

the Journalist

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Sub-editor goes to war

Journalist's terrifying stint in Ukraine



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“Welcome to the latest edition of The Journalist which comes amid the final countdown to a new Prime Minister and in the throes of what some describe as a summer of discontent.

So far, we've had the first national rail strikes for 30 years, the threat of action at Heathrow and many warnings from unions that employers must offer realistic pay as inflation spirals. In our own industry, the NUJ is balloting for industrial action at Reach, the UK's biggest news publisher.

In this issue, we go behind the scenes at the RMT as their communications officer John Millington presented their public face amid the first strikes and unexpectedly launched a media star in Mick Lynch, the general secretary. He was unflappable in the face of sometimes hostile media treatment, answered questions straight-forwardly, struck a chord with the public and became a TikTok hit.

And if you're getting ready to travel in your time off over the summer, few of us would dare to do what Jeff Farrell did. He took leave from his sub-editing job to go to Ukraine and report the war as a freelance. Without support he quickly got to grips with finding local fixers, reporting in a war zone, filing developing stories and keeping safe. Read his gripping account in our cover feature.

See you in the early autumn.

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Union ballots for strike action at Reach after pay deadlock

THE NUJ is encouraging members in Reach, Britain's biggest news publisher, to vote for industrial action in a dispute over pay.

The decision to ballot at the owner of the Daily Mirror, Daily Express and a host of major regional titles and associated websites such as the Manchester Evening News and Birmingham Live, follows deadlock in annual pay talks. Both sides also had talks at the conciliation service Acas but they were unproductive.

Reach's final offer of three per cent or £750 minimum was overwhelmingly rejected by the NUJ chapels in June. The escalating cost of living crisis, fuelled by rising inflation on top of historic low pay, led members to conclude



PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

that the company's offer failed acknowledge the contribution they provided to the success of the company.

Last year, the company made an across-the-board award of just one per cent or £350 minimum.

Reach journalists will be encouraged by the union to

vote yes to both strike action and to action short of strikes.

There are currently around 1,000 union members in Reach but the number is increasing with scores joining since chapels took the decision to ballot.

Chris Morley, NUJ Reach national coordinator, said:

"Balloting for industrial action of all members at Reach is an unfortunate landmark which we hoped we would never have to deploy. A sensible, negotiated settlement would be best not only for our members, but the business too.

"However, journalists' pay at Reach is inadequate for the amazing and crucial work they do – especially in midst of runaway inflation that threatens to pauperise many of those on the lowest pay. The company's final offer is an insult to our members' ingenuity and creativity – never mind their hard work with stressful variable shifts, weekend working and dealing with a sometimes, hostile and abusive public."

inbrief...

PARTIES URGED TO AXE MEDIA CHARGES

The NUJ in an alliance of media and free speech groups is calling for charges for journalists attending Conservative and Labour party conferences to be dropped. The group said £125 imposed by the Conservatives would hit freelancers, smaller outlets and local media. Labour had imposed £5 but now says that it is a voluntary carbon offset charge.

SUSAN MCKAY IS NEW PRESS OMBUDSMAN

Susan McKay, an experienced journalist and author, and a former director of the National Women's Council of Ireland, has been appointed the new Press Ombudsman of Ireland. She takes over from Peter Feeney, who is retiring after eight years in the job, in October.

ARRON BANKS LOSES HIS LIBEL CASE

Brexit campaigner Arron Banks lost his libel case against investigative journalist Carole Cadwalladr. Mr Banks, founder Leave.EU, sued Ms Cadwalladr for defamation over two instances in 2019 - one in a TED Talk video and another in a tweet. Mr Banks claimed he was defamed after comments Ms Cadwalladr made about his relationship with the Russian state.

Fears over BBC merger plans

THE BBC is to merge its World News and News Channel into one rolling news service with the loss of about 70 jobs in London. The new channel is expected to start next April and will broadcast around the world. UK viewers will have some specific UK

content at certain times of the day.

The NUJ fears that the merger will result in reduced coverage of UK elections, party conferences, local events, and special briefings.

Past consideration of closing the BBC News channel was abandoned

following the assessment of its benefit to audiences.

Paul Siegert, NUJ national broadcasting organiser, said: "Recent fluid events in parliament illustrate why there is a need for a dedicated rolling UK news and why plans for a new channel covering both UK and world news simply won't work."

Remembering Shireen

THE REALITIES of life – and death – in the occupied Palestinian territories burst into the heart of the British journalism establishment in a beautiful and moving memorial on 28 June for Shireen Abu Akleh. The service at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street - the 'journalists' church' – celebrated the life and work of Shireen, who became known as Palestinians' 'voice to the world' in 24 years of reporting for Al Jazeera.

Shireen was shot in Jenin on 11 May. Friends and colleagues paid tribute, in English and Arabic, and the gathering of distinguished journalists and media figures heard music including singer Reem Kelani. The service was initiated by former NUJ London Freelance Branch chair Pennie Quinton and supported by Artists for Palestine, the Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK and by the branch.

Recognition deal win at Verso

The radical publishing house Verso and the NUJ have agreed union recognition after extensive talks. The union can now negotiate on staff pay and terms and conditions. The NUJ Verso chapel said: "We're really excited to be recognised and start negotiations. The publishing sector is having a moment of self-examination and we're excited to join our colleagues who have already begun organising across the industry, including those in Verso's US office. For over 50 years Verso Books has been a leading publisher of emancipatory politics."



NUJ wins backing for broadcasters at the TUC LGBT+ conference

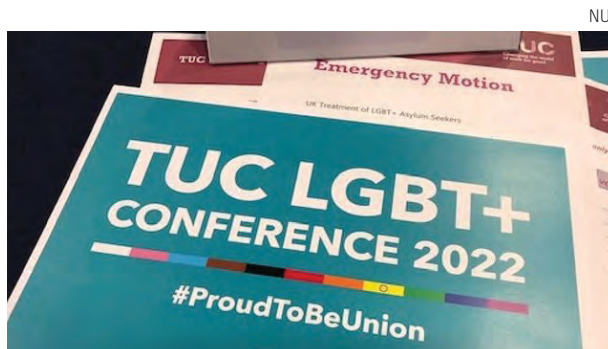
DELEGATES at the TUC's LGBT+ conference backed an NUJ motion calling for support for the BBC and Channel 4.

The motion, which appealed to the union movement to campaign to protect the BBC's funding and universal output and to oppose the privatisation of Channel 4, won unanimous support at this year's TUC LGBT+ conference in London.

It said: "Channel 4 has been a champion of LGBT+ issues – both in its factual output and in innovative, challenging dramas such as *It's a Sin*. The BBC has also – across radio, television and online – introduced LGBT+ coverage and representation in mainstream broadcasting, including appointing an LGBT+ news correspondent."

The main theme of the two-day conference, held just before the 50th anniversary of the first London Pride march, was the rights of trans and non-binary workers. A number of motions highlighted the high level of workplace discrimination experienced by trans people, with almost half reporting being bullied or harassed at work according to TUC research. The research found that just one in four managers said that they had a policy setting out support for trans (including non-binary) workers who wished to transition to live as another gender.

The poll of around 1,000 HR managers – run for the TUC by YouGov – found only one in eight employers monitor their LGBT pay gap and 21 per cent did not have policies to support LGBT staff.



Recent research suggests there is a 16 per cent LGBT pay gap, with LGBT staff effectively earning on average £6,703 less per year.

Delegates voted for motions that called on the TUC to produce guidance affiliates could use with their employers to support trans employees and promote trans equality in the workplace.

NUJ vice-president Natasha Hirst seconded an emergency motion calling for an end to the stigmatisation of the LGBT+ community, especially in the reporting of health and in particular the reports linking the spread of monkeypox to gay and bisexual men.

She said the NUJ was in solidarity with the motion but also called on delegates to have solidarity with the NUJ in its efforts to protect standards of journalism.



Channel 4 has been a champion of LGBT+ issues - both in its factual output and in innovative, challenging dramas

NUJ conference motion

Dutch union's freelance deal

THE DUTCH journalists' union has agreed a minimum hourly rate for all freelances working for media group DPG. The deal struck by Nederlandse Vereniging van Journalisten sets a new rate for freelances somewhat higher than the

same media group's house agreement for employees - a reflection of the extra expenses that freelances have to meet.

DPG Nederland owns the major Dutch dailies Volkskrant, Trouw and Parool. The last two of these

started life as stencilled underground Resistance newsletters in the Second World War. It also owns many regional and local titles in the Netherlands. DPG Belgium is one of Belgium's biggest media groups.

Under the new deal, freelances with DPG in the Netherlands will earn a minimum 30 euro per hour. They should negotiate more, based on their experience or the nature of the work. Photographers will be paid for a minimum of two hours per job.

There will be standardised rates for freelances working for the media group. The minimum hourly rate is 167 per cent of the hourly rate for staff. This reflects extra costs to freelances including insurance, social security contributions, pension contributions.

LYNCHPICS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



Media groups lobby Bristol mayor

SEVERAL media organisations have written to Marvin Rees, the mayor of Bristol, asking him to reverse a decision to ban local democracy reporters (LDRs) from his media briefings. However, the Labour mayor, a former journalist, said that there was no ban.

Controversy was sparked when Alex Seabrook, a LDR for the Bristol Post and Bristol Live, questioned whether Rees should have flown to Canada for a 14-minute TED talk on climate change. Saskia Konynenburg, head of communications at Bristol City Council,

questioned the reporter's credentials, saying he wasn't a newspaper journalist. Seabrook was then barred from press conferences along with another Bristol Post LDR, Adam Postans.

The barring has led other media outlets, including the BBC, to boycott the mayor's press conferences.

The NUJ's Bristol branch said: "Anyone in an elected role has a duty to be answerable to his or her electorate. We reiterate that the question to which Rees and his staff took offence."

Russia bans British journalists from entering the country

NEARLY 30 journalists and members of the British media have been banned by Russia from entering the country.

Russia's foreign ministry said this was in response to western sanctions and the "spreading of false information about Russia", as well as "anti-Russian actions of the British government". The ban affects some of the best-known broadcast journalists, national newspaper editors and the director general of the BBC.

The foreign ministry said the British journalists on the list "are involved in the deliberate dissemination of false and one-sided information about Russia and events in Ukraine and Donbas".

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "This is a deliberate move to stifle press freedom and curtail accurate reporting about events in Russia. This tit-for-tat targeting of senior media figures and journalists is clearly intended to send a chilling message at the same time as curtailing reporting by the high-profile, experienced journalists singled out in this list."

Those on the list are: at the Daily Telegraph, editor-in-chief Chris Evans, columnist Con Coughlin and journalists James Rothwell and Joseph Barnes; at the BBC, Richard Sharp, chair of the board of governors, Timothy Davie, director general, Clive Myrie, correspondent and news presenter, presenter Nick Robinson and correspondents Orla Guerin, Paul Adams and Nick Beake; Channel 4 journalists and presenters Alexander Thomson and Catherine



Newman; at Sky News, chief correspondent Stuart Ramsay and journalist and presenter Sophy Ridge; at The Times, John Witherow, editor-in-chief, and Larisa Brown, military news editor; at the Guardian, editor-in-chief Katharine Viner and correspondents Shaun Walker, Luke Harding, Peter Beaumont and Emma Graham-Harrison; ITV correspondent Dan Rivers; Edward Verity, editor-in-chief, Daily Mail; Christian Broughton, editor-in-chief, The Independent; Mark Galeotti, political scientist; Gideon Rachman, Financial Times correspondent; Dominic Lawson, Sunday Times and Daily Mail columnist; and Lawrence Freedman, Sunday Times columnist.

On the frontline in Ukraine, Pages 12-14

inbrief...

BBC APOLOGISES TO WHISTLEBLOWER

The BBC has apologised and will pay a 'significant sum' to a former Panorama journalist who alerted it to suspicions over the way Martin Bashir secured his 1995 interview with Princess Diana. Mark Killick had been treated as a troublemaker and managers claimed he leaked information because he was jealous as he had not been on the interview team.

SUBSCRIBERS BOOST ECONOMIST'S PROFITS

The Economist has seen profits rise because of increased subscriptions. In its annual report, The Economist Newspaper Ltd said its adjusted operating profit was up 11 per cent to £46.4 million, its best figure since £47 million in 2016. Subscribers in March totalled 1.18 million, compared with 1.12 million in March 2021 and 1.08 million in 2020.

FORBES DECIDES AGAINST MERGER

Business news publisher Forbes has halted a plan to go public through a merger with a special-purpose acquisition company (SPAC). It cited the poor SPAC market, indicating that the deal may not have done credit to Forbes' underlying value. It may now explore bids from private buyers.

Russian media union forced to close

RUSSIA is forcing the closure of the Journalists' and Media Workers' Union.

Following a lawsuit filed by Moscow's prosecutor to dissolve the Journalists' and Media Workers' Union

(JMWU), the union was ordered to provide large amounts of data spanning meeting minutes, accounts, and information related to publications. The deadline imposed of one working day

was flagged with Moscow's deputy prosecutor Sergei Savenkov, accompanied by a request for "reasonable time" to provide requested files.

