

Celebrating the life of A&T

TRIBUTES have poured in for Charles Starr Curry, who edited the *A&T* for nearly 50 years, following his death on Saturday.

Known for his fierce independence, generous nature, sense of fun and love of all things mechanical, he was 98.

After taking over the editor's chair in 1966, he made the *A&T* one of the most respected and successful newspapers in the country while at the same time helping hundreds of young reporters embark on their careers as he shared his passion for covering anything from WI meetings to sensational murder trials.

Charles was born in Canada in 1920 and enjoyed a rather grand welcome into the world after the Mayor of Toronto, who knew his father, Frederick, through his work as reporter at city hall, sent his Rolls Royce to collect him from hospital.

Returning to England in 1925 Frederick relaunched the *Christchurch Times* which had shut down as a result of a libel action.

In 1930 he sold his shares in that newspaper to buy the *New Milton Advertiser* and in 1932 he started the *Lynton Times*.

After attending at least six schools and leaving with virtually no qualifications, Charles came to work at the *A&T* in 1936, where he was kept busy as a reporter, collecting names at funerals, attending council meetings, and doing any other chores which no one else wanted to do.

Apart from national service, Charles continued working at the paper for the next 76 years. He took over as editor in 1966 on the death of his father and the paper continued to expand and prosper by maintaining a traditional grass roots approach to news gathering and a policy of not soliciting for advertising.

In 1990 his younger brother Teddy, who ran the accounts side of the business, decided he wanted to retire, but Charles, who was 70 at the time, did not want to give up working. In attempting to keep the newspaper going, he had a meeting with Sir David English whom he had worked with when they were both junior reporters and who went on to revive the *Daily Mail*.

Sir David was quite keen to aircraft, which was arranged as a surprise by his family.

Describing the experience as "really quite exciting" especially when he was handed the joystick, Charles said the trip took

him into the business but the conditions he laid down for the purchase were not agreeable to Charles who instead managed to borrow the money from Barclays Bank by re-mortgaging his house.

Charles' wife Catherine was disabled and it was a lot for her to agree to take on such a loan at their ages but she agreed. Her faith in her husband's business acumen was not misplaced as within three years he had repaid the lot.

Realising the paper needed a new press because it was becoming increasingly difficult to obtain the necessary flings for casting plates, Charles won a planning appeal to build a new printing hall at the paper's Compton Road site, telling the inspector if he refused the paper would not survive.

He bought a scrap Hoe and Crabtree converted letterpress printer from a paper in Lancashire which was brought to New Milton and reassembled. Powered by a John Deere tractor engine, coupled to a marine alternator, it continued to produce the *A&T* from 1995 until last year when it closed down and printing moved to Portsmouth when the paper went colour.

He was made an MBE in the 1997 New Year's Honours for his lifetime of service to journalism and the newspaper industry.

He remained as editor until 2012, continuing to write his Townsman column tackling the many issues of the day he considered important, not least global warming, planning and Europe.

On his 90th birthday Charles was driven to Bournemouth Flying Club where he enjoyed a 45-minute flight aboard a light

order sheet. However, instead of being congratulated, he was immediately shipped off to a new posting in Berlin.

Catherine married a fighter pilot during the war and had a son, Tony, but sadly the marriage did not last. After demob Charles and Catherine rekindled their friendship and were married several years later.

Charles willingly welcomed Tony into their home, and he was joined by daughter Caroline in 1952 and son Eddie in 1954. They lived in a cottage on a four-acre smallholding in Hare Lane at Ashley.

Family holidays, which he grudgingly went on, were either in the New Forest with a caravan or a trip down to a family house in Penzance until Catherine decided she needed to put some water between Charles and his business. This resulted in several holidays on the Isle of Wight, although he would still be phoning to check the production and printing were going okay in his absence.

Catherine got a taste early on of what married life would be like when he converted a bare Chrysler chassis to take a diesel engine.

Whilst the vehicle was still without any bodywork, he was keen to demonstrate his handwork to Catherine but she was not impressed when, after a ride down Station Road in New Milton, her new dress was covered in oil spray.

Another of his brilliant ideas for modifications occurred when he was concerned that in their sitting room heat was lost from their back boiler in the fireplace. For several years there was a bare car radiator sat in the sitting room next to the fire until one day a member of the *A&T* staff built a grill to cover it!

