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In a bunker with Trump

Trainee reporter's exclusive interview

There's hardly a news bulletin that doesn't mention Donald Trump these days as the US president sends shockwaves throughout the world. He's also set his sights on journalists and the media, attempting to undermine an independent press by excluding a growing number of organisations.

Few journalists this side of the Atlantic have encountered The Donald but one trainee on the Ayr Advertiser scooped all the nationals securing an interview (with just one hour's notice) when the Turnberry golf course became part of the Trump empire. In her great series On Our Patch, Ruth Addicott speaks to local journalists who were there when Trump came to town.

And in his insightful column, Ray Snoddy dissects Trump's attitude to the media and looks at where this will take journalism in the US.

At home, media models are changing constantly and we have pieces on the value of producing newsletters and making the most of your expertise by becoming a media consultant.

On a lighter note, we also have features on where to take your holidays if you want a destination with a journalistic theme; how cartoonists had a heyday in the miners' strike; and the disappearing art of the newspaper diary.

I hope you find some interesting reading in this edition.

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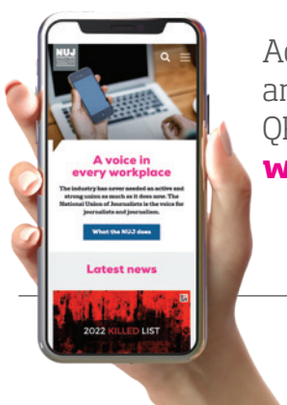

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Calls for fair pay as Reach makes £102m

THE NUJ has urged news publisher Reach to fairly remunerate journalists at the company following news that it made £102.3 million in operating profits in 2024.

Reach, whose titles include The Mirror, Express, Irish Star and Manchester Evening News, recorded a six per cent increase in profits on the previous year.

But any decision on pay will now be taken by a new chief executive after the sudden departure of Jim Mullen (pictured right) in March. Mullen, who led Reach for six years, is to be the new chief executive of the Jockey Club starting in June. But he stepped down at the end of March and was immediately succeeded by Piers North who has been Reach's chief revenue officer since 2020.

The union has said that with pay talks now underway, journalists at the company should receive a pay offer that fairly reflects their the invaluable role they have played in contributing to the company's success.

Reach's figures for last year revealed that although print revenue was down seven per cent on 2023 results, increases including in digital advertising where yields grew by 19 per cent were achieved.

The union has said that it is crucial this year's pay award allows for the retention of the skilled and talented journalists at the company.

Chris Morley, Reach NUJ Group Chapel national coordinator, said:

"The return to growth for Reach's digital operations which it has put central to its business strategy - and the continued stability of print revenue - is to be welcomed in today's announcement.

"The positive strides in digital revenue have come about on the back of the company's journalists who were asked to significantly boost their productivity. They met that challenge and put the company back on track - that now needs to be recognised through a decent and fair annual pay settlement."

He said references by management to further costs savings of between four and five per cent were of concern to the NUJ.

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> **The positive strides in digital revenue have come about on the back of the company's journalists**
>
> ***Chris Morley, Reach NUJgroup chapel national coordinator***

Concern over Turkey's actions

THE NUJ has written to the Turkish ambassadors to the UK and Ireland, expressing grave concern over the expulsion of Mark Lowen, a BBC journalist, from Istanbul because of his coverage of anti-government protests, and the ongoing crackdown on media freedom.

The union has also highlighted its concerns with the UK and Irish governments and with Michael McGrath, EU commissioner for democracy, justice, the rule of law and consumer protection.

Lowen, who was the BBC's Istanbul's correspondent for five years until 2019, was detained for 17 hours in Turkey and then deported to London for "being a threat to public order". Lowen said the whole experience had been 'extremely distressing.

Turkish authorities took several journalists from their homes after large street protests against the imprisonment of the mayor of Istanbul who is the biggest rival to the long-standing President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The union and the International Federation of Journalists have repeatedly highlighted the undermining of media freedom in Turkey.

King applauds local journalists

KING CHARLES and Queen Camilla hosted hundreds of regional journalists, including the NUJ's president Natasha Hirst and other union members, at a Buckingham Palace reception in March.

The event was held to acknowledge and appreciate the important role played by regional media across all forms of news outlets.

Acknowledging the industry had shrunk by 75 per cent in 20 years, King Charles said in a statement: "I have long believed that regional media, in all its forms, has a unique and vital role to play in society, perhaps even more so in these uncertain times.

"As I said in a speech to mark the tercentenary of Britain's first daily national newspaper, back in 2002, the press, alongside other long-standing institutions, is at the forefront of 'defining, describing and celebrating the more profound values of our nation'.

"Two decades on, when too much focus is given to that which divides us, that role for your whole industry is more important than ever – and it starts from the ground-up, at local level, in your hands."

NIKKI CHAMPAGNIE

NUJ and ITV Wales celebrate Nick Powell

MORE than 100 of the great and the good of journalism and Welsh politics came together at the Senedd in February at an NUJ/ITV Wales celebration of the life and work of Nick Powell, *David Nicholson writes*.

He died suddenly of a heart attack aged 66 in an Azerbaijan hotel covering a conference for news website EU Reporter.

Powell was a former political editor of ITV Wales, chair of the NUJ's Welsh executive council and South Wales branch secretary and a prominent member of the Journalists' Charity in Wales.

Former first minister Mark Drakeford, Welsh Conservative leader Darren Millar, Plaid Cymru leader Rhun ap Iorwerth and former ministers Julie Morgan, Lee Waters and Mick Antoniw were among those attending.

A message from the current first minister for Wales was also read out. Eluned Morgan could not attend but wanted to show her appreciation for Powell's work as a journalist and trade unionist.

"He was like a part of the furniture in Welsh political journalism and was taken from us far too young," Morgan's message said.

Martin Shipton spoke on behalf of the NUJ and as a friend of Powell's: "Most people in Wales would not recognise him, but Nick had a huge knowledge of politics and had a tremendous influence on the coverage of devolution."

Shipton spoke about Powell's work developing NUJ policy in Wales to combat the crisis in the country's media industry.

In a nod to the many politicians in the room, Shipton said it would be a fitting tribute to Powell for public interest journalism

EU REPORTER.

to be designated a public service and to establish a Wales Media Institute funded by the Welsh government.

