

Spreading the News: The Distribution of Bath Newspapers in the Eighteenth Century

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'Newsman' from William Alexander, *Picturesque representations of the dress and manners of the English* (London: Bulmer & Co., 1814) -

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The Bath newspapers of the eighteenth century did not only serve readers in the city. Their increasingly sophisticated distribution networks extended into the local country and beyond, making them regional newspapers. In Bath itself, the newspaper proprietors sold their issues over the counter at their places of business, by employing hawkers to cry their wares around town, and by delivering them to subscribers and social spaces such as coffee-houses. They hired newsmen to carry newspapers (along with books, medicines and parcels) to local towns and villages. They made arrangements with agents around the country, who not only sold the newspapers, but also took in advertisements. They also used the Post Office to send newspapers anywhere in the nation, often without a charge for postage. There was a financial imperative for provincial proprietors to extend the reach of their newspapers,

not only to increase sales, but more importantly to attract advertisers.¹ During the 1760s Cornelius Pope boasted that his *Pope's Bath Chronicle, and Weekly Gazette* had 'absolutely a much more extensive Circulation than any other in the City; and consequently a greater Number of Readers', despite being the most junior newspaper then published in the city. He declared this primacy to be 'more beneficial to those who advertise' in his publication.²

Despite the Bath newspapers being printed on paper bearing a revenue stamp, precise circulation figures for the eighteenth century are no longer available, because of the destruction of Stamp Office records in the nineteenth century.³ Nevertheless, it is possible to estimate the circulation figures of the Bath newspapers based on those records that have survived for comparable newspapers. Christine Ferdinand has suggested that during the mid-century the *Salisbury Journal* sold around 2,000 issues per week, rising to over 4,000 by 1780, although she does accept that these figures may be exaggerated.⁴ These numbers certainly chime with Geoffrey Cranfield's findings in his ground-breaking study of the provincial press, as well as those of Victoria Gardner in her recent study of the newspaper business.⁵ Some of these sales would have been made over the counter at the newspaper proprietors' places of business, such as the printing office in Kingsmead Street, where the *Bath Journal* was printed from its inception in February 1743 (1744 by modern reckoning).⁶ Some newspaper proprietors had other business concerns, as was the case for William Meyler, who already had a successful bookshop and circulating library on the Orange Grove, where he sold copies of his *Bath Herald*.⁷ Subscribers to Meyler's circulating library and Samuel Hazard's on Cheap Street could peruse the Bath newspapers along with a selection

1 Jeremy Black, *The English Press 1621-1861* (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), pp.111-3.

2 *Bath Chronicle* (12th August 1762), p.1; and all subsequent issues until 15th September 1768.

3 Christine Y. Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p.17.

4 *Ibid.*, p.128.

5 Geoffrey A. Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper, 1700-1760* (Oxford: OUP, 1962), p.176; Victoria E. M. Gardner, *The Business of News in England, 1760-1820* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2016), p. 25.

6 Roy M. Wiles, *Freshest Advices. Early Provincial Newspapers in England* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1965), p.115; For a study of Bath printers see Trevor Fawcett, *Georgian Imprints* (Bath: Ruton, 2008).

7 For a more detailed biography see Kevin Grieves, 'A Literary Entrepreneur: William Meyler of Bath (1755-1821)', *Bath History*, Vol. XII (2011), pp.81-93.

of others from London and the provinces.⁸ The same was the case at Pratt's circulating library and bookshop on the corner of Milsom Street where the Bath newspapers were also available for sale.⁹ The coffee-houses also made the Bath newspapers available for patrons to read.¹⁰

Provincial newspaper proprietors hired newsmen and hawkers to distribute their publications not only in the place of publication, but also to the towns and villages of the surrounding countryside. The terms 'newsman' and 'hawker' were often used interchangeably during the period; yet Ferdinand makes a useful distinction between hawkers who sold newspapers on a casual basis and newsmen who delivered primarily to subscribers. This latter group can be further divided into adult newsmen who walked a regular route through the surrounding country and the younger newsboys who delivered the newspapers to subscribers in the town of publication. Evidence of the lives of newspaper hawkers is thin on the ground; as Ferdinand explains, they 'were certainly part of the weekly life of most provincial towns, although they are rarely mentioned – they were so much an ordinary part of the scene'.¹¹ Despite this lack of records, it is fair to assume that hawkers cried the Bath newspapers about town. As Wiles declared, 'it would be a very stupid and inert printer, indeed, who did not engage a corps of "mercuries" and hawkers to carry the papers through the town streets and into the public houses, bawling out the name and thrusting a copy into every outstretched hand'.¹²

More can be said about the newsmen who tramped their weekly circuits through the surrounding countryside delivering newspapers, along with other items sold by the newspaper proprietors, such as books and patent medicines.¹³ The newsmen also took in orders for advertisements and new subscriptions along their routes.¹⁴ The importance of the newsmen to the business of selling newspapers is revealed in Cruttwell's notice that appeared in the *Bath Chronicle* in 1771, which stated that he was looking for 'Some Industrious Men of good character, who have clear audible Voices [...] to distribute this Paper in different

8 *A Catalogue of Meyler's Circulating Library, in Orange-Grove, Bath* (Bath: Meyler, c.1790), p.iv; *Bath Chronicle* (20th October 1791), p.3c.

