

# the **Journalist**

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## **AI needs a firm hand**

Bots struggle with media diversity



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**A**s 2021 draws to a close the coronavirus and its mutations continue to shape our lives and we can only hope that 2022 sees its influence wane.

Not only has it caused many thousands of deaths and untold misery, it has also changed our working lives immeasurably. Who would have thought two years ago that homeworking would become so prevalent and that offices would lose their importance? In this edition we report that the regional publisher Archant has followed Reach with a wide-ranging closure of offices and downsizing of the ones it has kept.

Our cover feature asks if AI in journalism is being successful in the drive to further diversity.

Fighting for local public interest journalism at a time when closures mean that local news is often produced miles from the places it concerns can be an uphill battle. We report on work in Wales to ensure that news comes from the communities it serves.

In a digital age, some experienced journalists can feel that their skills are not up to speed. Jenny Sims uses our Viewpoint column to urge the NUJ to do more training.

Wishing you a happy, prosperous and peaceful New Year.

Christie

**Christine Buckley**  
Editor

@mschrisbuckley

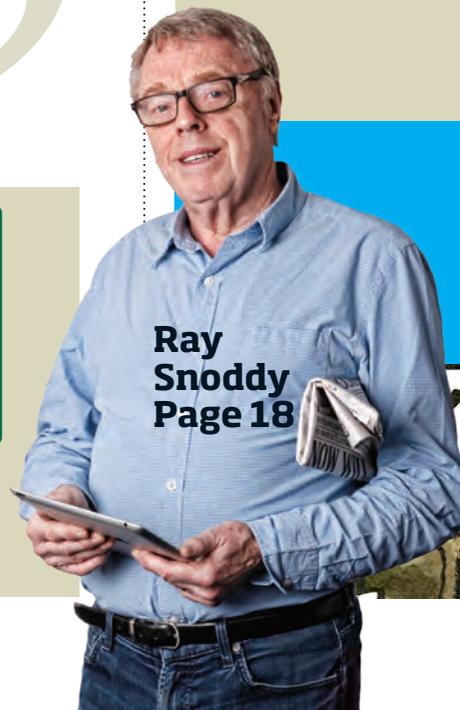
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Gary Neill



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# Archant plan to close two thirds of its newsrooms

ROBERT EVANS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



Archant, which publishes the Eastern Daily Press, will keep four offices in Norwich, Ipswich, Huntingdon and Exeter, but they will reduce in size and the Exeter office is up for sale.

The St Albans, Weston Super Mare and Wokingham offices will close by the end of this month, Stevenage at the end of January and Barnstaple, Cheltenham, Great Yarmouth and Romford by the end of March.

The move by Archant will further fuel concern that local papers and journalists are disappearing in many communities and that local news is often produced miles away in news hubs.

While many people like homeworking for its flexibility and the time saved by not commuting, there are fears that employers use new working arrangements solely to cut their costs.

Laura Davison, NUJ national organiser for newspapers, said: "A greater degree of flexibility from employers when it comes to working arrangements is welcome; but whole office closures can impact people in different ways. Employers need to be mindful that genuine suitable working options are provided and that staff, especially trainees, are properly supported on all fronts – with equipment, mental health, and financially. Significant savings for employers are to be had from closures, especially with rising energy prices; however, members can see increased costs and both tangible and intangible impacts from such a change and this should be properly recognised."

**REGIONAL** newspaper publisher Archant is planning to close two-thirds of its newsrooms by the end of March. Management said it had made the decision because of feedback from surveys and because of the low numbers of staff going into its offices.

The decision to reduce the number of offices follows a similar move by Reach, the owner of the Mirror, Express and Star and many regional titles, earlier this year. In the Spring, Reach set out plans to move to a combination of office-based, office and home-based, and home-based teams who can use an office occasionally. Just a quarter of Reach staff are working only in the office.

## Concern over court video access

**THE NUJ** has written to judges serving the North east circuit courts, over a decision which appears to be preventing reporters having video access to proceedings.

Social distancing takes place in courts and this has prevented reporters

having access because of capacity issues. The letter asked that if video access is denied, at least one place in every courtroom should be reserved for a reporter, allowing a pool system to operate if necessary.

The letter from Michelle Stanistreet,

NUJ general secretary, said: "There is widespread agreement in our newsrooms that the video access has allowed much more frequent reporting of the courts and that is in the public interest, as it puts the principle of open justice into practice."

## Branch increases pressure on RTE

**THE UNION'S** Dublin broadcasting branch is increasing pressure on broadcaster RTE over its refusal to disclose data relating to pay and gender. Last March the NUJ asked for the data but in June the broadcaster refused, saying that it didn't compile such data and wouldn't do so until the Gender Pay Gap Information Bill is implemented.

Meanwhile, An Post, the

Irish postal service, has recently become one of the first big companies in the country to report that it has now eliminated its gender pay gap.

Emma O'Kelly, the Dublin broadcasting branch chair, said: "RTÉ is basically saying that it won't publish gender data until it is actually forced to do so by legislation, and we think this is a disgraceful stance for the national broadcaster."

## inbrief...

### THE JOURNALIST RETURNS TO PRINT

The Journalist will be back in print for those who want a copy for the next edition following a decision by the NUJ's delegate meeting last year. The print edition had been suspended in 2020 to safeguard the union against adverse financial effects from the pandemic. However, finances fared well after an increase in membership and a rise in subscription payments.

### MARTIN CLARKE LEAVES MAIL ONLINE

Martin Clarke, editor-in-chief and chief executive of Mail Online, is to leave after 13 years at the helm. He relaunched the website in 2008 and has made it one of the most popular news websites. It reaches about 23 million people per month in the UK and is also one of the biggest sites in the US where it is known as DailyMail.com

### THOMSON REUTERS PULLS OUT OF PLEDGE

Thomson Reuters has pulled out of a pledge to support the British armed forces after its journalists feared it could endanger colleagues working abroad. It had signed the UK Government's Armed Forces Covenant, a voluntary pledge businesses can make to demonstrate their support for the armed forces community.

## Union launches online help series

The NUJ has launched a series of online training modules to help journalists minimise the increasing risks they encounter – ranging from working in conflict zones to encountering online abuse. The series called Storysmart has been supported by the Google News Initiative and the modules, which last between 10 and 20 minutes, are free for anyone to use. The interactive modules include advice from hostile environment trainers, cyber-security experts and experienced journalists. The courses can be accessed here: [www.nujstorysmart.com](http://www.nujstorysmart.com)



# Scottish institute recommended to secure public interest journalism

**AN INSTITUTE** for public interest journalism to safeguard the future of news gathering in Scotland has been proposed.

The institute is one of a series of recommendations outlined by the public interest journalism working group, which was established by the Scottish government last year in response to industry-wide concerns that more support was needed to sustain high-quality journalism in Scotland.

The group was made up of representatives from the Scottish media industry and NUJ representatives.

Its other recommendations include community groups taking over local publications at risk of closure and voucher schemes enabling teenagers to access public interest journalism free of charge.

John Toner, NUJ national organiser for Scotland, said he hoped the report would “convince the Scottish Government to implement our recommendations”. He added: “It’s important to acknowledge the contribution of Edinburgh freelance branch and of Joyce McMillan in particular.”

Joyce McMillan, Edinburgh freelance branch chair, said: “Thanks to many months of hard work by the working group, the report reflects many of the priorities highlighted by the NUJ over the last two years and represents a powerful consensus among the very diverse media interests represented within the group.

“Edinburgh Freelance Branch was inspired to work on these issues by the NUJ’s news recovery plan for the UK and Ireland published in April 2020 and, through our weekly online branch meetings during the pandemic, we were able to develop

PA ARCHIVE/PA IMAGES



proposals based on the plan that could be implemented here in Scotland, and to begin lobbying on the ideas raised.

“The publication of the working group’s report represents a very welcome next stage in the debate about how to sustain and develop Scotland’s strong tradition of public interest journalism in a fast-changing 21st century media landscape.”

John McLellan, Scottish Newspaper Society director, (pictured above) said: “The proposals are ambitious and innovative but also deliverable, and can put Scotland at the forefront of the international quest to secure a sustainable future for public interest journalism. Scotland has a justifiable reputation for brilliant journalism, not for its own sake but also for the benefits that fearless, independent reporting brings to all parts of society. The technological revolution has created significant challenges which the sector cannot solve on its own, but we believe solutions are at hand.”

**Words into action on public interest, page 8**



**The proposals are ambitious but also deliverable, and can put Scotland at the forefront of the international quest to secure public interest journalism**

**John McLellan**  
**Scottish Newspaper Society**

## Second **Somalian** journalist murdered

**VETERAN** Somali journalist Abdiiaziz Mohamud Guled was killed in November in a targeted attack by a suicide bomber in Mogadishu.

Guled, 41, also known as

Abdiiaziz Afrika, was well known for his reporting. He produced radio and TV programmes highlighting violent extremism and the killing of citizens.

Guled had called on the authorities to investigate Al-Shabaab and bring its leadership to justice. He had also interviewed Al-Shahaab suspects detained by the

Somali security forces.

The attack has been claimed by the terrorist group. A colleague who saw it said: “He went into his car with a colleague after dinner

and the suicide bomber ran onto the car window and detonated himself.”

Guled is the second journalist killed in Somalia this year. Jamal Farah Adan, whose radio programmes were critical of Al-Shabaab, was shot in March.

# Scan here if you care about **journalism.**



**Journalists' Charity**

Supporting journalists nationwide

# Abuse of journalists is rife, government report finds

**EIGHTY** per cent of journalists face abuse in their job but nine out of 10 don't report it to the police because they fear they won't be taken seriously, according to a government report.

Of those who had reported incidents to the police, 60 per cent said they were dissatisfied with how their cases were handled and only 15 per cent were satisfied.

The report by the Home Office and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) revealed that most have experienced threats, abuse or violence during their work and that one in three female journalists don't feel safe because of this.

It was based on a survey of 360 journalists.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, has warned MPs that the abuse of journalists was becoming 'normal' and that the culture of how journalists are treated and regarded needs to change.

In evidence to the cross party DCMS select committee she said that online abuse was spilling into physical attacks and stalking. She said that women and ethnic minority journalists faced a disproportionate amount of abuse. Her comments to the committee's inquiry into the Online Harms Bill followed similar comments from others in the industry.



Owen Meredith, chair of trade organisation, the News Media Association, has said that local reporters face a 'daily onslaught' of abuse. Ian Carter, editorial director of Iliffe Media has said that the abuse of journalists was deterring young people from joining the regional industry.

In October Lee Trehwela, chief reporter of Cornwall Live, blamed social media abuse for his decision to leave journalism after a 30-year career.

The government report states: "Multiple responses suggested the police themselves contributed towards threats or abuse towards journalists. This included police physically restricting access to spaces, arresting journalists, and holding negative conceptions about the role of journalists which affect how

they treat them.

"A number of responses also felt that ministers and other politicians contribute to this negative attitude towards journalists. One argued that politicians and individuals in power attack or criticise journalists, this gives 'the green light for members of the public to do the same.'"

Other findings include that half of female respondents had also experienced sexism during the course of their work.