Many speakers referred to Powell's terrible driving; his younger brother Mike recalled him driving into a field through a hedge and promptly turning round and driving out through the gap he had made without anyone in the car saying a word about this.

Waters, a former environment minister and journalist, said that after Powell had been appointed as ITV Wales political editor, he went on to guide coverage of devolution and politics for more than two decades.

Adrian Masters succeeded Nick as ITV Wales political editor and paid a moving tribute to his friend and colleague: "He was the best political journalist I have worked with."

> **Nick had a huge knowledge of politics and had a tremendous influence on the coverage of devolution**
>
> ***Martin Shipton***

Coroner backtracks on secret inquest plans

A FREELANCE journalist and a group of media lawyers have succeeded in forcing a senior coroner to reverse a decision to hold an inquest in secret.

Charlie Moloney, who specialises in court reporting, launched a challenge after the senior coroner for Buckinghamshire, Crispin Butler, had refused to provide him with the record of inquest (ROI) in the case of 38-year-old electrician Graham Whelan.

The ROI was crucial for Moloney because Butler had decided to hold Whelan's inquest 'in writing', under powers to avoid unnecessary hearings in uncontentious cases. This meant there was no hearing in open court, with the coroner concluding the inquest and sending his conclusions to the family.

Moloney argued refusal to the ROI amounted to a secret inquest, which he described as 'unprecedented'.

Moloney obtained assistance from the Media Lawyers Association. He stated the coroner's decision was unlawful and warned he would issue proceedings if the ROI was not disclosed.

The coroner disclosed the ROI and a ruling, which revealed Whelan had died from unintentional hanging, which was ruled misadventure.

Family Courts, Page 17

Two-year pay deal agreed at the FT

AFTER months of pay talks between the NUJ and FT management, a 3.75 per cent increase for editorial staff was agreed for this year and an increase of 3.5 per cent for 2026, with agreement to review next year's deal should annual inflation reach 3.5 per cent or beyond.

For 2026, if annual inflation in 2025 reaches a level of 3.5 per cent or higher, management and unions will renegotiate the agreement.

It has been agreed the inflation gauge for this assessment will be annual UK CPI for 2025 as calculated by the UK Office for Budget Responsibility in its 2025 autumn forecast.

The break clause provides a commitment to negotiate in good faith, taking into consideration all relevant factors. It does not mean an automatic commitment to raise the 2026 pay increase beyond 3.5 per cent.

Steve Bird, NUJ FT chapel chair, said: "At a time of record profits for the FT, members have sent a strong signal that they will continue to fight for a fair share and for pay rises that do not leave them lagging behind inflation."

IFJ blasts Trump over attacks on the media

DONALD TRUMP'S continuing assaults on the mainstream media in the US has come under fire from the International Federation of the Journalists (IFJ).

In the wake of Trumpian broadsides against organisations such as ABC and legal action against NBC and others, the IFJ has launched a strong defence of factual reporting.

Anthony Bellanger, general secretary of the IFJ told The Journalist: "As journalists, we are committed to truth, transparency, and holding power accountable. Donald Trump's persistent attacks on the media are a direct assault on these fundamental principles and clearly undermine democracy.

"We also must be aware that Donald Trump fills informational gaps and feeds them with his own narrative. Journalists must stop following his pace and rhythm and remember, as stated in our Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists, that 'journalism is a profession and the notion of urgency or immediacy in the dissemination of information shall not prevail over fact-checking'."

Clearly it is difficult to ascertain what the president of the USA believes; what he will continue to believe; what he has been told to say and what he says for effect. What is predictable is that any reporting that does not correspond to his narrative will be branded "fake news".

Nevertheless in March, he proclaimed: "I have stopped all government censorship and brought back free speech in America. It's back." That is not the experience of the mainstream media in the US.

Three weeks earlier he had banned Associated Press journalists from the Oval Office and Airforce One, for failing to adhere to Executive Order 14172 by refusing to refer to the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America".

DEREK MCCABE

As reported in the Guardian, he is also taking legal action against ABC and CBS and the chair of the Federal Communications Commission, a Trump appointee, has ordered a series of investigations into NBC News, National Public Radio and Public Broadcasting Service.

Trump has asserted that some media groups should be made "illegal" and he has cut funding from organisations like Voice of America. The White House lambasted Jeffrey Goldberg, editor in chief of the Atlantic magazine, for revealing that he had been mistakenly invited into a secret Signal group during which a US attack on Yemen's Houthi militia was being discussed.

Raymond Snoddy Page 9

> **As journalists, we are committed to truth, transparency, and holding power accountable**
>
> ***Anthony Bellanger, IFJ general secretary***

Wilson aide Joe Haines dies aged 97

FORMER journalist and NUJ member Joe Haines died in February aged 97.

He was best known for his role as press secretary to Harold Wilson, Labour leader then prime minister in the 1960s and 1970s.

Haines, who was from Rotherhithe, London, began his career aged 14 as a copyboy on the Glasgow Bulletin before joining The Scottish Daily Mail in 1960 as a political correspondent.

From there he went to The Sun, then a left-leaning broadsheet, where he became political editor. The journalist, described by Labour as "a brilliant writer", was reportedly vocal at NUJ meetings and held pay talks with unions.

He had two stints advising Wilson and went on to work for the Daily Mirror as political editor, assistant editor and a non-executive director.

Haines also wrote an authorised biography of Robert Maxwell and a book called The Politics of Power. In later years, he was an occasional political commentator for publications including the Daily Mail.

A Labour spokesperson said: "Joe had two spells as press secretary to the former Labour prime minister in the late 1960s and mid-1970s, becoming one of his most trusted advisers.

"The son of a Rotherhithe docker, who died when Joe was two, he was raised by his mother, a hospital cleaner. He left school at 11.

"It was as a political correspondent that he came into his own. He was covering politics for the Sun pre-Rupert Murdoch when Wilson asked him to be his press secretary.

"A fast and brilliant writer with an acerbic tongue, he won a reputation for toughness and loyalty in equal measure."

ZUMA PRESS, INC. / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Calls grow to release Lai

THE NUJ has joined the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in welcoming a statement by the UN special rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, urging China and Hong Kong to release journalist Jimmy Lai.

In March, professor Ben Saul addressed the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, stating that Jimmy Lai's prosecution is "directly related to his criticism of the Chinese government and his support for democracy in Hong Kong SAR".

Saul highlighted his concerns over the use of the national security law to bring forward prosecutions against Lai and others for exercising their rights.