9 *Bath Chronicle* (25th April 1782), p.3c.

10 Alfred Barbeau, *Life & letters at Bath in the 18th Century* (London: Heineman, 1905), pp.56-7n.

11 Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade*, pp.91-3.

12 Wiles, *Freshest Advices*, p.115.

13 *Bath Chronicle* (22nd March 1792), p.4.

14 *Bath Journal* (7th May 1744), p.4; *Bath Chronicle* (16th March 1775), p.4

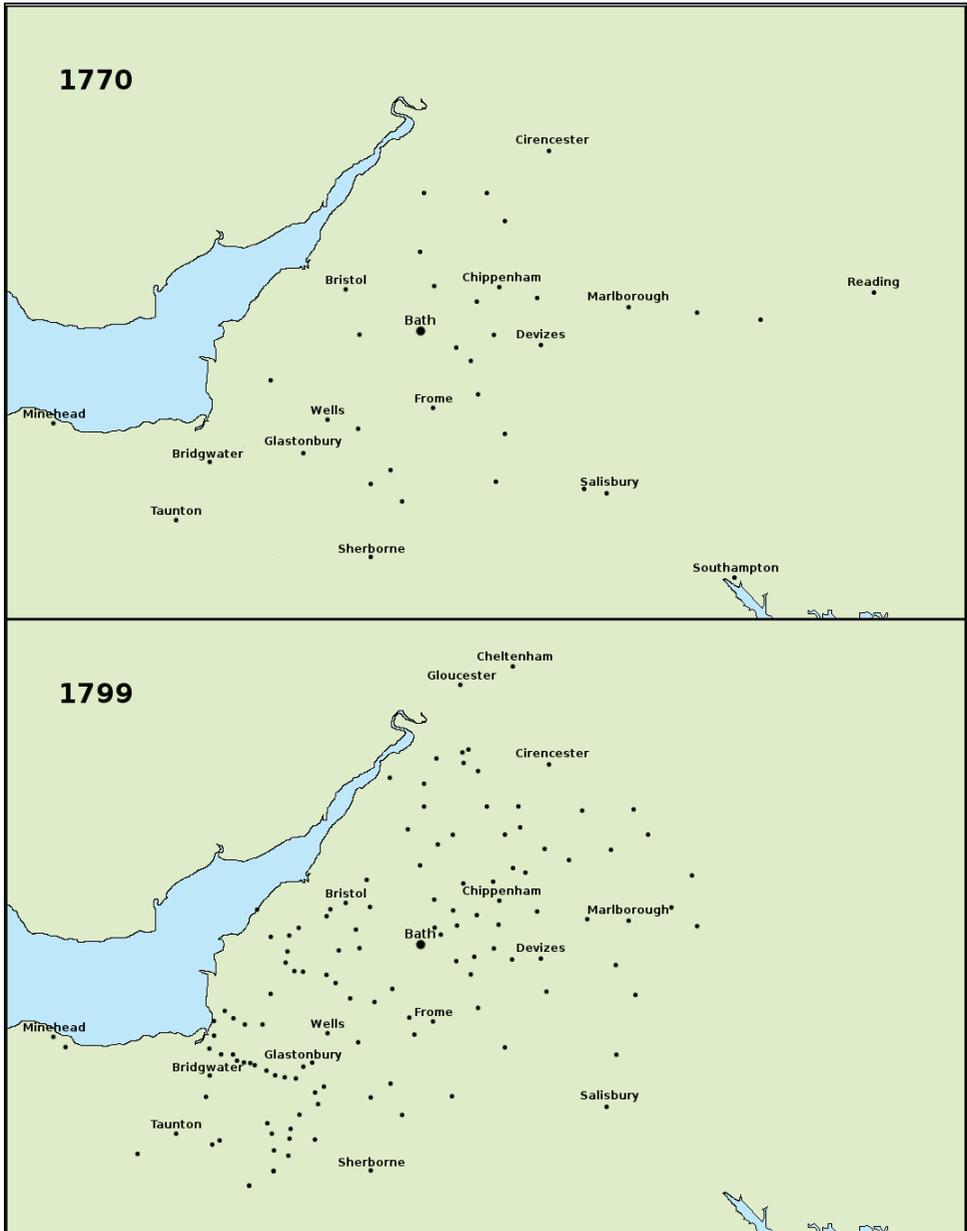


Fig. 1: *Bath Chronicle* newsmen delivery networks, 1770 and 1790

County Circuits'.¹⁵ Potential subscribers who did not live on one of these circuits could also be catered for; as the *Bath Journal* explained, 'Persons residing near the Towns through which the Newsmen pass, may have it left where they please

¹⁵ *Bath Chronicle* (25th April 1771), p.3d.

