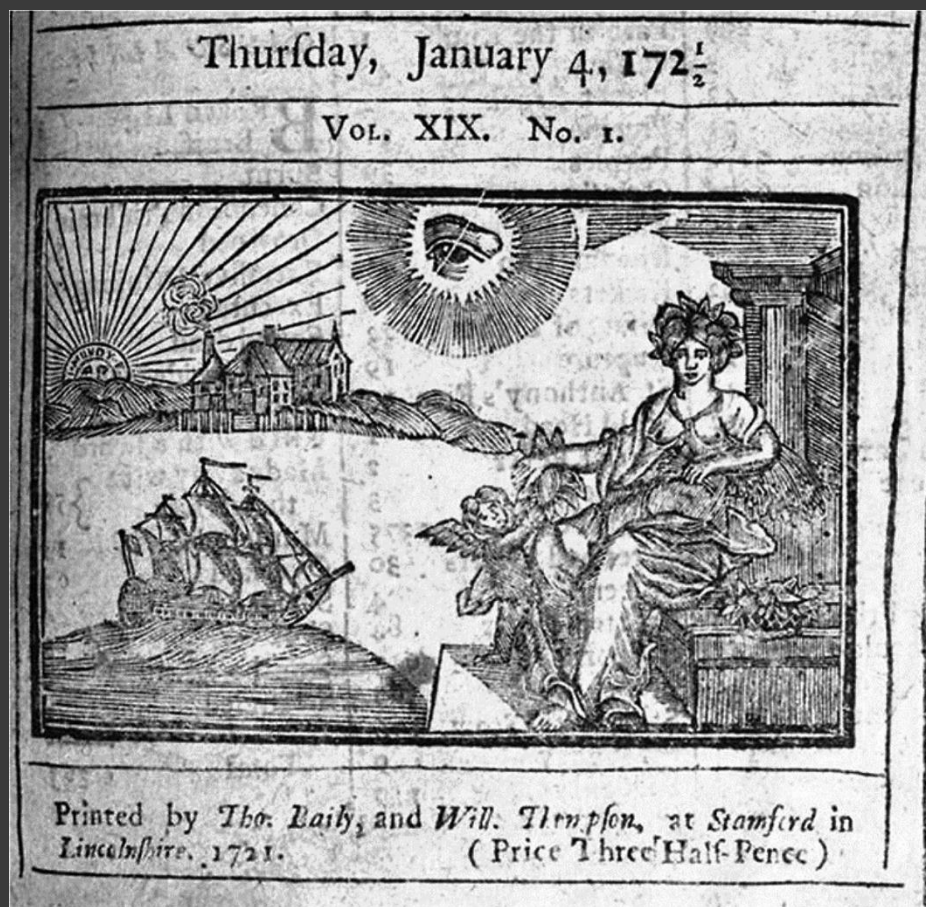
1712 to the present.



Stamford's first newspaper, the *Stamford Post*, was established in 1710 in High St, St Martin's by local businessmen, Thomas Baily & William Thompson. It was renamed the *Stamford Mercury* in August 1712. From 1712 until the present day, the paper has been at the heart of the local community reporting on local, national and international news.



The archive's oldest newspaper, 13 May 1714



A cover of 4 January 1722





Lincoln, Rutland & Stamford Mercury

Established 1695

Britain's Oldest Newspaper

**Lincoln**

**Rutland & Stamford Mercury**

Incorporating  
The Boston Guardian, The Spalding Guardian and The Stamford & Rutland News

No. 12,615

FRIDAY, MAY 7, 1954

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**STAMFORD AND DISTRICT**

This masthead lasted with little change from 1791 until 1988

**Stamford Mercury**

No 16,556

BRITAIN'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER

SERVING STAMFORD AND THE DEEPINGS

Simplified form introduced January 1988

Since 1712  
No: 16,811

Friday  
June 01  
2018

BRITAIN'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER

STAMFORDMERCURY.CO.UK

**Stamford Mercury**

£1.20

SERVING STAMFORD AND THE DEEPINGS

ILIFFE MEDIA

Present day masthead



It was only after about 1760 that local news began to be reported in provincial newspapers. For example, this *Stamford Mercury* of 16 May 1776 records the laying of the foundation stone of Stamford Town Hall.



STAMFORD, May 16.  
On Monday last the foundation of the new Town Hall to be built in this borough, was laid in the presence of the worshipful the Mayor, the Aldermen, and other Gentlemen of the Corporation; on which occasion several suitable toasts were drunk, a handsome present was given to the workmen employ'd, and plenty of liquor distributed to the spectators.