Lai, 77, is serving five years and nine months in prison on charges of fraud for allegedly breaching the lease of former pro-democracy outlet Apple Daily.

Since Apple Daily's forced closure, he has been subjected to prolonged solitary confinement during his detention and complaints have been filed by legal representatives to the UN special rapporteur on torture.

The NUJ and IFJ have repeatedly called for Lai's release. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has concluded that Lai is being arbitrarily detained and urged for his unconditional release. Others calling for this include Sir Keir Starmer.

Delegates back women in Palestine

AN NUJ motion calling for solidarity with women journalists in Palestine was passed unanimously at TUC Women's Conference. NUJ delegates also spoke on motions, including on the rise of the far right, tackling misogyny in workplaces, women's health at work and confronting sexual harassment. Wider issues discussed included how to confront exploitative zero-hours contracts, as well as decriminalisation of the sex industry.

The NUJ delegation comprised Ann Galpin, Sara Lewis and Mariam Elsayeh Ibrahim. They were joined by NUJ member of honour Anita Halpin who attended as an observer.

Ibrahim, who sits on the union's ethics council, moved the motion calling for solidarity with women journalists in Palestine. It noted "that according to the UN, around 70 per cent of people killed in Gaza are women and children. These women include journalists who play a crucial role in covering the war and bringing this information to the attention of the rest of the world."

In an impassioned speech, she praised the support that trade unions in the UK had shown those being attacked in Gaza. She said: "I am profoundly grateful to be part of a community united in support of marginalised voices."

The theme of the event was Resist, Persist, Deliver, and it took place against a backdrop of recent right-wing misogynist rhetoric.

TUC assistant general secretary Kate Bell highlighted the global challenges facing women and said: "It's never been more important for women to be in a union, to stand up and tackle the far right and to win progress at work and in our communities, not just for women but for everyone who's been let down by years of austerity politics and unchecked inequality."

NUJ

An emergency motion called on the TUC Women's Committee to defend diversity, equality and Inclusion programmes.

> **I am profoundly grateful to be part of a trade union community united in support of marginalised voices**
>
> ***Mariam Elsayeh Ibrahim NUJ delegate to TUC Women's Conference***

Call for probe into Ukrainian killing

THE UNION is backing calls for an investigation into the killing of Ukrainian journalist Tetiana Kulyk by a Russian drone.

Kulyk, a member of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU) and an editor-in-chief of Ukrinform, Ukraine's national news agency, was killed at home with her husband.

Anthony Bellanger, general secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, said: "We are deeply saddened by the outrageous killing of our colleague, journalist Tetiana Kulyk and her beloved husband by a Russian drone attack.

"As the war in Ukraine enters its fourth year, we reiterate that journalists, as civilians, are entitled to protection in the context of armed conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian law. We call for an independent investigation that determines the circumstances of Kulyk's death and brings the perpetrators to justice."

Sergiy Tomilenko, NUJU president, said: "Tetiana was not just a professional in her field; she was a voice that told the world about the resilience of the Ukrainian people."

"Every journalist who dies at the hands of the Russian occupiers is an irreparable loss for the entire journalistic community and Ukraine."

KJP1

Building a community

Bringing colleagues together boosts union strength and solidarity. **Kath Grant** reports

Early doors: the Manchester Mechanics Institute was an early supporter of trade unions, hosting the first TUC event

Union recruitment and organisation is not just about increasing numbers – it's about building a community, participants at an NUJ webinar were told.

Last year, the Central Arbitration Committee approved an application for automatic recognition at the Press Association because the majority of journalists were union members.

PA chapel officers, who spent years campaigning for this, said the key to recruitment was developing an NUJ community at work, through conversations, social events and the use of social media to share the benefits of union membership.

Webinar participants were reminded that, in the early days of trade unionism, working people's social clubs, walking groups and community day schools run by establishments such as the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and mechanics institutes complemented and enhanced union organisation.

The Manchester Mechanics Institute hosted the first meeting of the TUC, and a WEA art appreciation class in the North East inspired the development of the renowned Ashington Group – the Pitmen Painters. Trade unions also grew out of friendly societies, groups of craftsmen who supported their fellow workers, including those travelling around the country looking for work .

These types of structures no longer exist so today's trade unionists need to build their own communities to boost strength and solidarity.

NUJ general secretary Laura Davison and vice-president Gerry Curran said the webinar had been organised to share examples of recruitment and organising work, and hear from members about their own ideas.

Curran, who also chairs the national executive council's (NEC) development committee, emphasised each workplace has its own issues but said all members could ask themselves: "When was the last time I asked someone to join the NUJ?" Many journalists say they've never been asked – yet, if all members recruited one person, it would double the membership.

Davison said members' voices and creativity had helped drive the NUJ through 'tough times' of redundancies, but hopefully new laws would open up more access to unrecognised workplaces.

During pandemic lockdowns and post-Covid hybrid workplace practices, unions provided ways of working together to combat isolation.

Chapels, branches, industrial councils and individual members all have their role to play. Union action at newspaper groups such as Reach and high-profile cases, like the equality issues at the BBC, brought union members together and could boost recruitment.

The general secretary had particular praise for workplace reps throughout the UK and Ireland, backed by national and regional organisers. She said it was the dedication and determination of these reps that had led to the union's success in gaining recognition.

> **There were 300 people from widely dispersed workplaces and we were starting from scratch**

Davison told the meeting of NUJ reps' training opportunities, including a workshop, and that NUJ trainer Caroline Holmes would be attending the annual delegate meeting in Blackpool.

The PA chapel co-chairs, Jonathan Brady and Emily Pennink, said union recognition was the culmination of a four-year process and the chapel had 'gone from strength to strength'. They had held numerous discussions about building the chapel; one-to-one conversations were essential.

"There were 300 people from widely dispersed workplaces and we were starting from scratch," Pennink said.

Social events tended to be London-centric so they used social media networks and WhatsApp groups. These had drawbacks but they stayed upbeat, despite some negative responses. "The community was able to hear a wide range of views and that was good," they said.

Brady was reassured by Davison's advice that chapel officers did not have to react immediately to negative comments: "She said we should keep things positive, learn about the difficulties members were expressing and think about solutions."

Union staff knowledge is important if chapels are to develop and retain energy and enthusiasm. "Issues like AI need support from the national organisers and, if there's one thing we regret, it is that we didn't undertake the NUJ reps' training earlier," Brady said.