## inbrief...

### ANDREW MARR TO JOIN NEW STATESMAN

Andrew Marr is to become The New Statesman's chief political commentator in February. Last month he said he was leaving the BBC after 21 years including five years as political editor. He has presented his Sunday morning politics show for the past six years. Marr will also present programmes for LBC and Classic FM.

### ADAM BOULTON TO LEAVE SKY NEWS

Adam Boulton, the political commentator, is leaving Sky News after 33 years. He has been editor-at-large there for the past seven years after stepping down as political editor after 25 years. His departure follows a decision by the head of Sky News not to be so reliant on news anchors.

### ESME WREN HEADS TO CHANNEL 4

Esme Wren, the editor of BBC2's Newsnight, is leaving the programme to lead Channel 4 News. Wren joined Newsnight three years ago from her role as Sky News head of politics, business and specialist journalism. She had been at Sky for 12 years after starting her career as a producer on Newsnight.

## NUJ supports Putin's People author

**THE NUJ** has signed a letter in support of Catherine Belton, the former FT Moscow correspondent, after she and publisher HarperCollins were sued over her book Putin's People.

Some 19 signatories complained to the UK government that the lawsuits against the author and publisher of Putin's People are strategic lawsuits against public participation and part

of more widespread action to intimidate journalists.

Two defamation lawsuits were brought by Russian businessman Roman Abramovich and the Russian state energy company

Rosneft in relation to Belton's book, Putin's People: How the KGB took back Russia and then took on the West, which was published in April 2020. Rosneft has since withdrawn its action.

## Journalist and activist Mary Maher dies

**MARY MAHER**, a pioneering journalist, trade unionist and founder member of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement, and NUJ member of honour, died last month aged 81.

Tributes have been led by the President of Ireland Michael D Higgins. He said: "There will be so many who will have been deeply saddened to learn of the death this morning of Mary Maher. A passionate feminist and trade unionist, Mary was a true trailblazer, role model and inspiration.

"The death of Mary Maher represents the passing of one of the founding elements of the rights movement and women's rights in particular. Her importance as an activist in the public area was accompanied by a professional commitment in journalism that broke so many ceilings, all of which advanced the causes that affected women's lives."

### Acquisitive Future sees growth soar

The specialist publisher Future, which has bought a variety of titles and publishing houses recently, has reported a sales increase of 79 per cent to £606.8 million in the year to the end of September. The group's organic growth was 23 per cent and that excludes its recent purchases of the publishers TI Media, Cinema Blend, Dennis Publishing and the title Marie Claire US. Future's pre-tax profits more than doubled with a rise of 107 per cent to £107.8 million while its operating profit increased by 127 per cent to £115.3 million.



# Journalists at the Guardian and FT win strong pay deals

**JOURNALISTS** at the Guardian and Observer and the Financial Times, where the NUJ chapels are strong, have secured pay increases following lengthy negotiations.

At the Guardian, they won a two-year pay deal worth a minimum of five per cent on staff salaries and a five per cent increase in lineage rates.

Last year, journalists had threatened industrial action because the group withdrew the agreed offer of a pay increase. Then, in October last year, it set out plans to cut staffing by 12 per cent.

But in April this year, the publisher repaid the £16 million furlough cash it had been given, citing improved finances. In July, it said revenue had risen 0.9 per cent to £225.5 million.

At the same time, pay talks continued to stall over the



principle that the company had no power to withdraw a deal that had already been agreed. Staff balloted for strike action this September after talks at the conciliation service Acas failed. However, agreement was reached before the ballot closed.

Andy Smith, NUJ national organiser, said: "We now have a deal that covers last year's increase, a three per cent increase for this year, a

payment to cover back pay and an increase in freelance rates. By the end of the process, management understood the importance of all these elements of our claim and I'm confident we can use this as a basis to address other issues."

The FT group agreed that editorial staff earning £77,000 or under (or the local currency equivalent) will receive an increase of £1,800, while

colleagues earning more than £77,000 will see their salaries rise by 2.3 per cent.

It also agreed to increase freelance rates, from £160 to £175 a day for sub-editors and from £145 to £160 a day for picture editors. These rates had been left unchanged for several years.

Management and the chapel also agreed a £5,600 bonus in recognition of the work done by everyone in editorial in the difficult times in 2021.

Tobias Buck, FT managing editor, told staff: "We were able to conclude our negotiations somewhat earlier than usual to ensure that bonuses could be paid before Christmas. I would like to express my thanks to Steven Bird and his team for approaching our talks in a manner that was both robust and constructive."



**Management understood the importance of all the elements of our claim and I'm confident we can use this as a basis to address other issues**

**Andy Smith**  
NUJ national organiser



## Union wins over £5 million for members

**THE NUJ** has won more than £5.5 million for its members this year through a variety of negotiated settlements with employers.

More than £2 million was secured in equal pay claims and close to that amount was gained in compensation under settlement agreements.

Payments made for unfair dismissal, discrimination and wages owed topped £1.4 million.

For personal injuries, more than £120,000 was paid out and members who were found to have suffered trade union victimisation won £30,000.

Freelance NUJ members

benefited from payments for copyright infringements and from enhanced contract terms following advice from the freelance office on negotiating terms and conditions.

The freelance office is also pivotal in chasing up delayed payments, and reported securing £12,500

after an agreed book deal was cancelled.

The union's legal department, backed by its solicitors Thompsons and Bindmans, also works to protect journalists' rights, such as overturning the confiscation of equipment belonging to reporters and photographers by police

and other authorities.

Legal work is also ongoing on a wide range of issues which affect members' working lives.

## Guide to reporting poverty issued

**A COMPREHENSIVE** guide to covering poverty in news and features has been published by the Freelance Journalism Assembly.

A Freelancer's Guide to Reporting Poverty looks at many aspects of the issue. It provides expert tips from specialist journalists and academics, and includes detailed, practical resources.

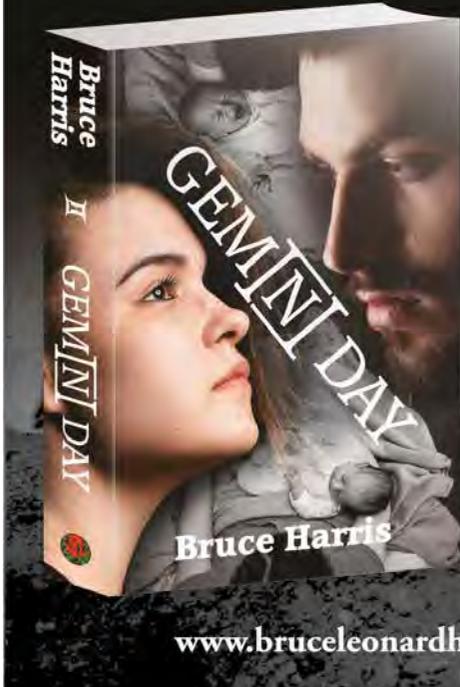
Rachel Broady, from the NUJ's Manchester and Salford branch, who has written extensively on the subject, contributed to the guide as well as to the NUJ's own guidelines.

The Freelance Journalism Assembly is supported by the European Journalism Centre and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

<https://tinyurl.com/24mddkxk>

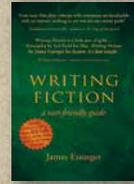
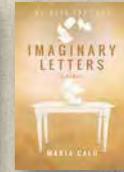
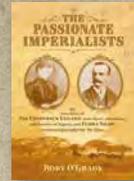


*Gemini Day* is the rollercoaster epic of an Englishman and an American woman, both journalists, who meet in Berlin in 1935 and marry during the Spanish Civil War two years later. Forced to flee to southern France, Ruth gives birth to their child, Susannah, and they adopt a Spanish orphan, Rafael, born on the same day. They name the children's birthday as *Gemini Day*, and the story tracks the Gemini Days of the future.



*Gemini Day* is Harris's second novel, after *Howell Grange*. His publications also include five collections of award-winning short stories and three poetry collections. Because of his partner's illness, he is donating his takings to the Huntington's Disease Association.

## HAVE YOU WRITTEN A BOOK THAT DESERVES PUBLICATION?



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## Broad group intends to revitalise Welsh news media, says **David Nicholson**

TRACEY PADDISON / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



# Words into action on public interest

**T**he Welsh Government's working party on public interest journalism has met for the first time after the NUJ successfully persuaded media minister Dawn Bowden to set it up.

The group, which includes industry figures, Welsh Government officials, the NUJ and universities that provide journalism training is seeking ways to improve public interest journalism in Wales.

When the pandemic struck, the union's Welsh executive council adapted the NUJ's news recovery plan to Wales.

The home newspaper industry is small with low circulations. The majority of daily newspapers sold in Wales are English-based titles such as the Sun, Mirror and Mail.

Unlike Scotland, where newspapers often change front-page stories and include Scottish sports stories, none of the imported titles cover specific Welsh news.

The recovery plan for Wales was road tested at an online NUJ town-hall style

meeting a few weeks before Christmas 2020 to discuss solutions to the failing Welsh media industry.

The meeting was joined by actor and activist Michael Sheen who grew up in Port Talbot in the 1970s, when there were five local newspapers with more than 20 reporters.

"Now there is one newspaper which has one part-time journalist based 10 miles away in Swansea," Sheen said.

Newspaper groups have since decided home working has worked and opted to close offices across Wales, with journalists working from home and meeting in centralised hubs.

The nearest hub to Port Talbot will be in Cardiff.

The NUJ met with Bowden, a former trade union official, in September and persuaded her to set up a working party representing the industry across Wales, including interested parties.

Bowden agreed the group should come up with solutions to address the declining industry, boost numbers of people entering journalism and make the workforce more representative. The group will report back to her in 2022. In

Scotland, a public interest journalism working party was set up earlier in the year and Scottish government officials have reported on how it had worked.

The broadcasters told the first Welsh meeting, held in November, they would have to consult over whether they could take part in the working party and retain their impartiality, but responded positively to the discussions.

The NUJ told the group of industry players that its media recovery plan was a detailed list of measures to improve the industry in Wales.

However, it said it would not insist that its blueprint was followed in the interests of agreeing proposals.

"We wanted to build a consensus to increase the chances that the Welsh Government would back any recommendations made," said NUJ national officer for Wales Pam Morton said. "We have had too many talking shops and not enough action."

The NUJ plan proposes to use apprenticeship schemes and further education to expand entry into journalism from a wider base than is possible through the undergraduate and master's degree routes.

Also on the table for the working group to consider were changes to legislation to ensure that, if newspaper titles close, the name is designated as a community asset (similar to what can happen to local pubs that close) so local papers could be kept alive by their communities.

After years of seemingly endless discussion about the ills of the media industry in Wales and its continuing decline, the working party is a bright spot focused on solutions and the NUJ will continue to invest its energy to make work.

Once the terms of reference of the working party have been agreed, the Welsh executive council will consult with members in Wales to give them the opportunity to raise issues and suggest solutions.