to appoint'.¹⁶

The newsmen also delivered parcels from Bath to locations along their routes, a service that the printers promoted in their guidebooks to the city. In the 1753 edition of his *Bath and Bristol Guide: or Tradesman's and Traveller's Pocket-Companion*, Thomas Boddely listed twenty-nine places to which newsmen delivered his *Bath Journal*.¹⁷ The number of places served by the newsmen grew over the course of the century. In 1770 Cruttwell listed thirty-eight locations in the delivery network for his *Bath Chronicle* in his *New Bath Guide; or, Useful Pocket Companion*.¹⁸ The 1799 edition of the same guide gave 130 locations that his newsmen visited (see **fig. 1**).¹⁹ The vast majority of the additional locations were in the core area served by the Bath newspapers: north Somerset, west Wiltshire and south Gloucestershire. Yet it is possible to see a slight change in Cruttwell's focus from east to north with Cheltenham and Gloucester added to the list in place of Hindon, Newbury, Reading, Southampton, Warminster and Wilton which no longer appeared.

It is unlikely that the more remote locations in these lists were served by newsmen on foot. Rather the newspaper proprietors employed a carrier: a self-employed man who used a horse or wagon, with which they delivered all manner of goods around the region.²⁰ Feasibly Cruttwell hired a carrier to convey wares from his Bath printing offices to Frome, from where newsmen collected their newspapers before walking their local circuits.²¹ Carriers were also likely responsible for the weekly deliveries to agents in local towns, some of whom would in turn employ their own newsmen to walk local circuits. Charles Hewitt, the Glastonbury bookseller and agent for the *Bath Chronicle*, placed a notice in June 1790 declaring that he would '*dispatch a Hawker every Thursday morning to Balsbury, Butleigh, Kingweston, Somerton, Langport, Muchelney, Longload, Kingsbury, South-Petherton, Martock, Ilchester, Kingson, and numerous intervening Villages, Gentleman's Seats, &c.*'.²² To complement this newsman, who walked his circuit to the south of Glastonbury, by early the following year Hewitt had employed another hawker to walk another circuit to

16 *Bath Journal* (31st December 1792), p.1.

17 *The Bath and Bristol Guide: or Tradesman's and Traveller's Pocket-Companion* (Bath: Boddely, 1753), p.33.

18 *The New Bath Guide; or, Useful Pocket Companion* (Bath: Cruttwell, 1770), p.61.

19 *The New Bath Guide; or, Useful Pocket Companion* (Bath: Cruttwell, 1799), p.80.

20 Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade*, pp.91-2.

21 *Ibid.* pp.91-2.

22 *Bath Chronicle* (24th June 1790), p.3c.

the north-west of the town.²³ Assuming that the places listed were in the order in which the newsmen visited them (which seems reasonable), it is possible to reconstruct the two routes walked (see **fig. 2**). Both routes included many locations mentioned in the 1799 edition of the *New Bath Guide*, suggesting that Cruttwell sent newspapers, parcels and other wares by courier to Hewitt