NEC member Georgina Morris described how branches can help build union communities. Her West Yorkshire branch has an online meetings every other month and these alternate with social evenings so members can chat informally about issues at work.

Thou shalt not steal

Plans to let AI companies take creators' work are unethical, unworkable and undermine the law, says **Andrew Wiard**

On one day in March, every newsstand displayed a range of front pages all with the same bold message – Make It Fair. So, what was that about? The copyright and artificial intelligence consultation. And what was that all about? In a word, theft.

Our government is proposing to demolish the essential basis of UK copyright law. They think, with no evidence whatsoever, this will give them an edge in luring artificial intelligence (AI) developers to our shores.

According to Caroline Dinenage, who chairs the culture, media and sport committee, the proposals would be "the largest copyright heist in the world's history".

The consultation declares: "The lack of clarity ... means that leading AI developers do not train their models in the UK, and instead train in jurisdictions with clearer or more permissive rules."

This is simply not true. The AI tech companies, who are thieving our work on an industrial scale, are not worried because the law is not clear. They are worried because it's all too clear. We own it; they don't. All spelt out beyond any doubt in the Copyright Designs and Patents Act. We own it because we create it. They must seek our permission to use it and, if granted, must pay for it.

This consultation is not about clarity. It is a thoroughly disingenuous attempt to give these AI thieves a free pass and legal absolution for past and future sins by way of an exception to copyright law.

This exception would permit text and data mining for commercial exploitation of all we create unless we 'opt out', by somehow or other 'reserving' it.

This is wrong not only in principle. As Baroness Beeban Kidron put it so succinctly in the Lords: "Should shopkeepers have to opt out of shoplifters?" It is also quite unworkable.

Take photography. There are millions of photographs already online, all beyond any hope of retrospective 'reservation'. On this ground alone, this idea should immediately be scrapped.

Every picture I send out carries my prohibition on data mining, in machine-readable metadata, 'reserving' my rights. But so what? Metadata is not secure. It is routinely stripped out, together with any such opt-out 'reservation'. There is no effective legal defence against this as, once this has been stripped out, innocent infringement is impossible to disprove. Besides, I have neither the time nor the money to spend my life playing copyright whack-a-mole.

Today, I still have my rights. They are clear. Why should I be dragged, in the name of clarity, into this legal morass?

The entire creative world, from the Creative Rights in AI Coalition to the TUC, who issued the AI for Creative Workers Manifesto, is up in arms.

The government has three choices:

- To force this through, with their unbeatable parliamentary majority
- Just drop it
- Devise a madcap scheme to divide and rule, by exempting certain sectors from the opt-out system, as reported in the Guardian.

Somehow, I don't think they have a photography sector in mind. All creators are born equal, but some would have more rights than others.

> **The government is about to sacrifice our right to own what we create to propitiate the AI corporate thieves**

The Guardian reported that officials are looking for ways to offer protection. One was allowing creative industries to opt in, while letting AI companies use mass media for free unless they opted out. So, what about freelances, we individual intellectual property creators? Clarity, anyone? This is a right mess.

They have not thought this through. It would be in clear breach of our international copyright obligations under the Convention of Berne. This exists to stop member states breaking the fundamentals of copyright law. Any such legislation risks judicial review.

If the UK insists on going ahead, it would undermine the £1.25 billion creative sector. Generative AI would replace creativity with aesthetic sterility and reliable reporting with fake news. Realistic fake pictures would threaten public trust in press photography.

This is not like any other fight. The government, chasing the mirage of growth, is about to sacrifice our right to own what we create ourselves to propitiate the AI corporate thieves.

We now face two partners in crime. Silicon Valley steals our work. Our own government stealing our rights. I hope that's clear.

ZUMA PRESS, INC. / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

News is the casualty in Trump's war on media

Lawsuits and and axed funding are among the extreme, overt attacks, says **Raymond Snoddy**

Amid the mayhem caused by President Donald Trump's stream of orders, tariffs and threats to Canada, Panama and Greenland, it would be easy to overlook the threat he poses to the media in the US.

Some actions are simply spiteful, such as excluding AP from White House briefings because the news agency has refused to turn the Gulf of Mexico into Trump's Gulf of America.

More generally, the White House has taken control of access to presidential press conferences and Air Force One and excluded not just AP but also Reuters and the HuffPost.

Other moves are much more fundamental, such as ending America's international broadcasting operations after more than 80 years.

Matters are made worse by billionaire media owners, most notably Jeff Bezos at the Washington Post, apparently currying favour with Trump by emasculating one of America's most iconic newspapers.

As he gets into his stride, Trump's threats against the media are getting more overt and extreme.

The US president has launched a $2 billion lawsuit against CBS because its 60 Minutes programme has broadcast items critical of his actions in almost every weekly edition since his inauguration.

There are fears that CBS owners Paramount might buckle and settle because they are in talks over a merger with Skydance Media and that would require approval by the Trump administration.

Trump has now taken to suggesting that programmes by news channels such as CNN and MSNBC must be illegal because, as he sees it, 98 per cent of what they broadcast is critical of him.

Broadcasters have much to fear because of the power a Trump-controlled Federal Communications Commission could wield over their licences.

The direction of travel is clear and the attacks on freedom of expression in the US could intensify as Trump's popularity continues to wane.

The journalists on the New York Times and the Washington Post are still reporting the news despite the threats but, for the Post, free comment is a different matter entirely.

Not content with blocking Post editorial writers from backing Kamala Harris, to his shame, Bezos has ruled that the Washington Post of Watergate fame is no longer going to have a broad-based opinion section.

Instead, it will focus solely on support for 'personal liberties and free markets'. The Washington Post opinions editor David Shipley resigned as did Ruth Marcus, who had worked on the section for 40 years, after Bezos killed a piece she wrote opposing the policy change.

The most outrageous attack on the US media is the 'pause' – in effect the closure – of the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which broadcast news to countries where freedom of expression is suppressed. Funding has been halted and hundreds of staff placed on 'administrative leave'.

Trump is also threatening to pull federal funding for PBS television and National Public Radio.

What happens next in Trump versus the American media?

The likeliest will be a blizzard of legal cases citing the first amendment to the US Constitution, which states that Congress 'shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press'.

How does any of this affect the UK?

The main impact so far has been on right-wing commentators, who seemed willing, until recently, to treat Trump as a normal president despite mountains of evidence to the contrary.