The union's co-chair Sofia

Rusova and union representatives were questioned by prosecutors about the union's activities, and in July the JMWU received confirmation of a ruling to dissolve the union.

IFJ backs Ukrainian media workers

THE INTERNATIONAL Federation of Journalists (IFJ) congress gave its full support to journalists in Ukraine and welcomed Serhiy Shturkhetysky from the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine (IMTUU) as a delegate.

He told the 250-strong congress, which was held in Muscat, Oman: "Thank you, IFJ, for all the help that you have given to my union and to my country. The conditions suffered by my members are intolerable and knowing we are part of an international family is one of the things that keeps us going."

The IFJ is running a fund to support Ukrainian journalists and foreign media workers who are covering the war. Assistance is being co-ordinated by solidarity centres, which were set up by the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine supported by other journalists' organisations including the IMTUU and the NUJ.



Dom Phillips laid to rest in Brazil

Dom Phillips, the British reporter and NUJ member murdered in the Amazon, has been laid to rest in a cemetery in Niterói near Rio de Janeiro. The 57-year-old freelance, who had written for the Guardian, the Washington Post and The New York Times, was researching a book with Bruno Pereira, former head of isolated tribes at federal indigenous affairs agency Funai, when they disappeared in the remote Javari valley in June. Both men were shot. Dom's memorial was held after Bruno's funeral, which was attended by indigenous peoples.

Scotland to set up independent public interest journalism institute

THE NUJ has welcomed the Scottish government's pledge to create an accurate, reliable news about important issues.

Angus Robertson (right), the cabinet secretary for constitution, external affairs and culture, announced the move following recommendations from an independent working group on public interest journalism, which included the NUJ.

He said he would "bring together institutions and stakeholders at a cross-industry roundtable in autumn 2022, to consider the best model for an institute".

John Toner, NUJ national organiser for Scotland, said: "Scotland desperately needs an organisation to champion public interest news following year-on-year cuts and the loss of many titles. The minister must show his commitment to this body, which would be totally independent from the government, by looking at ways to provide funding to get it set up."

The working group was set up to look at measures and make recommendations to the government to support news outlets following Covid, the shift to digital publishing and the closure of many Scottish newspapers and cuts to journalist numbers.

The group has called on the Scottish government to take up issues with the UK government, such as putting pressure on Westminster to give the Digital Marketing Unit sufficient powers to regulate the tech companies, which have benefited by receiving most of the digital advertising revenue.

DPA PICTURE ALLIANCE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



The NUJ's Edinburgh freelance branch was instrumental in persuading the government to set up the working group.

Branch chair Joyce McMillan, said: "As a member of the working group on public interest journalism in Scotland, and a lifelong NUJ member and activist, I very much welcome the Scottish government's response to our report, particularly the Scottish government's strong support in principle for the setting up of an independent Public Interest Journalism Institute in Scotland.

"Scotland has a long and proud journalistic tradition, and it will be vital, in the coming years, to have in place a cross-industry institution that can act as a focal point for discussion and action on how to ensure that tradition survives, thrives and continues to develop in the fast-changing 21st century media landscape."



Scotland has a long and proud journalistic tradition, and it will be vital to have a cross-industry institution to ensure that tradition survives and thrives

Joyce McMillan
Chair, Edinburgh
Freelance Branch

Longest serving editor dies

NUJ member Ian McCormack, who was thought to be the longest-serving editor in the UK when he retired two years ago, has died aged 74.

McCormack edited the weekly West Highland Free Press, based in Broadford on the Isle of Skye.

After he retired, he was presented with a special recognition award at the Highlands and Islands Media Awards and the lifetime achievement award at the Scottish Press Awards.

The newspaper reported his death, saying: "A very sad

day for all connected with the Free Press as we bring news of the passing of Ian McCormack.

"Ian, who retired in January 2020, made an immeasurable contribution to his community and to Scottish journalism as editor

of the paper for 44 of its 50 years. We will miss him."

McCormack began his career at the Kilmarnock Standard then worked on Glasgow-based daily The Herald.

He joined the West Highland Free Press as a reporter in October 1975, and was quickly promoted.



Paramilitaries threaten journalist

THE UNION has strongly condemned threats from a loyalist paramilitary group against a Belfast-based journalist.

The union is urging the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to conduct a thorough investigation following the threats against the NUJ member.

The reporter, who works for the Sunday World title was informed of the threat by PSNI officers.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "This is yet another cowardly threat by

thugs trying to silence journalists and a free media.

"The union will do everything to support the journalist concerned and we call on those behind this threat to lift it immediately.

"Death threats and threats of other violence have become a regular occurrence for many journalists in Northern Ireland but there is nothing normal about this scenario.

"The NUJ calls on the PSNI to vigorously pursue those behind all threats to journalists and bring them before the courts."

Wales TUC backs union's aims to rebuild journalism in the nation

THE NUJ gained support for its campaigns to rebuild journalism in Wales and against Channel 4 privatisation at the Wales Trade Union Congress, held in Llandudno in May.

The trade union movement supported the NUJ and its work with the Welsh government's working party on public interest journalism.

Wales' executive council member David Nicholson told congress about the tripartite working group, which will make recommendations later this year to media and culture minister Dawn Bowden.

The group was formed after the media recovery plan for Wales was drawn up in the wake of Covid-19.

"The NUJ has been campaigning for a long time about the declining and weak media landscape in Wales. The working group is looking at radical solutions," Nicholson said.

Delegates also agreed to fight the privatisation of Channel 4 after an emergency motion moved by the NUJ. Nicholson told congress that the Tory bid to privatise the public-service broadcaster was motivated by "spite and an overwhelming urge to further enrich the super-rich".

He said: "Westminster media minister Nadine Dorries had lied repeatedly to try to justify the sell-off, claiming almost all responses to a consultation on Channel 4's future were in favour of privatisation when 96 per cent were in fact against."

Dorries had also said that investment in broadcasting rival Channel 5 increased after it was "privatised, but channel 5 has never been publicly owned", he added.

Equity's Simon Curtis said the logic of privatisation was "censorship through the profit motive", noting it would restrict the range of voices heard in the broadcast media.

An economic study by accountancy group EY found if the publisher broadcaster model and public service obligations were removed from Channel 4, £2.1 billion could be slashed from the supply chain over a 10-year period and there would be 2,400 fewer jobs each year.

Congress agreed that its general council would work with unions and the creative industry in Wales to campaign against the privatisation of Channel 4.

The NUJ also backed and amended a motion from broadcasting union Bectu condemning the two-year BBC licence fee freeze.



inbrief...

LAW ON FAIR WORK GETS NEARER

The Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill was laid before the Senedd in June. The proposed law will establish a statutory social partnership council including unions and create duties on public bodies, promote fair work and create a duty for socially responsible public purchasing. This follows pressure from unions on the Welsh Government for fair work laws going back four years.

UNIONS TO HELP SET UP BROADCAST BODY

As part of a deal with Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Government is setting up a shadow broadcast authority for Wales. The Federation of Entertainment Unions in Wales has been invited to sit on the body to set up the broadcasting authority and will be represented by Carwyn Donovan from Bectu.

CONCERN OVER WELSH SERVICE CASH SHIFT

The NUJ's Welsh Executive Council has written to media minister Dawn Bowden expressing concern about a £100,000 budget cut by the Books Council of Wales to Welsh-language magazine Golwg 360. The union has also complained that the £100,000 has been given to Newsquest for a rival Welsh language service.

Minister promises to support NUJ's work

DAWN BOWDEN, the Welsh culture and media minister, pledged continued support for the work of the NUJ in improving journalism in Wales at a fringe meeting at the conference.

The NUJ spoke about its work on the tripartite working party on public interest journalism in Wales set up by Bowden. She said the Welsh government had given the group £100,000 this year.

The meeting heard that the public interest journalism working party was looking at journalism in Wales as a public service and creating a more diverse pool of people coming into profession.

The meeting was staged by the NUJ and other cultural industry unions in Wales.

Welsh TUC general secretary Shav Taj thanked Bowden for state support for freelancers during the pandemic.

Nicholson is elected to general council

THE NUJ'S David Nicholson was elected to the Wales TUC general council for the next two years.

Nicholson is a freelance journalist and a member of the NUJ's Wales' executive council and of its national executive council.

He said: "It is an honour to have been elected to the general council at the Wales TUC and to represent our union and members in Wales. The Welsh government works closely with the trade union movement and I will ensure that our union plays a full part in the vital work of the Wales TUC."

Nicholson has worked for trade unions, local government and the charity sector, as well as writing for newspapers and works at the Caerphilly Observer as a reporter for three days a week.

He is a founding member of CommsCymru, a network for communications professionals in public services in Wales



Roy Jones gets warm welcome

Veteran journalist and NUJ member Roy Jones delighted friends when he appeared at the Wales TUC. Jones, 92, been experiencing ill health but made the short journey along the coast from his home in Rhos-on-Sea. "It was brilliant to see Roy on such good form," said David Nicholson, Wales TUC executive council member. "He insisted on coming along to the Morning Star fringe meeting and his was the first hand up to ask questions and explain he was born a few months after the paper was founded in 1930." Jones plans to resurrect the North Wales coastal branch and continue as an NUJ activist.

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Creating the monster and bringing it down



The media oversaw Boris Johnson's career, says **Raymond Snoddy**

The phenomenon that is Boris Johnson was largely created by the right-wing national newspapers and, ironically, they too were responsible for his nemesis when it arrived at last.

The Daily Telegraph is probably more guilty than any for smoothing Johnson's path to 10 Downing Street. For years, the paper happily published his ridiculous or grossly exaggerated stories from Brussels, which helped to poison the public mind about the European Union.

Former Telegraph editor Sir Max Hastings sacked Johnson and later warned he was totally unsuited to be prime minister of this country.

But the paper gave him a lucrative perch as a columnist and supported his premiership. It praised him for 'getting Brexit done' when years later the chaos, political instability in Northern Ireland and widespread economic damage to the UK are with us still.

Now Sir Max says: "We have had government by clown and it is not funny."

Papers such as the Daily Express, the Daily Mail and The Sun were witless cheerleaders for the worst prime minister in UK history, underplaying or ignoring behaviour that would have brought down any of his predecessors.

There was always going to be a problem of credibility for the right-wing press when Johnson crashed and fell to earth, which was only a matter of time.

How then to explain their enduring support for a leader who misled MPs, lied as easily as he breathed, presided over riotous misrule in Downing Street and could face criminal charges of misdemeanour in public office.

The writing was on the wallpaper thanks to the reporting of the

Partygate scandals by Pippa Crerar of the Daily Mirror and Paul Brand of ITV.

Yet it was Johnson's handling of the curious case of deputy chief whip Chris Pincher that proved a scandal too far.

The Sun broke the story of pinching Pincher while the Mail on Sunday reported that Johnson had described the whip as 'handsy, that's a problem. Pincher by name Pincher by nature', before promoting him.

The political history of these strange times will record that the coup de grace came on the BBC's Today programme from Lord McDonald, the retired senior civil servant who insisted that Johnson had been personally briefed on Pincher's behaviour – and then Johnson was gone.

Any contrition from the right-wing papers about the prime minister they had supported through thick and thin? Hell no.

Rather like Johnson himself, they looked for someone else to blame.

What Have They Done? was the Mail's take on the day of resignations before attacking the 'utterly duplicitous' Nadhim Zahawi, while the Mail on Sunday had its knives out for former chancellor Rishi Sunak.

The Sun admitted Johnson may have been 'flawed', a euphemism in anybody's money, but was still 'a giant figure in our nation's story, the most significant politician since Margaret Thatcher'.

There was no 'mea maxima culpa', as he put it, from Allister Heath, editor of the Sunday Telegraph. Johnson had been the right choice in 2019 because he saved Britain from Corbyn and the remainers.

The prime minister's performance may have been 'atrocious, delusional and indefensible' as he used his Brexit triumph to impose 'socialism and eco-extremis' on the UK. Despite this,

according to Heath, Johnson will be remembered as one of this country's most consequential prime ministers.

Let's wait for the result of the inquiry into whether Johnson misled parliament, the official inquiry into government handling of the Covid pandemic and to see whether Brexit has any advantages to compensate for a 15 per cent drop in UK trade before making such grand judgements.

There is a coda to this gothic tale. Johnson is gone (or soon will be) and Labour leader Keir Starmer has been cleared of any wrongdoing in the Durham Miners Hall.

The Daily Mail failed to retain a shred of grace in its coverage of the beer and curry supper. It accused the Durham police of 'bottling it' as Starmer was 'piling pressure' on them by promising to resign if given a fixed penalty notice.

You had to read to the very end of the Mail piece to see Durham Police said that 'following the application of the evidential Full Code Test... there is no case to answer... due to the application of an exception, namely reasonably necessary work'.

We can now look forward to Johnson's resignation honours list with the certainty that Paul Dacre, the man responsible for calling judges enemies of the people, will get a peerage and will be able to sit in the House of Lords with some of those judges.

We can be equally sure that the Daily Mail – with or without Dacre – will circle the wagons around whoever emerges from the Grand National size leadership field, however deluded, delusional, compromised or incompetent they turn out to be.

At least there will be no journalists among them and, given recent events, that is probably a good thing.