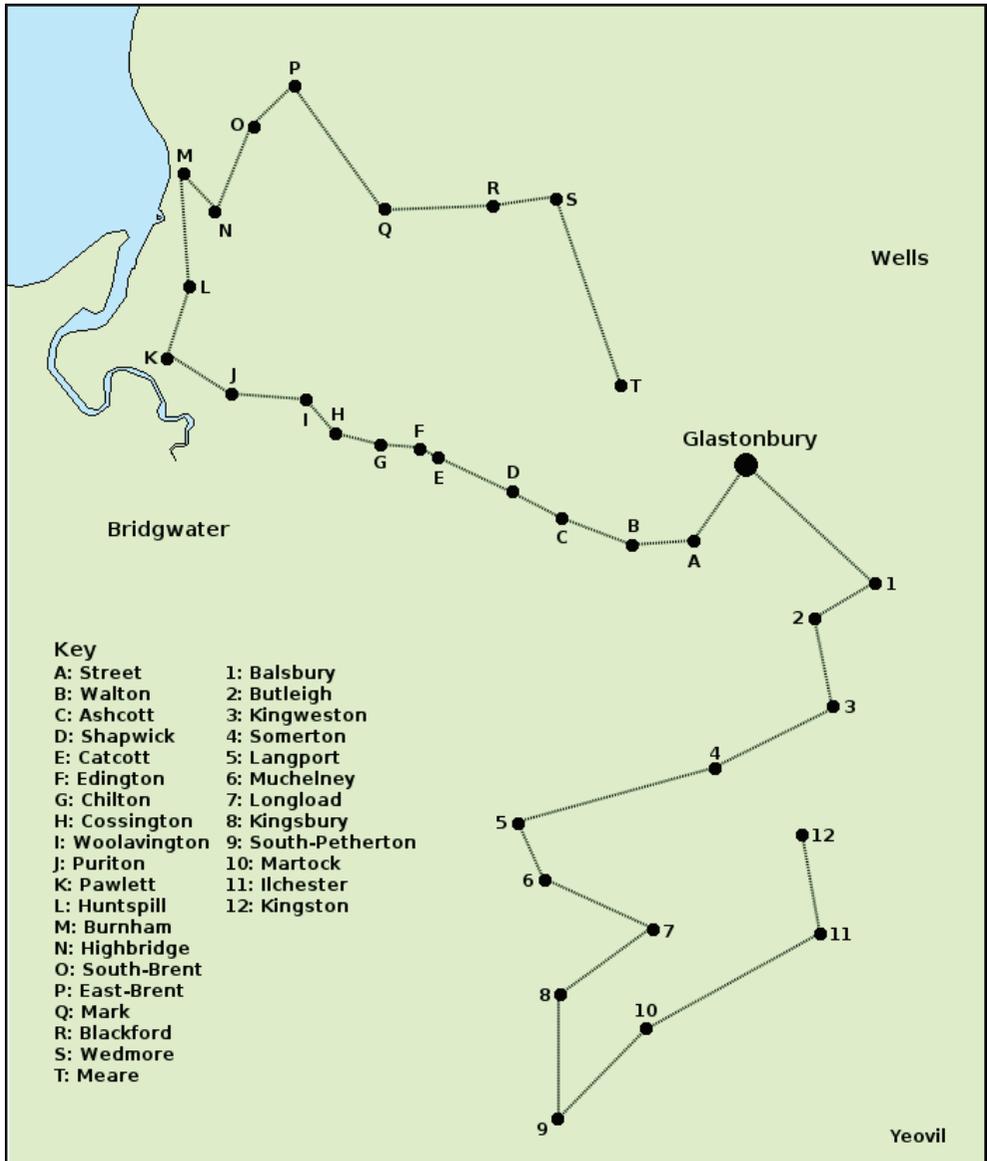


Fig. 2: Charles Hewitt's newsmen delivery networks, 1791

²³ *Bath Chronicle* (27th January 1791), p.3b.

for distribution by the bookseller's own newsmen.

While the majority of the Bath newsmen remain anonymous, one did achieve a modicum of fame, shedding some light on the lives of these vital components in the newspaper distribution machine. Following his admission to the Bath Hospital suffering from a 'violent illness' which robbed him of 'the proper use of his limbs [...] for near a year past', Stephen Gay placed a notice in the *Bath Chronicle* in the autumn of 1791, in which he not only proffered his 'humble thanks to his friends who have been pleased to encourage him for twenty-nine years past', but also requested prompt payment from the 'many hundred persons [who] are in arrear to him'.²⁴ No doubt the majority of those who owed him money were his customers. An earlier notice appeared in the same newspaper providing details of Gay's delivery route, as well as the organisation of distribution and the remuneration offered to newsmen:

A Sober, honest, diligent, active Man, (who lives in the neighbourhood of Wincanton, Bruton, Castle-Cary, or Cadbury, would be preferred) is wanted to distribute the Bath Chronicle, in place of STEPHEN GAY, whose ill state of health incapacitates him for continuing that business. At present the distribution of the papers in Frome is reserved for GAY, should he recover so as to be capable of attending the business; and the papers sold beyond Frome will be conveyed to that place, and must be taken from thence VERY EARLY on Thursday morning. The allowance to the Hawker will be One Penny on each paper sold. The person applying must have a good recommendation.²⁵

It seems that Gay never fully recovered from his condition; yet the high regard in which he was held not only by his employer, but also by the Bath elite is evidenced by his appointment as an examiner of the city's fish and meat markets in September 1793.²⁶ Sixteen months later the Bath press reported the sad news of Gay's death at the age of sixty-six. The announcement stated that it was Gay's 'boast that he had travelled three times the circumference of the earth, and till within the last three years never failed one journey'.²⁷ The story of Gay's demise also appeared in London and provincial newspapers, no doubt fuelled by the purported distance that he had walked during his career.²⁸ In the notice that he had placed while in hospital, Gay claimed that

²⁴ *Bath Chronicle* (22nd September 1791), p.3b.

²⁵ *Bath Chronicle* (27th January 1791), p.3b.

²⁶ *Bath Chronicle* (26th September 1793), p.3b.

²⁷ *Bath Chronicle* (15th January 1795), p.3b.

²⁸ *Derby Mercury* (22nd January 1795), p.4c.

he had walked 'twenty-two times the diameter of the Terraqueous Globe'; an assertion that the *Chester Chronicle* declared to be an 'Extraordinary instance of health and regularity in a pedestrian'.²⁹ Considering his weekly circuit, a later claim of his having walked a distance equal to thrice the earth's circumference seems much more reasonable, as it would have required him to hike roughly 50 miles (80 km) each week of his twenty-nine years as a newsman, as opposed to the weekly 115.5 miles (186 km) of his earlier boast. Either way, the fact that he never missed a delivery gives testament to his diligence. The *Bath Chronicle* lauded Gay's assiduousness in its report of the storms that brought about the great flood of March 1774, during which he was 'obliged to dig his passage through the snow' at Batcomb.³⁰ It is fair to assume that Gay was not one of the newsmen who failed to walk their routes in January 1776, when an 'excessive fall of snow' resulted in the *Bath Chronicle* printing the following explanation of a disruption of service:

We conceive that the humanity of our readers will render apologies for our country hawkers unnecessary; it being impossible, without certain risque of their lives, for many of them to proceed on their circuits. The newsman who goes the Monmouthshire circuit returned Friday, after a vain attempt to get forward.³¹

The vagaries of the weather brought about one occasion when Gay contributed to the reporting of events in the newspaper he delivered. In 1787 the *Bath Chronicle* printed his account of a violent storm, during which 'A ball of fire fell on a large maiden elm' at the village of Alford. Gay collected accounts from local residents including the Reverend Mr. Philips, whose 'mustard-glass and butter boat were overturned' by the strike.³² The story was picked up by the *St. James's Chronicle*, although the London newspaper's report neglected to mention the newsman.³³ His name did, however, appear in a poem in a later issue of the same newspaper, commemorating the tempestuous event.³⁴

Some eighteenth-century provincial newspapers included a supplement with their New Year editions, containing an address to subscribers in the form of a poem written in the voice of a newsman. *Crutwell's Newsmen's*

29 *Chester Chronicle* (30th September 1791), p.3c.

30 *Bath Chronicle* (17th March 1774), p.3c.

31 *Bath Chronicle* (18th January 1776), p.3d.

32 *Bath Chronicle* (19th July 1787), p.3d.

33 *St. James's Chronicle* (17th – 19th July 1787), p.4d.

34 *St. James's Chronicle* (2nd – 4th August 1787), p.4a.

New Year's Gift, To his Worthy Masters and Mistresses. For the Year, 1769 humbly requested that the subscribers of the *Bath Chronicle* show their appreciation of their newsman's weekly efforts by giving him 'A cup of beer, and slice of meat', or even to 'cross his hand' with coins.³⁵ A similar entreaty for an 'Annual Boon' appeared in the 1788 address, which also expressed the pride of the newsmen.

For, though not us'd to boast or brag,
He'll lay his Wallet to a Rag,
That, throughout all his spacious round,
No other Newsman can be found,
Who manages his business better,
Or takes more care of every Letter,
Or any Parcel, small or large,
His friends think fit to give in charge.
Then, as to News, you know full well,
Your faithful Hawker bears the bell.³⁶

The proprietors of the Bath newspapers had ambitions to develop circulation networks beyond the city and its immediate vicinity. In an early edition of the *Bath Chronicle, and Weekly Gazette*, published on Christmas Day 1760, Cornelius Pope listed fifty towns and cities in which his newspaper was circulated, from Plymouth in the west to London in the east. While many of these locations were near to Bath, Pope clearly aspired to attract readers in the West Midlands by circulating issues in the major urban areas of that region as far north as Shrewsbury (see **fig. 3**).³⁷ Over thirty years later J. Johnson had similar hopes for making his *Bath Register, and Western Advertiser* a regional newspaper, declaring on the front page of the first issue 'that no Paper out of the Metropolis shall have a more extensive circulation through ENGLAND and WALES'. He did admit that his fledgling publication 'may for a time operate to the loss of the concern'.³⁸ These losses most likely contributed to the failure of his newspaper, which was soon absorbed by William Meyler's *Bath Herald and General Advertiser*, both of which had been launched on the 3rd March 1792. In order successfully to extend the reach of their newspapers, publishers made

35 *Cruttwell's Newsman's New Year's Gift, To his Worthy Masters and Mistresses. For the Year, 1769* (Bath: Cruttwell, 1769).

36 *The New Year's Address Of the Men who distribute the Bath Chronicle, To their Worthy Masters and Mistresses. On the Entrance of the New Year, 1788* (Bath: Cruttwell, 1788).

37 *Bath Chronicle* (25th December 1760), p.1.

38 *Bath Register* (3rd March 1792), p.1a.