Catherine suffered for 30 years with periscope cancer, she was going out. He resulted in him needing to look after her as well as running the business. She said that he never complained or resented having to wash and dress her.

Her condition was similar to, but not the same as MS. He had read that MS could be put into remission by placing someone in an oxygen-enriched atmosphere at elevated pressure. He was keen to see how he could do so and tried buying a three-ton redundant decompression chamber used to help divers overcome the 'bends'.

The navy was not keen on selling the chamber which did not work but after unremitting pestering, they relented and he was able to buy it. His natural engineering skills came into play and he took the door mechanism apart and realised that it had been incorrectly assembled. He connected it

until he informed his commanding officer that he believed there was a scam going on regarding the RAF's and cautions, where items being delivered did not match the

'I was once asked why the paper was so successful when others were failing, and I replied because I didn't know how to do it properly and as a result advertising rates were half that charged for papers with a similar circulation.'

Being interviewed by ITV Meridian reporter Sarah Gomme in his famously untidy office

'He could punch through the pomposity of people like me' – MP

CONSERVATIVE MP Julian Lewis first came into contact with Charles when he fought and won the New Forest East seat in 1996.

"I realised straight away I was dealing with someone who was hugely well-informed and influential and someone whose regard I felt I needed to earn," he said.

"I thought he was an absolutely phenomenal and incredible character. He was completely fearless. He knew how to punch through the pomposity of people like me," he went on.

My favourite story in that respect was a time when I was trying to unsuccessfully persuade Charles that a particular cause was deserving of attention in the paper and he said to me, "That's a subject, I think, for a national," to which I replied, flatteringly, "Charles people read your newspaper", but he instantly and wittily then said "Yes, and I want to keep it that way".

Dr Lewis continued: "I can truly say even though he was 98 and had a tremendous innings, the New Forest will not feel quite the same without knowing that sharpness of wit and commitment to always being on the ball is there.

"He was quick-witted and determined and willing to take politicians down a peg or two if they deserved it. I had huge respect for him. He knew the area, he

knew the personalities but above all else, he knew the people. He was a great journalist and a great man."

NEW Forest, West MP Sir Desmond Swayne said: "Charles was a truly amazing character.

"In addition to being a very successful proprietor of the *A&T* with, for so many years, his own column, he had a wide range of interests and, in particular, with technological solutions to any number of different problems.

"I frequently received faxes from him suggesting technical fixes for issues being faced by the Ministry of Defence and UK Border Force."

"He was always 'on the ball' and with a mischievous sense of fun," Sir Desmond added. "He will be missed very much indeed."

LORD Montagu said: "I didn't know Mr Curry well but was always aware that it was his editorship which gave the *A&T* its sometimes idiosyncratic character.

"I once visited him at the *A&T* and he kindly showed me around the works, which was one of the last to be setting type in hot metal. I had heard that his office was

more like that of a garage mechanic, with tools and machine parts scattered over his desk. It was clear that he was a hands-on owner-editor in every sense of the word!"

NEW Forest District Council leader Cllr Barry Rickman said: "Charles was a modest, kind and independent-minded man with an amazing degree of knowledge on every subject under the sun and beyond!"

"He played a great part in my early business career with sound advice and encouragement. I believe the *A&T* through Charles helped many local businesses thrive, and in those days was the main way of communication in the area.

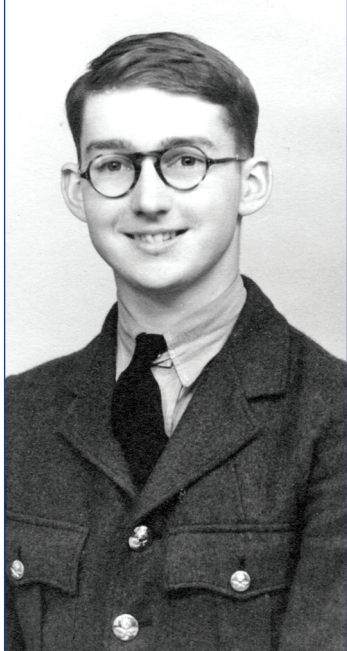
"I know so many local organisations and societies were so grateful for the valuable publicity they got to advance their aims."