“On Monday last the foundation of the new Town Hall to be built in this borough was laid in the presence of the worshipful the Mayor, the Aldermen, [etc.]; on which occasion several suitable toasts were drunk, a handsome present was given to the workmen employ'd, and plenty of liquor distributed to the spectators.”

The *Stamford Mercury* was a most important regional newspaper. National newspapers did not exist at that time, so the *Mercury* was the only source of information about national and international events.

The 1745 Jacobite Rebellion, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, was extremely worrying to Stamfordians as the rebels got as far as Derby, only 50 miles away. There was widespread panic. The *Mercury* of 19<sup>th</sup> December 1745, unprecedentedly, devoted a huge amount of space to the progress of the Rebellion.



*Mansfield, Dec. 4.* The Rebels were this Morning upon their March from Ashbourn to Derby. By one that saw them we hear, they appear'd to be a good deal fatigued, their Yesterday's March having been a very great one.

*Stamford, Dec. 11.*

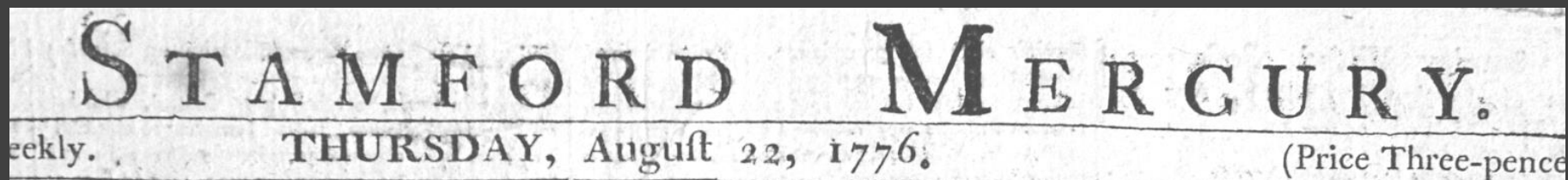
We think it would be very ridiculous, and no Way satisfactory to our Readers, to publish every Hearsay and flying Rumour, during the present Disturbances; for as Peoples Apprehensions are continually upon the Alarm, and the fearful always represent Facts according to their own Suggestions, which are then generally very inconsistent; we shall therefore make it our principal Care, to insert only such Accounts, as are published by Authority, or come to our Hands well attested; by this Means our Paper will not be crowded with the Marvelous, and Hearsay, but be an Entertainment to our Readers, much more Satisfaction as it will come nearest the Truth.

A soothing editorial in the *Mercury* of 12 Dec 1745 on the news of the rebels reaching Derby.



It took six weeks for news to reach Stamford during the American War of Independence, and even then the huge significance of the events was not recognised.

There is no mention of the actual Declaration of Independence in the *Mercury*, and this report of three days before is all that we have.



A letter from on board the Fowey man of war at Maryland, dated July 1, after speaking of the great confusion, noise, and clamour in their meetings and councils, on the debates of a separation from the Mother Country, says, "The whole eight Eastern-shore Counties were against Independence; four of the Western were for it, and the other four were against; so that in Maryland the division was twelve to four." The

The French Revolution and the following 25 years of war were cataclysmic events for Britain. Everything was reported in great detail in the *Mercury*.

## Tuesday and Wednesday's Polts.

From the LONDON GAZETTE.

Paris, July 17. In the evening a detachment with two pieces of cannon went to the Bastille, to demand the ammunition deposited there. A flag of truce had been sent before them, which was answered from within: But nevertheless, the Governor (the Marquis de Launay) ordered the guard to fire, and several were killed. The populace, enraged at this proceeding, rushed forward to the assault, when the Governor agreed to admit a certain number, on condition that they should not commit any violence. A detachment of about forty accordingly passed the drawbridge, which was instantly drawn up, and the whole party massacred.

A breach was soon made in the gate, and the fortrefs surrendered.

Not more than four or five prisoners were found in the Bastille.



The fall of the Bastille, 14 July 1789.

Stamford Mercury, 24 July 1789



The *Mercury* reported in great detail all the events of the Napoleonic Wars: from battles to the introduction of Income Tax. The importance of the victory at Trafalgar merited the use of early headlines. together with 'Glorious News' of the victory at Waterloo.

**Friday's Express.**

*The Most Glorious and the Most Decisive*  
**V I C T O R Y**  
Ever obtained by the Navy of Great Britain:  
Purchased; however, at the dearest rate.  
Death of Lord Nelson.

