

# the Journalist

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## From deadline to breadline

Journalists next for food banks?





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The cost of living is an issue like it hasn't been since the 1980s. Many people are feeling the pinch, and worse, and others fear they may fall into that situation.

We've recently had action on energy prices although with the long-term bill for the aid falling to the public and their children in years to come rather than the energy companies. And now the new Chancellor's mini budget has added to the misery by throwing mortgages and the housing market into turmoil.

Our cover feature looks at where journalists feature in the squeeze on finances and finds depressingly that they are reporting on hardship while experiencing it. More journalists, especially regional ones, struggle to find affordable housing near their work, and may have to take out loans to tide them over. Some are leaving the industry in search of better paid employment.

Some leave journalism for PR. Also, in this edition we look at the sometimes useful, sometimes difficult relationship between journalists and PRs.

Journalists leaving the profession can, along with other factors, result in a scarcity of specialist reporters. We have a great piece about the 15 minutes of fame of Alan Jones, PA's veteran industrial correspondent, who as the last expert on the beat became a star of TV and radio amid the increasing industrial disputes.

I hope you find something of interest in this edition. If you have feedback, please send your thoughts – our feedback pages are always hungry – [journalist@nuj.org.uk](mailto:journalist@nuj.org.uk)

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**Cover picture**  
Stephen Collins



**Ray  
Snoddy  
Page 09**

**Arts  
Page  
22**



**Our hearts  
are broken**

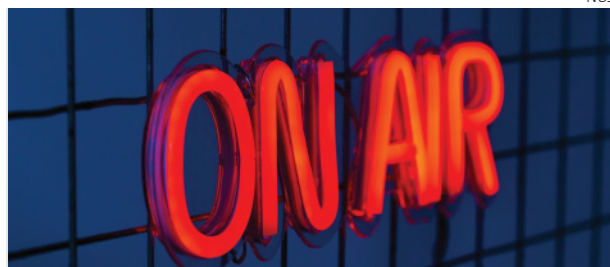
**Letters &  
Steve Bell  
24-25**

# BBC axes 400 World Service jobs to cut costs and shift to digital

**THE BBC** is to cut nearly 400 jobs in the World Service in a cost-cutting drive to save £28.5 million and move more content to digital from linear output.

The corporation is planning to stop 10 radio services, including BBC Persian and BBC Arabic with both staying on linear TV, and move seven language services - Chinese, Gujarati, Igbo, Indonesian, Pidgin, Urdu, and Yoruba - to online only. This will mean that nearly half of the 41 BBC World Service language services will be digital only.

The proposals also involve moving the production of some services out of London to the countries they cover. Some 382 jobs in news content, news output and



operations will be lost.

Paul Siegert, the NUJ's national broadcasting organiser, said: "The announcement comes as a direct result of the government failing to fund the BBC properly. Let's be clear, many of these services should be funded directly by the Foreign Office and not the BBC, as they were prior to 2011. There are direct benefits for the UK government

through soft power and the influence it gets around the globe via the BBC World Service. The government needs to accept this and find the money to help fund the service before it's too late."

The BBC said the World Service will continue to operate in all the languages and countries where it is currently present, and no language services will close. It will serve audiences "during

moments of jeopardy" and ensure that countries such as Russia, Ukraine and Afghanistan have access to news services.

The move comes amid concern about editorial integrity in the BBC over plans to move most speech-based programmes to the commercial arm.

A number of NUJ chapels, together with Bectu which represents technical staff, have made protests to an internal review saying it would undermine their editorial integrity as public service broadcasters.

A poll of NUJ members in BBC Audio found that more than 96 per cent want to keep speech programmes in the public service.

## inbrief...

### FT STAFF GET COST OF LIVING BOOST

Staff at the Financial Times, at which the NUJ is recognised and has a strong presence, are each getting a £1,800 payment to help with the cost of living. The one-off amount follows similar payments made by other media employers. Last year all FT staff were given a £5,600 bonus after strong profits.

### FRESH CALL FOR O'HAGAN PROBE

The NUJ has renewed its demands for an international investigation into the killing of Martin O'Hagan, the Sunday World reporter who was shot dead by the Ulster Volunteer Force in Lurgan, Co Armagh on September 28 2001. On the 21st anniversary of his death, the union called on the British Prime Minister Liz Truss to take 'urgent steps' to establish an investigation.

### DUTCH UNION FREELANCE STORY

A story in the last edition of The Journalist - Dutch union's freelance deal - came from an edition of the NUJ publication Freelance and was written by Matt Salusbury. The Journalist apologises for overlooking acknowledgment of the source of story.

## Strike ballot at Al Jazeera

**NUJ** members at the broadcaster Al Jazeera are being balloted on whether they are prepared to take part in strike action and action short of strikes.

Some 40 members have received ballot papers following a decision by the Al Jazeera group chapel to move to

an industrial action vote, rejecting the company's 2022 offer of 4.5 per cent plus an unconsolidated £500 for those earning less than £50,000.

The NUJ asked for either a higher award covering this year or a two-year deal consisting of 4.5 per cent this year

and 4.5 per cent next year. With inflation at around 10 per cent and expected to remain high for all of 2023 the union doesn't consider that pay claim to be unreasonable. The rising cost of living increases and pay stagnation at Al Jazeera has left some journalists in financial hardship.

The ballot closes on October 17.

## NUJ office closes after 115 years

**THE NUJ'S** Manchester office has closed after 115 years but the team is still "very much in place".

There has been an office in the city since 1907 when the union was founded. It was initially in the home of William Watts, the first general secretary.

As the union flourished, the office moved next to the Manchester Guardian.

Over the years, it moved to different buildings in the city, one of which was a casualty



of the 1996 Manchester IRA bombing.

NUJ senior organiser Chris Morley said: "Just as the

industry has changed and continues to evolve in the face of new technologies and methods of working, the requirements for having such a base has changed too.

"But the Manchester team is still very much in place serving members throughout the Northern and Midlands region. If members need to meet in person, this can be accommodated in office space in the same location at 111 Piccadilly so the service remains unaffected."

### Recognition win at gal-dem media

The NUJ has won union recognition at gal-dem, the media company which describes itself as being committed to sharing the perspectives of people of colour from marginalised genders. The agreement means that the union can now negotiate on pay and terms and conditions. The NUJ gal-dem chapel said: "This is a huge moment for gal-dem! gal-dem staff past and present have been collectively organising for over two years to reach this milestone. It was a long and challenging process, but we're extremely thrilled to now be a unionised workplace".



# Fifty years of murders, scandals, politics, triumphs and tragedies

**WHEN** NUJ life member Vince Gledhill joined Newcastle's Evening Chronicle and Journal newspapers as a teenage apprentice reporter in 1963, he soon learned the need to keep copies of every story he wrote in a cuttings book.

Those were the days before digital storage, and the company's librarians were selective about stories they filed.

He continued to keep cuttings of his stories in that traditional way until he retired, ending up with half a century of stories from murders, scandals and political shenanigans to individual triumphs and tragedies.

"I always meant the books to be for my personal use and nothing else, but I ended up with a day-to-day history of people and events in this part of north-east England that exists nowhere else," said Gledhill, now 76.

"I kept the books in my loft but, every so often, brought out one or two because relations or visitors to my home asked to see them out of curiosity or because they needed to see them for research and, every time, the result was the same. Having found what they were looking for, they kept on turning page after page and discovering what they had not been looking for.

"One of my friends even found a story about his older sister that he had been completely unaware of. When he was just a schoolboy, she and her family had been made homeless and forced to live under a canvas covering them and their meagre possessions on the back of a horse cart."



Eventually, Gledhill decided the loft was the wrong place for the cuttings books and donated all of them to Northumberland Archives, where they are now being catalogued and preserved.

"I hope that since the archives are at Woodhorn Museum in Ashington, the 40 books of cuttings will in time be available for anyone to browse through, to learn who and what was hitting the headlines in their home area during the five decades they cover."



**I ended up with a day-to-day history of people and events in this part of north-east England that exists nowhere else**

**Vince Gledhill**

DAVID BLEEKER PHOTOGRAPHY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

## London gets a City Hall lobby

**JOURNALISTS** who cover the Mayor of London and Greater London Authority (GLA) have established a City Hall lobby in a similar vein to the lobby group of Westminster journalists.

The aim is to bring together reporters and help

shine a light on devolved London politics.

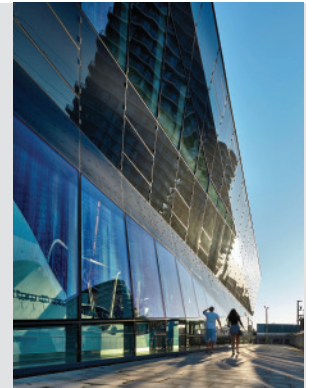
Only a handful of reporters primarily cover City Hall but the group – City Hall Journalists – is open to all who regularly report on the mayor and the GLA. They will develop plans for improving

access for journalists and transparency for the public.

The group's creation comes shortly after City Hall moved from Southwark to east London – and follows controversy over the exclusion of a local democracy reporter by

the mayor of Bristol.

The group, spearheaded by MyLondon's City Hall editor Josiah Mortimer, is backed by the Press Gallery, NUJ, the News Media Association and the Society of Editors. Contact [@cityhalljournos](https://twitter.com/cityhalljournos) on Twitter or [josiahmortimer@gmail.com](mailto:josiahmortimer@gmail.com)



## Myanmar jails former BBC presenter

**THE NUJ** has joined the International Federation of Journalists in condemning the sentencing of journalist Htet Htet Khine in Myanmar amid growing restrictions on press freedom.

On 15 September, former BBC journalist Khine was sentenced by a Yangon court to three years in prison following a conviction under Myanmar's penal code for allegedly disseminating 'false information designed to foster public animosity towards the military government'.

Khine is the former presenter of BBC's Khan Sar Kyi (Feel It) programme, which has been covering the impact of prolonged conflict in Myanmar.

The NUJ is urging authorities to do more to ensure the rights of journalists are protected in the country.

The International Federation of Journalists said: "The unlawful charges against Htet Htet Khine are yet another blatant attempt to silence critical voices and stifle press freedom in Myanmar."





# Reach members accept pay deal and begin 2023 negotiations

**NUJ** members at all the publications of Reach narrowly voted to accept a revised pay offer after a one-day strike and long-running negotiations.

NUJ journalists voted by 55 per cent to 45 per cent to accept the deal which involves a minimum increase of three per cent but a range of substantial increases between 14 and 44 per cent for those staff who receive lower pay. The turnout for the vote was 76.5 per cent.

The Reach group chapel paid tribute to the collective work and solidarity of members across the group to secure a settlement that delivers significant pay rises to over 700 journalists. The deal also includes improved redundancy terms and conditions for many members currently in receipt of statutory minimums.

Ahead of the negotiations for pay in 2023, which are commencing this autumn, NUJ reps pledged their determination to build on the achievements to date to deliver further improvements in pay transparency, higher rates of editorial pay, and meaningful career progression.