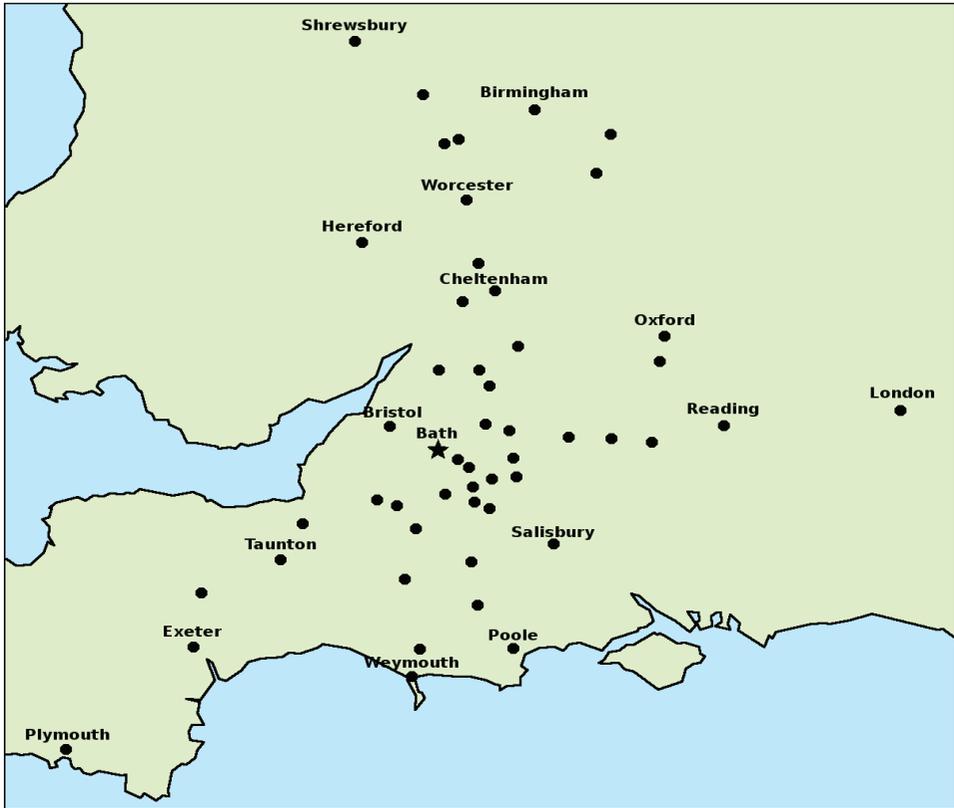


Fig. 3: *Bath Chronicle* proposed circulation area, 1760

good use of their business contacts by engaging established business people in other towns and cities as advertising and distribution agents.³⁹ The Bath newspapers usually listed their agents on either their front or back pages. For the long-established titles, the number of listed agents increased over time as distribution networks developed. The *Bath Journal* listed six agents in May 1744, twenty-two in August 1776 and fifty-two in January 1793.⁴⁰ Similarly the *Bath Chronicle's* agents list increased from twenty-four in March 1774 to forty-three in March 1792.⁴¹ Unsurprisingly many newspaper agents were in the book trade. The list of eleven agents in the *Bath Advertiser* of 27th September 1760 described seven of them as either booksellers or printers.⁴² Similarly the

39 Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade*, p.72.

40 *Bath Journal* (7th May 1744), p.1; *Bath Journal* (19th August 1776), p.1; *Bath Journal* (7th January 1793), p.1.

41 *Bath Chronicle* (16th March 1775), p.4; *Bath Chronicle* (22nd March 1792), p.4.

42 *Bath Advertiser* (27th September 1760), p.4.

thirty-three agents listed in the *Bath Register* of 10th March 1792 included eighteen booksellers.⁴³ Newspaper printers and publishers often acted as agents for other provincial newspapers. The list of agents printed in the *Bath Journal* of 7th January 1793 included seventeen such examples (see **table 1**).⁴⁴

The publishers of the *Bath Journal*, Hooper and Keene, appeared on the list of agents for the *Sherborne Mercury*.⁴⁵ It is difficult to determine whether Hooper and Keene had reciprocal arrangements with any other of these newspapers, as many of them did not list their agents, and of those that did, the *Hereford Journal* and the *Liverpool General Advertiser* made no mention of an agent in Bath.⁴⁶ The *Chester Chronicle*, however, did declare that advertisements for that paper could be placed with 'the Printers of the Country Papers'.⁴⁷ The *Salisbury Journal* listed Cruttwell, the publisher of the *Bath Chronicle*, as one of its agents for Bath; the other was Meyler, who would later publish the *Bath Herald*.⁴⁸ At that time, Meyler focused his business activities on his bookshop and circulating library, as did John Love of Weymouth, who not only acted as agent for three Bath papers, but also filed copies of the *Bath Chronicle*, as well as newspapers from London, Salisbury, Sherborne, and Winchester, at his circulating library.⁴⁹ Whereas most agents were engaged in the print trade, many were not. The *Bath Journal* of 14th March 1747-8 listed 'Mr. Leach, Snuffmaker, in Devizes' as an agent.⁵⁰ The *Bath Advertiser* of 25th October 1755 listed 'Mr. Bailey, Bell-founder, in Bridgwater'; while the list of agents in the *Bath Register* of 10th March 1792 included two grocers, an auctioneer, an ironmonger and a linen draper.⁵¹

The Bath press listed many agents in nearby Bristol, except the *Bath Advertiser* which apparently had no agents in that city.⁵² Unsurprisingly, Samuel Farley had strong links to Bristol, listing his mother's printing business

43 *Bath Register* (10th March 1792), p.4.

44 *Bath Journal* (7th January 1793), p.1.

45 *Sherborne Mercury* (6th July 1789), p.4.

46 *Hereford Journal* (2nd January 1793), p.4; *Liverpool General Advertiser* (23rd April 1795), p.1.

47 *Chester Chronicle* (4th January 1793), p.1.

48 *Salisbury Journal* (23rd February 1789), p.4.