**"We wanted to increase the chances the government would back the recommendations. We have had too many talking shops and not enough action"**

**Pam Morton  
NUJ national officer  
for Wales**

**\* NUJ representatives on the group include national officer for Wales Pam Morton; campaigns officer Frances Rafferty; NUJ training project manager Dr Rachel Howells; and national executive council member for Wales David Nicholson.**

# NUJ should help us keep up with digital demands



Journalists may not even know they lack skills, says **Jenny Sims**

**A**dam Grant, organisational psychologist, author and Ted Talk host, puts it succinctly:

“Knowledge is power. Knowing what we don’t know is wisdom.

I believe there’s a need for the NUJ to offer digital skills training for older journalists and freelancers like myself – who might not know what we don’t know until we’re in the thick of it, as I was this summer.

I won a short-term contract editing a website for a national charity focusing on digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI) and the transformation of health and social care.

The job was to provide cover for the editor who was taking a three-month sabbatical.

With my specialist knowledge and editorial experience, reading the job spec with its extensive list of requirements of qualifications, skills and experience, I could honestly and confidently tick all the boxes – except for the very last one: update content to WordPress.

I hesitated. I’d written blogs on WordPress in the past, but never edited a website. How hard could it be?

I reasoned that, if successful, I’d have a few weeks before starting the job to do a quick online training course – which I did. Unfortunately, it wasn’t enough to equip me with the competence and confidence needed, and my learning curve those first few weeks was steep.

I was grateful for the handover week and the editor was extremely helpful, but there was little time for tech tips and my next few weeks were a struggle.

In recognition of my difficulties, I received a one-hour ‘help’ session from two of the team.

But I was slow to learn, partly out of fear of making mistakes, and at times felt like a frozen rabbit caught in headlights.

Working remotely, as we all were, I was afraid to ask simple questions – the sort that would seem inconsequential in an office with colleagues alongside. Instead, I called on IT-literate journalist friends instead, and eventually got there.

I felt I’d climbed Everest. Luckily for me (being a bit of an AI geek), I enjoyed the climb: doing interviews, reporting on webinars and conferences, writing blogs, editing copy, compiling news lists etc.

But the experience reinforced my conviction there is a role for the NUJ in helping older journalists improve their digital skills. The membership is ageing, technology is evolving, and not all employers offer computer skills training.

Joan Macdonald, the training manager for NUJ Scotland, agrees that upskilling is needed. Their last annual survey of Scottish journalists’ needs found that 40 per cent felt they did not have all the skills needed to do their job.

A Scottish podcasting tutor found that journalists signing up to his courses were “a wee bit put off” by the links he sent them before the course, and quite a few dropped out at the last minute.

In response, in November NUJ Scotland ran a four-hour Improving Computer Literacy pilot course for 15 people. It was described as “working up from the absolute basics using easy-to-understand terms, this is for

anyone who feels unsure or anxious using computers and technology”.

Before the event took place, Macdonald said if it attracted enough interest, they would be repeating it.

Rachel Howells, the project director for NUJ Training Wales, said they were organising a month-long digital skills fest in February, but had not to date planned for anything specifically aimed at older journalists.

Natasha Hirst, NUJ vice-president and a union learning rep, said: “Obviously, many older journalists do have good digital skills but for those who don’t, reaching them to see what the gaps are is not an easy task.

“People don’t necessarily know what they don’t know. We’d welcome feedback on what people need because we genuinely do want to make the courses as inclusive as possible.

“I don’t think it is clear enough to us what members need and how many of them would like to have digital skills training.”

Members – it’s over to you. Tell the NUJ what’s needed – and your wish may be granted! But there could be opposition.

Seamus Dooley, assistant general secretary, says: “I do not detect a specific need for age-based training in any section of the union.

“If there is a skills gap in relation to digital technology, I don’t think it is age related and wonder if that suggestion in itself is not ageist.”

Well, that’s another Viewpoint and an interesting question.

**Jenny Sims is a freelance journalist, co-chair of the NUJ’s 60+ council and a member of the Welsh executive**

“**I don’t think it is clear enough to us what members need and how many of them would like to have digital skills training**”

# Dublin

## Ruth Addicott talks to journalists about what it's like to live and work in Dublin

**K**

ieran Fagan has lived and worked in Dublin for nearly 50 years and was on the news desk of The Irish Times the day of the Omagh bombing. Like many, he won't forget the day.

"My first inkling was when a techie colleague said the mobile phone network was acting strangely in that part of County Tyrone," he recalls. "Had the IRA taken out a mast and, if so, why? The real horror unfolded very quickly after that. Without thinking very much, I dispatched three young colleagues who happened to be closest. It never crossed my mind that older hands might have been better able to deal with the unspeakable reality of 29 deaths in a market town on a fine Saturday afternoon. My guys did a fine job – their names are still with me. Do they lie awake at night, as I do, trying to comprehend?"

The conflict dominated newsrooms in Dublin for years and, back then, they had the resources to handle everything. While there are always resources for big stories, Fagan's concern now is the day-to-day stuff, "having someone keep an eye on inquests, review what is happening in the smaller theatres and attend parliamentary debates, rather than just processing the press releases that the political parties put out and topping it off with a witty sketch by someone with an undergraduate sense of humour".

That said, he loves the city and has the bonus of living five minutes from the beach and a 15-minute drive from open countryside.

Dublin is home to Ireland's biggest-selling newspapers. The Irish Independent and Sunday Independent (owned by Mediahuis) have been in print for more than 110 years. They sit alongside the Sunday World, The Herald, Sunday Life and

Belfast Telegraph. The Irish Times (established in 1859) is owned by The Irish Times Trust. There's also Irish daily and Sunday editions of The Sun, Mirror, Daily Mail and Daily Star.

Deaglán de Bréadún is an award-winning journalist who has lived and worked in Dublin, Belfast and Moscow. He was Northern editor, foreign affairs correspondent and political correspondent with the Irish Times and later political editor with the Irish Sun.

"It's a tough time for newspapers," he says. "Jobs in Dublin in the newsroom seem rather scarce. A good many journalists are going over to the dark side now. Some of my colleagues have gone to work for government ministers and I assume they're getting quite well paid."

De Bréadún had such an opportunity himself but turned it down. "I should have taken it on for a while, to see how the system works from the inside and then gone back to journalism," he says.

The biggest story of his career was getting word of the IRA ceasefire in 1994. "I wasn't the only one," he says. "There was a journalist on the Irish Independent who got word as well, but it was a huge story and I was proud to be involved in breaking it." He got the tip-off from a contact he had known for a long time and acknowledges that a good contacts book is as important today as ever.

He has written books on the Good Friday Agreement and Sinn Féin. He's now a columnist for the Belfast-based Irish News, writes obituaries for the Sunday Independent and does regular radio and TV broadcasts in Irish and English.

He enjoys the Dublin's historical sites and its theatre and music scene but says: "I'd recommend moving to the city from other parts of Ireland, but I wouldn't recommend moving from London, for example, as I don't think there are as many opportunities in Dublin."

The city is also home to many magazines, including Ireland's women's glossy Image, Irish Tatler, Woman's Way, RSVP, Stellar, Irish Country Magazine and VIP. The Gloss is published with the Irish Times, GCN (Gay Community News)

DEREK SPEIRS



## Getting ahead

### Time and money

Freelance journalist Kieran Fagan wrote obituaries for the Irish Times for 15 years and stopped around 2017 after realising he was being paid half the rate in real terms he

had got in 2006. Rates vary and, like elsewhere, the challenges are finding regular work and getting paid on time. Broadcast journalists face insecure working conditions and zero-hours contracts.

### On air and online

If you're looking for broadcast journalism work in Dublin, RTÉ correspondent Emma O'Kelly advises making a good demo. "Get someone in the industry to listen to it before you send it out. And be persistent."

Freelance journalist Kate Demolder believes the future

in the city is definitely digital. "Never did I think I would be happily working for UK and EU businesses from my bedroom," she says.

### Home costs

While the international airport and proximity to the beach and countryside are a bonus,

the city is experiencing a severe housing crisis and the cost of living is high.

Kieran Fagan says: "The Dublin freelance market is not for the faint hearted or those without funds to carry them through some lean years which I don't see ending anytime soon."

is Ireland's longest-running LGBT magazine and Hot Press has been going since 1977.

Kate Demolder was a features writer for Irish Tatler and decided to go freelance during the pandemic. She now writes for RTÉ, Image, the Irish Independent and the Sunday Independent among others. She says the media pool in Dublin is small and can feel 'intimidating' but persistence pays off and people are keen to help.

RTÉ is Ireland's national TV and radio broadcaster. The leading commercial broadcaster is Virgin Media Television. Tech giants Facebook and Google also have headquarters in the city.

Emma O'Kelly is the education correspondent for RTÉ and chair of the NUJ Dublin broadcasting branch and a former member of the union's national executive council. She moved to Dublin 25 years ago.

O'Kelly says the pandemic transformed the way journalists worked at RTÉ. "Just days after the schools shut, I was using Instagram to join students in a maths class, interviewing them and recording it all on my laptop to edit for a TV news report," she says. "We became adept at using whatever means necessary – Zoom, Whatsapp, whatever – to get important interviews."

Lois Kapila is editor and reporter on the Dublin Inquirer. Kapila moved to the city in 2013 after the UK government brought in a rule that UK spouses of people from outside the European Economic Area had to earn a certain amount to be able to bring them to the UK to live with them. Kapila and her American husband were working in India at the time and moved to Dublin to be together. As a newcomer, she found it hard to break into the media, partly because of the recession and immigration rules.

"Having a spouse from outside the EU meant I had to make

"Irish hacks tend to be a friendly and helpful lot."

**Kieran Fagan, formerly of the Irish Times, now freelance**

"All the neighbourhoods I've lived in have had very connected communities."

**Lois Kapila, Dublin Inquirer**

"I love how small Dublin is and that feeling of intimacy with the city – very few other places do you bump into people so regularly. The downsides are rental prices, the degree of homelessness and bumping into people when you don't want to be seen."

**Kate Demolder, formerly of the Irish Tatler, now freelance**

sure I had paid work to be able to have him here, and lots of routes into journalism seemed to require unpaid internships," she says.

"Then, there are questions about how much past experience in other countries translates and is recognised, and – while it's of course always hard to say for sure – a sense that being a brown woman with an unusual name, you're seen as less likely to be competent."

Eventually, she got some hours at Metro Éireann, focusing on news affecting immigrants to Ireland. That helped her get a foot on the ladder.

In 2015, she launched independent local newspaper the Dublin Inquirer and, in 2019, was shortlisted for the international Orwell prize for journalism.

"I felt like there was room for a local publication that did slower journalism, less breaking news and more features," she says. "I thought also that it would be good to try to create something that was a bit more open to newcomers, trying to get more people involved in journalism, developing different relationships with readers while, of course, sticking to the core values of independent journalism."

Aside from the legendary pubs, music, galleries, first-class food and the city's huge literary heritage, there is also a charm to Dublin that cannot be found elsewhere. Whether you're battling the rain walking beside the Liffey or knocking back a Guinness in Temple Bar, if you live in the city, you invariably run into someone you know. "These chance encounters remind me that Dublin is still the place that people like Joyce or Brendan Behan wrote about," says Emma O'Kelly.