Harry Cole, political editor of The Sun, hedged his bets in January by predicting that while the second Trump presidency may well be a disaster, there was just as much chance that it would not be. "And whisper it quietly – he might actually do a good job," Cole suggested.

In the Daily Mail, Boris Johnson clung to a belief in Trump by insisting he has a viable plan to end the Ukraine war. Trump, Johnson argues, will achieve 'a reasonable peace' by taking such tough action against Putin that he will have to agree. Unfortunately, Putin does not seem to read the Daily Mail.

More remarkably, Andrew Neil no less, wrote in his Mail column in March, one of the most abject mea culpas in the history of modern journalism, apologising for giving Trump the benefit of the doubt.

Trump's behaviour had convinced Neil, some would say very belatedly, of something he had feared in his heart of hearts – that the president was 'an unprincipled, narcissistic charlatan'.

Now Neil, who had seen 'the vacuous Kamala Harris' as the greater threat, admitted he had been wrong all along.

"What fools we were not to take him [Trump] at his own estimation, but to think he could amount to something better. We have no right to be surprised that the man who tried to overturn democracy in his own country doesn't give a damn if it's now snuffed out in Ukraine," Neil concluded.

Indeed. Quite. But I suppose better the sinner that repenteth...

> **"The direction of travel is clear and attacks on freedom of expression could intensify as Trump's popularity wanes"**

Get out there

Writing newsletters can give you both income and editorial control, says **Linda Harrison**

We're lucky as writers that newsletters serve two purposes for us – we're getting ourselves out there, but we're also showcasing the service we provide," says Sophie Cross, editor of Freelancer Magazine and creator of the The Dunker newsletter.

"It's also something you own; you have creative freedom over it, and the database belongs to you – unlike using social media platforms, where the platform owns the audience. As Austin Kleon said, 'Social media is not enough! The algorithm will screw you, eventually. You need a list of emails.'"

The Dunker, which goes to 5,000 freelances and has a 50 per cent open rate (way above the average of about 21 per cent), offers business and creativity tips for freelancers. It is written by a different member from the community each week.

Cross, who also runs the Grow Your Own Newsletter online course for freelancers, adds: "It's a way to connect the community and showcase members' expertise as well as being how we sell Freelancer Magazine and courses, and get client work. And we now monetise the newsletter with sponsorship."

So, how can journalists benefit from writing a newsletter?

Copywriter and marketing specialist Sarah Matthews started her newsletter in May 2023.

"As a copywriter, I spend most of my time writing words for other people," says Matthews, a former regional and national newspaper journalist. "So, it's really lovely to have a creative outlet of my own that allows me to write about topics of my choice – from Kylie and boybands to parenting and peri-menopause. And there's nothing better than getting a reply from someone who says they can relate to what you've written or that it's brightened up their day.

"In some ways, starting a newsletter is the closest I've ever got to my teenage dreams of editing a magazine. Despite being a journalist for years, I never had full editorial control of what I was producing."

Financial Times journalist Isabel Berwick leads the FT's Working It brand and writes its weekly newsletter about the workplace, the future of work, management and leadership. It arrives every Wednesday in FT subscribers' inboxes, and anyone with an FT subscription can sign up for free.

Berwick says: "There's no better way to connect directly with readers. And, if you're starting a newsletter, you have something to say, usually about a topic you're a specialist in – and the people who subscribe will be into that, too. So you find your community right from the start. Plus, you get into some amazing and unexpected conversations with your readers, online and in real life."

Cross adds that a newsletter reminds people you're there as well as giving readers a sense of you and your writing style. It also shows that you have confidence in your ability and are skilled, dedicated and reliable enough to create something.

Great newsletters for journalists

- Sian Meades-Williams: ***Freelance Writing Jobs***
- Lily Canter and Emma Wilkinson: ***Freelancing for Journalists***
- Jem Collins: ***JournoResources***
- ***Journalism.co.uk***

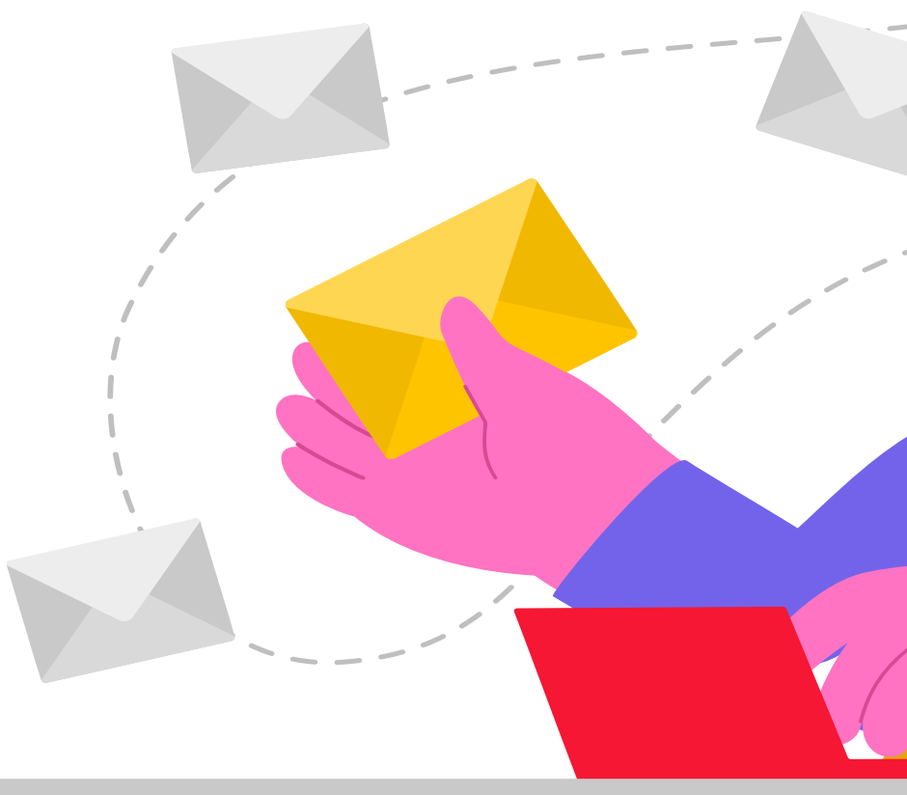
How to start

Berwick advises: "Really immerse yourself in other newsletters first – see what you like and don't like. I am a newsletter superfan: I subscribe to about 100 newsletters, a mix of FT, Substack and via publishers old and new such as Bloomberg, Semafor and Puck. Also, have a look at LinkedIn – lots of great newsletters on there."