49 *Bath Register* (10th March 1792), p.4; *Bath Chronicle* (22nd March 1792), p.4; *Bath Journal* (7th January 1793), p.1; John Love, *The New Weymouth Guide; or, Useful Pocket Companion* (Weymouth: Margrie, 1788), pp.52-3.

50 *Bath Journal* (14th March 1747-8), p.1.

51 *Bath Register*, (10th March 1792), p.4.

52 *Bath Advertiser* (25th October 1755), p.4; *Bath Advertiser* (27th September 1760), p.4.

Agent	Newspaper
Benjamin Charles Collins	<i>Salisbury Journal</i>
A. M. Smart and Thomas Cowslade	<i>Reading Mercury & Oxford Gazette</i>
Robert Goadby	<i>Sherborne Mercury</i>
John Fletcher	<i>Chester Chronicle</i>
Robert Trewman	<i>Trewman's Exeter Flying Post</i>
Miles (or Myles) Swinney	<i>Swinney's Birmingham & Stafford Chronicle</i>
John Tymbs	<i>Berrow's Worcester Journal</i>
David Walker	<i>Hereford Journal</i>
Robert Raikes	<i>Glocester Journal</i>
Samuel Harward	<i>Gloucester Gazette</i>
Francis Hodson	<i>Cambridge Chronicle and Journal</i>
John Gregory	<i>Leicester Journal</i>
Charles Wheeler	<i>Manchester Chronicle</i>
George Burbage	<i>Nottingham Journal</i>
Solomon Hodgson	<i>Newcastle Chronicle</i>
John Gore	<i>Liverpool General Advertiser</i>
Thomas Wood	<i>Shrewsbury Chronicle</i>

Table 1: **Provincial newspapermen acting as agents for the *Bath Journal* (7th January 1793)** - Information retrieved from the British Book Trade Index (online) <http://bbti.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>, [accessed 12th August 2016].

on Small Street along with five booksellers, including Thomas Cadell, who also served as agent for the *Bath Journal* and the *Bath Chronicle*.⁵³ The proprietors of the *Bath Journal* also forged good working relationships

⁵³ *Farley's Bath Journal* (11th October 1756), p.4; *Bath Journal* (7th May 1744), p.4; *Bath Journal* (19th August 1776), p.1; *Bath Chronicle* (16th March 1775), p.4.

with all the Bristol printers and booksellers.⁵⁴ Meyler established links outside the Bristol book trade, securing the city's principal coffee-houses as agents for his *Bath Herald*.⁵⁵ The coffee-houses of London also acted as agents for provincial newspapers from the 1760s onwards. The Chapter coffee-house on Paternoster Row, the London coffee-house on Ludgate Hill and Peele's on Fleet Street specialised as agents of the provincial press, appearing regularly in the lists of agents printed in the Bath newspapers.⁵⁶ In March 1775 the *Bath Chronicle* listed them along with the Guildhall, Union and Bath coffee-houses, and in January 1793 the *Bath Journal* also included them along with St. Paul's, Bedford, Grigsby's, Rainbow and the Guildhall coffee-houses, 'where it is constantly read by the Company'.⁵⁷ In March 1792 the *Bath Chronicle* listed coffee-houses as well as the Bedford Hotel and the Spread-Eagle tavern on the Strand, while in December 1799 the *Bath Herald* declared the capital's 'principal Inns and Taverns' to be its agents.⁵⁸ The first dedicated newspaper agency opened in London in 1785 when William Taylor (or Tayler) established his business at 5, Warwick Square.⁵⁹ By 1790 he regularly filed at least fifty-two provincial newspapers, including the *Bath Chronicle* and *Bath Journal*.⁶⁰ Later both the *Bath Herald* and *Bath Register* also listed Taylor as an agent.⁶¹

Taylor was not the only agent to serve multiple Bath newspapers. By the last decade of the century Bath's four extant titles all shared a surprising number of local agents with one another, suggesting that the competition between the titles did not extend to them requiring exclusive contracts with agents (see **table 2**). A comparison of agents listed in early 1792 reveals that twenty-five agents served multiple Bath newspapers, each of which were involved in the print trade. Even though he had only recently launched his *Bath Herald*, Meyler's existing contacts in the local print trade gave him access to agents that already served the established Bath newspapers. Out of the sixteen listed agents, ten served either the *Bath Journal* or the *Bath Chronicle*. By contrast Johnson's *Bath Register* listed thirty agents, of

54 *Bath Journal* (19th August 1776), p.1; *Bath Journal* (7th January 1793), p.1.

55 *Bath Herald* (28th December 1799), p.4.

56 Gardner, *The Business of News in England*, pp.54-6.

57 *Bath Chronicle* (16th March 1775), p.4; *Bath Journal* (7th January 1793), p.1.

58 *Bath Chronicle* (22nd March 1792), p.4; *Bath Herald* (28th December 1799), p.4.

59 Charles Henry Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing: With the Progress of Literature, Ancient and Modern* (London: H. Johnson, 1839), p.753.