She says: "Of course it's tough to break into journalism in Dublin, as it is anywhere, but there is always room for good journalists."



# Diversifying news by bots

**Naomi Smith** looks at how artificial intelligence affects diversity and journalism

**I**n the wake of the Black Lives Matter demonstrations and the consequent discussion of systemic racism, debates around the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism have shifted.

The usual arguments about the impact on employment have given way to questions about the capabilities of AI to accurately reflect the full experience of diverse audiences and those with marginalised identities. The experience of a white, middle-class woman, for example, is not the same as the experience of a black, middle-class woman – and neither of them have the same experience as a working-class, non-binary, Latin individual. And this is true for both journalists in the newsroom and the communities they cover.

If we bring ‘intersectionality’ into the mix – a term coined by American academic Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how identities overlap to create systems of oppression – then the picture becomes more complicated. For example, a white woman may experience misogyny and a black man may experience racism, but a black woman will experience both misogyny and racism. All three experience discrimination – and, consequently, may also experience disadvantage – but in different forms and to different degrees.

Therefore, the question becomes: how can an AI be expected to understand and represent that vast diversity of experience when their human counterparts already struggle to do so? While we can empathise with those who are different from us and learn in-depth about their experiences, we cannot fully understand them.

This is precisely the issue that recent diversity initiatives within newsrooms in the UK and US have sought to address. In the US, for example, NBC News responded to the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 with a pledge to increase workforce diversity to 50 per cent, with half the workforce women and half people of colour.

If, however, we hand sourcing and reporting duties over to algorithms and bots that do not (and cannot) have the same diversity of identity and experience as human journalists, do we risk undoing or, at the very least, rendering those initiatives ineffectual

Will a more diverse cohort of journalists and a move away from white, male-dominated newsrooms towards ethnically

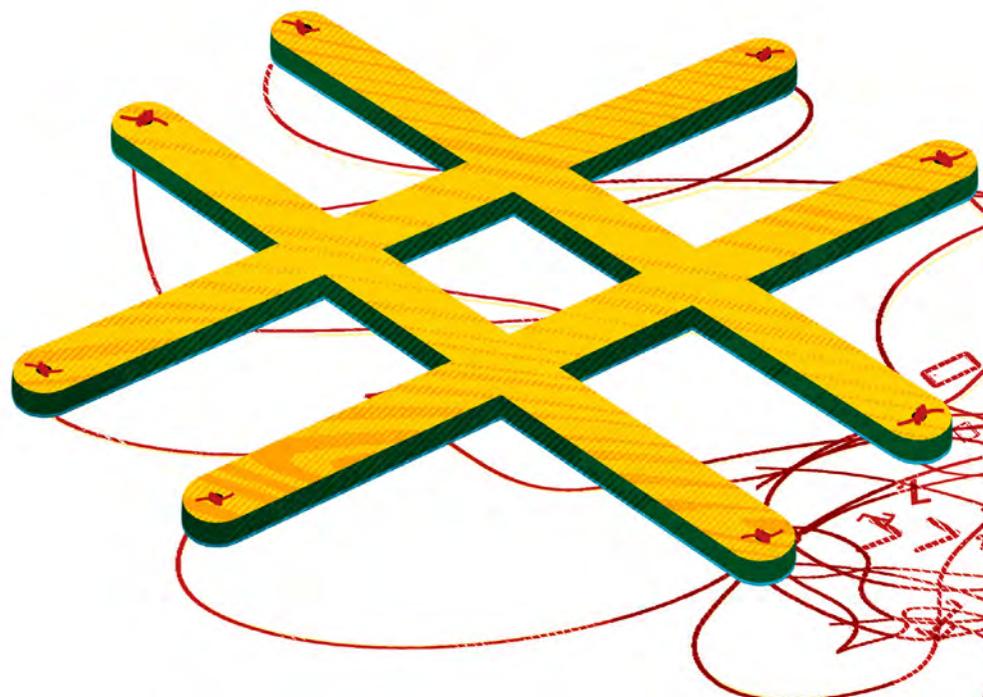
and racially diverse, women-led newsrooms change the way that we look at newsworthiness?

Academic research, including most famously that by Galtung and Ruge, suggests that ideas about newsworthiness and the underlying decision-making practices about story selection are relatively consistent and rely on the application of specific news values (such as timeliness, negativity and the presence of conflict). Those same frameworks can then be translated into algorithms and fed to AI systems such as Reporters and Data and Robots (RADAR) in the UK, that help select and produce text or curate stories, such as Microsoft’s news-skimming artificial intelligence. But to what extent can AI, which can work only within the parameters dictated by its programming, use these frameworks in such a way as to preserve the positive impacts of diversity?

In 2020, Microsoft controversially chose to replace scores of journalists across its platforms with a news-skimming algorithm. This does not carry out any reporting but aggregates articles from news sources and uses them to populate MSN with stories. The algorithm was quickly accused of racial bias and an inability to recognise people of colour after it confused two members of girl band Little Mix, attaching the wrong image to a news story. A Microsoft spokesperson told the Guardian that the company replaced the image as soon as they learned about the error but failed to address the concerns about underlying racial bias.



**Newsrooms intending to use bots that write stories will need to be clear when they do or do not use these tools**



In 2016, Tay, a Microsoft-operated chatbot, managed to make it through a mere 16 hours of 'life' before launching into a series of misogynistic and racist tweets that forced the company to take action and shut it down. The short-lived AI initiative had been billed as an experiment in 'conversational understanding' but was quickly corrupted as it started to echo back the kind of tweets that it received from other Twitter users. Language has the potential not just to wound but also to reinforce structural bias in often subtle but nevertheless impactful ways, such as by the delegitimisation of genders or races, or the erasure of non-binary identities. Tay parroted back words and phrases with no real understanding of the hate and bias encoded into them or the historical and social contexts that gave them the power to do harm. Where it failed to understand, it excelled at repetition.

In theory, increased diversity in journalism should lead to better representation of communities, which will lead to better public understanding of those communities. If we were to task an AI with that same job – to understand and reflect a society back to itself, and to accurately explain it to outsiders – would its inherent lack of lived experience within that society inhibit its performance?

Microsoft's short-lived experience with Tay raises another question: how we can ensure that those who monitor and regulate the use of AI in journalism do so in good faith? Tay was led astray by the flawed data from which it learned, despite the best intentions of its original programmers. Newsrooms intending to use text-generating AI tools (bots that write stories) will need to practise complete transparency or, at the very least, provide clear disclosure concerning when they do or do not use these tools, and how they function.

Those who plan to incorporate AI into everyday workflow but also run diversity initiatives to improve reporting quality through better representation may have to develop policies to reconcile those potentially conflicting approaches. RADAR may offer a solution by combining human editors with automated technology, speeding up data journalism while preserving some of the human element, and semi-automatically producing around 8,000 news articles per month. Journalists

## The rise of automated news

**ARTIFICIAL** intelligence has been used to great effect during the pandemic to quantify the effects of the virus, and to develop automated and/or semi-automated workflows for journalists in the newsroom.

The Times, for example, created national and international dashboards, summarising the latest data, and used automated or semi-automated text and graphics to display information about vaccination rates. While it already used automated graphics, the text

element was a pioneering long-term investment that required an international crisis – and a lack of a clear data release strategy from the Government – for it to be fully realised.

During the pandemic, some newsrooms integrated AI into their workflows, developing existing systems or designing new ones. In some cases, this involved journalists helping to design every aspect of fully automated workflows, as with Reporters and Data and Robots (RADAR).

Journalists also used automated news as a first

draft for their stories.

At RADAR, reporters work with automated systems to compile stories from large datasets, such as those detailing the spread of the virus. With a deluge of data, they doubled their output.

According to the Columbia Journalism Review, this briefly "put the newsroom under pressure due to resourcing issues" but, ultimately, provided an opportunity to "demonstrate... expert knowledge of automated news, which resulted in more clients being interested in RADAR's other" automated stories".



input government datasets organised by geographical area, identify newsworthy angles and insert those ideas into data-driven templates. Those templates let an AI automatically tailor bits of the texts to locations identified in the data, before the stories are sent to local media outlets who then decide whether to publish them. Journalists can edit stories before distribution, suggesting storylines, adding context and extra information from sources, while the AI acts as a kind of production assistant and adapts stories for local use.

Journalists have a moral responsibility to provide accurate accounts and be aware that their reporting has the power to shape perceptions. If algorithms and AI are to be used within newsrooms, it is crucial that diversity initiatives focus not only on the identities of those who work in newsrooms but also those who program and work with these algorithms.



# Yesterday's chip p

Some papers have short lives. **Conrad Landin** asks if such failures hold lessons for journalists and managers

**N**ewspapers are by definition ephemeral – some more than others. In 1994, the Daily Mirror's education correspondent Richard Garner was offered a job on Today, a tabloid launched just nine years before by union-busting press baron Eddy Shah. Having fallen out of favour with Mirror management, Garner accepted the job.

At the cricket a few weeks later while serving out his notice, his pager buzzed with a message from his news editor. "Read page two of the Standard and call me," the message said. Today was about to close, the lead story reported. Thankfully, the news editor offered Garner his job back.

Today was one of several newspapers launched in the mid to late 1980s after the Wapping dispute. The Independent, also launched in 1986, lasted as a print publication until 2016. News on Sunday, the trade union-backed socialist tabloid launched in 1987, lasted just seven months.

But even this could be considered a long life compared to two papers launched three decades later in 2016. The New Day, started by Trinity Mirror (now Reach) and aimed at younger readers who bought no other paper, lasted just 67 days. 24, billed as 'the north's national' and run by locals group CN News, folded within six weeks. Launching print papers in the digital age was always going to be hard.

Proprietors can pull the plug to cut their losses; journalists facing redundancy (with little compensation if papers are so short lived) may find themselves out of the industry altogether.

When a fledgling title becomes not tomorrow's but yesterday's chip paper so rapidly, what legacy does it leave? And do these stories of failure offer any lessons for journalists resisting cuts and closures – or indeed for management, whose job it is to sustain their business?

When the paper he co-founded hit the news stands in 1986, Stephen Glover felt that "to see someone in the street carrying a copy of The Independent made the heart pound with joy". This sense of excitement is common when newspapers are launched. Journalists working on such projects, producing dummies for months ahead of publication day, are encouraged, not

unreasonably, to believe they are making history.

Much like the Indy almost six decades later, the Scottish Daily Express was launched with high hopes in 1929. Lord Beaverbrook, who had bought the London Express in 1916, said the new, autonomous Glasgow paper was to be "the greatest landmark in the history of journalism".

He placed the paper within a romanticised narrative of his family, saying he had "always carried about within my heart the dream that my father went out of Scotland to speak to Canadians, so I might return from Canada with a word for Scotland".

Nothing shatters such illusions like a newspaper's closure. By the 1970s, the Beaverbrook group, now run by the tycoon's son Sir Max Aitken, was seeking to move production of the Scottish Daily Express to Manchester. As is typical with such moves, journalists on the front line received the news as a *fait accompli*.

"Every single detail was foreseen and planned," Sir Max's lieutenant Jocelyn Stevens said. "Nothing happened in the fortnight between the announcement and the moment it closed that we hadn't foreseen, despite the fact we were dealing with a very wild political situation."