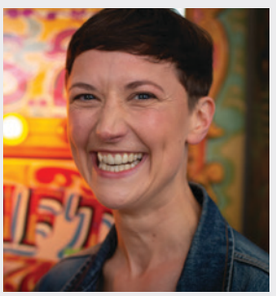
Many platforms are available, including MailerLite (free for up to 1,000 subscribers), Substack, Kit and Mailchimp.

"The success of your newsletter won't be based on the platform you use," says Cross. "Have a quick check on the pricing and the functionality you think you need, ask someone you respect for advice, then decide. It's not difficult to change platforms down the line either, so don't sweat it.

"My advice would be just to start. Now. Start before you're ready. Make mistakes. Learn as you go. But first, be clear on who it's for and why you're writing it, and focus



‘You don’t know where it might lead’



BILLIE CHARITY.

Helen Jane Campbell is a life and business coach for creative people, an author, and previously worked in PR and communications. She started a regular Sunday night LinkedIn blog in spring 2018. By October that year, she had been approached by a publisher about writing a business book.

Campbell says: “I didn’t believe it was real at first. Things like that don’t just happen, do they?”

But, in 2022, her first book, Founders, Freelancers & Rebels, was published. Now on Substack, her newsletter has a mix of paid and free subscribers, with an open rate above 50 per cent.

Campbell sends a range of newsletters out monthly: a main free newsletter, For Creative People, which often features a client case study; a paid-for newsletter, 50 Ways To Win Work, focusing on how creative founders and freelancers can gain new clients; and a free events diary.

She says: “For me, the open rate is much more important than the circulation.”

Campbell advises those starting out not to give up: “To anyone who’s recently started a newsletter, I’d say ‘keep going’. You really don’t know where it might lead.”

on making something that’s un-unopenable for them.

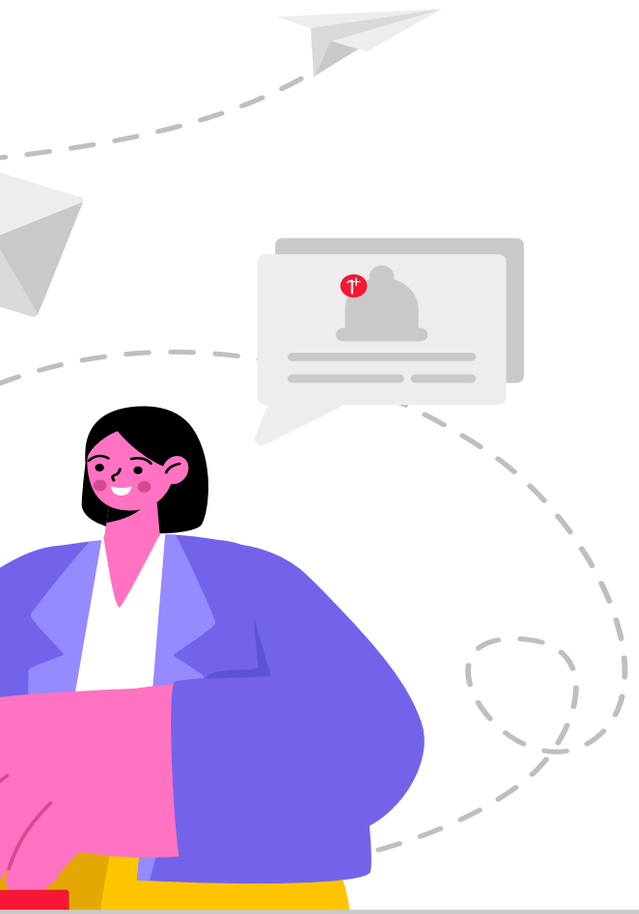
“No one ever wishes a newsletter was longer. Make sure it’s helpful, entertaining and/or interesting – and that it’s all killer, no filler. And be excited about it because if you’re not, no one else will be.”

Newsletters need to go out regularly. Cross advises: “Make a launch plan and see each newsletter drop as a mini-launch. Don’t put 95 per cent into content and five per cent into distribution. You’ve got to tell people about it again … and again … and again … Add a call to action for people to subscribe to your social media profiles, posts, email signature, website and your forehead.”

Consider creating a lead magnet (or free download). Matthews, who has 200 subscribers, says: “I launched a lead magnet this year which helped, and I’m working on doing more workshops and podcasts to get in front of other people’s audiences.”

Website and branding designer Berenice Howard-Smith finds her newsletter Gorgeous lets her reflect on what she does, and how to make that useful and accessible for others.

She says: “I spend snippets of time on it – I may see something online, or create a product that’s useful, or have a client ask a question. It all goes onto Trello, and I curate the newsletter from there.” She uses social media to reach new subscribers, using content or teasers and sharing a link.



Make it pay

You can monetise your newsletter by offering some free content and charging for premium content such as a bonus newsletter, downloadable guides or other resources.

Freelance digital and print journalist Adrienne Wyper produces the weekly Diary Days & Dates newsletter. The free version provides a UK calendar for the next six weeks; the paid version covers the next six months and has extra content, such as awareness days and events. It’s used for planning editorial content and marketing campaigns as well as for education.

Wyper, who set up Newsletter Day (November 13) to celebrate newsletters and their creators, says: “I’ve been sending it since November 2020, although it started as a much smaller list of key dates for the editorial team of Allaboutyou.com, now closed.

“With time on my hands in 2020, I thought I’d reproduce it in a new format. My work as a freelance writer and sub felt precarious, and I’d lost work due to the pandemic. I’d attended an NUJ talk on alternative income streams and the idea of having some control over what you publish was very appealing.”

With just over 1,100 subscribers – mainly for the free version – it has led to commissions to create bespoke calendars.

Wyper advises using Substack to bring in readers: “I saw great growth when I switched platform due to Substack’s cross-referencing. Tracking subscriber growth, I can see that most have come from within the platform, mainly from recommendations from other newsletter creators.”

And you don’t have to be salesy. Matthews aims for her newsletter to be entertaining, and says the biggest benefit is that when people decide they want to work with her, the initial call is so much easier. People have already got a good sense of who I am, how I write and what I might be like to work with, so they’re pretty much ready to make the decision. And we just end up having a lovely chat.”

