

In the beginning – before the chapbooks and non-stop news cycle, the tabloids and Twitter – there was the word of mouth. In Scotland, town-criers shouldered the responsibility of sharing news among the local community, banging the clap to alert the townsfolk to new bylaws, official proclamations, or the arrival of fresh herring.

While the advent of printed news in the eighteenth century was likely an unhappy prospect for those seeking a career in bellowing ‘Oyez! Oyez!’ across the town square, there were clear upsides, too. Newspapers crossed geographical boundaries and became a connecting force between communities: a tool to inform, inspire and persuade.

Since the introduction of print media to Scottish society, questions of national identity have been explored across the pages, with contemporary presses following a long tradition of debating constitutional change. Some of the earliest media outlets, such as the *Edinburgh Courant* and *Scots Postman*, were founded following the Treaty of the Union in 1707. Their pages absorbed the constitutional turmoil of the era, offering a platform through which to promote civic and parliamentary reform campaigns.

It’s a scene surely familiar to us. In recent years, Scotland’s media outlets have hotly debated the question of Scottish independence – the Whys, the Wherefores, the Hows, and the How Nos too. Indeed, from *Caledonian Mercury* to *Bella Caledonia*, the Scottish press has sought to shape the political and national character of its readers, performing a civic role by providing an important space for democratic debate.

While the way in which the media is used to construct our constitutional identity remains seemingly unchanged, our consumption of the news has transformed over recent decades. Indeed, the call of ‘Stop press!’ – whereby the printers heave their machines to a grinding halt to correct an error or insert Very Recent and

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