

We're moving

Newspapers have been produced in New Plymouth's Currie St for more than 100 years. But as of today, that's history as the Taranaki Daily News changes address, writes Helen Harvey.

It was Taranaki's answer to Fleet Street. The corner of Currie St and Powderham St in New Plymouth has been the home of Taranaki news for longer than any one of us has been alive. Taranaki Daily News acting editor Matt Rilkoiff says. He remembers getting a tour through the building when he was a teenager. It was so full of people and so busy, he says. "When I started at the newsroom 10 years ago there were still about 170 people working there from 4am in the morning until 2am at night. Now there's not even a quarter of that number and the building is just far too big for us."

So, today, after more than 100 years on Currie St, the Taranaki Daily News is moving to the seventh floor of the WorleyParsons building on Gill St.

"Our new office is much smaller but much more suitable to our digital newsroom," Rilkoiff says.

A digital newsroom, and the internet, would have been beyond the comprehension of the journalists who worked for the paper when it first moved to the corner of Currie and Powderham streets in 1897, over the road from where it is now.

The small building had a basement, the 1957 Centennial edition of the Taranaki Daily News noted. It invited readers to "Picture if you can - a single storeyed tin walled building opening onto Currie St. On the Powderham St corner was a vacant space - a sort of glory hole where everything and anything was thrown".

There was a ramp down which everything heavy was rolled to the press room. In 1938 a large Taranaki Daily News building was built on the corner of Powderham and Currie Streets.

It was here former editor Denis Garcia, 86, began his long career in 1948.



The Taranaki Daily News' New Plymouth office will be on the seventh floor of the WorleyParsons building. PHOTO: ANDY JACKSON/STUFF



The Taranaki Daily News is moving out of the offices on Currie St which have been bought by a developer.

The old building was quite interesting, he says.

"If you wanted to go out in the one car the company had at that stage, you had to walk right downstairs, because the car was housed at the bottom of the premises at the bottom of Currie Lane."

To get there reporters had to walk through what was called the publishing department, where the papers were wrapped, he says.

"They used to use basically a flour and water mix to paste the things you'd wrap the papers up with and you'd go down there at night and all the rats from the river would be eating the flour and water mix. It was quite a scary experience, particularly for a young reporter, going down there at that time of night with all those rats around."

Editorial, who were then known as the literary staff, worked upstairs on the top floor and the subeditors used to send their copy down by a chute to the linotype operators on the ground floor where the printing press was, Garcia says.

Garcia started as office boy, then he worked as a copy holder. "Then at night I'd wrap the newspapers then do a paper run on my way home."

Across the road the rival Taranaki Herald would put out a sports edition on Saturday evenings. So, they had to try and get it printed in time to take it around the pubs before closing time at the 6pm he says, remembering the days of the "six o'clock swill".

The Taranaki Herald had set up shop in Currie St in May 1900

and next to the Herald. By this time both newspapers had merged under the umbrella of Taranaki Newspapers Limited (TNL).

Having two newspapers so close to each other resulted in a "fierce competition" between reporters, former Daily News associate editor Peter Bingham, who worked on Currie St for 40 years, says.

"In my time the editorial departments were independent and you tried to beat them to stories.

"One of the worst jobs was, if you had a round and you got beaten to a story, you had to sit down and rewrite it as your punishment. It was quite hard case."

Both papers would send reporters to council meetings and in those days there were council meetings around the mountain.

They also had to produce their own weather forecasts after being sent a whole series of figures for the next day's report.

"The junior reporter of the day used to have to physically plot each co-ordinate on a map and then draw anti-cyclones and cut out Ls and Hs, and you used to have to do the fronts."

But then, every now and again, there would be a hitch and the figures wouldn't arrive, so reporters would improvise.

"If you were assigned to do the

weather map we used to move the anti-cyclone over by a bit... Farmers used to cut their hay by the weather maps that used to go in those days," he says, laughing.

"But that was just the way you had to do things."

And subeditors would shoot the copy to the production managers in air tubes. They were always breaking down, Bingham says, remembering the drama when the lead story got stuck en route to production.

But that all changed once computers came in.

"Everyone came, themselves when computers first came on the scene and we had to get rid of our typewriter and throw away our typewriter ribbons. It's evolved from that and the changes have been massive."

