



Ormskirk District Historical Society

‘Stories from a Local Newspaper Reporter’. Roger Blaxall. 20th Oct 2025



Introduction:

Roger Blaxall shared his memories of life working as a reporter for a local community newspaper. He brought items from his collection of local newspapers (including examples of newspaper front pages that recorded significant events), magazines and books that members were able to look at following his talk. Roger began by asking ‘Are Journalists born or made?’ and answered this with his opinion, at the end of his talk.

Entry into Journalism:

Roger described how a conversation with Jeff Howard, Deputy Editor at The Ormskirk Advertiser at a Careers Evening led to his interest in

Journalism. Although he had studied 'A' Levels at Ormskirk Grammar School with a view to going onto University, Roger decided to apply for the post of Junior Reporter instead. The application process was tough with 4 interviews, a 3-hour interview with the Editor and the submission of a piece of writing about Ormskirk. Roger was successful and started work at the Church Street premises of the Ormskirk Advertiser on a starting wage of wage of £17 per week. He was required to successfully complete a 6-month Probationary period before being permanently employed.

Training:

Together with other trainee Journalists from publications across Lancashire, Roger travelled to Preston to undertake training in for example, Shorthand (T Line 120 wpm) and the legal aspects of reporting. This led to him receiving a 'Proficiency Certificate in Practical Journalism'.

Roger soon discovered that to be a successful Journalist, he needed to be:

- of smart appearance in order to attend Council meetings, Magistrates Courts, Registry Office, schools etc.
- have excellent time keeping skills with an ability to meet deadlines
- be able to interview all types of people, using 'Open' rather than 'closed' questions
- be inquisitive and know how to find 'news'
- have a genuine interest in people and a desire to reflect individual stories, without prejudice
- have a good sense of humour and a 'thick skin'

Career Path:

Roger progressed from Junior Reporter to Motoring Correspondent, then from Chief Reporter to Deputy Editor all at The Ormskirk Advertiser. Roger then became Editor of the magazine of Greater Manchester Police before moving to Merseyside Police to edit their Force magazine. He then moved into social media, running a local news site called 'QLocalOrmskirk' on Facebook, which he continues to run to this day.

Questions from the floor:

Roger said he was unable to pick just one or two **memorable stories** as there had been so many during his career however he tended to remember stories involving children as they were particularly sad. **‘Born or made?’** Roger said he thought good Journalists were 95% born and just 5% made as not everyone could develop the qualities described above. Roger was asked about what he saw as the **future of Journalism**. He mentioned that The Advertiser circulation figures were now very low compared to the past and that many people now relied on Social Media and Smart Phones rather than newspapers. He said he did believe in the importance of a free press in a democracy and that ‘it will be a sad state of affairs if faith in the press is lost’. He said he was concerned about the impact of ‘Influencers’ on Social Media and the development of AI as these were making it increasingly difficult for young people in particular, to know if what they were being told or seeing was truthful.

Diane Edwards

20th Oct 2025