This approach ensures that workers' industrial leverage is fast evaporating by the time they realise the need to exercise it. There rarely seems to be any good chance of saving the paper itself.

The 1970s, however, witnessed the height of Britain's industrial militancy and, in the aftermath of the workers' victory in the 1972 Upper Clyde Shipbuilders work-in, Express staff in Glasgow sensed an appetite for something radical. They developed a business plan for a new paper that would save 500 of the nearly 2,000 lost jobs, enlisting the



# paper?

support of readers, a UK government loan and a £100,000 contribution from Robert Maxwell. The Scottish Daily News itself folded after just six months, but such was the spirit of the struggle that a group of workers, led by future SNP MSP Dorothy-Grace Elder, staged their own work-in and produced the paper for a further six months.

At the Indy and Scotland's Sunday Herald, which closed and merged into its daily sister in 2018, closure followed waves of budget cuts and redundancies. Journalists often find themselves absorbing their colleagues' responsibilities in the hope that doing more with less will buy time for an ailing paper. But product quality inevitably deteriorates, leading to falling readership. And that means not only a fall in income but also a dwindling support base to defend the paper when it is under threat.

Unsurprisingly, adequate staffing and terms are maintained more often at organisations with high union membership. The Financial Times, where the NUJ chapel saw off a threat to pensions in 2015 after threatening strike action,

was the only paper to record a significant rise in circulation in the year to June.

Its polar opposite in size and political sympathies, the Morning Star, has also maintained its (albeit far smaller) staffing levels in recent years. Both papers enjoy a specialist, dedicated readership base. Both have avoided alienating this base by continuing to offer original reporting in an age when most papers have become reliant on agency copy and 'churnalism'. If either contemplated giving up on print, they would have to account to a readership that would fight for their paper's survival.

Suzanne Wrack, who worked at The New Day for the duration of its short existence, believes there are positive as well as negative lessons to learn from that paper.

"The overall concept of going back to the drawing board and producing something purely with the modern reader in mind makes a lot of sense," she says. But catering to a new market cannot simply be a test bed for minimising costs.

"That was one of the problems The New Day had – it was recycling news a lot of the time. There were some exclusive lifestyle-type features, but we didn't have reporters.

"If you want to produce something that people want to read, you've got to give them stuff they actually care about – and the only way you can do that is have people on the ground. It was a bit of an exercise in minimum journalism and minimum resources.

"If you want to do something like that properly, you would need to invest decently in the actual newsgathering. People want quality journalism – they don't want recycling."

## Further reading

**Paper Dreams**, by Stephen Glover (Jonathan Cape, 1993)

**The Story of the Scottish Daily News**, by Ron McKay and Brian Barr (Canongate, 1976)

**The Thirty Years War: My Life Reporting on Education**, by Richard Garner (John Catt, 2016)

**The Hollow Sunday**, by Robert Harling (Chatto and Windus, 1967)

## When a launch may be a ruse

**ROBERT HARLING'S** 1967 novel *The Hollow Sunday* begins with a high-flying society journalist being taken on at a new Sunday paper, which is pioneering colour newsprint and is launched with the usual fanfare.

The paper seems to be successful – but management guard circulation figures closely and refuse to expand the print run.

Slowly, it emerges that the paper is a cynical ploy. Its proprietor, financier TJ West, is using it demonstrate the

viability of new printing technology to rival papers.

"I had to show the qualities and capabilities of the machines," West eventually confesses. "What better way than to produce the finest prototype newspaper in the world?"

Suzanne Wrack, now an acclaimed sports writer for the Guardian, left the Morning Star in early 2016 to work on a new Trinity Mirror project.

"They wanted to try to revitalise print," says Wrack. "The vibe was really, really

great. We were all excited to be involved in it."

Despite coming five decades later, Wrack's recollection of *The New Day* will be eerily familiar to readers of Harling's novel.

"In hindsight, I do wonder if the whole thing was an experiment for them to test some ideas," she says.

"It might have not have been conscious, but it might have been an experiment in some of things they'd like to do with the Mirror.

"We ran that paper on a very, very, very small staff. It did feel like a bit of an exercise in how much you can reduce something and still produce something on a daily basis."



**Jonathan Sale** charts the life of the famous satirical magazine

# DON'T CROSS THE EYE

**R**ichard Ingrams was not at the picnic after the 1961 Oxford finals, so he can't be sure that it was actually cartoonist William Rushton who declared to his fellow picnickers, leaving university for the grown-up world, that "we ought to do a magazine". Or words to that effect. "It is true," recalls Ingrams, "that Willie always had that idea."

Sadly, Willie has gone to the Great Editorial Office in the Sky but, later that year, when he was 50 per cent of the staff of the fledgling magazine, his reply to the query "What is the purpose of Private Eye?", always referred to a long-established humorous weekly: "We've got to knock Punch off its perch."

The seeds of the Eye were sown in 1950, when Ingrams and Rushton arrived at Shrewsbury (public) school, where later new bugs were Christopher Booker and Paul Foot, who were to become respectively the first editor and the investigations supremo. All contributed lively stuff to the previously respectable school magazine, the *Salopian*, and, at the University of Oxford, Ingrams and Foot took over *Parson's Pleasure*, a student publication which landed Ingrams with his very first libel writ.

When that magazine folded, they moved to Mesopotamia, not the region in Asia but a student publication which was then "terribly unfunny" in the words of its editor Peter 'Uz' Osborne, until they were joined by polymath joker John Wells, who helped make it seriously funny, as did cartoons by Rushton.

The picnic patter might have remained just that had not the entrepreneurial Osborne, on leaving university to work in advertising, started ringing up printers in his lunch hours to ask about the newish, cheap offset litho printing. Cheap-ish, to be accurate: he was looking at the wrong end of three hundred quid for a printing bill, which was well above what was in their wallets.

He suddenly thought of another Mesopotamian mate, Andrew 'Oz' Osmond, who postponed his career in the Foreign Office and coughed up the astonishing sum of £450, declaring later, "I became the original Lord Gnome" (the phantom proprietor, not to be confused with the real Maxwell and Murdoch). Later, he sold the Eye to Peter Cook.

Ingrams had by now exited stage left to blow his inheritance on founding a theatre group, so Booker became editor and Rushton, who did the layout and illustrations for the first issue, provided his bedroom as the editorial office.

Booker churned out practically all of the copy and the strain showed. A box on page two trailed *The Vote Buyers*, a *Private Eye* inquiry scheduled to appear in two weeks' time; sadly, the piece did not turn up, ever,

and the second issue did not surface in a fortnight either.

The highlight was Booker's lecture on nuclear fall-out for the under-10s: "Last week, we told you how to make a simple old-fashioned atom bomb out of a few old TV sets, some Sellotape and an ordinary lump of household uranium." However, the front page article, *Churchill Cult Next for Party Axe?*, feels pretty heavy going today and the whole design is just not pretty.

The colour may not have helped. Usborne had wanted the magazine to be called *Yellow Press*; overruled, he bought yellow paper anyway. The 500 copies of No 1 sold out, or at least disappeared, while the honesty boxes left by the piles of magazines were not exactly overflowing.

Yet anyone who owns a copy of the scrappy, six-page Volume I No I, priced at six old pennies,

## Eye on the editors

**IT WAS** in March 1986 at the farewell lunch for *Private Eye* columnist Auberon Waugh that the magazine's then editor, Richard Ingrams, also bid farewell to someone else - himself.

He was leaving the editorial chair, though not the magazine: "I have decided I should hand over to a younger and shorter man."

This was 26-year-old Ian Hislop (pictured right), whose undemocratic promotion by Ingrams soon sparked off another lunch, this time of dissident hacks.

They poured a lot of expensive wine into Peter Cook, now the proprietor with a majority of the shares but who hadn't been consulted.

The angry lunchers persuaded 'Cookie' - or so they thought - to sack Hislop instantly.

Instead, when the inebriated proprietor staggered into the Eye office, he seems to have forgotten what he was supposed to be saying, because he

greeted Hislop instead with the words:

"Welcome aboard!"

Back in 1961, the first editor had also arrived without any need to hire expensive headhunters. Christopher Booker was "quite a serious person, who was very funny", in Hislop's words.

He wrote most of the first three issues until he

was joined by Richard Ingrams and a few young satirists.

The team began to fret that Booker's perfectionism - or endless indecision and fiddling with copy - was causing delays extending well beyond pub opening hours.

After two years of this, Booker disappeared on what he admitted was "a prolonged honeymoon in Scotland", whereupon the rest of the staff told him not to come back.

Ingrams, who had been filling the editorial gap, took over. He was 26 too.



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2016 GETTY IMAGES



now has a very valuable collector's item and thus the last laugh, particularly if their copy was in the very first printing on the extra-yellow paper, as opposed to the second, less sickly, reprinted batch.

Things picked up. Osmond bought a company named Pressdram from "a bloke in Fleet Street", which is what publishes the Eye. When his theatrical enterprise came to the end of its run, Ingrams rejoined the pack and other talented satirists were drawn in. After Booker, an incorrigible breaker of deadlines, had been eased out of the editorial chair, Ingrams eased himself into it.

When Adam Macqueen, one of today's resident investigative hacks and editor of the new anthology *Private Eye: the 60 Yearbook*, looks back to the start of the magazine that was born before he was, he doubts that it would get off the ground in 2021.

"If you pitched to a publisher now the idea of a magazine that would have a lot of cartoons,

miscarriages of justice, an architecture column and a farming column, the response would be: 'Why would that work?'"

The early contributors could not have guessed that, today, the fortnightly would have a circulation of 230,000 and a staff of around 20 plus another 50 regulars, with a turnover, says editor Ian Hislop, of "millions, I'm sure". (The man in charge of the Pressdram funds was for years the aptly named Dave Cash.) The investigation section at the back of the magazine is longer than the entire first issue.

The Yearbook is a satirical Eye-view cast over six decades of national and world history. There were times when it looked as if the magazine would not have made it through another six weeks. When Sonia Sutcliffe, wife of the Yorkshire Ripper, was awarded £600,000 for libel in 1987, Hislop feared the magazine, which couldn't pay

it, was instantly trading at a loss. Fortunately, the damages were knocked down on appeal to (a still absurd) £60,000, which the readers were happy to cough up and so breathe life back into the magazine.

The dispute with Sir James Goldsmith, the 'barmy' businessman and father of Tory lord Zac, sticks in Ingrams's mind, and no wonder: "It was when somebody deliberately set out to destroy the magazine by threatening to sue the distributors."

Even less amusing was the fact that 'Sir Jams' was going for criminal libel, the 16th-century offence that saw Oscar Wilde being banged up in Reading Gaol and an earlier offender having his ear cut off and his cheeks branded.

Ingrams was so worried about being locked up that he had a haircut and bought a new corduroy jacket for his appearance in the committal hearing. This seemed to work, because, after he apologised to Goldsmith, he was pronounced not guilty.

Speaking as one who has contributed to the Eye fighting funds in those two cases, subscribed since the early days, been gently mocked myself and given it one or two stories, I rejoiced in those verdicts.