Any contrition from the right-wing papers about the prime minister they had supported through thick and thin? Hell no

Newcastle

Ruth Addicott hears from journalists about what it's like to live and work in Newcastle

W

hether you're crossing the Tyne by train or sprinting over the bridge with 57,000 others on the Great North Run, there aren't many cities like Newcastle.

With its world-renowned heritage and industrial past – at the start of the 20th century, half the world's ships were made in the north east – the city is now a leading cultural destination and was named one of the top 20 second cities in the world last year by Rough Guides.

Famous for its football, its eponymous brown ale and unforgettable nights out, Newcastle also has a long tradition of newspaper publishing.

The Chronicle dates back to 1764, The Journal was founded in 1832 and they remain the city's daily newspapers today. Additionally, there's Sunday Sun, England's biggest-selling regional Sunday. All three are owned by Reach and feed the website ChronicleLive. They also employ the biggest editorial team in the region.

Further afield, there is the Shields Gazette, Sunderland Echo, Hartlepool Mail and The Northern Echo based in Darlington.

Press agency North News & Pictures also has a base in the city with a small team of journalists, photographers and videographers supplying stories to nationals.

Lee Ryder was born and bred in Newcastle and is chief Newcastle United writer at The Chronicle. A devoted football fan, he's interviewed local legends such as Sir Bobby Robson, Kevin Keegan, David Ginola and Tino Asprilla.

One of the most memorable interviews was with international goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon when Newcastle

played Juventus. He was happy to talk but answered in Italian.

"A local restaurant worker at one of the pizza places on the Quayside helped us translate his quotes and it made for a great story," he recalls.

"I'm probably a bit biased being a Geordie, but it's a newsy patch – there's always something going on whether you are a news or sports writer."

One of the biggest challenges for local sports reporters is getting face-to-face access to players and managers. This was an issue even before the pandemic struck.

"When Mike Ashley was the owner at Newcastle, he would not speak at all, so we had 14 years of checking and clarifying with people around him," says Ryder.

"On a brighter note, the new ownership has made a great start with Amanda Staveley giving us an interview within hours of buying the club."

The city is also a big base for broadcasting. BBC Newcastle produces TV programmes Look North, Sunday Politics and Inside Out and, across the river in Gateshead, Tyne Tees produces ITV News Tyne Tees. Tyne and Wear TV is another local TV channel for Tyneside and Wearside.

As well as BBC Radio Newcastle, there are a number of commercial radio stations. Metro Radio and TFM (operated by Bauer) moved to new studios on Grey Street in the city centre last year. Global has a base in the centre and produces regional news bulletins for Capital, Heart and Smooth. Radio Tyneside, Spice FM and Pride FM are community stations, run mostly by volunteers.

The two universities, Newcastle and Northumbria, both offer media and journalism courses and various other initiatives such as hyperlocal publication Jesmond Local and the Civic Journalism Lab (CJL), a forum for student, community and professional journalists.

The CJL was started by freelance writer, editor and podcaster Ian Wylie, who saw an opportunity while teaching

Support and inspiration

Learning lab

The Civic Journalism Lab runs masterclasses, hack days and workshops on topics such as data journalism, making TikTok videos, reporting on race and handling abuse on

social media. David Baines, Newcastle NUJ branch secretary, says: "These sessions can be useful for freelancers in particular who wish to add new strings to their bows – and perhaps

enter new markets." civicjournalismmlab.org

A jewel of a library

One of Newcastle's hidden gems, the Lit & Phil is the largest independent library

outside London with 200,000 books, 20,000 CDs and LPs, comfy armchairs and a hatch serving tea and coffee. Established in 1825 and housed in a neoclassical building, it holds talks and events. Past speakers include Oscar Wilde and Edith Sitwell. litandphil.org.uk

Help for refugees

The Newcastle and Sunderland NUJ branches have been welcoming refugee journalists. David Baines, Newcastle branch secretary, says one has a background in sports journalism. "We are trying to help him to get back on his feet," he says.

at Newcastle University. "In a relatively small region like the north east, it can be easy for journalists to feel isolated and disconnected, so I saw an opportunity to offer student, community and professional journalists a chance to meet on a regular basis to learn and collaborate together," he says.

Wylie moved to Newcastle from London in 1993 after falling in love with the region and local people. He was offered shifts at The Guardian in London which turned into a permanent part-time job as a section editor but, despite several job offers, was not tempted to move back.

"For the entirety of my 16-year career with The Guardian, I lived in Newcastle, taking the East Coast Main Line train to King's Cross and staying with friends in London for a night or two before taking the train back home again at the end of the week," he says.

"I'd been made redundant from a job very early in my career and had promised myself that I would never again put all my eggs in one basket. I remember one of my bosses at The Guardian telling me that I would never make it in journalism if I didn't move to London or the south east. But I lasted longer at the newspaper than she did."

He still writes for The Guardian and the Financial Times, and produces audio content for Monocle magazine and Management Today.

Journalist Jo Dunbar also moved from London, where she had held staff jobs at Good Housekeeping, Woman, Bella and The Mail on Sunday: "I found very quickly when I arrived that regional media work wasn't going to pay the bills – the major regional newspaper had laid off lots of staff so that wasn't an avenue I could explore," she says.

Dunbar started using her skills in other ways and did editorial consultancy and now freelances for nationals including Grazia, The Telegraph and Mother & Baby magazine.

One of the things she loves about Newcastle is how

"Newcastle is a very newsy city, as is the North East, so as a journalist, there is plenty to get your teeth stuck into."

Steven Hugill, North East Times

"It's affordable, has good amenities, is close to the coast and countryside and has fewer traffic jams."

Ian Wylie, writer, editor, podcaster

"The friendliness of everybody in the city is the main thing – most people are warm and kind-hearted."

Lee Ryder, The Chronicle

accessible it is. "It doesn't take long to get to any part, so I can arrange meetings easily and also find myself a change of scenery if I fancy working somewhere other than my home office," she says. "Aside from the coast being close by, the city centre's architecture and famous quayside are fantastic landscapes to gaze upon." As well as an international airport and good train links (London is less than three hours and Edinburgh an hour and a half away), there are various co-working spaces at reasonable rates.

As for local and regional magazines, the pay varies and they are run by small teams. There is lifestyle glossy Living North, business and leisure magazine Northern Insight, North East Times and free listings and entertainment guides The Crack, NARC and NE Volume.

Steven Hugill is editor of North East Times and commutes from nearby (and now infamous) Barnard Castle.

"Newcastle is a great city," he says. "It sounds a cliché, but there really is so much to do and the people are really friendly. Take a walk along the Quayside and you've got the impressive Sage Gateshead music and arts venue that looms over the River Tyne and the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art nearby. Plans have also been approved to create a new international conference and exhibition centre overlooking the river. In the city centre, you've got great cultural venues such as the Laing Art Gallery, which will this year host the Lindisfarne Gospels."

Travel a few miles north and there are the spectacular windswept beaches of Northumberland, while a 15-minute train journey south is the historic city of Durham.

Its proud heritage, architecture, humour and straight-talking Geordies all give Newcastle its character, but there is more than that. There is a depth, a warmth, grit and resilience to this city that is not only inspiring but makes you want to go back.



Enraged by the horrors unfolding after the Russian invasion, **Jeff Farrell** took leave from his newspaper job to go to Ukraine and report on the war

On the frontline in Ukraine

An air raid siren wails. An explosion erupts, a deep rumble, and the ground vibrates. Lights flash on and off in cafes and bars. People who had been sipping cocktails and beers run for shelter under an archway below a building.

This is the city centre of Lviv in western Ukraine in late spring. I was standing with two rucksacks bound for the train to Kyiv, a 15-hour railway trip east. I had been in Lviv for two days and wanted to make my way slowly towards the front line in the east to see some action.

Now I have stopped in my tracks. The ground still vibrating. I'm confused. My eyes darting. My heart pounding. Should I run with others for shelter under the archway or take cover in the bomb shelter back in my hotel three blocks away?

I decide on the latter and whip out my phone and film myself rushing to the hotel. A soldier standing bravely on the corner hears me talking in English as I film, my words fast and blurted, and shouts: "Get back to your hotel."

I rush down the steps into the restaurant-cum-bomb shelter in my hotel on Lista Street. The guests are a mix of Americans, one is ex military and the other is a security contractor, and Ukrainian guests. Swilling beer. Finishing dinner. The only one in a panic is me.

Julia, the bartender, casually pulls the beer tap, filling a glass.

"I can't believe it," I said, "I've never heard a bomb in my life."

She shrugs. "I'm not afraid," she says, serving me the drink. "You get used to it."

I sip my beer, gripping the glass to stop my hand trembling.

I now feel embarrassed to be rattled. I had considered myself a hardened journalist. A decade ago, I wrapped up a three-year stint as a freelance stringer/correspondent in South America. For one story that I turned into a book (*The Cocaine Diaries*), I went into prisons in Venezuela to interview drug mules. The inmates were armed with machine guns and grenades. In Colombia, I interviewed Pablo Escobar's top hitman, the now late [hon

Jairo Velásquez, also known as Popeye. I was in dangerous places talking to bad people.

Roll on the years and I worked as a reporter in London for about five years, working for most of the national press. I was bored, however, as most of my reporting involved sitting at a desk. I was restless. I quit reporting and moved sideways into subediting. I was still sitting at a desk but at least I had my mornings free to write a novel. Later, I headed home to Dublin to sub for the Irish Daily Star – my reporting days and South America gung-ho journalism long behind me.

That was until Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24. I was enraged at the horrors that later unfolded. Mass graves. Cities levelled. Images of charred bodies after bombing attacks. Women and children killed. Raped. Tortured.

I was furious at this war on our doorstep in Europe. If I were a military man I might pick up a gun and head to the eastern frontline. Join the some 20,000 foreign fighters said to be here. But I'm no soldier. I can, however, arm myself with a pen and notebook and give people a voice.

//
I'm no soldier. I can, however, arm myself with a pen and notebook and give people a voice



Left: uniform of UK ex military



And I had an ego to cater to. I had always wanted to report from a war zone. But I couldn't just quit my subbing job.

Instead, I booked two weeks' holiday and hopped on a budget flight to Krakow and bussed over the border to Lviv in Ukraine. No beach holiday for me – I was bound for a warzone to report as a freelancer. I had made no contact with any editors, however. I made the plan on a whim.

"Look, see the explosions," says Arseny, a guest in the hotel in Lviv. He shows me his phone shortly after the Russian bombing attack while we sit in the 'bomb shelter' in our hotel. He points to a video playing on social media. It shows a missile cruising through the sky before it plunges to the ground. Flames erupt and plumes of black smoke rise.

"That's crazy," I said, shaking my head.

It later emerges that three missiles struck Lviv, leaving one person injured. Russian strategic bombers launched the rockets from the Caspian Sea. The missiles hit power stations linked to the railway network.

The next day, I'm at the scene of the bombing, at the railway power substation about a half hour's drive from Lviv. My shakes are gone and I'm relaxed. The sun is shining and I'm sweating in a flak jacket, the word Press daubed on the front. A US security contractor in my hotel – let's call him Dan – lent me the bulletproof vest for the day. I thought it no harm to be safe.

What I had needed fast the morning after the bomb strike in Lviv was how to get a driver/fixer and the location of the scene of the attack. The Telegram app group for foreign journalists and fixers/drivers in Lviv, set up by the Ukraine Media Center, sorted me out fast. I sent out a query message and, in minutes, had lined up a driver, Alex, and a fixer pinged me the locations of the areas hit by the missiles (for security reasons, officials had not yet released that info).

At the scene of the railway power substation that had been hit, the earth was blackened. Outside at the gates, a soldier at the site of the attack gave me a "no comment". Another drag was that no one spoke English, not even my driver, and I don't speak Russian or Ukrainian.

That was sorted after I latched on to two local Ukrainian journalists interviewing witnesses at the bombing sites. They did their interviews then translated my questions and told me the replies in English.

Being a freelance journalist in Ukraine

How to get there?

The only way is overland – no civilian planes are flying into Ukraine. Most fly to Poland, like I did, and bus it into the western Ukrainian city of Lviv then beyond.

What to do before you go?

Please take out war journalism insurance. I chose Battleface (battleface.com) and got a policy for two weeks for as little as €80.

Request your military press pass before you go (email newsmodu@gmail.com for info). It allows you to pass military checkpoints. Bring a flak jacket and helmet. Reporters Without Borders provide them in Lviv (in the Ukraine Media Center), but demand is high.

What to do when you get there?

The first city you will likely get to will be Lviv. There, sign up with the Ukraine Media Centre. Their services include a briefing area where press conferences and

debates on the war are held.

Sip a free coffee and go to their bar/cafe for media personnel only to work (and drink). Chinwag with journalists to research stories.

How to get around?

Ukraine is enormous and your best bet for comfort for long journeys is train travel. A warning: Russia is actively targeting the rail network with cruise missiles.

How to stay safe?

If you're a freelancer going anywhere near a conflict zone, move with a pack of journalists. If something goes wrong, you're not alone.

How much is a fixer/driver/interpreter?