60 John Trusler, *The London Adviser and Guide*. 2nd ed. (London: Literary Press, 1790), p.138.

61 *Bath Herald* (3rd March 1792), p.4; *Bath Register* (10th March 1792), p.4.

Location	Agent	BJ	BC	BH	BR
Bridgwater	Crandon (or Cranden)	X	X		
Bridgwater	Symes		X	X	
Bristol	Brown	X	X		
Calne	Stretch	X	X		
Cardiff	Bird		X		X
Chippenham	Angell (or Angel)	X	X		X
Cirencester	Stevens	X	X		
Devizes	Smith	X	X	X	
Exeter	Trewman	X		X	
Frome	Daniel	X	X	X	
Hungerford	Lye	X	X		
Marlborough	Harold	X	X	X	
Monmouth	Heath		X		X
Newbury	Fuller	X	X		
Salisbury	Easton	X	X		
Shepton Mallet	Cary	X	X	X	
Southampton	Baker	X			X
Taunton	Norris		X	X	
Trowbridge	Small		X	X	
Trowbridge	Spalding	X		X	
Warminster	Davis	X			X
Wells	Evil (or Evill)	X	X		
Wells	Lewis		X	X	
Weymouth	Love	X	X		X
York	Wilson and Spence			X	X

Table 2: **Local agents for more than one Bath newspaper (1792)** - *Bath Journal* (9th January 1792), p.1; *Bath Chronicle* (22nd March 1792), p.4; *Bath Herald* (3rd March 1792), p.4; *Bath Register* (10th March 1792), p.4.

which only six acted on behalf of the two older titles. Yet true to his stated ambitions in his first issue, Johnson had a more far-flung network than any of the other Bath newspapers, including agents in Dublin, York, Manchester and Cardiff. Johnson's extensive network may have prompted Hooper and Keene to look further afield for agents for their *Bath Journal*. By 1793 they had added agents in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Liverpool, Manchester and Swansea.⁶²

For those readers who lived too far from the Bath newspapers' agents, the Post Office provided another means for the delivery of newspapers to the public. From May 1787, issues of the *Bath Chronicle* stated that subscribers could have the paper 'sent free of Postage to any Part of Great-Britain or Ireland' with the other Bath newspapers offering the same service.⁶³ This was made possible by the abuse of franking that became widespread during the eighteenth century. Initially only the Clerks of the Road, postmasters and Members of Parliament enjoyed the privilege of signing franks, many of whom were willing to circulate newspapers for a fee. A 1764 Act of Parliament intended to reduce the number of franks issued had the opposite effect, whereby MPs nominated others to sign their franks, resulting in a great increase in the number of newspapers sent through the post.⁶⁴ In response the postal reformer and later Mayor of Bath, John Palmer, established a separate office charged with the distribution of newspapers in 1787. Five years later the Post Office abandoned the requirement for newspapers to be franked.⁶⁵

The effective reach of the Bath newspapers by the end of the eighteenth century extended across the entire nation, by utilising a variety of distribution methods each suited to different readerships. Those readers who lived far from the spa and who did not necessarily worry that the news might be a little stale could receive their newspapers through the post. Those who were resident in the larger urban centres could visit one of the agents who stocked one or more of the Bath newspapers. In London the fashionable company and others could read about the latest arrivals in Bath at the coffee-houses. Those who lived closer to Bath could visit one of the many agents who served the

62 *Bath Journal* (7th January 1793), p.1.

63 *Bath Chronicle* (31st May 1787), p.1; *Bath Herald* (3rd March 1792), p.4; *Bath Register* (10th March 1792), p.4; *Bath Journal* (31st December 1792), p.1.

64 Susan E. Whyman, 'Postal Censorship in England 1635 - 1844' (online) <http://web.princeton.edu/sites/english/csbn/>, [accessed 14th February 2010].

65 James Raven, *Publishing Business in Eighteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014), p.124.

newspapers, or even have the newspapers delivered on the day of publication by newsmen. Residents or visitors could purchase the latest issues at the printing offices and other places of business owned by the proprietors or from the hawkers that cried their wares around the city. Alternatively they could take out a subscription to have their news delivered to their home or lodgings, and those who did not wish to purchase the newspapers could peruse them in the city's circulating library (for a fee) or at the coffee-shops. Through cooperation with other businesspeople the newspaper proprietors of Bath developed communication networks that linked the city to its surrounding country and to the country as a whole.

To accompany his article, Kevin Grieves has created a web-based map that provides further information about the Bath newspapers' distribution networks in the eighteenth century. The address of the web page is <http://snip.li/c18bathnews>.

About the Author

Dr Kevin Grieves is an Associate Lecturer in History at Bath Spa University. His doctoral thesis explores the societal role of the Bath newspapers in the period of the French Revolution. He works on a variety of themes in British history during the long eighteenth century, including women prizefighters. Currently he is working on mapping boarding and lodging houses in Bath during the the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as part of the fledgling Digital Bath Project. He also recently joined the editorial board of the *Bath History* journal.