In accepting this revised pay deal, the group chapel stressed that it is just the beginning. It said that it would continue to

## Reach

advocate for improved pay and conditions for all NUJ members at Reach publications.

The NUJ will now enter into an agreed process with the company to identify outstanding pay anomalies and agree uplifts across other parts of the editorial bargaining unit, including across the group's national titles, a process due to conclude by the end of this year.

Reach said that it would work together with the union "to find a way forward and will continue to keep an open dialogue on these crucial issues in the months to come."

The company has also agreed to work with the union to develop collective bargaining processes in Ireland. This will be a vital start to the process of working together with the company to building a meaningful career progression structure and achieving better pay transparency.

## inbrief...

### JOURNALIST SHOT DEAD IN ISRAEL

Israeli-Palestinian journalist Nidal Ighbariya was shot dead as he drove home in Haifa in Israel. Known for reporting on organised crime in Arab towns, he was targeted last year in an assassination attempt. His family said he wasn't given adequate protection.

### UNIONS CONDEMN ATTACK IN ZIMBABWE

The NUJ has joined the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists and the International Federation of Journalists in condemning an attack on journalist Ruwimbo Muchenje. He was assaulted by party officers as he tried to enter a rally by the Citizen Coalition for Change political party. The party has apologised.

## Russian ex-journalist jailed

A RUSSIAN former journalist has been sentenced to 22 years in prison in what his supporters call a chilling crackdown on press freedom.

Ivan Safronov, who was formerly a defence reporter

for the Kommersant newspaper, was detained in July 2020 for allegedly passing state secrets to the Czech Republic.

The 32-year-old, who strongly denies the charges,

rejected a plea deal from authorities last month, which would have seen him serve 12 years in jail.

His lawyer Dmitry Kathev warned journalists that they needed to consider their own

safety. He told them:

"Safronov was given 22 years for his journalistic activity. I want each of you, who are looking at me now, to think whether it is worth staying in this profession, if somebody was given 22 years for doing his job."

Do you want your magazine in print rather than online or would like some printed copies for your branch meetings?

Please email us at: [journalist@nuj.org.uk](mailto:journalist@nuj.org.uk)

## NUJ magazine praised at TUC awards

**THE JOURNALIST** has been commended for its editorial mix, quality of writing and a lack of spin at the TUC's communications awards.

The annual awards celebrate the work of all unions in communications and campaigns.

The judges said: "As you would expect from the journalists' union, the magazine is very well written.

"The judges found a good mixture of light and serious pieces with clear reporting and a lack of spin or editorial 'line'. All topped off with a



JESS HURD

lovely cover and a great 'feel' to the magazine."

The judges included Chris McLaughlin, political commentator at the Mirror

and editor at large of Tribune, and Ellie Gellard, strategic director at campaigning group 38 Degrees.

They said the magazines that did best were those they felt "made the most persuasive case to non-members casually picking them up or reading them on screen".

They looked for "great journalism, enticing design and stories absolutely relevant to the membership".

The Journalist's editor Christine Buckley received the award from the TUC president Sue Ferns.

### Newsquest shuts National in Wales

Newsquest has closed its news website for Wales, The National, just 18 months after its launch. Its regional editor said declining subscriptions and competition from free news providers meant that the site was unsustainable.

The National went live on March 1st 2021 - St David's Day - shortly after the rival Herald News UK established its own Wales-wide initiative, Herald.Wales. Newsquest's venture was intended to cover Welsh national news from a Welsh perspective and offer an alternative to coverage by England-based publications.



# Story behind the picture

Final farewells to  
HRH Queen Elizabeth II

*By Ako Ismail*

**Monday September 19 was no ordinary day, for neither the people of the UK nor me. It was the last farewell to Queen Elizabeth II, the UK's longest-serving monarch. On that day, I decided to make the long journey from north-east England to London to document this historic event.**

Many thousands travelled to London and people watched from around the world. Huge numbers of police were on duty to make sure everything went smoothly and to prevent the event being targeted by terrorists.

Thousands of floral tributes were left in designated areas in the royal parks of Hyde Park and Green Park in the lead-up to the funeral. It was hard to see the grass in Green Park because the grounds were piled high with flowers and crammed with visitors who had come to see them and pay their respects.

Among all the mourners, a child's message in a handwritten letter attracted my attention:

'To Elizabeth, our queen

'Thank you for everything you have done for us over the last 70 years. I hope you meet your family and your loved ones. Thank you for being our queen.

'Love from Tom'

Mourners and other visitors carefully deposited flower bouquets, stuffed Paddington Bears, drawings of corgis, handwritten letters, painted pebbles, flags, posters, photographs and other tokens of appreciation in rows and piles on the ground, filling the park with colour and turning it into an attraction of its own.





*By Anna Gordon*

**Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, people queued for up to 24 hours in a line that, at its longest, reached 10 miles.**

Running to Westminster, it coiled its way around Southwark Park. It flowed along the River Thames both day and night as people waited to spend a few moments viewing her coffin as it lay in state in Westminster Hall. Altogether, 305,806 people passed through.

The queue started on September 19 and closed at 6.30am on 19 September, hours before the Queen's funeral.

I spend two days photographing it and it was fascinating. It included a wide variety of people from across the UK and the world. Some had medals, some were wrapped in Union Jacks, some carried flowers and some men wore sombre suits and top hats.

People had all kinds of different motives for being there; some had been recently bereaved. Some said a long wait was a part of them paying their respects. There was a lovely sense of community.

*By Jess Hurd*

**Royals are not really my subject area, but I was interested in the spectacle, the huge policing operation and the composition of the crowds.**

Some of my colleagues were on Whitehall from 5am to secure their position for the Queen's journey from Buckingham Palace to the Palace of Westminster. I arrived around 11am and was funnelled towards the Whitehall entry point at Horse Guards Parade.

I was surprised to see the crowd was only two or three deep. The mood was buoyant. I chatted to a couple of women from Kent and a young woman from South Wales who had made the journey alone.

I had brought my cable release and monopod to mount my camera. I wanted to capture the coffin, parade and the crowds in the same shot, so needed some elevation.

There was a hush in the crowd when we could hear the drums approaching. It did feel solemn, except for all the mobile phones held aloft, catching the moment people had waited hours to witness.



*By Howard Jones*

**The morning after the Queen's passing, I headed down to the gate of Buckingham Palace where a number of floral tributes had already been laid by members of the public.**

I felt some trepidation because, when the Duke of Edinburgh died the previous year, the police were preventing press photographers without a Royal Parks permit from taking photos, which covered the area in front of the palace.

This day though, there were no problems. After an hour or so of capturing the public laying flowers, I noticed two children wearing crowns with whom I assume was their mother, approaching the gate. One child was holding a painting but I had trouble getting a clear view because other people were moving in and out of the crowds and obscuring my view.

After a brief lull, the child approached the gate, knelt down and paused briefly before laying his painting on the ground at which time I managed to get the clear shot I wanted.



PA industrial correspondent **Alan Jones** is in demand after months of strikes



# Last man standing in labour reporting

**T**he outgoing TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady declared 'unions are back' as she hosted the annual TUC Communication Awards.

The audience of union press officers and officials was well aware of the renewed interest in their work as a result of the extraordinary outbreak of industrial action across the country this summer.

The cost of living crisis, years of austerity and pay cuts have united workers from refuse collectors and train drivers to posties and even barristers.

The headlines screamed 'Summer of discontent', no doubt to be followed by 'Winter of discontent', but these phrases date back to the 1980s, and don't begin to describe the level of anger that has exploded into industrial action.

Simon Weller, Aslef assistant general secretary, told me it was more like a 'summer of solidarity' – a far better explanation of the strikes breaking out as often as a generation ago.

Union membership, power and influence have changed since the end

of the miners' strike in the mid-1980s, as well as the way disputes are covered in the media.

Unions have rarely enjoyed much positive coverage but there used to be labour correspondents, who at least gave them a voice. Every national newspaper, TV and radio station had a specialist journalist in daily contact with unions, regularly reporting on the top story of the day – usually strikes and disputes or tensions with the Labour Party.

I've been described as the 'last man standing' in writing – positively – about the role of unions in society, a label I have come to accept after giving scores of TV and radio interviews about strikes in recent months.

The long list of programmes I have appeared on includes Radio 4's Woman's Hour, which covered the increasing role of women in the movement, and a GB News evening news bulletin about the rail strikes, hosted by Nigel Farage.

I didn't realise until the last minute that the former politician would be interviewing me and, when his face popped up on my laptop, I started to panic about what I had let myself in for.

**Rae moved to royal reporting decades ago, and the fact he was talking about today's strikes illustrates the lack of journalists covering unions**

But, after explaining to him why the rail unions were on strike and telling him that his introduction criticising the RMT was only half the story, he accepted there was another side.

Buoyed by positive reactions of contacts and friends, I also agreed to be interviewed by Alastair Stewart on GB News, with former Sun industrial editor Charlie Rae. Both of us covered industrial disputes in the heyday of strikes so know more than most about unions.

But Rae moved on to royal reporting decades ago, and the fact that he was talking about today's strikes on GB News illustrates my point about the lack of journalists covering unions.

Former BBC industrial and political correspondent Nicholas Jones has joined me in several interviews about how media coverage has changed.

He's a top journalist but, again, doesn't cover today's disputes and has no reason to be in regular contact with union leaders, unlike in the 1980s and 1990s, when talk about the daily disputes usually ended up in licensed premises – or a cricket ground.

On the eve of the TUC Congress, a team of journalists took on the general council for a game. Senior union officials often talked about the conference on TV, while wearing their cricket whites.

I captained the journalists' team in its final years, revelling in bowling against Bob Crow or arguing about an LBW decision with the TUC general secretary.

We would have difficulty providing two umpires for a game now.

A ceremony was held at the end of the conference to mark the journalist who had made the biggest mistake of the previous year – charmingly called the Golden Bollock. The press officer who had given the worst information would win the Bum Steer.

I would (unfairly) win the Golden Bollock every year now. Maybe the press officers could resurrect their award given the resurgence of interest in their work.

However, picking winners could be hard work given what a union official told me recently. A local reporter covering a dispute asked: "What's a trade union, and what's a strike?" I suggested that next time he's asked, he tells the reporter to join the NUJ, which is playing its part in the season of solidarity.



# Close scrutiny needed now more than ever



The new government must not be trusted, says **Raymond Snoddy**

**J**ust for a moment, let's have one last look over the shoulder to praise the talent, skills and professionalism of the journalists and broadcasters who provided such brilliant coverage of the death and funeral of Queen Elizabeth II.

Who can doubt the astonishing productivity of the journalists who produced such an array of supplements, even if a little fewer might have done?

The television coverage, bringing together the combined forces of the BBC, ITV and Sky, produced pitch-perfect performances and attracted an overall peak audience of more than 25 million.

There is a lesson there for new culture secretary Michelle Donelan, who at least is prepared to reconsider the business case – in reality nonexistent – for the privatisation of Channel 4.

The former universities minister (and education secretary for two days) has some learning to do on the subject of public service broadcasting.