A driver will typically charge €100-€150 for a day plus fuel costs. A trick is to get a driver who speaks English. If not, add on 50€ to 100€ to your trip for an interpreter.

The best way to save is to join forces with other freelancers. I regularly



shared a fixer and his car with three other freelancers and the cost tumbled.

What medium is best to cover a war?

I'm an old-school print journalist, but would prefer to have broadcast skills as well. I travelled with a journalist from Austria who did a piece to camera on his phone from a district shelled in Kharkiv. He flogged it to all the news channels in his country.

Where to sell stories?

The UK and a couple of Irish national papers have the war well covered with their reporters in Ukraine. Aim for strong human interest stories that only you have.

If you can't flog a war story, maybe write a piece about what it's like to travel in a war zone (I met one journalist who did that).



Remnants of a Russian tank near Bucha

One person I interviewed was an Orthodox priest whose church had been damaged in the missile strike. I asked him for his reaction to the Russian assault on Ukraine and the missile strike, and he called Moscow's army "savage invaders". A light bulb went off and I saw that headline on the page of a tabloid. I pinged off my story to the Irish Daily Star, angled on 'Priest slams Russian invaders' and they ran it the next day.

But a freelancer won't get rich filing one story to one paper. The trick is to file far and wide. I hit up a reporter mate in the Daily Mirror and other papers in London with the same story but no one bit. That's the life of freelancing.

After about five days in Lviv, I had a mountain of material I knew would make a great Sunday read, a nice 2,000-word article. I pitched to the Business Post, a Sunday broadsheet in Ireland, and got lucky.

"We'd been trying to get someone out there," the news editor said. They immediately agreed to take my 2,000 words and any other article of the same length every week. So far, they have published one a week for the past four weeks and

pay a rate per article which is twice or three times higher than I've ever been paid by a London paper for foreign copy.

Where do you get your stories in Ukraine? The site of a bombing attack is an obvious one but human interest stories are everywhere. Buses, trains and stations are a great start. I approached people on the bus from Krakow to Lviv saying I was a journalist and asked people why they were travelling to a war zone.

I approached two men in their 50s, one had an Irish accent, the other Scottish. They were foreign fighters bound for the front line – and they gave me an anonymous story that I flogged to the tabloids.

For the next few days, I ran around hoovering up stories. I interviewed refugees and wrote up their horrendous tales about bodies ripped apart by bombs. For the lighter side of life, I interviewed an Irish comedian who was performing in Lviv in a tour of Ukraine titled Special Comedy Operation.

After a week, I hit the road to Kyiv. On the platform in the train station, I spotted two guys carrying Press flak jackets and approached them. They were the same as me: freelancers – two English guys – hoping to have a crack at war journalism.

We decided to join forces in Kyiv where they had a fixer lined up. The driver brought us to the main horror sites outside Kyiv where the Russians had occupied Bucha, the site of mass graves, and Borodyanka, which Russian shelling has turned to rubble. I interviewed a woman whose house was now a shell of a building and volunteers involved in a clean-up in Borodyanka.

I pulled together a 'Ukraine rebuilds' newsy feature for the Business Post with photos thanks to the snapper, Phil Wilson, I had met in the train station in Lviv (we have since teamed up on all my Business Post articles).

The real test of my mettle was to get close to the military action on the front line. The nearest area of conflict to Kyiv was Kharkiv, an eight-hour train ride east towards the Russian border. The Ukrainian forces were making headway in pushing back Moscow's army, reclaiming towns. It was a great 'Ukraine victory' story I knew I could easily sell.

I headed off with Phil on a 6.45am train one morning from Kyiv and got to Kharkiv at about midday. Our fixer Shakhov Serhii was waiting for us. He offered to take me and Phil to a town recently liberated from the Russians.

We agreed, but I remembered I had no flak jacket or helmet. "I will die," I said, half joking. Serhii, who also had no protective gear, shook my hand. "You and me will die, but many years from now."

We later zipped off in Serhii's bright red taxi and, an hour or so later, we turned up in the town of Zolochiv, about 15km from the Russian border and about 10km from the front line.

Artillery fire echoed in the distance. My throat felt dry.

"That's us firing at the Russians," said Serhii, his face stiff. I didn't feel too convinced I was safe. But I continued to walk



Where do you get your stories? The site of a bombing is an obvious one but human interest stories are everywhere

Below: Ukrainian soldier in Kharkiv



the streets, past ruins of shelled buildings, looking for someone to interview in this deserted town below a grey sky.

Police pulled up, three officers piled out, boots stomping. Cops are actively hunting for Russian spies, but Serhii told the officers I was a journalist and they nodded. "They said the shelling starts from 5pm and you have to get out by then," Serhii said, interpreting.

It was 3.30pm. Ninety minutes before the bombs drop. I tracked down a man raking the earth on a farm and interviewed him about the shelling. "The life we had is over," he shrugged.

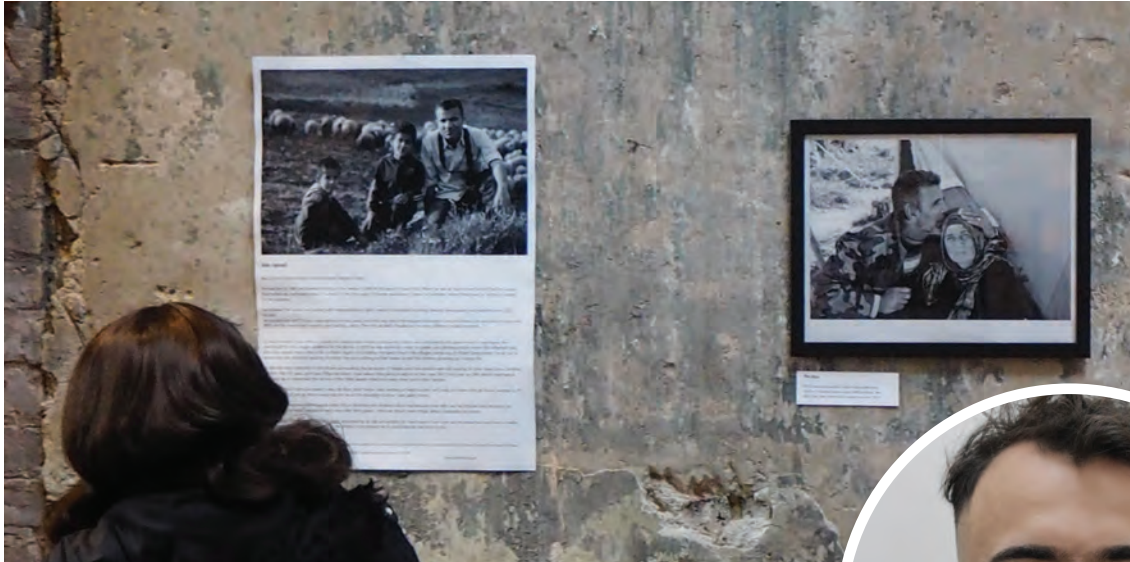
I piled back into Serhii's taxi with Phil and Serhii raced back west towards the city of Kharkiv. A half a kilometre or so to our left, Russian bombs hit the battlefield, clouds of smoke lingering. I asked could we stop and get a good picture. Serhii kept speeding. I shrugged and looked at the shelling, oddly feeling no fear. I am a war correspondent.

Jeff Farrell wrote this after returning home from the war. He is now back in Ukraine. His debut crime thriller novel, *Bad Blood*, is published in October



Locals pose for photos outside Bucha after Russians run out of town

Ako Ismail had to leave his home country but he is still committed to telling its stories



Showing the reality of war



This film tells the story of Azad, a survivor of the Halabja chemical attack on March 16 1988, who had lived in Birmingham for 20 years and who, until now, had never shared his experiences.

The event was opened by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle in January at Newcastle City Library.

The Smell of Apples was directed by Claire Webster Saaremetts, artistic director of Skimstone Arts.

She said: "We're honoured to be able to show this poignant exhibition and support the creation of the featured film The Smell of Apples with audiences at Newcastle City Library, Pop Recs in Sunderland on the anniversary of the Halabja chemical attack and St John's College, Durham University in May and Newcastle University for Refugee Week in June.

"This exhibition comes at a time when the world is being confronted with the realities of war daily as new atrocities unfold in Ukraine.

"One Day Changes aims to encourage people to explore how humanity can share understanding, care and support that positively affects people's traumatic lives. By witnessing and acknowledging people's experiences, we can learn more about the past and work together to take action to create a safer future."

One Day Changes was shown alongside original music from Skimstone Arts' Reality Boots and Ensemble. There was also film, poetry and spoken word inspired by real-life stories, research and lived experiences, to explore how a better future can be built.

Lord Mayor of Newcastle Habib Rahman, who attended the event, said: "Unless and until we get to hear these testimonies in unique and mesmerising ways will we learn, and once we learn we will say no... we must learn and for us to learn organisations such as Skimstone, it is vital for you to create the platform and the opportunity. I am very proud that this local authority, this city of Newcastle was able to sponsor you."

Myself and another Kurdish journalist, now living in the north east of England, have made a documentary, The Smell of Apples, and an exhibition, One Day Changes, that tell stories about the long-lasting impact of war and its consequences on our homeland and surrounding areas.

The exhibition and film have been shown in various venues in three cities and more screenings are likely in the upcoming months.

Myself and Shahor Omar fled our homeland in Iraqi Kurdistan to seek refuge in Britain. We have been closely supported and mentored by the Sunderland, South Shields and Hartlepool NUJ branch of which we are now members,

The inspiration for the film came when I was documenting the daily life of children in a refugee camp and thought about how one day changed their lives entirely – language, space, home, friends and everything else. Yet they still lived in the moment, playing, making friends, enjoying small things. We can learn from that story; the

children were so brave not to give up regardless of what happened to them.

Omar, who lives in Stockton on Tees, believes that everything in our lives is a story – happiness, sadness, failure, love, peace, war and survival.

Moreover, he says he saw war as a child and it opened his eyes. "I used to hear the sound of explosions. When I started to work in the media, I was only 19. I had an idea to work for peace, not war. I want my photos and film to show the brutal aspect of war."

We have both experienced trauma in our families and our own lives through war and oppression, and the risks of working in the media because of terrorism and censorship and repercussions.

We have witnessed political instability and unrest and, as photojournalists, we need to document what is happening.

This exhibition comprises a selection of images that explore the theme of One Day for Holocaust Memorial Day this year and was a key part of Skimstone Arts' radio and live event where the The Smell of Apples premiered.

// We have both experienced trauma through war and oppression, and the risks of working in the media because of terrorism and censorship //

All images: Craig Sugden

COME FROM AWAY

DISCOVER THE TRUE STORY OF THAT WE THE W

Showing at the Phoenix Theatre

THE AWARD WINNING MUSICAL THAT WELCOMES THE WORLD

7,000 Stranded Passengers. One Small Town.
A Remarkable True Story.

Winner of Best New Musical across the globe, Come From Away shares the incredible real-life story of the 7,000 air passengers from all over the world who were grounded in Canada during the wake of 9/11, and the small Newfoundland community that invited these 'come from aways' into their lives.

Experience the joy, heartache and soaring music as the spirited locals and global passengers overcome their fears and a world of cultural



"THIS MUSICAL GETS EVERYTHING RIGHT. IRRESISTIBLE AND INSPIRING."
THE TIMES



"THIS MIRACULOUS MASTERPIECE IS TOTALLY, SOUL-FEEDINGLY WONDERFUL."
TIME OUT

differences to come together and forge friendships that will stay with them forever. The first female American Airlines captain, the quick-thinking town mayor, the mother of a New York firefighter and the eager local news reporter are among the many real characters caught at the start of the moment that changed the course of history, and whose stories became a true celebration of hope, humanity and unity.

Tony Award-winning director **Christopher Ashley** alongside Olivier Award-winning writers **Irene Sankoff** and **David Hein** bring this amazing story to life in a life-affirming production that has audiences on their feet every single night.

Come on in. The door is open and the kettle is on.

<https://youtu.be/mCoHH08nIGE>

REMARKABLE A SMALL TOWN WELCOMED WORLD

re, Charing Cross Road, London.

BEVERLEY BASS'S STORY



Beverley Bass with her husband Tom

Come From Away features the real-life story of Beverley Bass - the First Female American Captain to fly, who found a love for planes at the age of 8, whose career was changed forever following landing in Gander. In this incredible true story, you discover how the events unfolded from a different perspective. Including having to remain in the cockpit for over 24 hours with only the BBC as a source of information.

Hear her story here:

<https://vimeo.com/727315344/72e75af389>

Promotion



COMPETITION WINNER

STEPHEN POWER

Congratulations to the winner of our competition, Stephen Power and his entry of a defining moment that changed his life in journalism.

'I was 16 and delivering newspapers very early one morning in a leafy, up-market suburb of my otherwise working-class hometown, in Merseyside. A man in his mid-thirties was loading camera equipment and a large clear plastic bag full of film into his car, as I cycled past. We said "hello" and - without asking him anything at all - I decided two things instantaneously: One, he was a professional photographer, setting off on an assignment (probably for a well-known newspaper or magazine) and two, that was how I wanted to spend my entire working life.