Campbell’s top newsletter tips

- Feature your clients. “A lot of newsletters are all ‘me, me, me’,” says Campbell. “Flip this around and use your newsletter to shout about your clients’ successes and stories instead.”
- Be consistent: Keep showing up every month.
- Share details of your newsletter on other platforms.
- Be clear about what you want your newsletter to do for you, and keep coming back to that focus and call to action.
- Write something that you want to read; your passion will shine through.
- Don’t worry too much about it looking really fancy – strong writing will speak for itself. Make it clear and easy to read, perhaps with a couple of eye-catching images.

Reap rewards

Becoming a media or communications consultant can open doors beyond traditional journalism – and pay very well. **Neil Merrick** reports

Sometimes it's not enough to be just a journalist. With permanent jobs increasingly temporary and freelancing an ever-greater struggle, some journalists are advertising themselves as media consultants and reaping the rewards.

"There are advantages to saying you're a consultant rather than a journalist," says former BBC journalist Mark Frankel. "The word journalist can be slightly pejorative. If you say you're a media or communications consultant, you open a lot more doors."

After leaving the BBC in 2018, Frankel worked in social media and communications before being made redundant in 2023. It was then that he took stock and evaluated how he could use his skills to find work outside traditional journalism.

This has included teaching in the UK and Singapore, and working in Eastern Europe for Media Action, the BBC's international charity. His CV had to be rewritten and rewritten again as he sought out potential clients.

"Journalism is a very crowded market," says Frankel, who spent nearly 20 years at the BBC. "People are asking what transferable skills they have that they can offer in consultancy work."

Dhruti Shah advertises herself as a storyteller, coach, public speaker and all-round 'ideas factory'. Her consultancy is called Have You Thought About, reflecting how she offers clients fresh ideas on putting their message across via different media.

Shah highlights her background in journalism as proof that she offers "observation, analysis and context". Clients, however, are most interested in her advice on equity, trauma literacy and understanding intersectional neurodivergence (interconnected identities among neurodiverse people).

Past clients include public sector bodies, humanitarian organisations, newsrooms and FTSE 100 companies. She adds: "I have a unique selling point because I'm a neurodivergent South Asian woman who brings with them a reputation around trust and helping people in communities that organisations are often trying to attract."

Consultancy work may involve travel. Paolo Bosonin spent much of last year in Dubai, helping to set up a media company for a client. Although he is based in London, it is not unusual for him to travel for consultancy work with clients in France, Switzerland, Singapore and New York.

> **"Consultancy helps you go upmarket, but you're expected to offer strategic advice on tasks that are more senior"**

One contract saw him working for a private equity firm that paid him to interview the chief executive of one of the companies in its portfolio. "I applied my skills as an investigative journalist," he explains. "They wanted someone who could ask the right questions and get the right answers for their investors."

Bosonin spent eight years working at the Wall Street Journal before moving into consultancy in 2023 and setting up a video production company, Iceworm Media. Generally speaking, pay is much higher for business or strategic consultancy work than for editorial contracts.

Companies that balk at paying freelance journalists more than £150 per day will happily cough up £1,000 per day or more for a consultant who advises on strategy. But expectations are significantly higher.

"It helps you go upmarket, but it also means you're expected to deliver on strategy and offer strategic advice on tasks that are more senior," he says. "If it's strategic, it goes under the business budget as it's considered more critical."

Can anyone with a background in journalism become a media consultant? It helps to have at least 10 years' media experience, preferably with more than one employer, and be able to show evidence of leadership and innovation.

It also helps to have more than one string to your bow. Veena McCoole advertises herself as a mindset coach as well as a journalist and editorial strategist. She also uses her website to sell personalised candles (with 20% of profits donated to a homelessness charity).

"My private coaching practice empowers high-performing individuals to exercise a greater sense of ownership over their lives," says McCoole on her LinkedIn page. "We work together to raise self-awareness, move from confusion to clarity, and get you to a place where life feels juicy, expansive, and brimming with possibility."

Andy Griffiths specialises in newsletters. Based in Plymouth, he not only produces his own Go Devon! newsletter for residents and tourists but also advises businesses on creating newsletters for their customers (see panel opposite).

‘Be clear about your expertise’

It was while working as business correspondent at The Telegraph in the mid-1990s that Andy Griffiths developed his love of newsletters.

After being invited to produce a corporate newsletter on a freelance basis, he left The Telegraph and found more newsletter contracts among corporate clients.

Griffiths, who is based in Devon and produces his own local newsletter, does not see himself as a media consultant but rather a newsletter consultant.

His work ranges from total project management, including recruiting writers and graphic designers and overseeing production to offering paid advice to publishers, or acting as a (paid) sounding board.

Griffiths is not particularly active with marketing, but maintains a website that he set up five years ago when he was looking for more work. He also posts regularly on LinkedIn.

“I get regular enquiries – some are a good fit for me, others not. I generally wait for potential work to come to me,” he says.

His advice to people setting out as consultants is to be clear about the expertise and skills you are offering, and the exact services you provide. Those on LinkedIn should look at what other consultants offer and position themselves accordingly, depending upon experience.

“I don’t have the scope for journalism or copywriting for clients any longer, but I might assist in the recruitment of someone suitable,” he adds.

“I can add more value with strategic and tactical advice, providing an objective, critical friend service for a new launch or to increase sales through a newsletter.”

During the past 30 years, he has launched or acquired more than 20 titles in financial services, corporate communication, sport and tourism.

“I’ve always combined the work with running my own commercial newsletters, so the consultancy has been an add-on or side hustle,” he says.

Freelancers wishing to work outside mainstream journalism need be entrepreneurial and willing to spend time seeking out opportunities. “It’s better than bombarding [lots of] similar outlets with your CV,” says Mark Frankel.

Consultants also need to develop a tough skin and be prepared for rejections. “It’s hard sealing the deal,” he adds. “There can be lots of expressions of interest, but it’s hard to get people to take you on.”

A media consultant must have a portfolio (which can form part of their website) setting out their skills and achievements. If you are an award-winning journalist or specialise in audience engagement, say so in no uncertain terms.

Be ready to embrace LinkedIn, shout loudly about your qualifications as well as your talent and post articles and other information that is of interest to would-be clients, not just fellow journalists.