On the subject of the life and death of magazines, I have to point out, as someone who worked on *Punch* for 17 years, I can say,

that Willie Rushton and the Eye gang did not "knock *Punch* off its perch". The *Punch* management – or what passed for it – did that by itself.

However, the perished periodical lives on in the opening page of the Eye, where Mr Punch's tiny image, taken from *Punch*'s long-gone front pages, is holding upright a pole that could be mistaken as his, er, gigantic organ. This accidentally lewd image was reproduced early on in mockery by *Private Eye*, whereupon it was dropped by an embarrassed *Punch* magazine. Lord Gnome is less prudish.

**Private Eye: The 60 Yearbook**, edited by Adam Macqueen, costs £30 and is published by Private Eye Productions



# The good, the bad and the Dorries



**Raymond Snoddy** says the PM should listen to his sister instead

**O**ver the years, there have been culture secretaries who have been good, bad and indifferent. And then there is Nadine Dorries, who is in a class of her own.

To my knowledge, no culture secretary has ever come before a select committee and been so ill-informed and clueless to claim that Channel 4 warranted thorough scrutiny because it received public funds.

It would have been a faux pas of enormous proportions from any of them but even more from the culture secretary who is charged with pressing ahead with the government policy that it is 'minded' to privatise the channel.

It's worth repeating the inelegant Dorries sentence in full.

"I would argue that to say that just because Channel 4's been established as a public service broadcaster and just because it's in receipt of public money we should never audit the future of Channel 4 and we should never evaluate how Channel 4 looks in the future and whether or not it's a sustainable and viable model. It's quite right that the government should do that," the culture secretary said.

A startled fellow Tory MP, Damien Green, informed her that Channel 4 was not like the BBC, did not receive licence fee money or any public funding and was paid for by advertising.

Dorries, obviously equally startled replied: "And... so... though it's... yeah and that..."

Apart from her profound ignorance about the financing of Channel 4 – which has not changed since its launch in 1982 – the culture secretary has another problem with the privatisation plan.

Dorries, who insists she has not yet made up her mind on the issue, is knee deep in 60,000 submissions to the government's consultation on the issue.

It is reasonable to assume that with the exception of a few right-wing ideologues who dislike public ownership on principle and those who hope to benefit from a cut-price sale, the vast majority will have opposed privatisation.

There are other compelling reasons why privatisation might not happen – thanks to former MP Owen Paterson, former Ofcom chair candidate Paul Dacre and Boris Johnson's sister Rachel.

The embarrassing about-turn on changing the rules to save Paterson and the resulting political fallout made it impossible to force Dacre into the Ofcom chair after he had been judged 'unappointable' because of his strident anti-BBC views.

Suddenly, it didn't seem such a great idea to have a newly appointed, more Dacre-friendly selection committee to come up with 'the right answer'.

Indeed, Rachel Johnson publicly warned her brother not to go ahead with the Dacre manoeuvre, which she explicitly linked with the Paterson debacle.

Had Dacre been warned the game was up before writing his bilious letter of withdrawal to The Times denouncing the left-wing 'blob' – the civil servants who had frustrated his ambitions?

We can deduce that Dacre much have been promised the Ofcom job for him to stand down from the lucrative post of chairman and editor-in-chief of Associated Newspapers. Perhaps a possible peerage was dangled in front of him if he sorted out the communications regulator.

This theory is underpinned by the fact that Dacre was immediately able to return to the even more senior position of editor-in-chief of DMG Media once it was clear the Ofcom gig was not going to be his.

It's a case of two down (Paterson and Dacre) with one more to go – the privatisation of Channel 4.

The case for privatisation has always been weak. The channel has just made a record surplus despite the pandemic, has been innovative in adapting to the digital world and, most of all, doesn't want to be privatised.

Why should the government be so keen to find a solution to a problem that doesn't exist other than the obvious – a mixture of ideology and revenge for the Channel's election coverage?

With the government facing one crisis after another, not least the danger of a new Covid-19 wave, it would seem foolhardy for Johnson to expend some of his rapidly evaporating political capital on such a pointless exercise as privatising Channel 4.

With so many problems on his plate, Johnson may decide he doesn't need to take on the UK broadcasting industry and the broadcasting peers in the House of Lords.

Here, again, he should listen to his sister Rachel who has advised him not to privatise the channel.

Rather like the Dacre about-turn, Boris Johnson may have to tell Dorries to decide she is not in favour of privatisation after all.

All of the above assumes that Boris Johnson will survive the arrival of the Tory men in grey suits and that, long before Channel 4 can be privatised, he will be a columnist for the Daily Telegraph once again.

**“**  
**Boris Johnson**  
**may have to tell**  
**Dorries to decide**  
**she is not in favour**  
**of privatising**  
**Channel 4 after all**  
**”**

**What made you become a journalist?**

It combines my love of photography and learning and my interest in other people's stories.

**What other job might you have done/have you done?**

My career has meandered a bit. I began as a researcher in physical sciences, then became a data analyst for the Wales Audit Office and then worked for the Wales TUC in campaigns and policy.



when a niche interest or new connection will bring opportunities for interesting work.

**Who is your biggest hero?**

Anyone who steps outside their comfort zone to make a difference in their communities and workplaces.

**And villain?**

Our education system that discourages critical thinking and states we must fit into boxes to succeed. I was told a [deaf] child like me shouldn't learn with 'normal' children and I'd be unemployable.

**What was your earliest political thought?**

Possibly my first act of solidarity – aged three, feeling distraught about people starving in Ethiopia. My mum found me stuffing my lunch of baked beans into envelopes.

**What are your hopes for journalism?**

To create a public recognition that press freedom strengthens all of our rights and is in a precarious position. We need greater diversity, stronger connections to communities and better media literacy.



**When did you join the NUJ and why?**

I joined in 2010. I can't imagine not being a union member. The NUJ protects my rights and it's important to me to use my voice as part of a collective effort to fight injustice and improve people's lives. As a freelance, the professional networking and social support from NUJ colleagues has been invaluable.

**Are many of your friends in the union?**

I've gained so many friends through the NUJ and have many more in other trade unions. My NUJ support network has seen me through some tough times.

**What's been your best moment in your career?**

Covering the Welsh election campaigns has always been exhilarating. Highlighting the people and the emotions behind the campaigns had a real impact. It helped engage with the public, to raise aspirations and spark interest in journalism. It had a huge impact on me.

# NUJ & Me

**Natasha Hirst** is a photographer, vice-president of the NUJ and chair of the equality council

**What is the worst place you've ever worked in?**

A cash-in-hand job in a garage in my early 20s. A textbook bad employer. I was sexually harassed, ripped off with wages and there were no women's toilets.

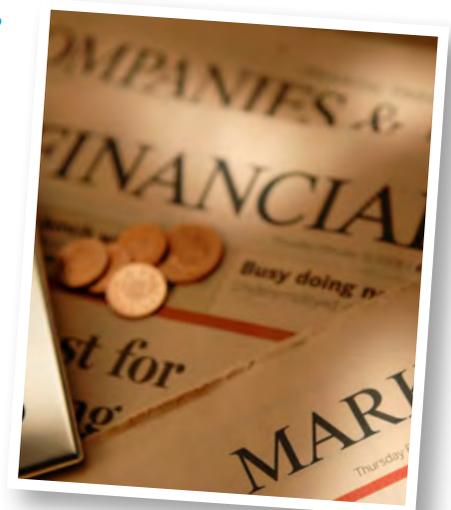
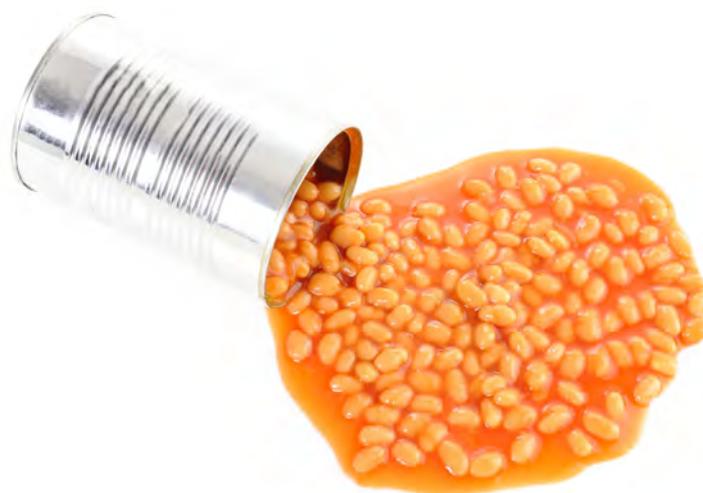
and learn so much. It is fulfilling and makes a difference for others.

**What advice would you give someone starting out?**

Develop areas of interest and expertise, build connections and be nice to people. Embrace your lived experience and the things that make you different – it helps you to stand out. You never know

**And the best?**

I love my work. I meet incredible, interesting people, visit new places



**And fears?**

That the priorities of shareholders and autocratic governments will continue to dominate over the importance of high-quality, public-interest journalism.

by **Tim Lezard**

# arts

**Books >**

**Manifesto**

*Bernadine Evaristo*

An intimate, inspirational and no-holds-barred account of how Bernadine Evaristo rebelled against the mainstream, moving from a childhood steeped in racism to becoming the first black woman to win the Booker Prize. Drawing deeply on her experiences, she gives her views on race, class, feminism, sexuality and ageing in modern Britain.

<https://tinyurl.com/2jweum27>

**Why We Kneel, How We Rise**

*Michael Holding*

Even Piers Morgan likes this book, the concept of which came following a spontaneous, impassioned monologue from the Jamaican fast-bowling great in the wake of the #BlackLivesMatter protests. A powerful and inspiring book with contributions from fellow sports stars, it delivers a message of hope.

<https://tinyurl.com/bv7daahu>

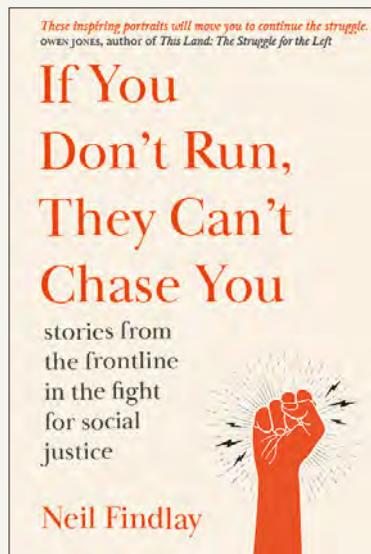
**Arise – Power, Strategy and Union Resurgence**

*Jane Holgate*

Professor Jane Holgate also delivers a message of hope – to unions – specifically ones like ours with many self-employed members. “Although there’s a lack of collectivism among

workers due to casualisation and precarity,” she argues, “these conditions were also prevalent when workers built the 19th century trade union movement. Transformational change is not only possible but within reach.”

<https://tinyurl.com/2m6sav24>



**If You Don't Run, They Can't Chase You – stories from the frontline in the fight for social justice**

*Neil Findlay*

Stretching from apartheid and the miners' strikes via the Hillsborough

tragedy and blacklisting to SpyCops and taking on corporate giant Ineos, former MSP Neil Findlay draws together firsthand accounts of some of the most important social justice campaigns in recent history. In turns inspirational and emotional, it's definitely educational.