Early use of headlines. The *Mercury* report of the Battle of Trafalgar, 21 Oct 1805.

### GLORIOUS NEWS!

About eleven o'clock last night a chaise and four, ornamented with French flags, and two French eagles, pointed out of the windows on each side, drove rapidly along the Kent road and across Westminster Bridge, up Parliament-street and Whitehall, to Lord Castlereagh's house in St. James'-square. It was instantly recognised by the passengers as the bearer of the anxiously expected dispatches from the Duke of Wellington. The news, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, spread with wonderful rapidity, and excited extraordinary sensations.

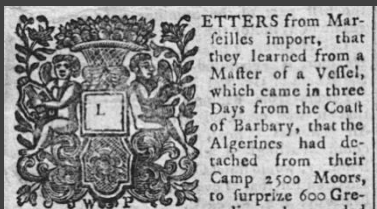
SM 23 June 1815. Report of the Battle of Waterloo fought 5 days before.

### OFFICIAL BULLETIN.

*Downing-street, June 22, 1815.*

"The Duke of Wellington's dispatch, dated Waterloo, the 19th of June, states, that on the preceding day Buonaparté attacked with his whole force the British line, supported by a corps of Prussians: which attack, after a long and sanguinary conflict, terminated in the complete overthrow of the enemy's army, with the loss of ONE HUNDRED and FIFTY PIECES of CANNON and TWO EAGLES. During the night, the Prussians under Marshal Blucher, who joined in the pursuit of the enemy, captured SIXTY GUNS, and a large part of Buonaparté's BAGGAGE. The Allied Armies continued to pursue the enemy. Two French Generals were taken."

Before the invention of photography the *Mercury* relied on woodcut illustrations. They were most attractive and were used extensively as decoration and for advertising. This selection ranges from the early 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.



STEAM to AUSTRALIA.  
**"GREAT BRITAIN"** Screw Steamer, 3500 tons, 500 horse power, B. R. MATHEWS Commander, from LIVERPOOL to MELBOURNE and SYDNEY in JUNE.—Experience has suggested many improvements in the

decks. Ca  
 provided f  
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 P.S. The  
 bourne and  
 Letty Low

21st instant.  
 General Man  
 MANCHESTER  
 RAILWA



Social events of every kind were recorded in the Mercury, some more curious than others. Wife selling was one of the few ways of ending a marriage for the labouring classes. The 1829 case (below) was later picked up by Thomas Hardy and used as a pivotal point in 'The Mayor of Casterbridge'.

The disgraceful scene of a fellow's selling and delivering his wife was exhibited in Stamford market on Friday last. The price obtained was *four shillings!* Robert Phillips, under-ostler at the George inn, was the seller, and a man named Wm. Brown, a labourer, of Oakham, was the purchaser. They were permitted to retire from the market-hill without molestation!

SM. 25 Sept 1829

Sale of wife - at Stamford – fellow sold her “for 2/- wet and 2/- dry – delivered her to the purchaser on the market hill in a halter after wh. the trio retired to a p. House to quaff the heavy wet.”



Thomas Hardy; left, a transcript from his notebook

Reporting on politics was the life blood of the Mercury. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century contested general elections were rare as Stamford was a 'pocket borough' under the control of the earls of Exeter. There were no parliamentary elections in the town from 1734 until 1809. The 1734 election occasioned a riot, but the death of George IV in 1830 saw the first serious challenge to Burghley.

Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt, *right*, uncle of Alfred Lord Tennyson, stood as candidate for Stamford and came close to winning. Two years later, standing for the cause of parliamentary reform, he was successful.