Donelan praised the BBC coverage as “splendid” and then, in almost the same breath, suggested the arrival of Amazon and Netflix somehow undermined the case for a BBC funded by the licence fee.

The opposite is of course true. The likes of Amazon and Netflix make it even more critical that there should be a national public service broadcaster funded by a universal funding mechanism whether licence fee or a similarly universal alternative.

The good news is that Donelan seems capable of learning in a way that her predecessor Nadine Dorries was not.

Now, following the long-awaited accession of King Charles III, after journalism's royal sabbatical, Britain's journalists have a much more serious and vital task. It is to hold the most

right-wing Conservative government in modern times to account.

At its heart is debunking the manufactured myth that Truss represents a new government and a new start. Under this whopper, all the events of the past 12 years, which have brought us to this current crisis, can be swept under the carpet even though Truss in particular was involved in all of those previous administrations.

Some journalists in the right-wing press either will not want to, or are not free to, remind their readers exactly who was responsible for the current mess.

Sometimes the barefaced cheek of The Sun passes all understanding. The paper supported Boris Johnson through thick and thin and lamented his political demise as a great mistake.

Now for the Sun, it is a case of onwards and upwards.

“We heard much ‘boosterism’ from Boris Johnson. It was all talk,” the Sun astonishingly says now.

Truss, the paper adds, without too much conviction, “may deliver something far more concrete”.

The Daily Mail, which had an even longer period of mourning for Johnson, got behind Kwasi Kwarteng's dash for growth and shamelessly perpetuated the myth that “if the country becomes more prosperous, everyone gets richer”.

So apart, from reminding people that this government has been in power for 12 years, journalists have to highlight the numerous economic studies showing that the ‘trickle-down effect’ is largely a myth.

Leaving aside the suggestive truth lurking in the use of the word ‘trickle’, studies such as those by the London School of Economics have demonstrated that 50 years of tax cuts have made inequality worse.

Give the rich more money and they tend to hold onto it. Give the poor more money and they are more likely to spend it, stimulating growth. Even journalists without an economic background can reflect this basic principle.

There is also an ever-greater need for journalists with a sense of history.

When health secretary Thérèse Coffey announced a two-week target for getting a GP appointment – even though it was an ‘expectation’ – it was made to sound like a great step forward. The last Labour government's target was 48 hours.

When Coffey said social services would get an extra £500 million to help free up hospital beds, BBC health editor Hugh Pym wondered whether it was new money. He was right. It wasn't new and had been taken from elsewhere.

With this government, everything they say and do should receive the most intense journalistic scrutiny.

Journalists should be equally sceptical about the continuing damage wrought by Brexit. It is impossible to understand the plunging value of the pound or labour shortages in the NHS without reference to this – something the BBC in particular seems terrified to do.

The primer on the state of the economy and Truss economics has been provided by Martin Wolf of the Financial Times under the headline ‘The economic consequences of Liz Truss’.

Wolf has applied his expertise to the Truss view of the world and among his findings is that it is ‘a fantasy’ that further tax cuts and deregulation will transform performance.

“Britannia is not ‘unchained.’ It is instead sailing in perilous waters. Can the new captain and first mate even see the rocks that lie ahead?” Wolf asked.

It is now up to journalists to show where those rocks lie.

**Some journalists will not want to, or are not free to, remind their readers exactly who was responsible for the current mess**

# Bristol

**Ruth Addicott** looks at life and work in Bristol, including protests and press boycotts

## H

ipsters, demos, Brunel, bikes and Banksy, it can only be one place – Bristol.

The city, renowned for its alternative spirit, magnificent suspension bridge and, more recently, the tearing down of Edward Colston's statue, is as much a hotspot for activism as it is for creatives.

In recent years, it has been named the UK's 'happiest city' (2019), Britain's 'coolest city' (2017) and, in 2008, the UK's first 'cycling city'. So what's it like for journalists?

Bristol is home to the largest BBC Studios production base outside London, which employs more than 500 staff at Broadcasting House on Whiteladies Road in Clifton. Staff from the world-renowned Natural History Unit, famous for programmes such as Planet Earth and Blue Planet 11, and Factual Entertainment Bristol (Antiques Roadshow, Countryfile and Gardeners' World), recently moved to Finzels Reach, the new waterfront quarter near Temple Meads station. Regional news programme Points West and Radio Bristol are expected to follow. ITV West Country and Channel 4 also have a base nearby.

Along with BBC Radio Bristol, there are numerous commercial and independent radio stations, including Alex Seabrook Radio and BCFM.

"It's a brilliant city to work in as a journalist," says ITV reporter Max Walsh.

Walsh cites the people, parks, independent spirit, music scene and access to the outdoors among the city's attractions, the only downside being the traffic. He advises getting a bike.

Among the stories Walsh has covered recently was the trial of Ryan Roberts, who was convicted of attempted arson with intent to endanger life after the riot in Bristol following a 'Kill the bill' demonstration. Roberts was jailed for 14 years. "It was

a big story for the city that asked questions about the police and the mayor at a time when we were still in the middle of the pandemic," he says.

Paul Breedon, treasurer of the Bristol NUJ branch, says the protests over the Police and Crime Bill in spring 2021, which resulted in severe damage to a city-centre police station and dozens of arrests, was a traumatic time for the city.

"Covering these protests was a real challenge for journalists – several were injured, many were abused and some got caught up in incidents with the police, which resulted in injury, temporary arrest and confrontation," he says.

Photographers faced hostility from protestors and were threatened at subsequent trials. One Bristol journalist had 'police spy' daubed on the front of his house.

"We got support from national officials, particularly David Ayrton, who has worked with the Met in London to successfully defuse tensions between the police and journalists," says Breedon. "We also got legal advice for members caught up in the confrontations, and two were able to pursue claims against the police."

Talks were held between the Bristol NUJ branch and Avon and Somerset police about how to defuse the situation and Breedon was invited to address police briefings.

"We showed officers what a genuine press card looks like and told them how to recognise a professional journalist," he says. "We also gave advice to members about keeping themselves safe and not obstructing the police."

The branch has continued to hold regular meetings with senior officers and Breedon says it has brought a better understanding on both sides.

One thing the city can take pride in is the strength of investigative reporting by independent titles such as The Bristol Cable and Bristol 24/7.

Martin Booth, editor of Bristol 24/7, was among those caught up in the protest and was detained by police a few hundred yards from his front door – prompting him to join the NUJ.

Aside from the main broadcasters, Bristol has many independent filmmakers, particularly documenting wildlife,



## Tips for freelance success

### Find a good co-working space

Bristol has a huge freelance community and great variety of co-working spaces all over the city. Linda Geddes shares a co-working space with

other freelance journalists in Stokes Croft. "It's a chance to chat to people who are having similar issues with pitching and share ideas," she says. "It's a bit like a mini newspaper office."

### Seek out stories in little-known places

Martin Booth, editor of Bristol 24/7 and author of 111 Places in Bristol That You Shouldn't Miss, recommends getting to know areas that aren't

usually mentioned in promotional material. "These are where you'll find some of the best stories," he says.

### Precise pitches and persistence pay off

ITV reporter Max Walsh advises journalists to track down relevant editors and

start pitching ideas. "It may not lead to something immediately, but jobs do regularly come up in this industry and you'll be amazed how opportunities can be created for people who have the right attitude and really care about telling local stories," he says.

leading some to dub the city Green Hollywood. The Bottle Yard Studios, which has made dramas such as Poldark and The Trial of Christine Keeler, is the largest film and TV studio in the west of England and is due to undergo a £12m redevelopment.

The main daily newspaper is the Bristol Post and its website Bristol Live. The Western Daily Press and website Somerset Live are also in the city. All are owned by Reach whose journalists staged a one-day walk-out at the end of August after rejecting a pay offer. They went on to accept an offer which involved rises of between 14 and 44 per cent for the lowest paid.

There has also been a dispute over access to press briefings with the city's elected mayor, Marvin Rees. The row began after local democracy reporter (LDR) and NUJ member Alex Seabrook asked Rees if he could see the irony in taking a 9,000 mile trip to Canada to give a 14-minute TED talk on climate change and why he couldn't use Zoom instead. TED Conferences is a not-for-profit American-Canadian media organization that posts talks online for free distribution under the slogan "ideas worth spreading".

The council's head of external comms, Saskia Konyenbourg, questioned whether an LDR should be asking such a question and Seabrook and the city's other LDR, Adam Postans (both based at the Bristol Post), were barred from future briefings. (Rees, a former journalist himself, has since said they were not "banned" but "simply not invited".)

The move was condemned by the NUJ and resulted in a boycott by local media. The council is now publishing press releases on its website. The branch has tried to mediate, but the boycott remains in place.

James Garrett, chair of Bristol NUJ branch says: "Whether it was a staff journalist or a LDR was immaterial – if it was a reasonable question, they should be able to ask it as much as anyone else."

"Bristol has some of the best local news outlets in the country from the Bristol Cable to The Bristol Post, Bristol 24/7, Ujima Radio as well as BBC and ITV."

### Max Walsh, ITV reporter

"It's a vibrant city with a strong counterculture and independent spirit. It's also a thriving city from a journalism point of view."

### Martin Booth, editor Bristol 24/7

"I love the fact that I can work in the city centre during the week but can easily get out to lovely countryside and the beaches of South Devon at the weekend. We also have a rather cool bridge."

### Sarah McPherson, features editor, BBC Wildlife Magazine

A concern at the Bristol Post and Western Daily Press is the introduction of page view targets. One reporter said their target was 850,000 views per month which they expected to rise; others had targets of 1.2 million. The chapel is opposing targets amid fears they could become a condition of employment.

SWNS (South West News Service) also has an office in Bristol. In terms of magazines, the biggest employer is Our Media (previously Immediate Media) which produces titles such as BBC History Magazine, BBC Wildlife Magazine, Cycling Plus, Gardens Illustrated and Homes & Antiques.

"We're a large, growing company with lots of opportunities, particularly in the digital sphere," says Sarah McPherson, features editor of BBC Wildlife Magazine.

"As well as good writers, we always need good freelance sub-editors, designers etc." She advises getting digital skills and tailoring pitches.

Other independent titles include The Bristol Magazine, Circus Journal, Rife and the Local Voice Network – free magazines covering communities.

Freelance journalist Linda Geddes works part time as a science correspondent for The Guardian; she moved to Bristol from London in 2014. "It was a mixture of wanting to get out of London and be closer to family and have a bigger house and greener environment for our kids," she says. She also likes the fact the Brecon Beacons, South Wales beaches, Devon, Cornwall and the Forest of Dean are on the doorstep.

She commutes into London once a fortnight and found work through the pandemic writing for the government's coronavirus website and working for vaccine alliance Gavi.

With a buzzing food and entertainment scene, galleries, museums, a floating harbour and even an inland surfing experience, there is enough to keep you occupied between deadlines and demos. Just don't moan about the graffiti.



# Solidarity on your doorstep

**Andrew Draper** looks at the support that trades councils can offer NUJ branches



our branch might not be affiliated to a trades union council – maybe you’ve never considered it. But joining with members of other unions to consider common causes and issues can strengthen your activities.