"He would say to me on group photos for use in the *A&T*, 'Get as many faces, especially children, in the photos with their names for a caption, they and their families will all buy my paper.'"

Sir Ray Tindle, founder of the Tindle Newspaper Group, said "Charles was one of the real newspapermen of this country. I greatly admired him and thought he produced a first class newspaper. I know his son Eddie and his daughter Caroline will type in hot metal on the great tradition of the *New Milton Advertiser & Lynton Times*."



Charles reading an edition hot off his cherished press



Charles served in the RAF during the Second World War

editor Charles Curry MBE



Charles (fourth from right) with his father (centre) and staff in the 1940s



Visiting the A&T's new offices last year for the paper's 90th anniversary

Fond memories



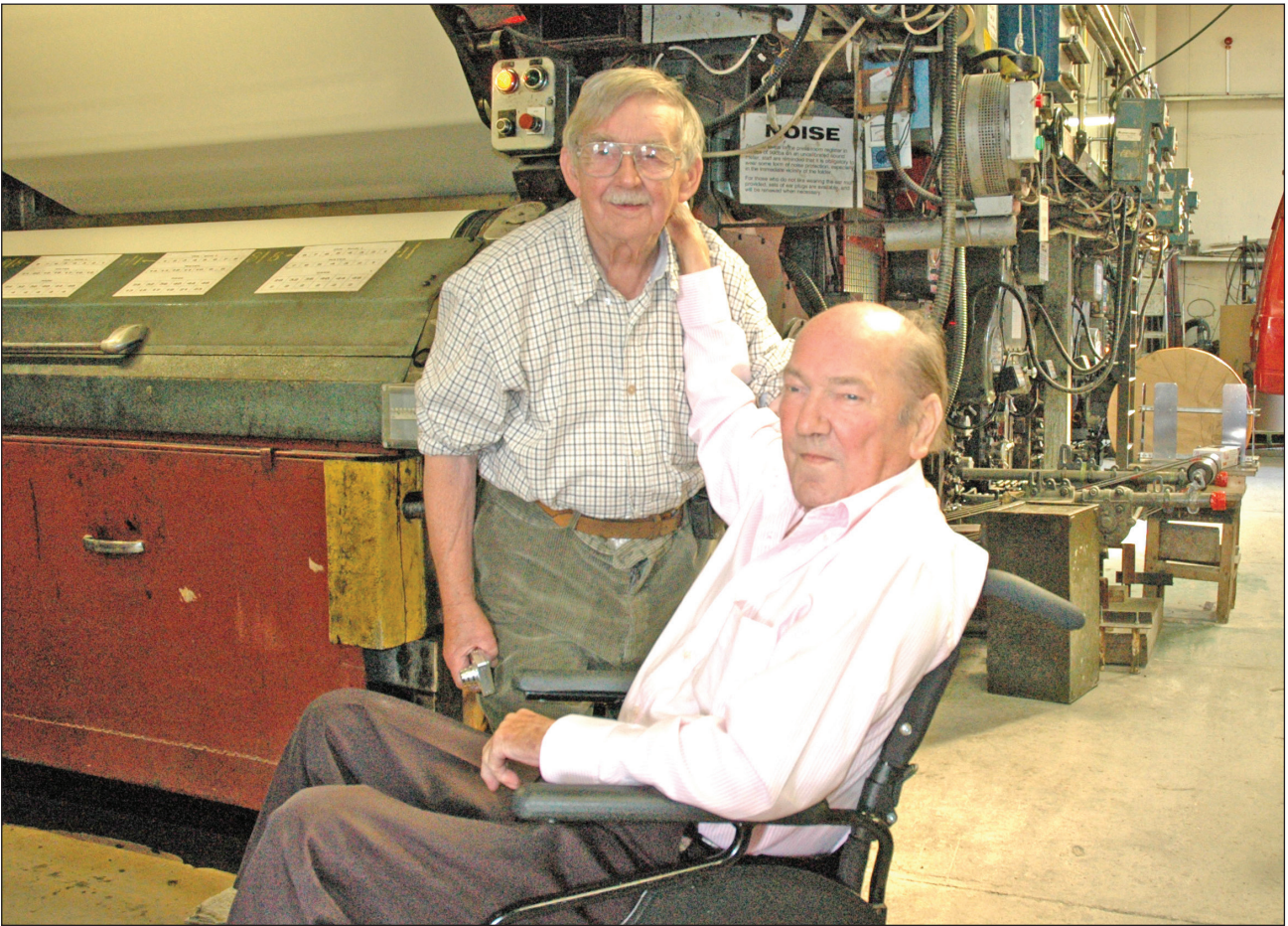
At work on his latest scheme



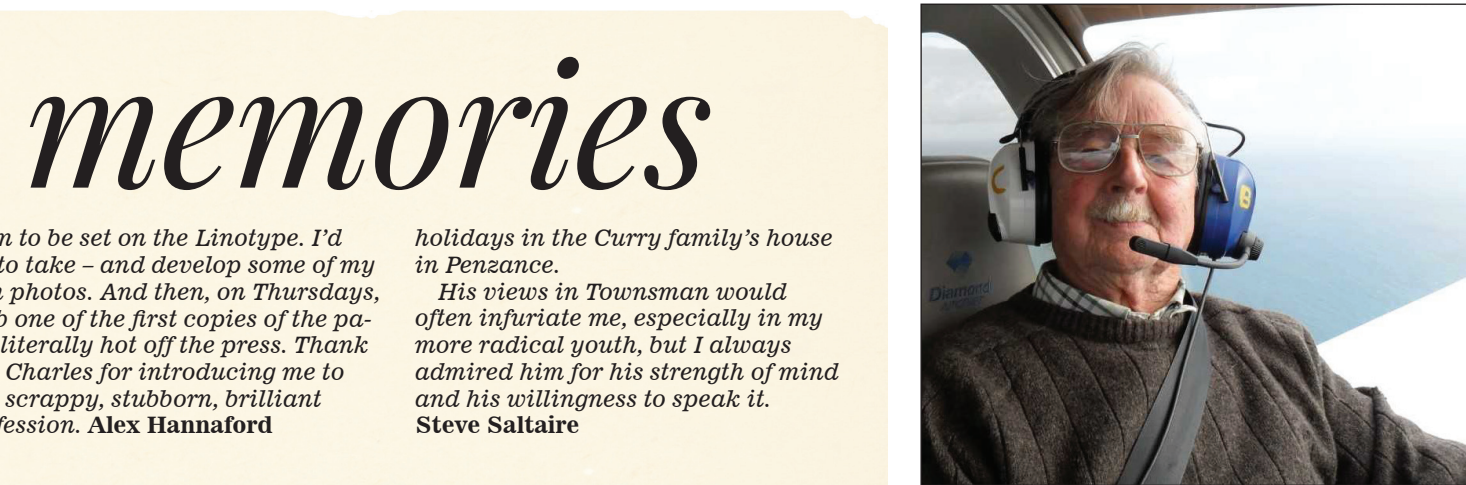
One way to clean out an ink drum!



The serious-minded journalist



With former Daily Mail sports writer Ian Wooldridge who started on the A&T in the 1950s



RIP Charles Curry a real newspaperman in every respect, Mike Denny

A great defender of professional journalism. When I worked in London (print/advertising) I always had to take a couple of spare copies of the *A&T* after the weekend because ad agencies would always nick my copy as they thought that type of journalism no longer existed!

Leslie R. Woodhouse

What a man, one of the great British eccentrics. I still have (some where) the slug of hot metal Charles gave me at my interview in 1998.