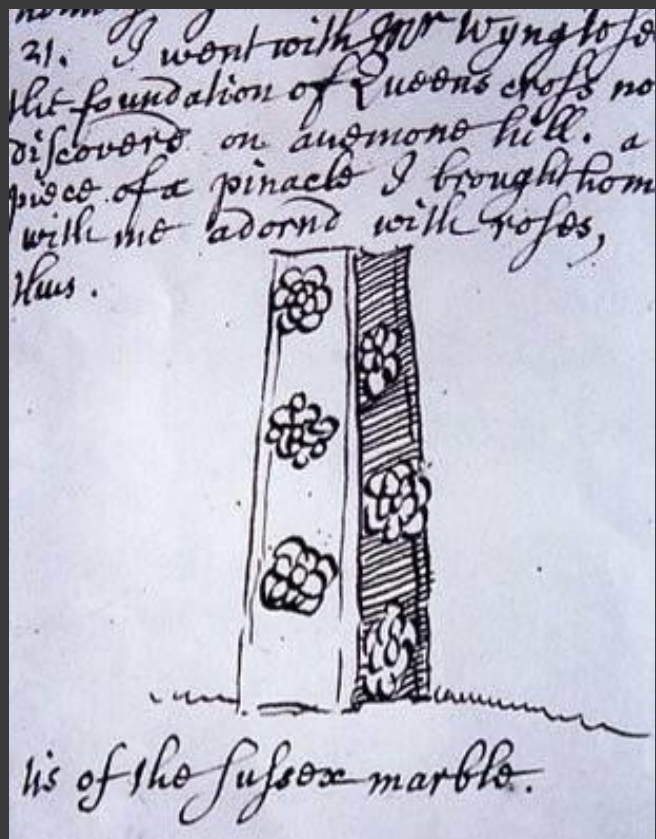
and the accompanying crowd of persons, anxious to greet "the emancipator," as Mr. Tennyson was pronounced to be, was the most numerous, and at the same time the most orderly assembly, ever seen in Stamford or the neighbourhood, being supposed to comprise not less than ten thousand persons.

Stamford Mercury, 30 July 1830





The Stamford Mercury is a boon to historians and archaeologists. In Dec. 1745 William Stukeley, the antiquarian Vicar of All Saints', wrote to the *Mercury* describing his discovery of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Stamford Eleanor Cross.



Stukeley's own drawing of the part of the cross he discovered.

To Mr. Howgrave, &c.

ON Saturday 21. decemb. '1745. Mr. Wyng the Surveyor of the turnpike road, acquainted me, that digging on *anemone hill* (as called) for stone to make the road: they came to a foundation of Bernake stone, squared. and found some carved stones. I instantly suspected it to be the remains of Queens Cross, demolished by the Fanatics in the beginning of the great Rebellion 100 years agoe.

On 23. decemb. we bared the whole *sumulus*, and laid open the entire foundation of this noble monument. the lower course of steps are left quite round: octagonal, each side being 13 foot in length: so that the outward circumference was 30 foot in diameter. the original building stood on 8 or more steps, and was 40 or 30 foot in height. there

The right worshipful Mr. Mayor of Stamford, being desirous of preserving the memorial of our Queens cross, as much as possible, has by the common Cryer forbid any person to displace or take away any of the stones now remaining: on penalty of the offenders being prosecuted with the utmost severity.

I am, &c. Wm. Stukeley.  
24 dec. 1745.  
I have a fragment of the upper pyramidal stone adorn'd with roses. 'tis of the Sussex marble.



A fragment of the cross was discovered in Stukeley's garden in 1993.

## THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR 1861-5.



Blockade of Chesapeake bay, 1861

Wars abroad could have worldwide effects. The North's blockade of the Southern ports prevented the export of their major product, cotton. Lancashire cotton workers were badly affected by this, and the *Mercury* reported on many collections in Stamford in 1862 to alleviate their distress. These were echoed throughout the country.

*"It had pleased God to bring upon the American people the curse of civil war – of all wars the most terrible . . . but there are many special reasons why we should extend help to those of our countrymen now suffering such great distress in the consequence of this dreadful war. The working men of Lancashire and Cheshire were patiently and resignedly enduring much suffering – which was not owing to their own want of forethought or any fault of their own."*

Sermon in St Martin's,  
SM, 31 Oct 1862.

This collection raised £52, the equivalent to £5,000 today.



It was the *Mercury's* practice, along with most other newspapers, to place a black edge round its pages on the death of a monarch. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this included every page, but in the 20<sup>th</sup> century this was reduced to the actual pages reporting the deaths.

It was at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the *Mercury* became less of a regional newspaper and more a local one.



George III, Feb 1820



Victoria, Jan 1901



George VI, Feb 1952



# GREAT EUROPEAN WAR.

GREAT BRITAIN DECLARES WAR AGAINST GERMANY.

SM 7 August 1914.

## STAMFORD'S DARK HOUR.

SAD TIDINGS OF LOCAL SOLDIERS.

SM 29 October 1915.