When I was a young reporter on the Slough, Eton & Windsor Express in the 1980s, we went on strike for better pay. We stayed out for several weeks. Our eventual victory was boosted by gaining the support of other unions through the local trades union council (also known as trades council).

I was invited to address the trades council, a body I knew little about. I was warmly welcomed and those at the meeting listened as I outlined our grievances over pay, which was pretty dire for a junior reporter. Sound advice and pledges of support were given to our chapel.

Before we knew it, colleagues from other unions joined our daily picket, and this solidarity gave us a real lift. Labour councillors also came along to support us and they boycotted the two strikebreaking reporters who helped produce a very thin newspaper, refusing to give them quotes for stories.

It is this sense of solidarity and sharing a common purpose among unions in their area that makes trades councils special.

I’ve represented Cardiff & South East Wales NUJ branch on Cardiff trades council for a few years. When Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) trades union council was formed last year, I became the branch’s elected delegate to that body too.

Katrine Williams has been president of Cardiff trades council for around 20 years. She says: “I think it’s clear why trades union councils are so important... In part it’s making sure there are structures in place so that individual trades unions from different places can get together and see what we can do to improve things. That’s highly valuable, with events, issues and campaigns, as well as solidarity with any strike action.”

The monthly agenda invariably contains an item on disputes. Recent disputes in the Cardiff area have involved bus drivers striking for higher pay, skilled electricians campaigning against being replaced by less skilled and cheaper electrical workers as well as teachers in a private school striking against cuts to their pensions.

Over the summer, there was strong support for the RMT strikes for higher pay and against erosion of terms and



**It’s given us opportunities to be visible. The NUJ hasn’t been so visible to the wider trade union movement or the wider public**



conditions. Campaigns against racism, austerity and in support of the NHS and environmental actions also feature regularly.

One of Williams’s proudest achievements was to get the May Day march and rally going again after the pandemic. A few years ago, a Cardiff and SE Wales branch NUJ member provided professional filming services at the event, which sharpened the council’s image.

“We should be hearing the NUJ as well,” says Williams. “It would be brilliant to hear NUJ members talk about issues they’re facing... It’s a sector we would want more involvement with. How can we influence the media and support the NUJ members to have louder voices?”

The political make-up of trades councils varies but, as they draw on grassroots activists, they tend to have





a reputation for being more left wing than the upper echelons of the TUC. In Cardiff, there is a sprinkling of members of the Socialist Party, the Greens and Labour. In RCT, Labour dominates and RCT trades union council was set up with the support of Cynon Valley's Labour MP, Beth Winter.

However, party politics do not feature much in either council – the focus is keenly on workplace issues.

Jason Richards, RCT trades union council secretary and convenor and Communication Workers' Union official, says they are steadily building and adding unions – most recently the Fire Brigades Union. "It's growing every month," he says.

RCT trades union council has prioritised getting speakers to its meetings. Due next was Jeremy Miles, education minister in the Welsh Government. "He's a priority from the discussions around teaching trade unionism on the curriculum. Trade unionism is part of our history," Jason says.

The Welsh Government is developing a project with the Wales TUC to teach school leavers about trade unions as they prepare for work. "It's been agreed and will be based on what they do in Scotland," says Jason. "The Scottish TUC got agreement with the government there to roll it out into schools."

Natasha Hirst, NUJ vice-president and vice-chair of Cardiff & SE Wales branch, says some NUJ branches are reluctant to affiliate.

"I think they probably focus their perceptions on protests and rallies and do not really understand what trades councils are and what they do."

Being affiliated to two trades councils has meant issues have come to the branch's attention that may otherwise have been missed, she adds. "We've had the opportunity to go on demos and get blown

## Trades councils in a nutshell

- There are about 150 trades councils in England and Wales, and some 25 county associations. They are represented nationally by the TUC Joint Consultative Committee. Trades councils in Scotland and Ireland have links with the TUC and their own national TUCs.
- They are organised locally and draw delegates from affiliated unions.
- Activities and campaigns include issues such as defending the NHS, tackling Covid in the workplace, pensions and retirement age.
- Trades councils can be called upon by any local union for dispute solidarity, on a picket line or with media publicity.
- NUJ branches can affiliate to their trades union council for a small annual fee per member, usually 10p-25p.
- There's an annual conference of trades union councils. Jason Richards says: "Trades councils can democratically shape the policy of the TUC by engaging with conferences, where we can introduce and vote on motions. When a motion is passed, it becomes the policy of the TUC."

### Help in practice

Issues brought to the trades union councils from Cardiff &

South East Wales NUJ include:

- Difficulties in of organising chapels in news outlets where there is a high turnover of staff who are mostly young and low paid
- Problems while working from home during the pandemic, such as inadequate working space
- Reach plc deciding to close newsrooms to save money, with many journalists forced to work from home
- The NUJ's news recovery plan. Richards says: "Should journalists in SE Wales enter into dispute, I know we could quickly and readily call on our colleagues in other unions for support. They would not be on their own, thanks to trade union solidarity and the trades union councils."

away with the banner! But it's given us opportunities to be visible. Because, certainly in Wales, the NUJ hasn't been so visible to the wider trade union movement or the wider public.

"The other thing that's really important from my perspective is when I've had the opportunity to speak at rallies, to represent our members who, we must remember, are also workers."

Also, negative rhetoric about the media can be countered. "When people are angry, for example, at how the RMT strikes are framed in the media, that needs to be directed at those setting the editorial line, not the journalists who write the way they have been told to write, or lose their jobs."

She has addressed trades council rallies in Cardiff and emphasised that journalists are workers too. "And when one of our own is killed in the line of duty, we organise once the tears dry," she once said, referring to reporter Lyra McKee, who was shot dead by paramilitaries in Londonderry in 2019.

At a rally in support of the RMT strike, Hirst told the crowd that most journalists are decent people. "Those with the wealth and power to create change for the better choose not to. That's where the problem lies, not with our members who are doing their best under a huge amount of pressure," she said. And the NUJ banner was the biggest one present.

So why affiliate? "It's an opportunity to represent members and raise awareness across the trade union movement and help change negative perceptions about the media. And there will be times when we need solidarity when our members have disputes or come under pressure from management," says Hirst.

Richards adds: "To the NUJ I would say 'together we are stronger'. We can work together on different campaigns to support each other. It's about networking, coming together and facing common tasks together. And having a positive impact in cases – that's the ultimate goal."

# Next in line for

Journalists are writing about the cost of living crisis and, more and more, that reporting is coming from bitter experience, reports **Reginald Haque**

**L**ast September, the Mirror splashed with: 'A perfect storm: cost of living crisis to hit Britain for two years.' Since then, we've faced two devastating hikes to the energy price cap. There have been a lot of promises to tackle it.

In May, the Express plastered a line from then PM Boris Johnson on its front page: "I'll fire up [the] economy to beat the cost of living crisis". We all know how that ended.

Both of those editions were drafted by journalists who had at the time been offered a pay rise of just three per cent, while inflation was running closer to 10. Others have it much worse, but few firms have the pay disparities of Reach. In what has become a widely shared but no less maddening fact, Reach chief executive Jim Mullen took home £4 million – enough to cover a national pay rise for every hack.

Emma Black (not her real name), who works at a national magazine, tells me the irony applies beyond just the biggest publishers.

"I wrote a piece explaining inflation and the healthy pay rises people were asking for. The day before, we got an email telling us we'd be getting a pay rise of only three per cent. You feel like the people who run your organisation don't read what you're writing."

A few journalists accept the idea of a long-suffering journo – with it, the expectation of long hours and low pay.

"Some would say we don't do it for the money. But we need to pay the bills," Black says. She's one of many grappling with the guilty thought: "We're doing what we love and, anyway, don't others have it worse?"

Like me, she's had to turn to moonlighting on her days off to pay the bills. Others I know have stopped paying into their pension pots. "I know pensions are important, but I need the money now," one colleague tells me.

An NUJ survey earlier this year revealed a quiet crisis in Britain's loudest industry.

Some 58 per cent of members who responded had no pay rise in the first year of the pandemic. The majority – 53 per cent – said they weren't earning enough to save. And, more worrying still, more than a quarter (28 per cent) said their earnings were not enough to cover their cost of living. They aren't running to keep still – they are running and going backwards, with 80 per cent saying their earnings had not kept pace with inflation.

Jenny Green (also not her real name) is a 34-year-old journalist working in the north west of England. She and her husband both work full time and have a four-year-old and a

newborn baby. The couple were managing financially until Green took extended maternity leave because their baby was experiencing health issues. Then their bills surged with the lifting of the energy price cap.

They used up their overdraft. Then they took out a small loan to help get by. That led to another. Even though she has now returned to work, with costs rising further, there is little hope of the couple paying off their debts and a greater chance of them falling behind again.

Things seem even tougher for those at the beginning of their careers. The starting salaries are, well, startling. Newsquest trainees earn £20,000 – while 'senior', qualified journalists get £25,000. Following the recent strike across all Reach publications, the lowest-paid journalists have secured solid pay increases. Qualified entry level Reach journalists earn £23,500 outside London and £27,000 in London. Senior journalists there get £30,000 and £33,500 in London, according to NUJ reps. The average rent for one room in London is now £815 per month, according to SpareRoom. It doesn't leave a great deal to play with.

## Costs make it hard to start out

As the founder of PressPad – a free accommodation platform for journalists doing internships – Olivia Crellin forecasts more obstacles in front of budding reporters on their road to a career.

She's worried that the cost of living crisis will kill off young people's hopes of starting a career in the industry.

"It will probably further discourage those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds from going into the profession.

"Look at what they've been through over the past 10-15 years – it's one thing after another," she comments.

Doing a month-long minimum wage internship is no longer feasible in the capital, changing how young hacks are starting out.

"A lot of people are skipping the internship phase and going into freelancing," she says.

"That has pros and cons. It skips some of the rigorous training you get from being in a newsroom.

"A lot of freelance work has never been designed as

an entry point to longer-term contracts. They may be doing journalism – but is it heading towards a career?"

In July, Manchester Evening News trainee Kit Vickery was appointed as a cost-of-living reporter for the paper.

"I can't avoid the price increases at all. When the new [energy] cap comes in, everything will get more expensive again. It adds a lot of worry. I'm not able to find some respite in work – I'm being paid to think about it," she tells me.

As much as Vickery loves journalism, that combination of low pay and writing about poverty "affects how you concentrate", she says: "It's not good for your mental health at all."





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# My successful crown duel

So, after the Queen had gone, I went over to Routledge, thinking

Although I'd got a great exclusive, I knew how it would cause panic in the BBC. Luckily, the fearless Kate Adie had also been covering the visit and was in a TV truck preparing for the 12.30 TV news. So, as further

|||||

"I offered the view that perhaps it wasn't about one man: knowing the miners, having been brought up among them, I thought that one man couldn't bring out 100,000 men for a whole year. There was a pregnant pause, and the royal party moved on. The exchange had taken 30 seconds at most."