I have no idea if I guessed his occupation correctly. For all I know, he could have been a camera salesman, or even a burglar. But my conviction that I wanted to spend my life as a professional photo-journalist was strong and it has not left me yet, some 45 years later.'

Stephen wins two tickets to see Come From Away with overnight accommodation. We hope he enjoys his a theatre trip to London and seeing this award-winning show.

Book tickets to see Come From Away now at:
www.comefromawaylondon.co.uk

Crown duels

The palace controls press coverage – and the media acquiesces, reports **Daniel Harkins**

Several stories surrounded the Queen's platinum jubilee in June besides the event itself.

First, there was the failing health of the monarch.

There was the absence of her son, Prince Andrew. He had Covid-19, we were told, but he had been stripped of some ceremonial roles because of his friendship with Jeffrey Epstein.

There was the ongoing saga of Harry and Meghan, and their conscious uncoupling from the institution.

It is curious then that none of the senior royals – funded through complex mechanisms, by the public purse – were questioned by the media over a long weekend in which they dominated the news.

No interviews. No Q&As. Yet plenty of coverage.

There is an explanation for this. It is one that journalists know and the public does not.

It is the royal rota.

The rota is not a secret. But describe it to the uninformed – which is 99 per cent of the country – and they will react with surprise and suspicion.

Media coverage of every royal event is pre-planned in advance with the royal households. What will happen, which newspapers will attend and when reporters can arrive and leave will all be arranged with the royal family. Copy and images from the events are then made available to all other publications.

This arrangement is not unique. Tight controls can be in place when Boris Johnson visits a fish market or factory, with clips often done on a pool basis.

What is different is the level of submissiveness and the intensity of control.

In most cases, reporters stand around at events, observe the royals, who ignore them entirely, and write down what they say and do.

The royals are not questioned. It is assumed they won't be. On the odd occasion a reporter breaks with convention and shouts a question; it certainly won't be answered. Indeed, in the past it has earned reporters a public telling off from one of the princes.

Inevitably, the copy filed is little more than a description of the mundane events that took place. It is almost always favourable to the royal family.

I covered and organised the rota at times when I worked at the PA news agency. I attended a few dull events, including one where a royal household PR barked orders at the press to "get back" a few seconds after Prince William arrived as if he – or we – were radioactive.

At another event, I suggested to a PR, partially tongue in cheek, that I would approach the prince and speak with him. She looked at me as if I had asked to dig through William's pockets.

In theory, the media rotates access to the highly valued, in-demand rota jobs. In practice, national journalists often run a mile from the more uninteresting events. Coverage often falls on the shoulders of PA and the local press.

It is not just that royal rota reporting is boring. It is that covering these events can amount to acting as a stenographer for some of the most powerful people in the country.

Corporate press officers would blush at putting out copy as inane and subservient as some royal rota stories. It is a system that is no longer fit for purpose – if it ever was.

I would stress at this point that I am not knocking the work

Inside the firm

Stephen Bates spent 12 years covering the royal family, sometimes referred to as the firm, for The Guardian. Despite the restrictions of the royal rota, he gained glimpses into some rare candid moments.

"William and Catherine were more accessible," he says. "They did things like have at least one drinks party, where you could chat to them and ask questions."

"Charles was usually regarded as a bit towards boring and also that he was a bit mean spirited."

"That's why the coverage of Charles – certainly sort of 10 years ago when I was

doing it – tended to be a bit more snarky than some of the other royals."

"He used to do silly things like turning his head away when the cameramen were trying to photograph him."

He says that jubilee years would often see "strangely stifled" press events where the senior royals would mingle with reporters – and they were not beyond seeking to rile up the

assembled journalists.

Bates says the Prince of Wales once cornered the editor of the then-republican Independent to ask him why he was there.

"I was invited," the editor told the future king, to which he replied: "Well, you didn't have to come."

The Sunday Telegraph's editor Dominic Lawson got a dressing down when the queen sought out his company at an event. Bates says: "He came over preening himself, apparently. The question was: 'What have you done with the crossword? I can't find it.'"

"Funnily enough, the crossword soon found its way back to where it had been."



KEITH MORRIS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



of royal correspondents, who regularly pull out great stories. I was always impressed by the PA royal team's commitment to finding hard news and pushing back against PRs.

But this is an almost impossible task for general reporters covering rota jobs, tasked with standing subserviently as a prince or duke or, God forbid, a duchess, tours a biscuit factory.

Stephen Bates covered the royals for The Guardian from 2000 to 2012. He stresses that reporters on rota jobs do strive to find interesting, hard news angles.

However, he accepts that there is an understanding that questions will not be asked of the royals.

"It's a convention really," he says. "I mean, there's nothing to stop you asking and it's not likely that they're going to answer, frankly."

"And you're not supposed to listen into conversations on walkabouts – for instance, if they talk to a member of the public, they're quite sensitive on that. Or at least they used to be because of things like the Duke of Edinburgh's celebrated gaffes."

He describes the system as "pretty unique" in journalism.

"I mean, even the pope holds press conferences," he says.

"But, you know, it's part of a pretty long-standing convention."

"The royals don't allow themselves to comment on anything that might be conceived of as partisan or remotely political."

Indeed, Prince Charles' recent comments criticising the UK government's asylum policy earned him widespread attacks.

Bates argues the media are doing a good job of holding the royals to account.

He says: "When the royals go wrong, I think people pile in. I mean, Prince Andrew has been shoved out of public life. There is criticism."

Brendan McGinty is a former editor of the Sunday Mail and now sits on the board of press regulator IPSO and runs a communications firm. He said there is a dichotomy in coverage around the royals.

He says: "It's not as if everybody turns up, writes down what everybody is wearing, files and goes home."

"Obviously there is a bit of that. There is lots and lots of uncritical coverage. But there is criticism."

He says royal events – such as Harry and Meghan's star-studded wedding – were often stories people would be "talking about in the pub" and around the dinner table.

"I agree with your premise that there's probably a need for more critical coverage. Yes, absolutely," he said. "But I'm saying that as someone who was more than once just sort of sucked in to the sort of intriguing glamour of the occasion at times."

The royal family – who declined to comment for this article – are not elected politicians but they hold immense power, wealth and land in the UK. Like any other power centre, they need to be held to account by the UK media.

It is impossible to do this when journalists cannot ask questions of them.

The senior royals have made many public appearances since Andrew was sued over allegations of abusing a teenager. They have answered zero questions about his behaviour, Andrew's disastrous Newsnight interview aside.

Prince Charles has attended scores of events since it was revealed he corresponded regularly with Jimmy Savile. Yet he has never been probed by the media on the scandal.

The reason is the royal family have very effectively built a system – the royal rota – that prevents those questions from being asked. And they have done this with the acquiescence of the UK media.

As we approach the inevitable dawn of the King Charles era, it is time to reassess this system. At the very least, the routine Q&As or huddles that take place during political events should become equally common during trips by the major royals.

But there are practical realities to royal coverage that may halt such changes. Even the dullest of royal stories get wide pick-up and hit the most-read sections of newspaper websites.

McGinty highlights that contradiction at the heart of royal reporting. "For the conventions to be challenged, there would need to be a sort of groundswell of opinion," he says. "You'd need to think the media wanted that badly enough."

He added: "It's certainly the case that royal coverage is seen as saleable and popular."

"Is that a situation that suits them or is it a boat they want to rock?"

The royal family hold immense power, wealth and land in the UK. But journalists cannot ask questions of them

The view from **INSIDE PR**



Name:
John Millington
Job description:
RMT press officer
and NUV national
executive council
member

Upfront approach wins over rail strike critics

Probation in any job is that chance to ease into your role, get your feet under the table and show you are competent enough to be kept on.

Well, what better way to show that as the new RMT press officer than to be the sole media contact for an organisation that launches the first national rail strike in over 30 years?

It would have been easy to have been intimidated but I knew a mixture of my nearly 10 years' experience, sheer bloody-mindedness and some luck would yield a positive outcome.

In some ways, the pressure was off. Being a union press officer for perhaps the most militant outfit in the country means no one expects positive coverage.

I was aware that the phrase 'no one likes us, and we don't care' had been associated with the union. It's not a bad starting point for a union – to be tough, resilient and up for a fight. But in public relations you have to care about the full spectrum of opinion and how it impacts your organisation.

The RMT had established an impressive media profile under the late Bob Crow and a grudging respect among its detractors. I knew, though, that the heat would be turned up considerably as national strikes are rare and many

newspaper editors would be wanting to take the union down a few pegs.

During the balloting period, I was getting a lot of name recognition for RMT coverage but very little of it was positive. While everyone had a thick skin, two weeks before our first day of action, I wasn't happy with our approach. We were in a defensive and reactive posture. I would spend my day rebutting attacks from industry and the government. You'd have to read to the end of a 400-word piece to find a snippet from us. Apart from social media, we were not getting our key messages out to the public and this had to change.

I've always believed that in comms, politics and life, you must find a way to your front foot, not be under siege. My assessment was we had some solid public messaging but we needed to deploy our secret weapon to deliver them.

Enter stage left Mick Lynch.

I'd seen how unfazed and agile he was in interviews on other matters. So I thought we must own our decision to strike, create a spectacle and make journalists come to us because we were the story.

I suggested a rough-and-ready press conference outside our HQ – with Lynch fielding questions from journalists I invited. This way, people got to see an articulate, working-class union leader speak plainly, ducking no questions and clearly setting out the union's position.

It was clear he was going to be in demand. So I invited every major broadcaster to a picket line where he would be for an hour the next day. I wanted a broadcast blitz that would swamp the airwaves so the rail industry and government couldn't easily respond.

Because he stood up to aggressive and at times bizarre questioning and showed calm self-assurance, Lynch proved popular on social media. People not only agreed with some of our messages but also warmed to the calm, professional manner in which they were delivered. Some of the stats went way above what anyone could have expected, with #MickLynch being viewed nine million times on TikTok.

It was easily the most accomplished and challenging week I've had in communications. We punched well above our weight.

It proves that to succeed in the media, you need capable, informed spokespeople, clear messaging the public will relate to and zero fear in challenging opponents who, on the face of it, are far more powerful and well resourced than you are.

With polling showing increased support for the strike after the three days' disruption, we not only influenced the 'don't knows' but also passed the 'person in the street' test. I have had multiple people tell me they had overheard positive comments about RMT and Lynch on buses, in pubs and in other public spaces.

The best sign of any success is when your natural critics start praising you. We've had positive articles in the Spectator, praise from Alastair Campbell saying we had won the media war, and Andrew Marr said Mick Lynch was the most effective communicator in the country.

The purpose of union comms is to help win disputes. We had a great first week, increasing public support, keeping members motivated and sending the government and the rail industry into a tailspin. Can it be sustained? Only time will tell. But we have set the cat among the pigeons.

 **TikTok**





Story behind the picture

RMT Strike
By Mark Thomas

In June, the RMT announced three days of national strikes. This dispute arose because workers had endured pay freezes and also faced the threat of compulsory redundancies. RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said: "Rail companies are making at least £500 million a year in profits, whilst fat cat rail bosses have been paid millions during the pandemic. This unfairness is fuelling our members' anger and their determination to win a fair settlement."

I covered the picket line at Euston station on the first two strike days. The RMT had announced a rail strike solidarity rally on the last strike day at King's Cross station. I thought this would be a great opportunity to get something a little bit different.

When I'm covering an event, I always try to get a picture in my mind beforehand of what I want to achieve. On the day, I arrived in good time and secured a decent position a little way back from the stage, in a crowd of several hundred on the concourse.

I had a monopod with me which I used to trigger the camera remotely. I did a few tests as CWU general secretary Dave Ward spoke but I soon realised there was a problem.

Three people raised placards directly in my line of shot. Having stood patiently for well over an hour, I realised that I had to move or I would not get what I was after.

I squeezed through the crowd and headed diagonally across to the other side of the stage which had a clear sightline. I did a few tests and was happy. Mick Lynch arrived and spoke, and I raised the camera and got the pictures that I had envisaged.

Lost in the cloud

Online news stories can often disappear.
Kieron Monks tracks the missing links



armUP95 is among the oldest and largest LGBT+ fan clubs in European football. They follow Fortuna Düsseldorf at home and away, and challenge reactionary thinking in the boardrooms and on the terraces.

I could tell you more, but every trace of the digital-only article detailing my weekend in Düsseldorf for Metro International newspapers has been scrubbed from the internet. Only a sad and broken URL remains.

Neither could I give many details about the predicament of Palestinian police in parts of the West Bank where they have no jurisdiction. That story has been expunged from the New Statesman website. After more than a decade in journalism, the majority digital, it is safe to say there are many more missing links.

I attempted to have the articles restored. A friendly editor at Metro International passed on my pleas to the website manager, who in turn harassed the company's outsourced tech workers. One month after my appeal, the article was back online. But then it disappeared again and the friendly editor had moved on. The site was under new management, which soon stopped replying to my emails.

The New Statesman was more upfront. My story had been lost along with many others when the company upgraded its website the previous year and more than 20 years of content was 'migrated'. There was no hope of restoration. A representative advised that I would have been better off writing for print if I wanted my articles to last.