### KILLED.

One of the four soldier sons of Mrs. Cornell, 14, Malting-yard, Water-street, has made "the great sacrifice," official intimation from the Record Office at Warley conveying the mournful intimation that priv. Leslie Cornell, of the Northants. Regt., had been killed in action. Deceased, who was 25 years of age and was an old St. Martin's school boy, was, prior to the outbreak of war, a moulder at Messrs. Martin's Cultivator Works. He was well known to many in the town. One of his brothers, priv. Lewis Cornell, 1st Lincs. Regt., was home on short leave last month after serving on the Continent since the commencement of hostilities. He was one of the survivors of Mons.

### REPORTED KILLED.

Sergt. W. H. Bliss was the eldest son of Mr. W. H. Bliss and the late Mrs. Bliss, of Easton. Like his father, who up to recent years held non-commissioned rank in the Stamford corps, he was an enthusiastic soldier. He was a member of the corps before the inauguration of the Territorial régime, and was one of its keenest and most efficient "non-coms." A fine marksman—as was also his father—he invariably figured somewhere near the head of the list in the annual shooting competitions. He was very popular with his officers and men.

Mystery appears to shroud the fate of lance-corp. J. F. Lenton. The second son of Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Lenton, 5, Rock-terrace, "Jack" was the life and soul of his Company and, in fact, was well known to all the men of his Battalion, in which his cheery disposition speedily made him a firm favourite. What he lacked in inches he made up for in character and pluck, and it is sincerely hoped that good news may yet be received of him. Another Stamfordian, who enlisted with him in August of last year, writing to his parents, says he saw no more of Jack after they got over the parapet together. Lance-corp. Lenton was 27 years of age. His promotion was of recent date.



Another young Stamford Territorial who is also unofficially reported missing is priv. L. Savage, the nineteen-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. S. Savage, 13, Stanley-street. Before enlisting about twelve months ago, priv. Savage was employed by Mr. J. E. C. Potter, printer, and he had only been in the firing line about a week before meeting with misfortune.



LINCOLN, RUTLAND, AND STAMFORD

## The Great War Ended.

### ARMISTICE SIGNED.

### King George's Message.

SM 15 November 1918.



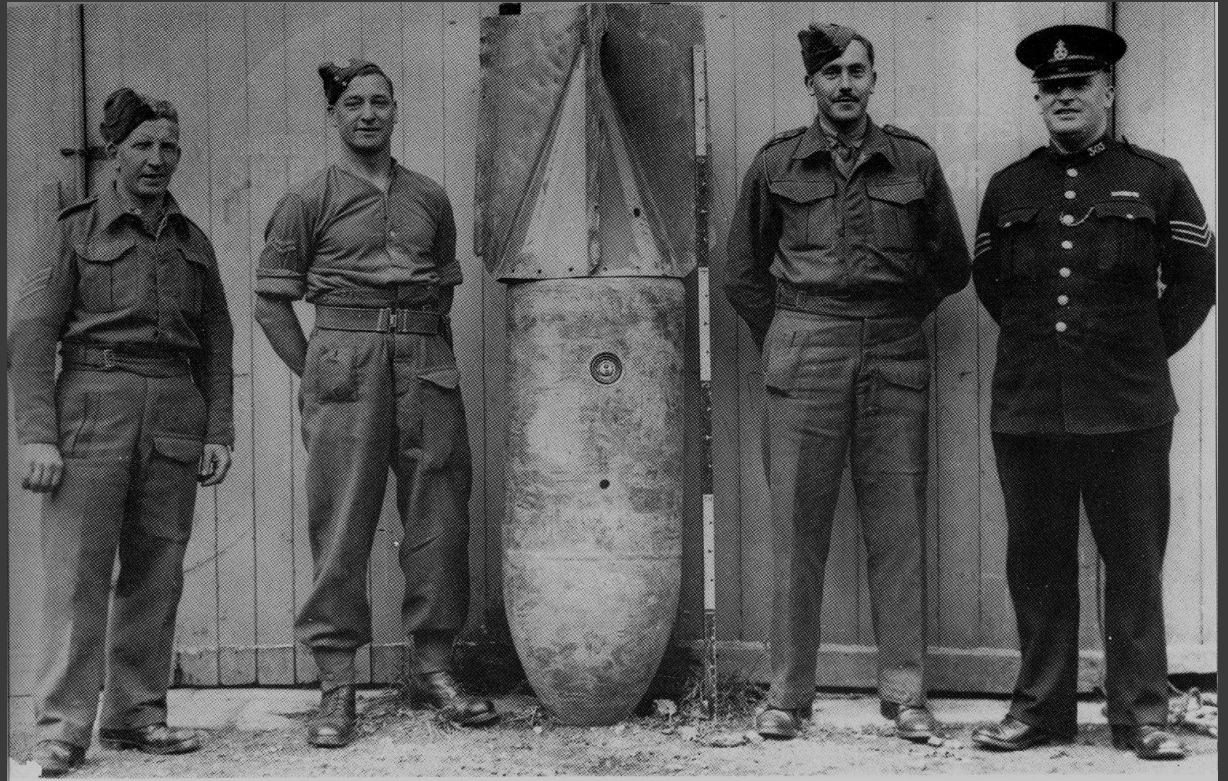
1 NOVEMBER, 1940.