[illegible][illegible]

**The royal family hold immense power in the UK, but journalists cannot ask questions of them**



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# Friends, foes or facilitators?

**Neil Merrick** looks at the sometimes tricky relationship between journalists and PRs

**N**ot everyone gets along well with journalists. Among those who must, if necessarily through gritted teeth, are PR professionals. It's not always that bad, of course. The relationship between journalism and PR may flourish and result in stories or publicity that benefits both parties.

But how do PR professionals see journalists and what are the best ways of working so that neither feels short changed?

The bottom line, says Lisa Astle, director of communications at Orbit Housing Group, is that the two professions must at the very least get along.

Astle, who previously spent 25 years at a PR agency, says it is vital that people in public relations understand what constitutes news.

"As long as you have mutual respect and recognise what is of interest to journalists, it's a symbiotic relationship," she says.

Things tend to get fractious when comms teams overdo the marketing and bombard journalists with press releases. On the other hand, journalists generally leap at the right sort of exclusive and may give organisations the exposure they are seeking.

"A relationship works well where you have a really good story so create magic together," says Astle.

Phil Harris, strategic communications manager at East Suffolk Council, recalls his first job as PR officer at a private firm where his boss saw working with journalists as an adversarial exercise.

"It was a competition between us and the journalist, and we normally ended up getting bad stories," he recalls.

Since moving to local government, Harris looks at reporters very differently and tries to work with them constructively.

"We never take the view that journalists deliberately write stories that are negative," he explains. "But if they don't like the organisation or PR team, they're less inclined to give you the best hearing."

Where PR officers deal with the same journalists on a regular basis, it can result in a close and even trusting relationship. But comms teams must also be prepared for calls out of the blue from reporters who are dealing with the organisation for the first time.

**71%**

**of journalists say PRs need to understand the difference between advertorial and editorial content**

In local government, things may get heated when residents complain about a council service, generally on social media. In such cases, it can appear to PR departments that the story is already written and the council is only being approached for a comment as the final tick in the box.

"That can be frustrating," says Lyndsey Hannam, head of news at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. "There are always two sides to a story. We don't want to get into 'he said, she said'. The best thing that a journalist can do is to give us a ring and have a conversation."

In London, it can be harder for council PR staff to develop a close relationship with local journalists than in other parts of the country. A local story can quickly become a national one, with serious repercussions for the council.

At the same time, says Hannam, she respects the fact journalists are inquisitive and need to ensure those in power are held responsible for the actions.

"We want to be held to account. That's what local democracy is about," she says. "People say we handle media enquiries. I dislike that term. We work with journalists to





ensure their reporting is accurate and we answer their questions honestly.”

Rebecca Williams, director at agency WPR, says building relations with a journalist involves playing a long game.

“Inevitably, journalists are wary of PR agencies if they get thousands of emails from them,” she says. “The challenge is to prove that you’re better than the rest and there is a reason a journalist should trust you.”

Williams sees her role as stimulating interest in a story or product, then providing information or samples before making her clients available for interview. Ultimately, it is up to the journalist to put their slant on the story or review, she says.

In regional journalism, the declining number of journalists can mean it is sometimes left to PR agencies to write copy. “They are more in need of PR people to fill papers – but it has to be of the right quality,” adds Williams.

One comms officer at a local council admits it is secretly every PR professional’s dream to see their press release reproduced in full by a news organisation. On the other hand, this can mean no journalist got around to checking facts or looking for a better angle.

The same officer recalls how, when his local authority failed badly, the local paper ran with the angle flagged up in the council press release and so gave the story a more positive slant. “We felt that we had got away with it,” he says.

Another major problem is that journalists and PR professionals do not necessarily appreciate the pressure each side is under, whether this is to file a story on time or to meet the internal demands of an employer.

“It’s likely that the journalist is in a more stressful position than the PR person,” admits Harris.

In local government, comms teams may need to explain to their councillors and officers why the media is taking a particular approach.

“Journalists are not there to do our bidding,” adds Harris.

“When there are negative stories, we do our very best to explain ourselves as openly as we can. Journalists are not stupid.”

## Pitch perfect

**HOW** are PR professionals advised to best pitch ideas to journalists?

A survey carried out for GingerComms, an agency specialising in brand stories, found that 35% of journalists wish PR professionals would realise how busy they are and pitch their ideas accordingly.

Almost one in five journalists (18 per cent) told the agency that one of the biggest mistakes PR professionals make is wanting to chat about something they are working on rather than waiting until it is ready.

The survey, covering 200 national journalists and

editors, found the average news journalist receives 63 pitches every day, of which fewer than a quarter contain anything of interest.

The media landscape has changed much, so PRs should use email rather than telephone to pitch to journalists.

“We do everything by email,” says Ellie Glason, director of GingerComms. “There are some agencies that hit the phones, but we have moved on from that.”

More than 70 per cent of those surveyed said PRs need to understand the difference between advertorial and editorial content when pitching ideas.

Other mistakes made by PRs include sending over branded press releases with no content of interest and chasing a journalist up to ask if a story idea will be used.

“We don’t expect to hear anything back and we never chase,” she adds.

However, Glason also stresses the value of face-to-face contact between PRs and journalists: “It’s in the interest of journalists to make a little time and give PRs some feedback and tell them how they work.”



# 35%

of journalists wish PR professionals would realise how busy they are

Journalists often complain that PR officers are too difficult to get hold of or fail to return phone calls. It is increasingly rare for councils and other public bodies to list phone numbers or individual email addresses for PR staff on their websites.

This is mainly to prevent non-journalists from calling press offices instead of general switchboards. “If we did that, we’d get complete \*\*\*\*\* members of the public calling us all the time,” comments one government press officer.

Journalists, of course, are not always sure which organisation they should contact for a particular story or query. At Kensington and Chelsea, the comms team has been asked for information about house prices in the borough, including where the most expensive homes are located.

This is when creative PR officers try to turn the situation to their advantage. “It gives us the opportunity to talk about what we are doing in social housing,” says Hannam.

Dealing with the trade press or specialist reporters who understand a topic generally makes life easier for PR staff. But at the same time, says Astle, comms teams must be prepared to explain complex issues, such as social housing or net-zero carbon, to reporters with less detailed knowledge.

If possible, she adds, a comms team should enjoy an open relationship with news organisations and set up interviews with senior people rather than keep them away from the media. “Our role is not to be a gatekeeper,” she adds.

Where a journalist comes at a story from a different angle, a PR professional needs to accept that the two sides have contrasting points of view.

“It’s very dangerous to take it personally,” she adds. “I’m representing my organisation. They’re representing their readers or audience. People [in PR] make a mistake by getting personally involved and feeling that a journalist is out to get them.”





The birth of radio news caused ructions with the press, reports **Jonathan Sale**

# TAKING TO THE AIRWAVES

**B**ritain's first radio news bulletin is lost in outer space. No recording of that first transmission from the British Broadcasting Company (as the Beeb was known before growing up to be a fully fledged corporation) exists on a typed sheet of paper, as a recording, or on iPlayer.

The signal from the transmitters on Tuesday November 14, 1922 reached a small but dedicated audience of radio 'hams' using primitive receiving equipment in the UK. It then headed off uninterrupted into the unknown.

Now, a century later, it will be zooming (but not Zooming) at the speed of sound to heavenly bodies 100 light years away. If you are an alien reading this on the planet known to astronomers as TOI 700 d, orbiting its star 600 trillion miles from us, please get in touch.

"Broadcasting in this country officially began yesterday," was how The Times on Wednesday November 15 1922 celebrated the event itself – briefly.

"News bulletins and weather reports were sent out from the London and Manchester stations," it reported – but the radio critic of the paper clearly had not heard them. For a start, there was no radio critic as there had never been any radio to criticise.

Fortunately, a reporter from the Daily News, a paper started by Charles Dickens and later swallowed by the News Chronicle and then the Daily Mail, did listen to the historic transmission on that Tuesday evening:

"Two budgets [sic] of news were sent out by wireless telephony - one at 6.00pm and the other at 9.00 p.m. The news came over in a clear voice."

Sensationalist it wasn't. "Mr Bonar Law [the prime minister] was announced as having made his final election speech at Glasgow, his policy being 'quietness and stability'." This

would have disappointed Glaswegians looking forward to an outbreak of noise and instability, and who would have been equally crestfallen to hear that "Mr Churchill was said to be none the worse for his rowdy meeting the previous night, and there would be no police court charges, said the wireless."

Again, there was no question of a vulgar news flash, nothing along the lines of 'Shaken Winnie survives attack by unknown assailants'.

The Daily News report goes on to mention 'the skeleton story of a train robbery' but gives no hint of whose skeleton it was or whether it was a train that was stolen, immediately going on to mention that "the sale of a Shakespearean first folio and the fog in London were other news items". Just in case this was too exciting, "This first budget of news concluded with the latest billiards scores" – a

sport for some reason missing from Radio 4 these days.

"It was read twice," explains Robert Seatter, the head of BBC History, "once at the normal speed, then slowly."

The pioneering newsreader was Arthur Burrows (pictured right), director of programmes, who asked listeners which speed they preferred. He was one of only four people in the entire company, along with its then general manager John (later Lord) Reith.

A yellowing typescript in the archives relates: "Two bulletins were broadcast each night, the news being telephoned through to the BBC from Reuters and taken down by Mrs Esmond on a typewriter."

But, before Mrs Esmond's flying fingers could take their place in broadcasting history, a conference held less than three weeks in advance

## Delicate device that brought the mews

**A CAT'S** whisker detector – so called because of the thin copper wire used for tuning – was indeed the cat's whiskers.

This entry-level set would allow a radio geek to pick up a signal within 10 miles of one of the transmitters.

On the evening a century ago when the first news bulletin

hit the airwaves, H Anthony Hankey, ex-fleet wireless officer of the China Squadron, was giving a lecture at the St Bride Institute off Fleet Street on the high-tech world ahead.

"If it was desired to entertain the family by means of a loud speaker [sic], it would be necessary to amplify the signal

with the aid of a couple of valves," marvelled a Times reporter.

Signals could be transmitted over distances as far as 100 miles, the lecturer said.

If you had no back garden over which to suspend an aerial, you might wind it around a lampshade ("It could be made to look quite neat").

Alternatively, it could be fixed to the door, which could be opened or closed so that it was pointing in the right

direction. Listeners might find themselves sitting in a draught while other members of the family yelled "Door!" – but at least they would get the seven o'clock news.

In the near future, continued the lecturer, there would be a choice of programmes even if they were transmitted at the same time: you could get "the 3.30 winner from London or a sermon from Plymouth".

That what you call spoilt for choice.



of the launch of the brand-new medium had to deal with a question being widely posed, then as now: who pays for the news?

Without actual programmes for listeners, the newfangled wireless would be stuck in the niche market of big boys fiddling with small pieces of wire.

While radio waves could cross the galaxy, BBC broadcasters had to get their topical material entirely from the hunters and gatherers of news working around the corner in Fleet Street.

In the words of the above-mentioned yellowing typescript, "News agencies and proprietors became anxious that the Company would want to put out bulletins and information without making any payment."

