

Street finally comes to an end

advertising staff who have worked in the building in its 130 years, all were unquestionably influenced by the traditions exemplified and the standards personified by the Dumbleby family who were shaped by the best Christian principles laid down by the RBC.

Although an internationally known broadcaster, Richard believed local papers played a vital role in society and were the "flagship of local democracy". David, who followed in his footsteps, underlined this, pointing out that knowing what is happening in our streets and neighbourhoods is as important as knowing about the national and international stage.

All of us who have worked there - and many journalists who cut their teeth on news and features in television, radio and major dailies and magazines - grew to love the premises and appreciated all that its organic growth embodied.

Nigel Cassidy, who went on to fame with Radio 4 and the BBC World News once commented: "This place is bigger than all of us. It shapes the way we work and how we report". Paul Morgan, now the editor of Rugby World, described it as "the comfortable home of a grand old lady of regional newspapers" and Nick Southworth a distinguished reviewer and theatre critic said when he left King Street it was like leaving home and he never matched the strong sense of identity that went with the job.

The building itself, deep and narrow, is very versatile and over the years the editorial department has moved upstairs and downstairs and from the front to back. In the thirties Delys Travers worked overlooking the street on the first floor.

"It was a big yellow painted room with a Reaxene covered table around which all the reporters sat", Delys, now in her nineties, remembers. "I think there were two typewriters between us and our telephone. Things were quite frugal, as Percy Dumbleby, Richard's uncle, who looked after the money was very mean and there was no toilet paper in the loo, just carefully

cut up squares of old newspaper".

By the time I took over as editor in 1976 the journalists had been moved to the back of the building, overlooking the Retreat. In the nineties we moved again to the top of an old stable block.

The car park at the rear was served by its own private road which you approached by a horseshoe bend from Water Lane. In March and November, when the tides were at their highest, you were often trapped until it receded, as the towpath was several feet under water.

Although it is sad to see a business so steeped in the history of the town moving out, the new location in the centre of the borough close to York House makes a lot of sense. After printing ceased at King Street, David Dumbleby reconsidered moving to a Twickenham location, in Church Street.

There were surveys and assessments and a lot of discussion among the executive directors, of whom I was one. Eventually it was decided to postpone the decision for a few more years and of course it was never rescinded.

Richmond's loss is Twickenham's gain and in many ways the new office in London Road will be even more convenient for readers and advertisers, as it is in the heart of the borough and well served by road, bus and train.

But we surviving former staff can be forgiven if we have nostalgic twinges. As the late Pat Haines, David's aunt and Richard's niece, wrote in the 125th anniversary edition in 1998: "Friday has always been a special day for me as I was taken to King Street by my father and I shall never forget the noise, the smell of ink and the feeling of excitement".

So say all of us who experienced those press days. There was a special thrill in knowing that you were continuing a noble tradition in a redolent building that dated back to Victoria's heyday. And where the saga of Richmond and Hounslow boroughs had been chronicled with such dedicated professionalism, launching countless successful journalistic careers.