The latter point is undoubtedly true. There is a popular misconception that the internet is a permanent repository. But news websites are continuously shedding content, with older pages the most vulnerable. There is no obligation to preserve journalists' work. When local news and niche sites go out of business, their entire output can be lost. One study by a data company and the Internet Archive



monitored 88 million URLs of news articles. More than one million were dead within a week.

News outlets are less than transparent about the articles they are losing – several declined to comment for this article – but a senior manager of one at the world's most popular news websites shed light on the many causes. Articles can be

Unpublish so you aren't damned

WHEN an article vanishes from a news website, it is usually the result of technology gremlins. But the easy-come, easy-go nature of web publishing make it tempting to quietly delete embarrassing articles.

In 2021, The Telegraph website published a column lambasting the Duchess of Cambridge for the "rare misstep" of displaying political partisanship

by writing a joint article with Jill Biden but not Melania Trump.

After a backlash from

supporters of the royal family, the piece was taken down. The newspaper did not explain why but denied there had been any pressure from the palace.

Eagle-eyed observers noted that two articles deleted by BuzzFeed in 2014 contained criticism of the site's sponsors, including a feminist critique of a 'condescending' Dove advert.

Buzzfeed said the article was removed for being too opinionated, despite the preponderance of opinion in its output.

The company had established a reputation for deletions the previous year

by culling more than 4,000 posts that chief executive Jonah Peretti said did not meet standards.

The Washington Post removed two articles about the Steele dossier concerning Donald Trump's alleged adventures in Russia, and replaced them with modified versions and an explanatory note. This was commendable to some, but media critics suggested the original stories should have remained as a record.

Sometimes deletion is best for all parties. Young author Jumi Bello posted an emotional essay on Lit Hub explaining why her debut novel was pulled for plagiarism. The piece was swiftly deleted when editors noticed it also contained plagiarism... from the website Plagiarism Today.





lost if the software that publishers use becomes outdated. Servers that host content can deteriorate with age. Rights for images and videos can expire, making it expedient to delete the articles they are attached to.

Often the finances don't stack up. "Businesses are unable to justify the costs of maintaining old content which gets a small amount of views," says the manager.

The best stories are often the most vulnerable, according to Ben Welsh, data editor at the LA Times. "Newsrooms have content management systems (CMS) that operate like an assembly line and produce stories in the same template," he says. "Those tend to have a better chance of surviving because they live inside a database that gets moved from place to place.

"But special projects that are often custom-designed, coded and published outside of the CMS are vulnerable to just disappearing from the web... They are exceptionally fragile and they are often the journalism that we care most about and invest the most time in."

Much of the Guardian's groundbreaking, crowdsourced investigation into MPs' expenses from 2009 can no longer be found on its website. A USA Today interactive piece on the border wall with Mexico now returns an error message. As new templates and graphic innovations are harnessed to convey the enormity of Covid-19 or the war in Ukraine, industry specialists fear that uniqueness may not be built to last.

Web articles often suffer degradation as well as disappearance. Hyperlinks are one of the great advantages of online publishing as they allow journalists to cite sources and

offer additional context. However, an investigation by Harvard's Library Innovation Lab (LIL) into 'link rot' found that a quarter of external links in New York Times articles were no longer accessible, with that proportion rising with the age of the page. This also revealed the wider implications of web decay beyond journalism. Hyperlinks to government websites and legal judgements – often digital only and containing information of vital public interest – suffered a high rate of attrition.

Researchers have also highlighted an issue termed 'content drift' where hyperlinks are redirected to new pages. The primary cause was identified by a 2019 BuzzFeed investigation that discovered a cottage industry of dubious companies offering hyperlink hijacking services on news websites, resulting in links to gambling sites and bankruptcy lawyers on BBC articles.

News outlets often lack the means and motivation to preserve their digital output. A Columbia Journalism Review study found 19 of 21 companies were taking 'no active steps' to do so. The internet is ever evolving – unsteady terrain for outlets that are constantly adapting to its innovations and challenges. One of my former editors likened web publishing to fixing a car while you are driving it. There is also the imperative to look ahead and focus on what's next rather than devoting resources to safeguarding the past.

Independent archiving initiatives are stepping into the breach. Harvard's LIL has launched Perma.CC, which fights link rot by providing secure permalinks to citations. Ben Welsh has launched several projects, including Save My News, a clipping service that saves articles to multiple archives, and The News Homepage Archive, which safeguards digital front pages. The British Library has expanded an ad-hoc archiving service for UK news websites into a more comprehensive effort since 2013.

The largest initiative is the California-based Internet Archive, which began in 1996 and now hosts more than 600 billion pages. The group's software spiders crawl the web and capture content in a similar fashion to Google's indexing technology. The company has expanded its catalogue to include books, TV, radio and music.

The Archive has demonstrated value to journalists through initiatives such as its Threatened Outlets page, established after billionaire Peter Thiel sued US site Gawker out of existence. The company also offers new investigative tools, as shown when it exposed Dominic Cummings' lie that he predicted the pandemic by revealing edits on his blog through versions with different time stamps.

But even a vast operation such as the Archive is dwarfed by the task of preserving the internet. "We get better every day but the need for our work outstrips our efforts," says director Mark Graham. The spiders run into paywalls and sites that are incompatible with their software. How far archivists should aim to preserve a page with all its layers of multimedia, links and ads involves curatorial decisions. Apps present a whole new category of challenges. This is all vastly removed from traditional newspaper archiving.

Harvard's LIL researchers believe the solution lies in the creation of a vast library by archivists, journalists, and technologists that would allow newsrooms to deposit pages through a common system without being slowed down.

"We shouldn't expect journalists to be librarians, but we could build tools that make it easy for them to hand things off to librarians," says the LIL's Clare Stanton. If we want our



News outlets often lack the means and motivation to preserve their digital output

Spycatcher caused a commotion that no ban could quell, says **Jonathan Sale**

WRIGHT AND WRONG

In 1987, so long ago that journalists were based in Fleet Street and went out to lunch, I bumped into a highly bemused friend who worked at LBC.

It wasn't so much the contents of the book in his hand, entitled *Spycatcher: the Candid Autobiography of a Senior Intelligence Officer* by Peter Wright with Paul Greengrass, that initially intrigued him. It wasn't, for example, the claim that a former head of MI5 was a Soviet agent.

He was remarking on the fact that the publishers had only just delivered the sensational volume to the London radio station: "It comes out tomorrow," he mused. This wouldn't give reviewers much of a chance to speed-read it, let alone express a considered opinion.

The reason for the haste soon became clear. Fear stalked Whitehall. The explosive memoir was instantly banned in England. All media was barred from mentioning any of the material.

Fortunately, the information gap was filled by the human voice. The youthful Alistair Darling, MP and chancellor of the exchequer-in-waiting, stood at The Mound in Edinburgh and read out selected extracts, thus making himself, together with fellow Labour MP Maria Fyfe, the 20th-century equivalent of a medieval town crier.

Russian spies who happened to be passing would not have bothered to make notes from the recitation. They would have already splashed out a few roubles on their own copy.

The book wasn't banned in Scotland. As *The Scotsman* pointed out, *Spycatcher* had already been published in Canada and the US.

Then there was Australia, where the British government launched legal proceedings to stop *Down Under* publication. This attempt failed, not helped by Thatcher's cabinet secretary

Sir Robert Armstrong admitting when cross-examined by barrister (and future prime minister) Malcolm Turnbull that, if push came to shove, he would be "economical with the truth" to protect national security.

Back in London, Tony Benn was one of those who turned themselves into human audio books at a Hyde Park reading of *Spycatcher*. Extracts were set to music by Verdi and sung, improbably, in the Stock Exchange.

Spycatcher had already been banned before it came out, in the sense that, after *The Guardian* and *The Observer* had used information derived from Peter Wright, both papers were enjoined from publishing anything else from that source. Wright had breached his duty of

confidentiality to his ex employers, the British Security Service.

You can see what got up the spooks' noses. The tone of the book is set early on, with the job interview at which the personnel director began by giving Wright a Masonic handshake. (It was not returned.)

"Just wanted to have a chat. Need to make sure you're not a Communist. Expect you were pretty left wing when you were young?"

"Mildly," admitted Wright. "I taught in the Workers' Educational Association."

"Fairly Communist, was it?"

"Not in Cornwall."

"Ever been queer, by any chance?"

"Never in my life."

Lunchtime secret of snaring spies

THE FIRST person to whom whistleblowing British security officer Peter Wright, who died in 1995, divulged his controversial secrets was *Daily Express* defence correspondent the late Chapman Pincher, author of *Their Trade is Treachery*.

This came out in 1981, before *Spycatcher*, Wright's revealing memoir.

The most explosive charge in both books was the bit about MI5

director-general Roger Hollis moonlighting as a Soviet agent.

Pincher later became bitterly critical of Wright for breaking his legal vow of silence by writing the book - which sold enough copies to make up many times for the failure of MI5 to provide Wright with a decent pension.

Pincher is credited with spotting other

alien agents such as George Blake, thanks to his contacts in the security field, whom he would wine and lunch at his regular table in the West End restaurant L'Ecue de France.

To encourage the free flow of his guests' conversation, Pincher did not make notes.

"I never knew what he was up to," recalls his former colleague James

Wilkinson, whose first job was as science correspondent at the *Daily Express*.

"He would disappear every lunchtime; then he would come back and type.

"When the restaurant was finally closed down, they found a microphone at his banquettes. All his conversations were taped."

The buggers had been bugged.

Chapman Pincher was one journalist of whom it could be said that he was truly a legend in his lunchtime.



PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Looking
back to:
.....
1987

FAIRFAX MEDIA ARCHIVES

The personnel director gave Wright a form to fill in with details of next of kin. That was it: "I was vetted," wrote Peter Wright. "No wonder it was so easy for Philby, Burgess, Maclean and Blunt."

There followed a two-day training course, which included a lesson in lock-picking. Wright received a small piece of wire with a hook on one end and the advice: "Make sure you carry your police pass. Technically, you are breaking the law by going equipped for burglary."

And not just 'technically', as it turned out. "MI5 bugged and burgled its way across London," Wright wrote.

It rapidly became apparent why the security services wanted to keep themselves off the news pages.

Wright recounts the unfortunate mistake made by the MI5 'watchers' who used to trail enemy agents.

The British spooks went to great pains to disguise their own cars by spraying them fairly frequently and also by switching numberplates even more often. It turned out that one car was being driven about with different numberplates on the back and front, which would have made it somewhat conspicuous to twitchy Russians.

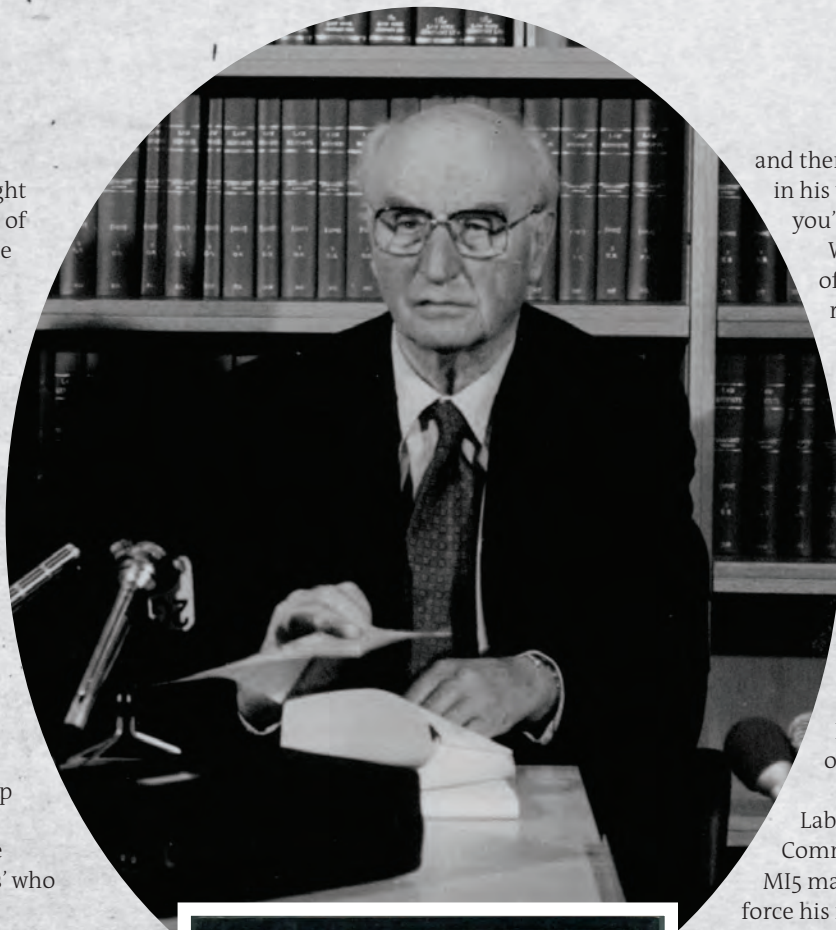
Sometimes, Wright and his colleagues deserve our sympathy for their sheer bad luck.

A massive computer programme finally cracked an encrypted message revealing the true identity of 'Stanley', a Briton who was working for the Russians.