There existed what Seatter describes as "a huge clash between the press and broadcasting", the former being concerned that the upstart radio service would ruin their news market.

To resolve this, at the eleventh hour – or at least on November 11 – the BBC signed an agreement to share the proceeds of the licence fees with Reuters and three other key news agencies.

To avoid the early bulletin competing for the attention of the readership of the evening newspapers, it would not go out until 7pm. In return, the agencies would provide a daily summary of the world's news for the two half-hour bulletins.

Furthermore, the BBC agreed it "must not provide such items itself" and, instead, would act as a channel for what the newsgatherers of the press gathered up for it.

This straitjacket was made even straiter by a 'supplementary agreement' in mid-January, described as "very irksome, debarring the BBC from anything which could possibly be called news".

There were grey areas about what could and what could not be regarded as having news value – and thus the sole preserve of the papers. An example was 'outside broadcasts of important dinners'. You weren't to know in advance if these were 'important' and thus forbidden territory or unimportant and thus up for grabs by the men with



the microphones.

Then there was sport. The BBC suggested to the agencies that it could provide a running commentary on the first half – and only the first half – of a rugby match, thus encouraging listeners to whip out and buy a paper to see who won. The agencies thought this idea to be a bit half-baked.

The second idea that the Beeb floated was 'a coded narrative of the Boat Race from a launch, the key to the code being published exclusively in the early editions of the evening newspapers'.

The immediate snag was that if a commentator said that Oxford was ahead, you didn't have to break the code to work out who was behind. The third idea was... well, to cut a long debate short, these proposals bit the dust.

A sensible compromise was agreed in 1927 that the "BBC could broadcast at any time 104 eyewitness descriptions per annum", plus "after 6.30 pm, 156 descriptions of events, whether by eye-witness or not, per annum".

It is no wonder that the BBC has developed Olympic standards in creating bureaucracy and, if necessary, getting around it.

What had helped throw off some of the shackles was the general strike in the previous year, during which no newspapers were published at all, apart from a government rag that resembled a British Pravda. The Beeb thus had the field to itself as far as eye-witness accounts were concerned and could create a lifeline of information.

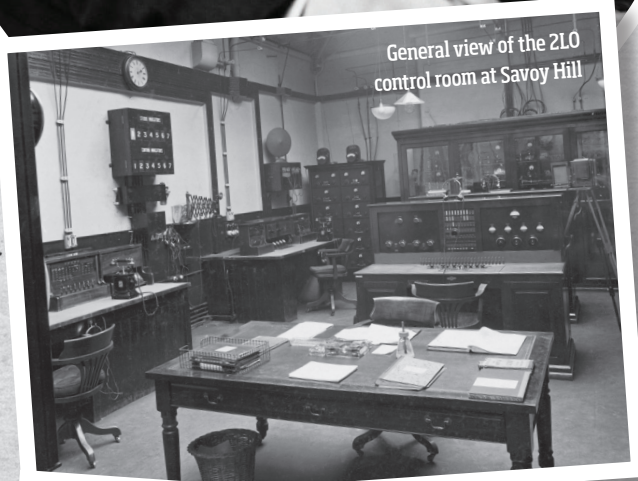
Radio news certainly had to fight its corner at the beginning.

"As with every new invention, there was the fear of change," says Seatter. "It was like the early days of the internet."

"The press feared that no one would buy their newsprint. When television came along, theatres and cinemas feared for their viability too. And, later, the internet would challenge the nature of broadcasting itself."

"The passion for radio quickly spread to a wider public, becoming the passion of the age."

And, let's hope, of ages yet to come, both here and – who knows? – many light years away.





# arts

by **Tim Lezard**

## Film > The Lost King

Based on a life-affirming true story and starring Sally Hawkins and Steve Coogan, Stephen Frears' comedy tells of amateur historian Philippa Langley's search for the remains of King Richard III, and how she defies the stodgy academic establishment. Spoiler alert: she finds him under a Leicester car park. <https://tinyurl.com/kpsb56dn>

## Comedy > Aberdeen International Comedy Festival October 6-16

Jack Dee is one of the stars of this show. The rest of the line-up was to be confirmed at the time of going to press. <https://tinyurl.com/2p8v35mx>

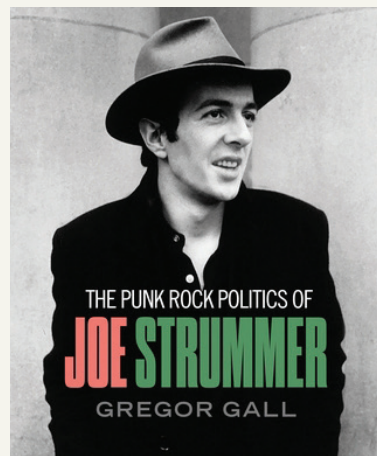


## Spontaneous Potter On tour in October

Nothing to do with Warner Bros, JK Rowling or her publishers, this merry troupe performs an entirely improvised comedy play based on an

audience suggestion of a fanfiction title. Wizard! <https://tinyurl.com/2p8ua868>

**Sigmund Troy'd**  
*On tour in October and November*  
Charmer, cad and Greeters' Guild president Troy Hawke confronts the 21st century as if waking from a 1930s time capsule. The creation of comedian Milo McCabe, he battles an enemy on behalf of people everywhere: the bastard saboteur that lurks in our own minds. <https://tinyurl.com/ypa6ty8s>



**Books >**  
**The Punk Rock Politics of Joe Strummer – Radicalism, Resistance and Rebellion**  
*Gregor Gall*

## Manchester University Press

This book by the editor of the Scottish Left Review examines the Clash frontperson's beliefs on issues including socialism, alienation, exploitation and multiculturalism, drawing on his lyrics and interviews with those he inspired (ahem, including yours truly). <https://tinyurl.com/3jcbpx7e>

## Frances Brown Literary Festival Ballybofey–Stranorlar, Co Donegal, Ireland October 13-16

This relatively new annual event celebrates the life and legacy of the Blind Poetess of Ulster. The organisers say their vision is to create an event where literature, language and landscape converge to create moments to share stories, connect minds and allow magic to blossom, which is good enough for me. <https://tinyurl.com/e9ey7yet>

## The Last Colony – a Tale of Exile, Justice and Britain's Colonial Legacy Philippe Sands W&N

Taking the reader on a disturbing journey across international law, Sands illuminates the continuing horrors of colonial rule, the devastating impact of Britain's racist grip on its last colony in Africa and the struggle for justice in the face of a crime against humanity. Cheery, then. <https://tinyurl.com/yeyrja33>

## Theatre > Good Harold Pinter Theatre, London October 6-December 24

Described as the definitive piece about the Holocaust in English-speaking theatre when it was written

in 1982, this new version stars David Tennant as the 'good' man, Professor John Halder, as he rationalises Nazism and embraces the final solution. <https://tinyurl.com/5n6nmu4z>



## Eureka Day Old Vic, London Until October 31

Helen Hunt stars as Suzanne in the European premiere of Jonathan Spector's thought-provoking 2018 satire about a community split over vaccination. Covid, anyone? <https://tinyurl.com/59k3kcjk>

## Music > Frank Turner & The Sleeping Souls On tour in October

"The more I practice, the luckier I get," golfer Jerry Barber once said. Former Million Dead frontman Frank Turner could easily add: "The more gigs I play, the more popular I become." When it comes to hard work, Turner's earned his success. He's back on the road in the autumn, playing medium-sized venues with his band. <https://tinyurl.com/ym7mfba>

## Pop Will Eat Itself On tour in October

One of Stourbridge's star trio of bands (The Wonder Stuff and Ned's Atomic Dustbin are the others), PWEI are touring their sample-driven indie and industrial rock. Relive your youth by singing along to Get the Girl! Kill the Baddies! <https://tinyurl.com/yu4a3n47>

## Spotlight > It's goodbye from me

After six years, this month the curtain falls on my Arts contributions as I begin a full-time job.

I hope you've enjoyed reading as much as I've enjoyed writing this, and I hope you've tried something

different as a result of my recommendations.

Exploring the arts world is a journey. You may not like where you end up, but having arrived, you'll know to try a different route next time.

Thank you to the editor, Christine Buckley, for allowing me to relive the fun and freedom of my early career – to resurrect my 15 fame-filled minutes of a fanzine writer.

Thank you to the designer, David Woods, for making my words look so attractive on the page.

And thank you to

everyone who works in the creative industries. Yes, you contribute significantly to the economy, but more importantly, you inspire us, bring us together, teach us about ourselves and make our lives better.

And so, it's goodbye as I lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies.





WAYS  
TO  
SAVE!

# TechDownload

Chris Merriman on technology for journalists

## byte size...

### MONEY BACK FROM LOST ACCOUNTS

It sounds like a dream – discovering you have a huge pot of money you didn't know about. That's where Gretel comes in. Feed it your old addresses, and it searches banks and pension funds for orphaned accounts. Your data is confidential and, if it finds anything, the bank pays Gretel. It's free to users. It didn't find anything for me – but you might be lucky, so it's worth a shot.

[www.gretel.co.uk](http://www.gretel.co.uk)

### SAVE ON TV AND FILM STREAMING

Streaming services can add up, and there are some cheaper alternatives. Plex offers hundreds of free TV channels and mostly second-tier movies on demand, as well as access to your own music and video files. For documentary fans, Curiosity Stream offers a full year of high-quality factual programmes on demand for \$20/year in HD and charges \$69/year for 4K streams.

[www.plex.tv](http://www.plex.tv)

[www.curiositystream.com](http://www.curiositystream.com)

### ASK ME ABOUT TECH HOME SAVINGS

My final offering this month is – me! I've been working with gadgets and home automation for a decade now and have loads of practical ideas for ways to make your home smarter – and that means cheaper. If you have a question about making your tech life cheaper, I'm available via Twitter and would love to help. This column returns to normal next issue when, terrifyingly, we'll be talking about Christmas gifts.

[@christhedj](https://twitter.com/christhedj)

## THE MONEY ISSUE

**W**e're doing things a little differently this month. There can't be many of us who aren't feeling the weight of rising costs, and I, for one, have been looking for things that I can switch off permanently to save money – which for a technology writer is a big deal!

So, this time we're looking at saving money using tech. Some of these items are 'speculate to accumulate', while you can implement others right now.

If I were to suggest a starting point, it would always be automating your heating. I've been using Tado smart heating for several years and it paid for itself in the first year. It automatically reacts to the outdoor temperature, air quality and more complex variables



to save money – for example by automatically turning off a radiator near an open window.

I've also switched to an air fryer, which is estimated to take half the energy to roast a chicken than a conventional fan oven. It paid for itself in a few weeks.

Before we move on to the gadgets, remember that if you join the ALCS ([alcs.co.uk](http://alcs.co.uk)), it will collect royalties on work you've done. Also, the NUJ has a charity to help journalists who have fallen on hard times.

[www.tado.com](http://www.tado.com)

## > Chargers to save cash and electricity

**S**urely it doesn't matter what charger you use?

Actually, it can do. Newer GaN (gallium nitride) filled chargers such as the Anker 737 do just

that, despite being smaller than the old-style boxes.