<https://tinyurl.com/drvtcu5z>

**Always Red**

*Len McCluskey*

From humble beginnings as a Liverpool docker to the leader of the UK's biggest trade union, Unite, 'Red Len' fearlessly (and humorously) tells his life story. He lifts the lid on his bust-up with long-time friend Tom Watson and the behind-the-scenes battles of the Jeremy Corbyn era as well as giving his views on current Labour leader Keir Starmer. Fascinating and compelling.

<https://tinyurl.com/cxy7tf5>

**Outraged – Why Everyone is Shouting and No One is Talking**

*Ashley 'Dotty' Charles*

Former BBC 1Xtra Breakfast Show presenter Ashley 'Dotty' Charles takes on the outrage industry, calling for a return to civility in this punchy book.

<https://tinyurl.com/jfd4v7x>

**Film >**

**Cyrano**

*In cinemas from January 14*

I like to accentuate the positive when it comes to arts criticism; if I don't like something, I prefer to ignore rather than condemn. But there are limits to my tolerance. And *Cyrano* is one. Edmond Rostand's swashbuckling hero is one of literature's most tragic/romantic characters, portrayed on screen by Gerard Depardieu and, recently, on stage by James McAvoy. So why

anyone decided to go full musical on him is beyond me. Yes, it's a nice twist to have Peter Dinklage as the short-bodied (rather than long-nosed) hero – but really? Even Roxane was better than this.

<https://tinyurl.com/5bup274w>



**Comedy >**

**Dirtbirds**

*No Filters*

*On tour in Ireland from January*

In a world where women are expected to have the patience of Mother Teresa, the figure of Jennifer Lopez, the social media profile of Kim Kardashian and the BMI of Elle McPherson, the pressure is relentless. This show takes a close look at the barrage of bullshit women are subjected to daily and reminds us there is no such thing as perfect...

<https://tinyurl.com/m3vj5ncw>

**Music >**

**Connectivity**

*Grace Petrie*

*The Million Things That Never Happened*

*Billy Bragg*

Two crackers for a loved one's stocking.

<https://tinyurl.com/2hfe2ky6>

<https://tinyurl.com/5cmcnwkj>



**Spotlight >**

**Panto time! Oh yes it is**

A pantomime horse walks into the bar. The barman asks: “Would you like a pint?” The horse replies: “No, two halves.”

Yes, it's that time of year again when B-list celebrities take to the stage in that

uniquely English Christmas tradition, the pantomime.

And after 18 months of stress and struggle in the arts world, what better way to let down your hair this winter than visiting the theatre?

Revel in the return of Widow Twankey, Aladdin, Cinderella, Ali Baba and Peter Pan as playhouses across the UK stage extravagant, outlandish performances of slapstick, cross-dressing and irreverent audience participation.

From *Pantoland At The Palladium* (starring Donny Osmond, Sophie Isaacs and

Nigel Havers among others) to *Cinderella in Inverness* (starring no children this year, they say), there's plenty to choose from at the link below. Buy your tickets now, or panto season will be behind you!

<https://tinyurl.com/yxbme73p>





# TechDownload

**Chris Merriman** on technology for journalists

## byte size...

### CORRAL AND CONTROL CABLES

My desktop is a mess of loose cables for charging or connecting some gadget to the computer. Anker's cable management kit is simple and elegant; it has a set of five magnetic 'collars' that go around each cable and a base to keep them on, which can be stuck to any surface with adhesive or the magnetic back. Result: tidy desk, but ready for action. Sometimes the simplest ideas are the best.

[£13.99 on Amazon.](#)

### NEWS SUMMARISED WITH SOURCES

Sometimes you don't want to read the whole story (however excellent the journalist) - you just want the gist. Enter Crux, a news reader that condenses stories into 60-word summaries with links to the source material. It's a great way of keeping on top of all the news and it's free - though we'd like a paid version to get rid of the ads.

[Available on the Apple Store and Google Play](#)

### CALL ON A KIDS' CHATTER PHONE

A fun entry for the last tech column of 2021. If you had a Fisher Price Chatter telephone when you were still in nappies (I know I did), you might like the official reproduction for grown-ups. While it does everything the toddler toy did, you can also connect it to your mobile via Bluetooth and take calls on it, and it sports an extra button for a speakerphone. You don't need this - nobody does - but they are available for preorder for around £60.

## IT RECORDS AND TRANSCRIBES

**W**hen you ask journalists what their least favourite part of the job is, you can guarantee that there'll be a lot of votes for 'transcribing interviews'.

Fortunately, Mobvoi, best known for its smartwatches, has come up with an all-in-one solution in a tiny package. The Mobvoi AI Voice Recorder is about the size of a thumb but packs in two microphones, noise cancellation and automatic gain control, so even the noisiest of press conferences will sound brilliant.

However, the real magic comes when you transfer the file to your phone (via wifi or Bluetooth 5.0), which takes a single button push. From there, your entire recording is sent to the cloud, where an AI

system uses neural machine translation to create a transcript. Included in the price is up to eight hours of transcription per day for the first year, and 200 hours of cloud storage for your recordings on top of the 500 hours the device holds internally. It has 10 hours of recording time or 40 days on standby.

It's easy to clip to your lapel as your step out so you're ready to document in one click. It's not just a 'great gadget for a journalist' - it's a 'no-brainer for a journalist'. Pick one up for £54.99 on Amazon.

<https://tinyurl.com/4jv6j9ne>



## > Smart mugs keep the coffee hot

**B**rrrr! Nippy out, innit? Journalists are powered by coffee (or tea) so Ember could be the solution.

With its range of mugs and

travel flasks, Ember guarantees that your caffeine fix is at the perfect temperature.

How? It has a battery and heating element hidden

inside, and an app that allows you to set the perfect heat, so you know it'll stay that way for hours, even if there's only a 'last glug' left.

As well as the included charging base for your desk, there's an optional car charger - but, without either, you'll get several hours out of the battery.

Prices start at £99.95 <https://ember.com>

### Mini keyboard shrinks some more

Logitech MX Keys has always been a fave range for me. This new version shrinks the footprint by ditching the number pad, but leaving the remaining keys full sized, so there's no sense of compromise. It connects by cable, USB dongle or with Bluetooth and can flick between three paired devices with one button, so you can connect your computer, phone and tablet at the same time - plus there are lots of well thought out shortcut buttons for screenshots and voice recording. The MX Keys Mini costs £99.99 from the usual suppliers.

**SMALL PAD, BIG KEYS**

## SMALL, SECURE STORAGE

**T**he rise of flash storage has meant keeping a spare hard drive in your bag isn't the lottery it once was. Flash drives are almost indestructible and adding in AData's security features makes for a very attractive product for itinerant hacks.

AData's DiskAshur Pro2 boasts bank-level 256-bit encryption and a physical keypad that doesn't add to its size (smaller than your phone and just 12mm thick) but allows you to create a PIN code. Enter the wrong code too many times and the data is destroyed so, if it gets swiped, you're covered (as long as the data was backed up, of course).

It's also exceedingly fast, capable of 370MB/s transfer speed. Add to that it's IP68 water and dustproof, crushproof and shockproof - AData says it'll survive being run over by a car.

It's available in capacities from 120GB up to 2TB, with prices starting at £129 - a small price for peace of mind.





## Ann Shuttleworth

My very good friend Ann Shuttleworth has died, leaving a gap in many people's lives.

Ann and I became friends when we were 18 and both down from the north and embarking on exciting lives in London, taking media studies at the Polytechnic of Central London (PCL).

PCL, now the University of Westminster, was a radical place at a radical time. Ann, myself and our other friends did a lot of marching, some occupying and a lot of believing that we could try to make society better. We did a lot of music too – the Clash, Killing Joke, Siouxsie and the Banshees and the Birthday Party fronted by Nick Cave, an artist who Ann would be devoted to for life.

Ann was cooler than most of the fresh faces at PCL. She was properly punk with punk friends and a punk boyfriend from her home town of Burnley. She wore her Doc Martens, donkey jacket and spiked hair like she did everything – with aplomb.

Ann went into healthcare journalism after graduating and remained in that speciality, with one foray into editing a theatre magazine. For many years until her untimely death, she worked for Nursing Times, latterly as practice editor.

She loved the NHS, her work and also her union. Ann was mother of chapel for Emap, the magazine's publisher. At her funeral, Robin Booth, Emap's managing director, paid tribute to her work. He said that, although he was her big boss, he'd found her a bit scary but could also see that to her equals and subordinates she was supportive and nurturing. Just the qualities you need for a good union rep.

At Nursing Times, she championed the stories of nurses, highlighted the challenges facing the NHS and was pivotal in the magazine's

online learning programmes which proved a very popular resource.

Ann was hugely supportive to her many friends and was supremely loyal and caring.

She was also utterly unflappable – she never panicked. In the same self-assured way that she welcomed Gordon Brown, then prime minister, to the Nursing Times awards – a big occasion in healthcare – she dealt with friends' crises and problems calmly and effectively. She genuinely wanted to help, and she did. She didn't even get wound up when the taxi to take her to her wedding was late. While most people would have become at least a little agitated, she calmly explained to the taxi operator that she was due to get married quite soon.

Her poise and innate dignity remained intact while dealing with the horrible cancer that took her life. And not only did she bear her ordeal remarkably right up to the end, she also continued to ask and care about the welfare of those close to her.

Ann had a natural burial in a wicker casket of claret and blue to mark her passion for Burnley FC. Her humanist funeral service was very long because so many people wanted to pay tribute to the amazing person she was.

She leaves her husband Paul, her brother David, niece Amy, nephew Liam, god-daughter Anastasia and many friends.

## Christine Buckley



## Stewart McIntosh

Numerous tributes have been paid to journalist, trade unionist and activist Stewart McIntosh who has died aged 73.

After leaving school at 15 with no qualifications, he became a steel worker before going on to gain an honours degree in Scottish and English literature, receive commendations for his poetry, lead the National Union of Students Scotland, win 16 national press awards and found the Glasgow Marathon, a running magazine, and an online property magazine.

He joined the NUJ in 1983 and was a member of West of Scotland freelance branch, which he

later chaired, and in 2003 and 2004 was a member of Scottish Executive Council. The branch merged with Glasgow branch in 2010 and Stewart remained a member until 2019 when ill health led to a lapsed membership just short of qualifying for life membership at 36 years.

Born in Rutherglen in 1948, he started work at Hallside Steel Works to contribute to the family income. But he took to night shifts to study at Langside College by day, eventually gaining the qualifications to go to the University of Strathclyde.

There he won the university poetry prize, had his poetry published, won debating society awards and contributed to the student newspaper, becoming its editor. From president of Strathclyde Students' Union, he was elected president of the National Union of Students Scotland from 1975-77. He led large rallies against racism and in support of student grants and free tuition fees.

After graduation, he worked for the Scottish Trades Union Congress under general secretary Jimmy Milne. He moved to writing for the then Glasgow Herald and the Daily Record and to reporting for BBC Scotland.

