

Paper that informed a growing region

Jade Aliprandi looks back at popular local newspaper *The Nepean Times*, which wrote about some of the most significant events in Penrith's history...

Flying hot off the press for the first time on March 3, 1882, *The Nepean Times* was published by Alfred Colless and was to last 80 years.

The first newspaper published in Penrith was the short-lived *Penrith Argus*, first published in 1881 but subsumed into *The Nepean Times* in October the following year.

The publisher of the *Argus*, William Webb, was given a column in *The Nepean Times*, possibly as payment for the *Argus*.

Mr Colless quickly became the master of local opinion, producing a newspaper of what many considered a high standard.

Prominent questions of the day, the latest local news, telegrams, humorous extracts and the latest Sydney commercial news were all given places within the paper.

The newspaper was sold through local and district newsagencies at a cost of threepence per copy and was published initially every Saturday.

It remained at the same price for its 80 year existence.

The first few editions were printed in a general store on the corner of High Street and Station Street by William Joseph Rhodes, who had also printed the *Argus*.

A few months later, as the business increased in popularity, it was moved further down High Street to a larger premises then known as Besley's building.

In March 1895, the paper transferred again to Station Street where it continued to be produced.

Alfred Colless was Mayor of Penrith when he established *The Nepean Times* in 1882.

He had been elected to Council in 1876 and remained until 1883, serving as Mayor from 1880 to 1882.

Colless' aggressive newspaper reporting



The Nepean Times office in the early days. Photo: Penrith City Library

and editorial style saw a war of words played out between *The Nepean Times* and other circulating newspapers, especially *The Cumberland Mercury*.

The *Mercury* responded by accusing *The Nepean Times* office of editorial bias against those who chose not to use the printing facilities at the *Times* office.

The competition in the local area was about to grow with the introduction of the *St Marys Gazette* on May 28, 1891, launched by George Nichols.

The Nepean Times announced the birth

of the *Gazette* with enthusiasm, but became quick to judge the credibility of the paper.

By September, Colless had launched an all out attack on the credibility of Nichols' journalism and his 'literary piracy' when reporting local events.

Colless ended up purchasing the *Gazette* in 1895.

He was involved in every public event in the district's history as a journalist, businessman, and auctioneer.

Alfred Colless passed away in 1920.

The Nepean Times reported a message in mourning of him.

It read, "With the concluding days of 1920 came the close of a life that figured prominently and honourably in the history of the Nepean district".

The business was passed onto his son, Alfred Sydney Colless.

The paper ceased production in 1962, due to declining advertising revenue.

The Nepean Times remains the yardstick by which all local newspapers in the region are judged.