Most chargers waste a lot of electricity during transfer to the device. GaN chargers work out the right amount of power

to send to the cable, and drop up to 21% less energy.

The Anker GaN Prime 737 can charge two laptops and a phone at the same time at the right amperage and wattage.

At £89, it's top of the range and a bit of an investment – search for 'GaN charger' to find one that suits you. These are worth considering – one big charger will cost less than running one for each gadget.

<https://tinyurl.com/yc7crt47>

### Got a smart meter?

There are now several apps that will give you more meaningful information on demand than the little display provided by your energy company. Loop can help you track down appliances that are using too much power, run simulations on how much you would save using solar panels and give tips on how to optimise your usage. Greenely is aimed specifically at reducing your carbon footprint, but can compare your use to that in similar-sized homes and, in the future, will offer its own energy deals and integration with your smart home. <https://loop.homes> <https://greenely.com/en/>

STAY  
IN THE  
LOOP

## Home security for a one-off cost

**O**ne of the first casualties of my big switch-off was the security cameras. This was because most brands charge a monthly fee for anything but a basic service.

Eufy's security products, which include indoor and outdoor cameras, floodlights, doorbells, alarm systems and sensors, offer a complete service without using the cloud. This means no monthly fees and the products have the features of more expensive options.

I've replaced my products with equivalent devices from Eufy and, apart from the initial outlay, there's nothing more to pay. They are battery powered or you can add solar panels.

Eufy are regularly in flash sales on Amazon – prices for a starter kit of two cameras and a hub are around £229 on sale, with the doorbell kit costing around the same. An alarm starter kit with sensors and a siren will cost £159. Then you can add items bit by bit.

[uk.eufy.com](http://uk.eufy.com)





# Your Say...

inviting letters, comments, tweets



Please keep  
comments to  
350 words  
maximum

Email to:  
journalist@nuj.org.uk  
Post to:  
The Journalist  
72 Acton Street,  
London WC1X 9NB  
Tweet to:  
@mschrisbuckley

DENIS CARRIER



## Precious or infuriating: when a story walks in

I'm writing a book about local journalism (working title: There's Someone In Reception) and I'd like to appeal to your readers to contribute. The book is primarily about 'walk-ins' – those precious (or infuriating) moments when members of the public wander into reception with a story to tell. Or, perhaps more often, with no story but a desire to speak anyway.

I would be pleased to hear from anyone who has worked in local news and can remember great stories or bizarre experiences that began with a walk-in. I'm also working on chapters about going out on the patch, vox pops, death knocks and stories found online.

I have worked as a local news reporter and news editor myself, and the aim of the book isn't to mock local journalism – it's to celebrate the weird and wonderful things that happen, and show non-journalists why so many of us love(d) it so much. The stories gathered so far range in time from the 1950s to the present, and any good tale is allowed.

I can be contacted via email at alex.morrison@hotmail.co.uk or on Twitter @alexmorrison81. If I could afford an office, I'd be open for walk-ins.

Alex Morrison

## A 28 per cent pay rise - but still a struggle

Rising inflation, rising interest rates, rising prices, rising strike threats, rising wage claims? Have I been here before? I have.

In a recent loft clear-out, some minutes dating back nearly 50 years from a meeting of the Slough Evening Mail's chapel officers and the paper's management were rediscovered.

The 1974 meeting, held in 'a generally gloomy economic scene', was to negotiate a house agreement.

The editor began by pointing out that "Evening Mail salaries had already risen 28.25 per cent since November '73". He added that "the current NUJ pay claim being considered by the Newspaper Society was the biggest ever received by the Society from any union".

The newspaper's management negotiating team offered an immediate 10 per cent all-round increase, subject to the other clauses in the house agreement being agreed by both sides.

Sadly, this is the only set of minutes to have survived in the loft, so I can't report on the outcome and how much our wages did go up.

Blimey, it sounds as if we were going to be rolling in cash back then. We weren't.

This was the 1970s. A time of generous pay rises but also a time of vertiginous price rises and living costs. 1974 saw inflation up to 17 per cent, the next year it was 25 per cent and, in 1976, back to 16 per cent. It wasn't until the end of the decade that annual inflation figures were to return regularly to single figures.

So, to misquote Harold Wilson from an earlier financial crisis, the pound in our pockets did shrink – and quickly.

Surely, politicians with both long memories and the ability to learn from history won't let us go back to the seventies. Or will they? Erm, I don't think I'll put a quid on it. Oh, and that 1974 pound? It's now worth 11p.

Jeff Wright  
Life Member, Hampshire

## The magazine unites us - especially in print

The arrival of The Journalist is always a pleasure.

It conveys the sense of being part of a professional community, which is well underlined in the August-September edition, with its wide range of news, opinion, comment and first-hand reportage.

From the moment of opening the envelope, it was evident there was a lot in this edition – news, informative articles, opinion/comment.

For me, a long-time Irish journalist, chapel/branch officer in my time, Irish area council member, leading NUJ campaigns, The Journalist is a pleasure to read.

There are those who prefer the digital world and digital world.

I work in print, digital and broadcast, as do many journalists in today's media industry and world.

There remains a uniqueness in printed words – more aesthetically appealing, more memorable. It's easy to remember where and when you saw 'something in the paper, in the magazine' and refer to it as opposed to swiping left/to/right or up/down.

The varied facets of journalism, production, usage, appearance and circulation are valuable and essential in a free, democratic world.

The Journalist in all its forms is part of that. It is an essential part of the NUJ.

So is print.

I look forward to many more editions of our printed magazine arriving in the post.

Tom MacSweeney,  
Cork, Ireland

## Journalists for Extinction Rebellion: a new group

I'm a long-term NUJ member, and an active supporter of Extinction Rebellion, as I feel we all have to do something to slow down climate change before it's too late.

Most of the media coverage of XR events is negative as it is dictated by the owner's editorial line. However, there are journalists who support what XR are doing or stand for but cannot get positive stories into their media.

I'd like to set up a Journalists for Extinction Rebellion Group. This would be a way of offering support – and suggestions – to journalists who would like to give XR and its activities positive coverage but cannot for a whole number of reasons.



It would also be a way for experienced journalists to be in touch with XR, as they always need extra help and support with their media operation.

If you're interested in knowing more or getting involved, please contact me at [xrjournalists@gmail.com](mailto:xrjournalists@gmail.com).

**Daphne Davies**

*London Freelance branch*

### Media collaborated with Johnson's evasive tactics

Raymond Snoddy highlights the malign role of the Daily Mail, the Daily Express and The Sun in supplying their readers with distorted coverage of Boris Johnson's disastrous time in government (Creating the monster and bringing it down, August/September).

One reason why they avoid comment by other journalists is that, apart from those who have to read the three papers professionally, I doubt that more than a handful of NUJ members read them for pleasure.

There is a further way in which all the newspapers have been culpable in sustaining Johnson's desired image and that is their continual coverage of him visiting schools, eating ice cream, driving tractors or any of the many other

'photo opportunities' his office has used to avoid face-to-face interviews.

The few interviews he has undertaken, such as that recently with Beth Rigby of Sky News – and reported in most newspapers – have exposed his lack of grasp of any detail of government action.

If the media had collectively refused to go along with his evasive tactics, he would have had to take part in more interviews.

This collusion with the prime minister's office was particularly significant in the role of the broadcast media at the time of the last general election.

During election campaigns, the amount of time allocated to parties is strictly regulated. Consequently television media, given the refusal of Johnson to undertake difficult interviews, had to fill the Conservative allocation with the photo opportunities.

My view was that the television channels should have offered him interview time then refused to transmit the stunts in an attempt to drive him into the studios.

**Michael Meadowcroft**  
*Leeds and West Yorkshire Branch*

### Ballad of bugging told Spycatcher saga in song

Jonathan Sale's piece summed up the Spycatcher saga concisely and entertainingly.

Another concise and entertaining telling of the tale came out in Leon Rosselson's song, *Ballad of a Spycatcher*, which was written in 1987, published in the *New Statesman* then released as a single, sung by Rosselson himself with backing from Billy Bragg and the Oyster Band.

It was mostly banned by the BBC, but got some radio play, including on Radio 1, and reached number 7 in the NME indie singles charts.

I think Rosselson expected some official action to be taken against him, but that didn't happen; I understand he was a little disappointed about that. Here are two half-verses from the song.

'We bugged the Russian embassy, which wasn't very chic,

'So we bugged the French, the Chinese, the Egyptians and the Greek,

'Bugged Khrushchev's rooms in Claridge's and listened in with care,

'While K decided on his tie and how to part his hair.

'And what did it add up to, and what did it avail,

'All this bugging and burgling and intercepting mail?

'Did it save us from the Russians? Did it help to keep us free?

'Did it keep this country green and pleasant? Did it buggery!'

Many journalists would also enjoy the B side of the single, *Song of the Free Press*, about the way some of the tabloids operate.

**Sheila Miller**  
*London*

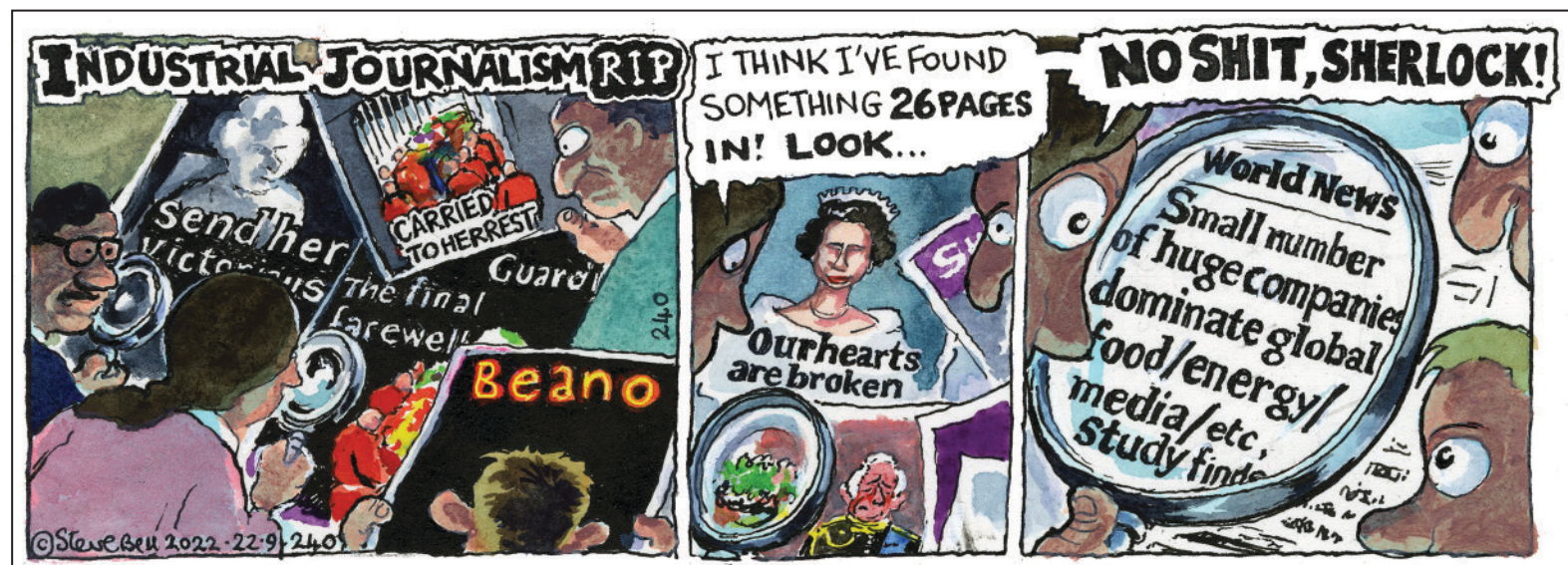
### If simple words baffle you, should you be a journalist?