In 1983, he went freelance, writing for The Sunday Times, Scottish Business Insider, The Scotsman, Sunday Herald, Business AM,

Estates Gazette and Property Week, among others. He specialised in property journalism, winning 16 national press awards and was named UK Property Journalist of the Year no fewer than nine times.

He also became a media coach with clients including Bank of Scotland, Royal Bank of Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, The Times Group, The Miller Group, Insider Custom Publishing and Editions Publishing. He called one of his seminars Trust Me – I'm a Journalist!, which clients did because he was highly respected in his field.

With two colleagues, he launched an online commercial property magazine, CompropScotland.com. It was not his only venture into publishing. A keen distance runner from his teens, he co-founded the monthly Scotland's Runner, which ran from 1986 until 1993.

He helped to start the Glasgow Marathon, now the Great Scottish Run. He himself won the Ben Lomond hill race and a top-100 place in the London Marathon with a time of 2:44:57.

The centre of his life, though, were his 'three girls' – wife Marion, daughters Morag and Rona – and his grandchildren.

## Francis Shennan



## Geoff Oakley

Quietly spoken, genteel and reticent, Geoff Oakley, who died in his 93rd year in September, could not have been further removed from the stereotype of a swashbuckling, hard-drinking, foul-mouthed editor in the style beloved of sitcoms.

In the face of a minor disaster, the immediate reaction of Oakley was to proclaim “crikey”.

Frustrated by something more serious – such as frequent draconian cuts to his impossibly small editorial budget, he would peer over his glasses and say: “Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad”, or perhaps invoke a favourite line from Gilbert and Sullivan.

In a career spanning 50 years, he was an influential journalist in the Irish midlands.

Jl Fanning, proprietor and editor of the Midland Tribune, was nominally editor of the Tullamore Tribune when it was founded in 1978 but from the beginning Geoff was the guiding spirit – his formal appointment as editor merely confirmed his status.

Oakley began his career in the long-defunct Offaly Chronicle in Birr, and joined Fanning’s Tribune when the rival title was acquired by the company.

Tall, lean and with ruffled hair, he frequently seemed distracted, preoccupied with a million thoughts as he churned out acres of copy on his battered Remington typewriter in the dimly lit, two-tabled newsroom in Church Street, Tullamore.

He had flawless shorthand and placed a premium on attention to detail. He was a model local newspaper editor and his role in securing the future of health services in his country has been widely acknowledged.

As a local newspaper editor, he was neither parochial nor provincial in his perspective. His editorial stance on social issues was courageous.

Geoff was a life member of the NUJ and a former officer of the Athlone and District branch. He often disagreed with union policy but his commitment to the union was never in question.

A kindly, rigorous mentor, he helped shape the career of many reporters, including this author.

Following the announcement of his passing, David Pate, former senior producer at CBC News

Novia Scotia, remarked of Oakley: “He taught me everything I know while never pointing out the obvious fact that I knew absolutely nothing when I started.”

His editorial stance on social issues was courageous while his commitment to fairness meant all sides were accorded coverage.

In addition, he was an exemplary critic and his drama and musical reviews, under the byline GVO, were eagerly awaited. His comprehensive reviews were sometimes celebratory, always painstaking in detail, unfailingly encouraging but never fawning.

A former critic with the Association of Irish Musical Societies, he had a love of music that was reflected in his membership and active participation in Tullamore Gramophone Society.

All who knew him, including his readers, knew of his love for and devotion to his late wife Dorothy. Despite his natural reserve, their holidays were the subject of endless quirky features, always written with style and humour at a time when foreign holidays were not the norm.

In retirement, Geoff and Dorothy enriched the lives of so many humans and animals through the Offaly Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

He never wavered from his commitment to his community or to his belief in the importance of local news.

## Séamus Dooley



## Tom Burke

Widespread tributes have been paid to retired Independent Newspapers photographer Tom Burke, who died suddenly at his home in Dublin. The public tributes to the NUJ life member were led by Taoiseach Micheál Martin

The Dublin-based photographer was the subject of affectionate cross-party tributes in both the Dáil and Seanad. A measure of the impact of his death was the fact that #TomBurke was trending on Twitter on Thursday evening, something that would have amused and puzzled the famously old-school photographer.

At the beginning of leader’s question, Leas Ceann Comhairle Catherine Connolly departed from precedent by paying tribute to the man who captured the comings and goings of the Irish parliament for most of his 50-year career. Tom photographed every taoiseach since Eamon de Valera and was a very familiar figure outside Leinster House.

Connolly extended sympathy to his family – wife Mel, his five children, Paul, Aidan, Yvonne, Derek and Elaine, and his six grandchildren.

She said: “Tom’s career as a photographer spanned an incredible 50 years, during which time he covered both the daily national and international news for the Irish Independent. For many of us, however, he will always be associated with Leinster House. It was his beat and he was certainly a semi-permanent fixture outside Kildare Street for decades.

“He was the first friendly face I saw when I was

elected in February 2016. He enjoyed a unique relationship with deputies and senators and had a great respect for elected representatives, and that respect was mutual. He also enjoyed a cordial relationship with all staff and was a welcoming presence for many workers and visitors.

“Tom was also a close friend of many members of the Oireachtas press gallery. The reaction to his passing is reflective of the standing and respect he had earned and deserved. It is also important to highlight the legacy Tom leaves behind in his [photographic] record of parliamentary politics, an integral part of political journalism but one not often given the value it deserves.”

Tánaiste Leo Varadkar joined in the tributes describing Tom as ‘a truly fine man’. In the Seanad Cathaoirleach, Mark Daly led the tributes.

While Tom would have appreciated the tributes, he would have no doubt been more impressed by the outpouring from former colleagues across the media, reflected in coverage in his own newspaper: “Tom Burke: a legendary photographer who was a true professional and a gentleman.”

## Séamus Dooley

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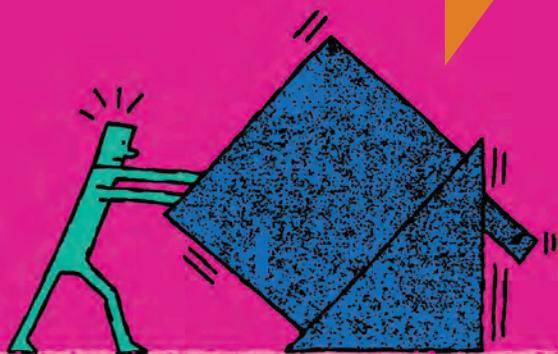
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**NUJ**  
NATIONAL UNION  
OF  
JOURNALISTS



### Alexander and Maria

by Soulla Christodoulou  
(The Conrad Press)

"Former teacher, Soulla Christodoulou, writes about real life, in all its messy glory while unwrapping the stigma of disability and highlighting the attraction of online connections. In Alexander and Maria, part set in Inverness, Scotland, she boldly examines love, relationships and trust and how second-time chances can be presented to us in the most delicious of serendipitous moments. Twitter, a married man with cerebral palsy and a single mum of a rebellious teenage daughter weave an authentic story which "explores new territory... beautifully written with empathy and understanding; a very different love story yet very much one for our times".

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Alexander-Maria-Soulla-Christodoulou/>

# Hot air failed to inflate global climate event



Despite expectations, COP26 was a damp squib, says **Chris Proctor**

**C**overage of the Glasgow climate conference reminded me of spoiled children at Christmas.

They desperately anticipate the Great Day in a frenzy of greed and expectation. And on the 25th they pass half an hour ripping thin paper from unwanted plastic, then spend a couple of weeks moaning about what a let-down it's all been.

For weeks before the UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, we frenzied with excitement about how vital and crucial it was going to be. This would be the meeting that would save the world – or plunge us all into everlasting turmoil and damnation. 'Is this how it is doomed to end?' asked David Attenborough.

Happily, there is always a silver lining, even as the planet scurries to extinction: it was boom time for our PR colleagues' expertise in honed and polished soundbites.

Tony Blair emerged from his counting house to advise: "Time is short – but it is not too late." Boris trumped this with: "It's one minute to midnight on that doomsday clock." UN secretary-general António Guterres' team came up with: "Either we stop our addiction to fossil fuels – or it stops us." Business news channel CNBC talked about "humanity's last chance".

By the time the conference kicked off, the build-up and pre-sales had reached Bond-film proportions.

Indeed, had the film been delayed, it could have been launched as a double whammy alongside COP26. No Time To Die would have worked as a joint title, saving considerably on publicity paper.

Even the Daily Mail was fascinated as it was able to report on house prices: well, flat rentals. Apparently, there were so many delegates, observers, experts, protesters, media, hangers-on, documentary-makers, fossil-fuel lobbyists and double-glazing salespersons anxious to be seen in Glasgow that locals could rent out a sleeping bag in a coal hole for a king's ransom.

Admittedly, this currency is likely to decline in value with the accession of Charles. Who, incidentally, said that COP26 was "quite literally the last-chance saloon". The notion of Glasgow's last-chance saloon is genuinely frightening.

The actual conference proceedings were largely skirted over. No self-respecting journalist wants to be found in a conference hall with a notebook. The speeches are predictable, usually aired in advance and their technical calculations and rampant statistics make for very dry copy.

Besides, a news story needs to answer the question: "So what are you going to do?" When the answer is "nothing until the middle of the century", newsdesks lose interest. Waiting three decades for movement makes the gestation period of an elephant seem brisk. Not that there are likely to be any elephants by 2050.

Interest waned further when the UN pointed out that rich countries would need to give £100 billion a year to bail out poorer nations if we were to reach COP26 targets.

This moved the conference into fairyland the week after Rishi Sunak reaffirmed that the UK government would continue to cut foreign aid spending by £5 billion a year. And there

was something about a 'Paris Rulebook'. Rulebook! This was COP26, not PC Plod. Besides, we don't do rules in the UK.

Has no one noticed that Northern Ireland Protocol in the wastepaper bin? So we skipped over the debates and boring stuff and moved swiftly to the tradition of finding a scapegoat to blame for letting us all down: the equivalent of the children moaning about their disappointing Christmas.

The Saudis, Japan and Australia had been trying to water down a UN report on the need to move away from fossil fuels. Russia and China didn't bother showing up, thus spoiling the show and cutting out the caviar.

And the Big Bad Wolf himself, Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro, perhaps advisedly, did a body swerve. His deputy explained that this was because "everyone would throw stones at him". Quite rightly, too: since he took office in 2019, deforestation in his country has increased by 45 per cent.

Once the big boys had jetted out of town, and we'd noted that none of them had come on bikes, we were left with 18-year-old Swede Greta Thunberg to summarise proceedings: "Net zero by 2050. Blah, blah, blah. Net zero. Blah, blah, blah. Climate neutral. Blah, blah, blah."

It was a sorry conclusion to 12 days of speechifying featuring the majority of global leaders and involving media coverage from all over the world on an issue that young people put at the top of their political aspirations.

And, after all the words we've recorded, filmed, scribbled and tweeted, the image that endures is that single, slight figure with its 'Fridays for Future' placard.

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The notion of Glasgow's last-chance saloon is genuinely frightening  
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