This turned out to be Kim Philby, one of the 'Cambridge spies', a foreign correspondent for The Observer who could easily have been arrested on one of his regular visits to the paper. Unfortunately, MI5 was too late: Philby had defected a few months earlier.

Another failure involved an attempt to blackmail a certain KGB agent. MI5 secretly set him up with one of their 'high-class call-girls' and then confiscated his trousers. Sad to relate, the randy Russian did not defect. John le Carré this ain't – more an out-take from Carry on Spying.

Graham Mitchell was another colleague on whom Wright had his eye. "One Friday afternoon, he began drawing on a scrap of paper



and then suddenly tore it up and put it in his waste bin." Highly suspicious, you'll agree.

Wright fished the fragments out of the wastepaper basket and reassembled this scrappy jigsaw. It was a sketchy map of an obscure part of Chobham Common and indicated an 'RV' – a rendezvous? Wright had the spot staked out. "Sadly, Mitchell never went close to the spot, nor did anyone else."

As head of MI5, Roger Hollis had been one of the few people in the know about this escapade and Wright became convinced that the boss was a Russian agent. Annoyingly, a 1974 review by former cabinet secretary Lord Trend found no evidence of this.

Neither, most of us would agree, was Labour PM Harold Wilson much of a Communist spy, even if Wright and a few MI5 mates began a failed conspiracy to force his resignation.

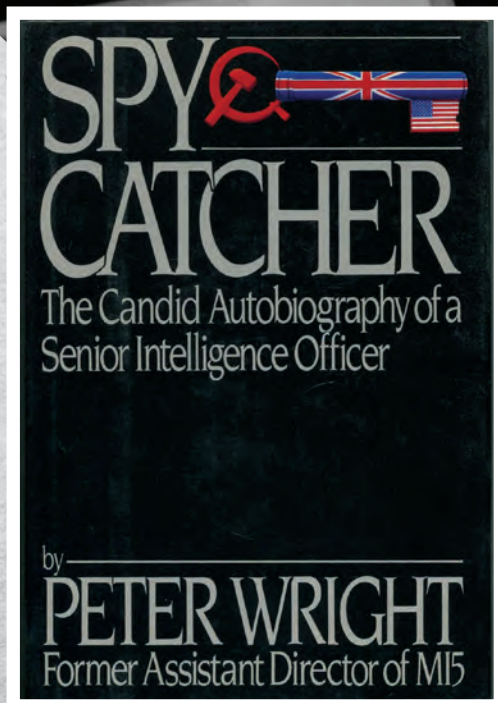
As for Wright's question about Wilson's predecessor as leader of the Labour Party: was Hugh Gaitskell murdered? Probably not.

Despite the improbability of the major accusations, it is the absurdity of details that make the account of MI5 life so convincing.

Drat! That's not 'drat!' as in 'botheration!' but 'Drat' as in the name of one of the players in this game of security, a character so secret that he or she does not appear in the index, unlike 'Top Hat', 'Squirrel' Nutkin and Hamburger. The latter, incidentally, is not a cryptonym but the real Rudi Hamburger, the first husband of 'Sonia', alias Ruth, a spymaster or rather spymistress (Do keep up!).

Fortunately, the law lords lifted the injunction on October 13 1988 on the grounds that any revelations were no longer confidential. All the media was able to feast on the previously forbidden fruit. If you didn't buy the book, you could enjoy the Mail's serialisation.

Another pleasing victory for journalism came in 1991 when The Guardian and The Observer sued the UK government at the European Court of Human Rights for not lifting the injunctions at a time when they should have done; for this restriction of their freedom of expression, damages of £100,000 were awarded to the two papers. This clearly demonstrated that the Tory government were a bunch of complete REDACTED.



by Tim Lezard

arts

Music >

Yard Act

On tour

UK, September

Leeds post-punk heroes Yard Act hit the road in September to plug their debut album, *The Overload*. They're playing small venues, but not for long. www.yardactors.com



Pavement

On tour

UK, October

Seminal slacker rockers Pavement are back! The Stephen Malkmus-fronted Californian five-piece, who last reformed in 2010, have reformed again, with dates in Leeds, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester and London. Catch them while you can. Who knows when they'll next reform?

<https://pavementband.com/#tour>

Television >

The Change

Channel 4

Bridget Christie writes and stars in this six-part comedy-drama about Linda, a

50-year-old working-class married mother who is having a menopause-prompted crisis. She leaves her family behind and motorcycles off in search of an identity and a purpose. Described as "Shirley Valentine meets *Deliverance*. With pigs", it's going to be brilliant or excruciating. Possibly both.

Exhibition >

Legacies: London Transport's Caribbean Workforce

London Transport Museum

Celebrate the contributions of first, second and third generation Caribbean transport workers to transport in London and British culture at this exhibition.

<https://tinyurl.com/ychpzm9t>

Comedy >

Helen Bauer

Madam Good Tit

On tour

The comedy powerhouse that is Helen Bauer learned stand-up skills while waitressing and drinking in London and Berlin. Her show addresses self-confidence, self-esteem and self-care.

<https://helenbauer.co.uk/live/>

Mark Thomas

Black and White

On tour

Arts favourite Mark Thomas returns with a new show with old themes: taking

down politicians, mucking about and finding hope. He says: "After lockdowns and isolation, this show is about the simple act of being in a room together and toppling international capitalism." <https://markthomasinfo.co.uk/tour-dates/>

Film >

The Forgiven



On general release from September 2, this film, starring Ralph Fiennes and Jessica Chastain and set among the High Atlas mountains of Morocco, explores the reverberations of a random accident on the lives of local Muslims and Western visitors.

www.imdb.com/title/tt3696180/

Festivals >

Beautiful Days

Devon

August 19-21

I don't think I've seen a better festival line-up than this. Let's go: Flogging Molly, The Specials and Levellers (obvs) as headliners, with the Dandy Warhols, Maximo Park, Lars Frederiksen, the Interrupters, Reverend and the Makers, Neds Atomic Dustbins, Beth Orton, Billy Bragg

www.beautifuldays.org

Feakle Festival

Feakle, County Clare

August 4-8

This event has concerts, workshops and ceilidhs, with performances by Lisa O'Neill and Cormac Begley, Charlie Harris, Maeve Donnelly and

Geraldine Cotter, and Martin Hayes, Brian Donnellan and Conal O'Kane. www.feaklefestival.ie

Swn Festival

Cardiff

October 21-23

Cardiff's Swn Festival is promoting gigs in small venues – including the iconic Womanby Street – and is about bringing new, exciting artists to Cardiff. www.swnfest.com

Theatre >

The Doctor

Duke of York's Theatre, London

From September 29



In this play based on Arthur Schnitzler's 1912 short story Professor Bernhardt, Juliet Stevenson is Ruth Wolff, a doctor heading a private clinic who denies entry to a priest wanting to give the last rites to a young patient who doesn't know she's dying. A morally, politically and personally fraught drama.

www.thedukeofyorks.com

Write our Arts page >

Sadly, our accomplished Arts writer Tim Lezard is leaving because of work commitments. If you would like to write lively, entertaining and relevant copy for one of our best-read pages, please email journalist@nuj.org.uk

Spotlight >

The secret gig worker

Juliette Binoche stars as undercover journalist Marianne living among those who work in the gig economy.

Adapted from journalist Florence Aubenas' non-fiction bestseller *The Night*

Cleaners (*Le quai de Ouistreham*), *Between Two Worlds* sees Marianne relocating to Caen, passing herself off as one of a group of itinerant workers desperate to make ends meet.

She finds work as a cleaner on a ferry travelling between Ouistreham and Portsmouth, recording the drudgery of the work she and her colleagues have to do.

At the same time, she grapples with the ethical and moral dimensions of posing as one of the workers, balancing the need to highlight the lives of her

colleagues with her subterfuge.

"Where is the boundary between truth and lies? How far are we allowed to lie for the truth to be captured?" Binoche asks.

Her dilemma is heightened as bonds of friendship develop.

www.imdb.com/title/tt10088984/





TechDownload

Chris Merriman on technology for journalists

byte size...

SMALL SPEAKER, BIG PHONE SOUND

Poly has been around for decades but you probably know it as Plantronics. The Poly Sync 10, its latest speaker/conference phone, is designed to be compatible with Microsoft Teams. While it is around the size of three mobile phones stacked up, it produces big, clear sound, and the accompanying software offers a host of features. Grab one for £119 on Amazon.

<https://tinyurl.com/3ybybmkv>

YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM THIS CAMERA

'Tis witchcraft. Clip your phone in this little stand, turn it on and start a video call. Despite not being connected by app or Bluetooth, the sensor will find your face and follow it so you're always in the centre of the shot. Although I tried to fool it by swerving and hiding, it kept me front and centre in a test. It goes eight hours between charges. Well worth £35.99 – just to see it for yourself.

<https://tinyurl.com/55bjh7nv>

LOOK WONDERFUL ON A ZOOM CALL

Logitech's Litra Glow is its answer to the ring lights that are designed to make you look great on Zoom calls, videos or TV. It takes a more subtle approach, with a square light that clips to your monitor and offers softer, more flattering light for more natural facial tones. The software works with Logitech webcams. At £59 it's worth a look.

<https://tinyurl.com/mr4y4zwc>

PRETTIER WINDOWS

I thought it was worth starting with a bit of an explanation of Windows 11, which was quietly released last autumn.

It was a bit of an odd launch, so now I've had a chance to play with it, let's debunk a few mysteries.

The first thing to say is that Windows 11 is largely a cosmetic update that starts the rollout of Microsoft's new look. It's only available for machines with the newest of new hardware, so it may well not be an option until you're upgrading your computer.

Windows 10 will continue until late 2024, so there's no massive rush, and the benefits are, more than anything, that it looks slightly prettified.



It is integrated tightly with Microsoft Teams and OneDrive (eww). Under the hood, it's easier to log on to your office network without messing up the settings you like when you're at home. It's also the first version of Windows without Internet Explorer, so you'll have to use its replacement, Edge, to download Google Chrome.

Windows 11 is a free update – but the message here is that, if you're not offered it, don't panic. It's very much a nice-to-have, at least for the moment.

<https://tinyurl.com/v4z969w7>

> Laptop rest with space to stash stuff

I usually write with a laptop on my lap – and the Kikkerland Felt iBed Storage is a seemingly simple box that addresses a myriad of issues.

Its felt covering makes it soft to the touch, the non-slip wooden top has a furrow to provide a tablet stand. Take the lid off and you'll see plenty of room to store your

laptop, power supply, mouse and anything else you might need like pens and notebooks.

It's great for keeping by the bed or sofa, and is a boon on aeroplanes as it fits into a

carry-on and makes it easy to find your electronics when the x-ray machine beckons.

Plus it raises your computer, putting your arms in a more natural position. Simple idea – big impact. Perfect for roving.

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8fntuh>

Crystal clear, warm sound in your ears

SHARP SOUND, NOT LIKE SOUP

I thought I'd seen my last pair of wired earbuds, but Flare has knocked it out of the park with this reference-grade, in-ear powerhouse pair. Flare has long been the choice of many in the music industry, and the sheer clarity, range and warmth produced by the E-Prototype earbuds are astounding; they're also comfortable thanks to their soft, ear-filling tips. Speech is crystal clear – I managed to decipher a very fuzzy interview transcription that sounded like soup on regular headphones. They are a treat to use but at £279.99 from flareaudio.com, you'd hope so!

Clean machine knows its way

There's something about robot vacuum cleaners that represents the future we imagined in our childhoods – but most of them just zoom around and change direction when they bang into things. The Eufy Robovac X8 Hybrid is a different beast. Not only does it have wet and dry settings, so you can use it on hard floors and carpets but also, in a rare addition for this price bracket, it is intelligent, creating a map of the floor plan, and learning to avoid obstacles as it goes.

It works with Google and Alexa, so you can set it to work overnight or while you're out, so it doesn't get under your feet, terrorise the cat or generally get in the way.

Also, it picks up dirt better than many more expensive models. At £399 from Argos, it will allow you to eat lunch at your desk and let it deal with the crumbs later. Won't do stairs, though.

<https://uk.eufylife.com/products/t2261211>





Your Say...

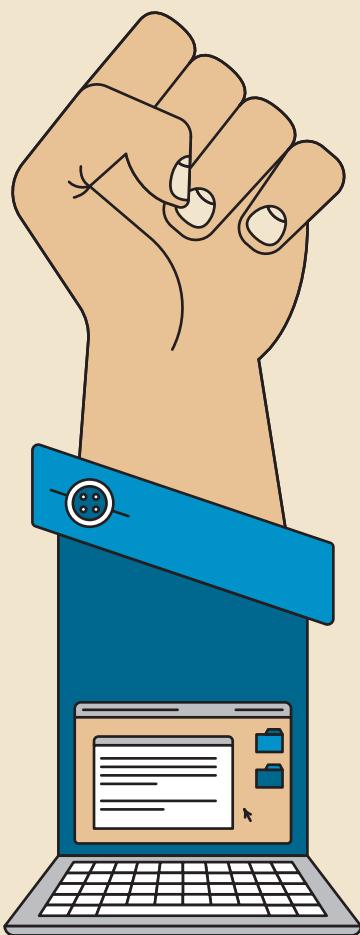
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DENIS CARRIER



World of work needs specialist reporters

It's high time we saw a major revival of specialist correspondents following the world of work. A whole raft of industrial disputes are occurring and trade union membership is on the up. I believe these need careful, dogged reporting and analysis by specialists.