If, as George Morris suggests (*Your Say*, August), baffled new NUJ members need "something more easily understood" because they find the father/mother of the chapel titles "confusing", then one does wonder whether they should really be thinking of embarking on a career in journalism.

**Mal Tattersall**  
*Life Member*

## STEVE BELL

## THE OWNERS





## Brian McGuire

A long-standing member of Edinburgh and District branch who has sadly died was loyal to the end – and beyond.

From his hospital bed, Brian McGuire requested that the notice of his passing in *The Scotsman* should include a name check for the NUJ as well as for individuals and organisations that had supported him during his last illness. Brian, 82, was a life member of the NUJ and still played his part in branch business after retiring.

When told he was had terminal cancer and only a short time to live, one of the early items on his bucket list was a get-together with close union colleagues. A small gathering in one of Edinburgh city centre's eateries could have been a mournful occasion but the laughs came thick and fast. Brian turned up with photos that could only be described as historical to go with a fund of stories.

Back in the day, Brian's 'old technology' tasks included fetching and carrying for the 'real' journalists and keeping the glue pots topped up for the cutting-and-pasting subs – all this in a haze of cigarette smoke and accompanied by the clatter of typewriters. That was the life of a copy boy on the old *Evening News*.

For Brian, who grew up with four brothers and sisters in two rooms at the top of a tenement with no running water, it proved to be the first step in a career that took in stints as a real journalist on the *Evening News* and the *Herald* before a switch to PR.

He was a highly respected press officer with the Scottish Office, where he was heavily involved in forging a twinning agreement between Edinburgh and Ukraine capital Kyiv.

His final seat was at the Church of Scotland, where he combined his deeply held faith with his PR talents. There were, of course, ups and downs and Brian always remained grateful to the NUJ for sorting out a dispute between him and the Kirk, very much in his favour.

He leaves behind his wife of 60 years, Frances, daughter Rhona, son Douglas and grandchildren in Scotland and Australia. Brian will be missed by his NUJ colleagues who would have liked to have heard more tall stories from a veteran journo.

**Brian Horne**



## Alan Knowles

Alan Knowles, made an NUJ member of honour in 1984, died on July 29 aged 94. His proudest achievement was to serve the union at local, regional and national levels over six decades.

He worked as a reporter at the *Bolton Evening News* from 1943 to 1959. He joined the BBC as a sub-editor at Alexandra Palace in May 1959 and returned to Bolton the next year as a regional journalist in the Manchester newsroom, where he worked until retirement in 1987. He was mentor to generations of young journalists.

He served as Bolton Branch secretary over 1950-59 and later as chair of the Manchester branch. He was father of the BBC Manchester chapel for over 20 years, four times chair of the Radio and Television Journalists' Council, a long-time member of the Broadcasting Industrial Council and twice a member of the National Executive Council. After retirement, he served as president of the NUJ superannuation fund and was the Manchester Branch welfare officer until 2004. I remember my mother buttoning up his coat as he went on his last picket line in Manchester, aged 80, in the rain.

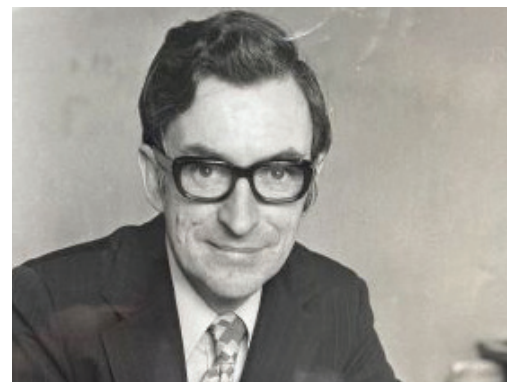
Born in Bolton in 1927, he spent his childhood mainly in lodgings after the death of his mother when he was just three. He won a scholarship to Bolton School, which he left at 16 to join the *Bolton Evening News*. He spent nearly three years in the army, serving in Berlin in 1946 and 1947 and using his school German when guarding prisoners of war.

In 1957, Alan won an English Speaking Union scholarship for three months to the United States, where he met actor James Cagney and presidential hopeful Hubert Humphrey. (He had been given a choice of interview between two Democrats – Humphrey and John F Kennedy.)

Alan and his wife Mary, who were married for nearly 60 years, left Bolton and moved to Islay in the southern Hebrides to be near their daughter Jean in 2009.

He died peacefully, of dementia, with Mary and Jean by his side. The funeral took place in Port Ellen, and Alan was buried with his NUJ lapel badge on his jacket.

**Peter Knowles**



## Teddy Quigley

Former secretary of the Derry North West Ireland branch Teddy Quigley has died in his 94th year. He spent his entire career with the Omagh-based *Ulster Herald*, serving as editor for 17 years before retiring in 1994.

He was noted as a mentor to young journalists, for attention to detail and for his fine style of writing. He was noted, too, for a weekly custom. Every Friday, he took the editorial staff for coffee, paying for it himself.

He was born in Omagh in May 1929, the fourth of five children. His father James was a baker and his mother Bernadette a homemaker. The Quigleys were a long-established Omagh family.

During World War Two, American and South African forces were stationed in the town, as were German prisoners of war. During the war, Teddy saw a flying boat crash, killing all 10 crew.

Aged 15, after attending Christian Brothers schools, he went to work in the *Ulster Herald* office. He soon became a photographer, learning by the seat of his pants, before moving on to reporting. As a young journalist, he was the first reporter on scene in 1950 when five railwaymen were killed in an accident at Omagh's train station.

Northern Ireland's Troubles dominated the last quarter century of his career. Political violence meant frequently dealing with tragedies.

The editorial line of the *Ulster Herald* was constitutional Nationalist. While keeping to that, he kept good relations with the town's other paper, which had a mainstream Unionist line.

Teddy was a man of energy. He used to cycle the 40-mile return journey to Strabane to see his future wife. On marriage, he moved there.

Teddy never learned either to write shorthand or to drive. He could, though, write fast and take an excellent note. On the rare occasions when a detailed record was needed, colleagues would help him out. His inability to drive didn't impede his covering sport. He simply organised a lift with whatever team was playing. And he could turn not driving to useful purpose – subbing copy while on the bus.

He is survived by his wife Cynthia, son Victor and grandchildren.

**Anton McCabe**



# When no news is definitely bad news



Television reporters abhor a vacuum, says **Chris Proctor**

**R**eporting the news is trying enough. But reporting the news when there isn't any is even worse.

Last month, gaggles of our fraternity stood in front of cameras inside and outside, above and beyond the Queen Elizabeth II Centre waiting to report the news of the day: the outcome of the Tory leadership contest.

They had been summoned to arrive before 11 o'clock for an announcement due at half twelve. Anchors back at base, having nothing to say themselves, tried to shift the onus onto the newsgatherers on the scene. What was happening? Any sign of white smoke? What had the 150,000 party members decided? It was a breathless, historic moment.

Except that it wasn't. Everyone knew the result. Paddy Power had told us the outcome two weeks beforehand. But, for a miserable 90 minutes, the unfortunates holding microphones were expected to come up with something. Anything. They grappled with vacuum, desperate for an angle.

What's the mood outside the centre? Have the candidates arrived yet? Has anyone in the Sunak camp been seen? Have any Truss supporters/family members/school friends/neighbours said anything? Any comment from an imaginary insider/uniformed doorman/innocent passer-by?

Desperation sets in. Are there any words to fill the 28-second gargantuan gulf before the arrival of the blessed adverts? Are there more pigeons in the square than usual?

And in the back of each of their minds is the knowledge that they are

the only people on the planet who are pretending not to know the outcome.

Their world is reduced to banality. 'She's expected to arrive by limousine.' No? Really? Not hopping into Parliament Square waving from a pogo-stick or galloping Lady Godiva style on Noble Yeats whose odds for the Grand National by the way were only slightly less than those for a Rishi victory.

My heart bled for these non-news reporters. But at least there were people in the background trying to look busy: there was some activity. It wasn't as bad as it was for the reporters stuck outside a Virginia courtroom after the result of the merry diversion from sanity known as the Johnny Depp-Amber Heard trial. The verdict was announced, the show was over and everyone had gone away except a brace of reporters working for 24-hour news channels, forlorn outside the open stable door.

How they must have yearned to tell the truth. To stare the camera right in the lens and say, 'Sod all is happening. The courtroom's empty; the antagonists have gone to Yorkshire or bed and the only noise is lawyers counting their money. The judge is now dealing with parking fines in Chesapeake. In news terms, this is Freda Bloggs for Sky News in the ruddy Gobi Desert.'

But 24-hour coverage doesn't cater for 'no news'. Schedules need to be filled with breathless anticipation. Viewers don't want to see someone yawning on a street corner; they want enthusiasm, verve, involvement. 'The atmosphere outside the court is electric,' the reporter announces,

hoping desperately there are no pan shots of an empty street.

'Any word about the Jack Sparrow situation?' Pause. 'Well, we seem to have lost the line from Virginia, but we'll be back, live, in front of the courthouse, just as soon as we can.'

Broadcast reporters outside sports games due to begin in eight hours' time can, with a nicely trimmed shot and a handful of fans, at least create an impression of excitement. Most people wearing a scarf can, it seems, be persuaded to crowd around, wave tin cans and shout loudly, so that our reporting chum can hardly be heard over the din. Everyone wants to be on the telly, apart from those having an unauthorised day off to see the match.

"Well, Angus, the people here in red want the red people to win and the ones wearing white are white supporters. There hasn't been such an enticing conflict since ... (loud shouts drown out the example) ... yes, it's all hotting up here!"

Camera operators have strict orders not to film any of the stadium forecourt, populated as it is by three crisp bags and a plastic bottle.

It's like those desperate times on the Today Programme when they are reduced to talking to Jack Straw, who most people under 50 think is something to do with the Peasants' Revolt.

The problem is that editors think if a story is big, it needs a lot of people working on it. One team is always condemned by the 'acne' formula that insists someone's on the spot. It's always a good idea – unless you are the person staring with gloom at the boom.

**//**  
**Desperation sets in. Are there any words to fill the 28-second gargantuan gulf before the blessed adverts? Are there more pigeons in the square than usual?**  
**//**

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