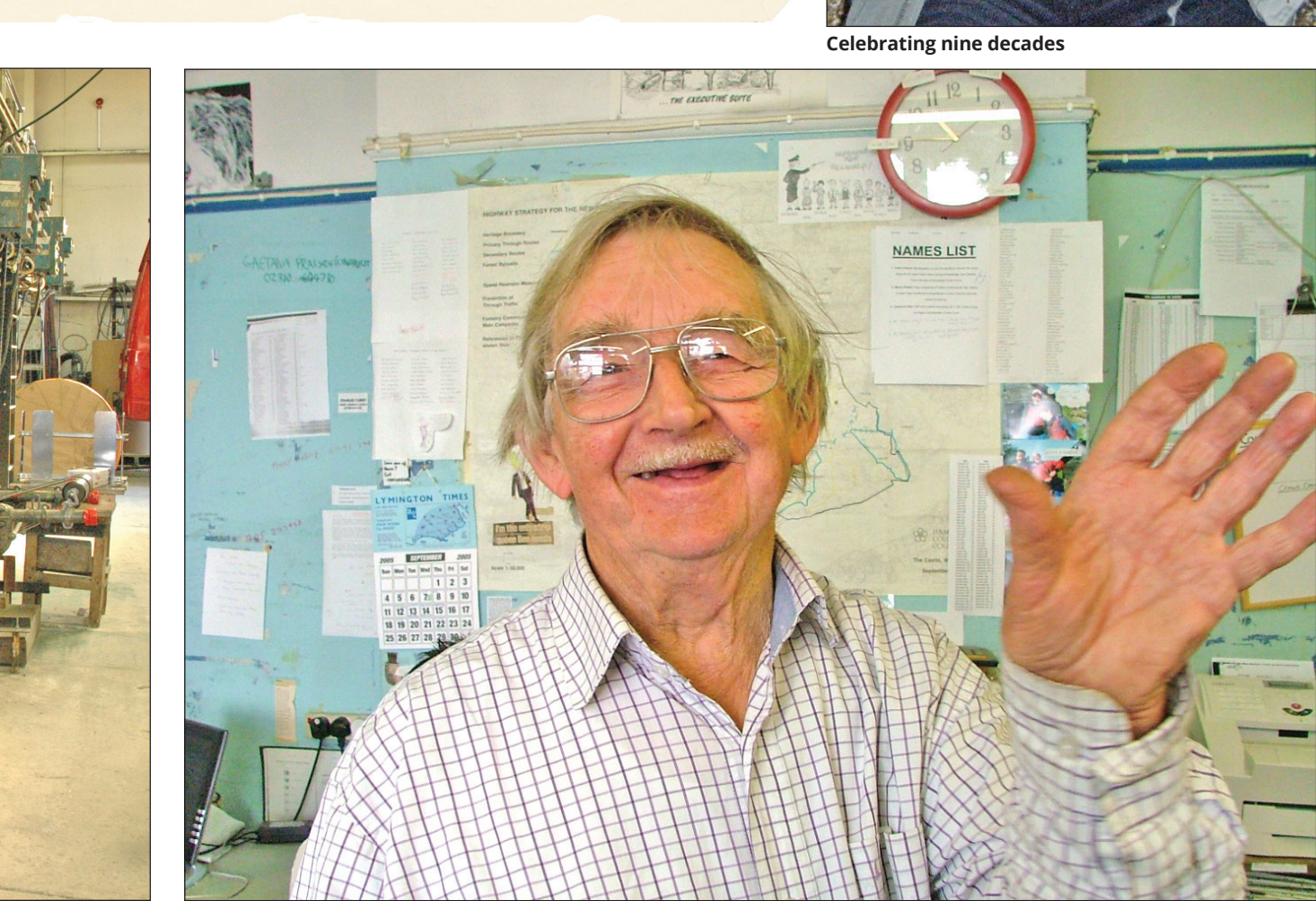
I remember Charles coming in one day with my typed copy, saying 'would you be embarrassed or harassed if I told you embarrassed has two Rs, and I still have his letters filed somewhere. A unique gentleman running what I believe was a unique regional newspaper. Chris Balcombe

Truly one of a kind. Had some of my first articles and photographs accepted and used in the paper back in the 1970s. I still have his letters filed somewhere. A unique gentleman running what I believe was a unique regional newspaper. Chris Balcombe

So sad to hear this news. He was an amazing person and the heart and soul of this fantastic newspaper. Carole Bailey

Over the years, Charles Curry and his father earned the gratitude of many, like myself, for giving them a start in journalism. Those of us from the 1950s era who went on to have careers in Fleet Street never forgot the lessons learned the hard way on the *A&T*.

After my retirement, I was always amazed when I looked in at the *A&T* to find Charles still bursting with the energy and enthusiasm I had seen decades before. A remarkable man. Ian Stevenson



Charles always welcomed visitors with a big smile