"We were told 25 years ago that

From Monday you can find us in the WorleyParsons building on Gill St, next to Centre City. We're on the seventh floor and you'll need to take the lift. Our public opening hours remain the same: 11am-2pm, Monday to Friday.

News by the numbers:

- August 4, 1952: Taranaki Herald opened on Devon St.
May 14, 1957: Taranaki Daily News opened on Devon St.
1957: Daily News moved to corner of Currie and Powderham St.
1959: Daily News built new building.
1962: Daily News moved into new building across the road.
1968: The two papers amalgamated at Taranaki Newspapers Ltd.
1968: Taranaki Herald demolished and new building built at a cost of \$17 million.
April 29, 1968: Taranaki Herald closed.
April 2017: Daily News moves to new building in Gill St.

"We were told 25 years ago that papers won't last another 10 years and yet they're still going. People still like getting their papers. I think there will be a resurgence in papers."

Bingham started in the old Taranaki Herald building in 1971. "I can remember walking up those stairs that still remain the same."

When the old Herald building was demolished the original stairwell, with its turned wooden bannister, a stained glass window and an old safe, were saved and incorporated in the new building, which was built in 1985 at a cost of \$17 million to join with the Daily News building on the corner.

At that time TNL had 190 full time staff in New Plymouth, 10 in Hawera, five in Stratford and four in Tauramaramu, along with 78 part-time staff.

But the Herald closed a few years later in 1989. Kevin Nielsen was general manager at the time.

"I think when we closed the Herald it was the oldest daily in the country. We were unique in that we had two separate editorial teams, but shared a production area. That probably allowed the Herald to live 15 years longer," he says.

The 1980s was a time of change. About the same time as the Herald closed the Daily News changed to what was called 'direct editorial input', Nielsen says.

"Which is when the editorial department sort of first had access to computers.

As a result a lot of jobs in the production area were displaced and people were made redundant, he says.

"The final phases of that were years later when we had full page output, where pages were done on computers and came out in one piece ready to go to the press."

But nearly 30 years later those computers are old and obsolete. And in May 2015 the press was closed, with printing now taking place 354 kilometres away in Petone.

In the digital age of the 21st century the number of staff required to do the job is greatly reduced, resulting in the move to smaller premises.

On one hand it's sad to leave behind a place with so much history, where so many people have passed through, Rilkoiff says.

But on the other hand it's an office very firmly stuck in the 1970s and I don't think anyone is going to miss the acres of wood panelling, the water stained ceiling tiles and grungy windows that made everything outside look a bit gloomy.

The new offices have some of the best views in the city, Rilkoiff says.

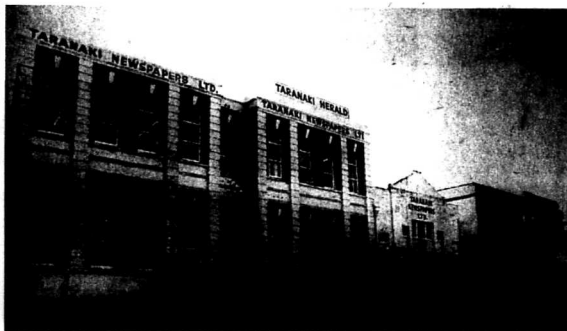
"I've already been looking on Trademe for telescopes."

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Weather TODAY: Cloudy, 21°C TOMORROW: Cloudy, 19°C Inside AD Opinion A12 TV A30 Magazine A36 Weather A21-24 Sport B1-2 World B3-11 Classified B50 Puzzles FITZROY, NEW PLYMOUTH, OPEN 7 DAYS BROADWAY SOUTH, STRATFORD, NEW ZEALAND WWW.RJEAGAR.CO.NZ 0800 753 2427 R.J. Eagar



How it began. The Taranaki Herald and Budget Office in Currie Street.



At one point the Taranaki Daily News and the Taranaki Herald buildings sat next door to each other in Currie St. In 1985 the Herald office was demolished and a new building was erected at a cost of \$1.7 million.

Remembering New Plymouth's 'Fleet Street'

Newspapers had a home in Currie St for more than 100 years. Here's a look at how things changed over time.



An aerial view of the Taranaki Newspapers Ltd complex on the corner of Currie Street and Powderham Street, New Plymouth before the old Herald site was demolished.



The old Herald building is demolished in 1985.



The Taranaki Daily News' old home at the corner of Currie Street and Powderham Street. The newspaper left this site and moved across the road.



The old newspaper building in the 1960s.