## UNEXPLODED BOMB

MIDLAND TOWN  
MACHINE GUNNED

As this issue went to press we learned that an enemy 'plane machine-gunned a Midland town, and dropped a heavy high explosive bomb, which caused minor damage to property in its descent but failed to explode.

As far as we could learn there were no casualties.



For reasons of national security, the Mercury, like all newspapers, referred to a town's location only in deliberately vague terms: *a Midland town or an Eastern Counties town.*

Local people knew to what the Mercury was referring.

## HOUSING ESTATE BOMBED

Early-Morning Ordeal In Eastern Counties  
Town

### BUT ONLY TWO MINOR CASUALTIES

IN the early hours of one morning this week an enemy aircraft dropped high explosive bombs on a housing estate in an Eastern Counties town. Houses in the vicinity sustained damage, but in the main it was of a minor nature, being confined to shattered windows and dislodged tiles.

SM, 3 July 1942

The survival of the Stamford Mercury archive is fortuitous, owing to the care and diligence of many generations of owners, editors and journalists.

By the 1990s overuse and mishandling had caused deterioration so bad that its owners, Johnston Press, closed it temporarily to the public. They donated the archive to a specially formed trust, which consulted various experts on the best way to conserve the archive.

An application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund which in 2005 was successful. A grant of £305,000 was made towards a five year conservation programme. This was completed on time.



# THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

The archive was stored in the newspaper offices, and from 1785 to 1971 was kept on the *Mercury* premises at 61 High Street. Since then it has moved four times, coming to its present location in Cherryholt Road in 2013.



The archive room in the Sheepmarket offices, just prior to the 2005 conservation programme.



Storage conditions were not ideal: volumes were stored vertically and the larger ones were collapsing under their own weight. Environmental conditions were not up to modern standards.

# THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

All newspapers before 1988 are stored horizontally in archival boxes on mobile shelving, and there is enough expansion space to allow for the next 50 years.

Handling is facilitated by the use of safety steps and a mobile trolley.

The room is air conditioned and internal climate is monitored.



A Trust volunteer working in the archive.



# THE CONSERVATION PROGRAMME



Conserved volumes stored in archival boxes.

The newspapers were taken in batches to a specialist paper conservator. If the volumes were in good condition and the bindings not causing long term damage, they were conserved merely by washing, cleaning and repair. They were then placed in archival standard boxes and protected with inert 'Mylar' dust wrappers.

Where the bindings were in poor condition and rebinding would cause more damage, it was decided to leave the papers unbound and to place them in archival standard folders and archival boxes; a course of action decided after consultation with specialist bodies.



The papers from the disbound volumes, stored in inert folders and archival standard boxes.

One of the trust's major achievements has been to organize a consortium of national and local bodies to microfilm every known copy of the *Stamford Mercury*. To do this the trust contacted libraries all over the world. Subsequently the British Newspaper Library digitised this microfilm and the Stamford Mercury Archive Trust is proud to know that its newspapers have made a major contribution to the project.



An exhaustive index to the Stamford Mercury, 1800-1844, was compiled some years ago and is now located in the archive.





With the completion of the conservation programme, the main task of the trust has been to compile a full inventory of the archive, a task never before attempted. This inventory is now being transferred to computer.

The computer also monitors internal climate and is used for administration.



Much of the trust's work is carried out by the volunteers who, as well as compiling the inventory, organise the storage and answer enquiries. This includes sending out scanned images via CD, DVD and e-mail.

# Stamford Mercury Archive Trust

The *Stamford Mercury* archive is an important part of Stamford's, and the nation's, heritage. It has been maintained in the town since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and the Stamford Mercury Archive Trust, working in cooperation of the newspaper's present owners, Iliffe Media, continues the work.

Volunteers play an essential part in our work and we welcome new members.

If this presentation has interested you in our work and you would like to become a volunteer, please contact us at:

[enquiries@smarchive.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@smarchive.org.uk)