Industrial correspondents had their heyday in the 1970s and 1980s when unions were strong and major industrial disputes were more common. But, as heavy industry shut down and union membership declined, so too did the body of specialists who reported on the struggle between labour and capital.

That struggle became less intense but never went away. New winds are blowing and unions are asserting themselves. Barely a week goes by when Unite is not chalking up another 'inflation-busting pay rise'. Teachers in the NEU will be balloting for industrial action in the autumn, the CWU are balloting as I write and barristers have just gone on strike.

Nautilus International is still after P&O Ferries for sacking 800 seafarers with no notice by video and the RMT is in a high-profile dispute in defence of jobs and working conditions and in pursuit of a pay rise. No doubt many more disputes will erupt.

So there's plenty to report. Lots of movers and shakers, issues and grievances, wins and defeats, changes to legislation, labour analysis. The Washington Post has just appointed a labour reporter and Novara Media is recruiting a labour movement correspondent. A growing trend?

In the brave new world of global giants such as Amazon, Apple and DHL, and gig workers, I think there is room for a new breed of transnational labour correspondents - even in teams - to cover their affairs and thinking and how (organised) labour is responding.

Andrew Draper
Cardiff & SE Wales branch

£40
prize
letter

Our old terms for union reps are off-putting ...

Traditions can be a wonderful thing but I'm with Rob Osborne in thinking it's time for our union to ditch the mother and father of chapel titles in favour of something more easily understood (Outdated terms or treasured tradition?, June/July).

For several years now, I've referred to myself simply as a chapel rep and group chapel rep as I too found the traditional titles were confusing to new members and those yet to sign up.

I decided that it was better to waste less time on deciphering cryptic titles for prospective members and more time talking about how the NUJ makes a difference in our newsroom.

Retaining the word chapel for our workplace groupings is an easy way to honour the tradition and differentiate them from branches, but let's not insist on keeping the mother and father titles that feel so old-fashioned and make our union seem inaccessible.

George Morris
National World group
chapel rep

... but it's more pressing to have reps in the first place

Natasha Hirst raises some interesting points in her discussion of NUJ terminology (Outdated terms or treasured tradition?, June/July).

I think whatever we call chapel officers is of far less importance than the fact that we have some, ideally in every workplace. So maybe individual chapels should be free to choose what they call workplace reps. Speaking of which, what's wrong with 'workplace rep'?

Tony Harcup (an ex-father of chapel)
Leeds and West Yorkshire
branch

Nothing sweet about data-grabbing cookies

The internet has changed our lives, but it is virtually impossible to view a site without a box blocking the screen to

Union invaluable in legal battle to protect sources

As you will know, I was taken to court by the West Midlands Police, who applied for an order under the Terrorism Act 2000 in an attempt to force me to reveal the names of people I interviewed in my investigation into the Birmingham pub bombings more than 30 years ago. In response, I argued that protection of sources was a cardinal principal of ethical journalism

and that my actions had been overwhelmingly in the public interest.

The application was heard at the Old Bailey and on March 22 the recorder of London, Judge Mark Lucraft, declined to grant the police application on the grounds that it was not in the public interest to do so.

Hopefully, this case will serve as precedent that will protect other journalists in a similar situation.

Although I would not under any

circumstances have disclosed confidential sources, I would have had difficulty in defending the action without the support of the NUJ, which paid my legal costs.

I would like to thank Michelle Stanistreet and her colleagues for their unswerving support and to say to anyone in doubt about the value of trade union membership that you never know when you will need it.

Chris Mullin
www.chrismullinexmp.com

prevent users from accessing a site or obtaining information without accepting cookies and agreeing to a range of conditions.

The conditions are written in a new, ambiguous language implying they protect users when the real aim is to obtain as much data as possible for commercial or other purposes. The following are examples of this twisted gobbledygook:

- "We value your privacy." No they don't! They want to know everything about us.
- "We use cookies to give you online experience." What is an online experience? The function of cookies is to sell products and services by attracting advertisers.
- "We want to personalise your experience." They want to know everything about us to pass on to advertisers.
- "You can see more options or change or manage your settings or preferences at any time." What is a 'preference' or 'setting'? And why do we need options? Either we agree or refuse – if we can.
- "By clicking 'accept' you consent to the processing of your data by us and third parties." Finally, an honest statement – but why should we and who are the third parties? If we don't

want to 'accept' it is hard to locate the 'refuse' or 'deny' icon if there is one. It should be mandatory to display 'refuse', 'reject' or 'deny' icons.

It seems fair for companies that require subscriptions to block their sites to non-subscribers, but it is an affront to people's intelligence to pretend that these rules are to protect them when the real purpose is to extract personal and private data for commercial purposes and pass it on to other companies or even the government.

Peter Fieldman
Madrid

Wonderful column, particularly in print

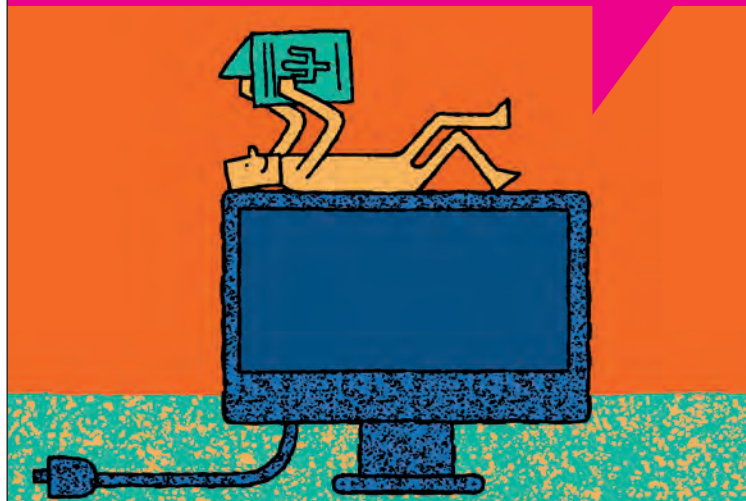
Chris Proctor's column, always the first thing I turn to in the Journalist, has me laughing out loud. More power to his pen.

And what a treat to have the Journalist back in print. I confess I never read the digital edition – I spend far too much of my life looking at computer screens as it is. My loss, I know, but I suspect many other members feel the same.

I still yearn for a sub's column, though...

Norman Burr
Kelso

Do you want to unplug and read your magazine in print rather than online?



Please let us know.

You can change your member preferences on the website nuj.org.uk or email journalist@nuj.org.uk

NUJ
NATIONAL UNION
OF
JOURNALISTS

STEVE BELL

THE OWNERS



What made you become a journalist?

May 1968 events in Paris – the reports made me want to follow suit, give up being an academic and change the world via journalism (how naive!).

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

Teacher/academic (but I was too impatient).

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

In 1968 when I became a graduate trainee with the Scotsman in Edinburgh – as a believer in solidarity/collective action.

Are many of your friends in the union?

A few still hanging on in there – and new ones – but many retired (or dead...).

What's been your best moment in your career?

Gosh, too many but, perhaps, midnight on October 3 1990 in front of the Reichstag in Berlin when Germany was unified, the Cold War ended, Ossis and Wessis shared Sekt – and a stalker interrupted Kohl's speech.

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

A confectionery factory in York as a student: a relentless production line and minimal pay and conditions.



NUJ & me

David Gow is a former Guardian writer and is treasurer of Edinburgh freelance branch

And the best?

New York City in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.

What advice would you give someone starting in journalism?

You should believe in yourself and your ability, doubt everybody else and accept no bullshit.

Who is your biggest hero?

Daniel Barenboim for his passion for music as a force for peace, reconciliation and solidarity.

And villain?

Vladimir Putin in today's world.

Tell us a secret

Brussels, where I lived/worked for over 10 years, is NOT boring but

vibrant – and a good story pre and post B---t! A green, very cosmopolitan and culinary city where the future of Europe is debated and, often, decided (typically in English)...

**Which six people (alive or dead) would you invite to a dinner party?**

George Orwell, Nelson Mandela, Billie Whitelaw, Jürgen Klopp, Mary Robinson, Joan Baez.

What was your earliest political thought?

Let's get rid of all private schools and reform the education system from top to bottom (still think that...).

What are your hopes for journalism over the next five years?

That good, critical, investigative journalism will flourish, the media barons will see their powers curtailed and new outlets will open for ambitious young hacks.

And fears?

That the manipulative, mendacious moguls will acquire more properties and powers – and the space for independent, critical reporting shrink.

How would you like to be remembered?

As a good European hack.



An unusual, surreal but effective shock tactic



We'd all benefit if public figures were direct, says **Chris Proctor**

I was astonished at the performance of RMT general secretary Mick Lynch during the rail strike. To general amazement, he pretended to be himself. At one point, he even admitted the source of his cunning subterfuge, telling one reporter: "I'm me."

Such appalling naiveté was difficult to watch. Did he not know the rules?

Any strike leader being savaged by bilious interviewers has a moral duty to act the part of either Militant Wide-Eyed Extremist or Slippery Sulky Apologist. The choice was his: yet he did neither.

Equally, he failed to squeeze himself into a nice suit and tie, have a neat haircut or foam about the despotic boss class. Although, to be fair, given his limited hirsuteness, he can be excused the haircut. But he cannot be forgiven for failing to mention key words like 'derisory' and 'diabolic'.

But where were his interminable lists of figures? Where did he mention the minuted decisions of the union's Ad Hoc Remuneration Sub-Committee? More importantly, where were his threats?

Did he not know that it is a truth universally acknowledged that a strike leader in possession of a media interview must be puce with indignation or trained into well-rehearsed sound bites? On this basis, Lynch's performance was amateur. It was like an actor playing Hamlet without scanning the script. Media tutors across the land must have despaired.

For its part, the mainstream media acted impeccably, as it frequently does when discussing industrial action. That is to say, it was both petty and confrontational.

Piers Morgan stepped up to the plate with an excellent exposition of the art of pettiness. Transport is halted, families are rent asunder, business writhes in death throes – and what does Morgan demand of the union leader? He wants to know why Lynch has a picture of The Hood on his Facebook page. This was of particular surprise to those of us who had no idea what Morgan was talking about. The Hood is as remote from most people's lives as TalkTV.

It was like getting Putin into your studio and, ignoring contretemps in Ukraine, insisting he explain why his dog is called Buffy.

But, lest other people share Piers' bizarre obsession, Lynch changed his Facebook profile to something that the broadcaster may be more approving of – a photo of a beaming Morgan with Ghislaine Maxwell.

The confrontational approach to interviewing was epitomised in a marvellous clip involving Sky's Kay Burley. Burley told Lynch that agency workers could be hired to do strikers' jobs and demanded to know what the union would do if this happened.

The correct answer, if only Lynch had understood the rules, was: "We will surround, intimidate, attack and possibly garrote any such person on sight. Furthermore, we will throw stones at their families and set fire to their homes. The level of violence and destruction will make the scenes at Orgreave look like a vicarage tea party."

Alas, Lynch miscued. He said union members would form a peaceful picket line and try to persuade any agency staff not to do their work. Burley was miffed. "But surely you would kick them to the ground and pull their legs

off?" she (almost) asked. Lynch, the dirty spoilsport, said he wouldn't.

He carried on like this throughout, acting as if he wasn't acting. As if he were a normal person saying what he believed.

This 'honest' approach is an unusual but effective shock tactic. When I worked at the postal union, we had a press conference where first the officials spoke; we then introduced an ordinary postal worker to the reporters. He didn't make a speech. He just wandered over and showed them his pay slip from the previous week.

That one piece of paper revealed more about the dispute than all the inflation indexes, comparative remuneration tables and industrial predictions that the research department had bursting from their dossiers. It was an ordinary person explaining their predicament in their own way. Lynch did the same. That was what made it surreal. And effective.

I know this sounds ridiculous, but I wonder if politicians could pick up any lessons from the RMT leader.

I always think this at Prime Minister's Questions. Obviously, the soon to depart PM doesn't know everything. But he bumbles on about everything under the sun, from war to taxation to filters for washing machines to how much Hammersmith Council spends on EU flags. Why didn't he adopt the Lynch approach and say, "I don't know. I'll find out"? It's not a crime not to know everything. And, excepting Boris, it's not a crime to be yourself.

It would be so helpful if all public figures were direct, unambiguous and honest. And it would make our jobs much easier if it didn't involve interpretation, assumption and guesswork before putting pen to paper.

He carried on like this throughout, acting as if he wasn't acting. As if he were a normal person saying what he believed

**REASONS
TO JOIN**



Should You Be Getting Paid Holiday?

Many UK freelances and casuals are entitled to holiday pay in law, but an NUJ survey found that almost nine out of ten did not receive it. Are you losing out? The NUJ has been successful in winning holiday pay and backpay for many of its members.

Could that be you? If so, the NUJ can help. Contact freelanceoffice@nuj.org.uk

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