Potential clients will be especially interested in the organisations that a consultant has worked for in the past, although commercial secrets must never be revealed to competitors or anyone else.

Media consultants must also be aware that not every business is naturally inclined to employ a journalist, even on a job-by-job basis. To counter this, journalists working as consultants may need to demonstrate that they are no longer on the look-out for a story but fully committed to working for their client of the moment.

That does not mean abandoning all principles. Shah has turned down work that was not of “the right culture and client fit” because she wants to be seen as providing a “trusted and authentic service”.

While clients come to Shah with work, she undertakes her own marketing when needs be. “It’s a cold climate for freelancers currently,” she adds. “If you’re going to set up as a media consultant, make sure you build up a community. Don’t work in isolation.”

According to Bosonin, journalists working as media consultants need to flag up ways they are ‘indispensable’, such as understanding industry trends, flagging up best practice and managing developments such as AI.

“Media organisations are rarely able to adapt as fast as technology, consumers and the content landscape require,” he says. “Getting an outside expert to come in and identify high-impact strategies can help set teams up for success.”

Bosonin calculates that he spends about 20 per cent of his time on consultancy work but this accounts for roughly half his annual revenue. “The more you consult, the more you can bring an external perspective,” he adds.

The money he earns from consultancy helps him afford to not just pay his rent but also spend time on more time-consuming and less lucrative work, including investigations and ‘mission-driven’ journalism.

“It’s so hard to live off just journalism,” says Bosonin. “Good consultants for media organisations are those with in-depth knowledge of industry trends, operations and best practice, and who can bring an unbiased, constructive perspective over existing projects and operations.”

Fancy a busm

Anttoni Numminen and **Rory Buccheri** look at destinations with a journalistic bent

When you're on holiday, one of the last things you want to think about is the news. Unless you're a journalist, of course, in which case your instinct is to run towards it. Good news: there's a way to do both.

Whether you want to investigate the flavour of it media or review the sights with a significant journalism connection, these six travel locations across the world will do the trick.

Some of these are reporting landmarks and have contributed to shaping literary classics. Others we stumbled upon by chance and they reminded us of the global media landscape's richness and how there is no single way to tell a story. In fact, one would struggle to find a place that isn't impacted by the work of journalists, from Thailand – our humorous pick of the bunch – to Sicily, where words empowered the civil resistance against the corrupt status quo. We also look towards the future, from the Nordics, showing us how media is vital for any healthy democracy, to a Portuguese museum's news academy that comprehensively covers all angles of the newsmaking process. And, since there is no one way to tell a story, there are many ways to enjoy its setting.

Whether a dusty archive is your ideal day out or you'd rather stay at a very fancy hotel, we've got you covered.

Italy

MuST23, Palermo

RORY BUCCHERI

A cargo container in the middle of a barren parking lot is an unlikely storyteller of the anti-mafia journey as lived by journalists and video reporters.

Yet archival materials, including film from the Italian national broadcaster RAI and newspaper clippings, come to life in a dark container room where you're invited to take a seat and become a spectator.

The museum's raison d'etre is to tell the story of anti-mafia judge Giovanni Falcone, who was active between 1980 and 1992.

It is located a couple of miles away from the place where Falcone was assassinated on highway A29, on 23 May 1992.

The feeling of being in a narrow train carriage as you watch the documentaries is intentional.

The Museo Stazione is located on the grounds of Capaci's former railway station. Although this is now abandoned, you can still hear freight trains speeding by on adjacent rail tracks.

In the films, we learn from old-guard journalist Francesco La Licata about why Palermo was chosen for the assassination.

"It would have been easier to kill Falcone in Rome" where the judge spent most of his time, says La Licata.

Shedding his blood in his motherland was meant to make a "powerful statement" to those who were still alive and fighting on Cosa Nostra's home turf.

La Licata knew a thing or two about those statements, having reported on the mafia wars in Palermo for regional newspaper Giornale di Sicilia until 1989, at the height of street shootings and racketeering.

The museum brings to life accounts from dozens of reporters from regional and national newspapers, as well as featuring shots from famous photojournalist Letizia Battaglia.

It comes with an interactive element, too. A virtual reality set catapults you into the action, navigating you through the debris following the highway explosion.

By interacting with your surroundings and with objects on the scene, you are invited to become an eyewitness to one of Sicily's darkest days.

You can see the impact of the stories collected in MuST23 in the streets of Palermo today.

Behind the tribunal building where the historic maxi-trial took place, Memory Square immortalises the names of those who fought the mafia, which are engraved in sunlit marble steps.

The three-hour No Mafia walking tour with anti-racketeering organisation Addiopizzo will take you to the key places – from the Teatro Massimo to Palermo's most famous street market – and there won't be any Godfather aprons or gunshot glasses at the end either.

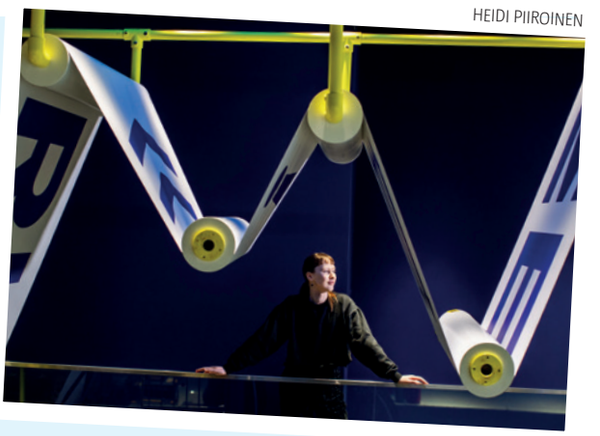
MuST23 entry fee: €12 /£10. AddioPizzo No Mafia Tour €30/£25

an's holiday?

Finland

Merkki, Helsinki

HEIDI PIIROINEN



A visit to the media museum Merkki in Helsinki, located in the former offices of the country's most famous newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat, is an afternoon well spent.

Merkki's permanent exhibition looks back on the history of the printed press and digital media in Finland, across the Nordics and worldwide. It also has a strong focus on contemporary media issues and its 'meme alley', a rotating display of current-affairs-related memes, is just one way used to interest people of different ages and backgrounds.

"Our lives are connected and shaped by media, so every visitor is involved with what Merkki has to offer," says Saila Linnahalme, head of the museum.

In a country where the first law prohibiting censorship was adopted under Swedish rule in 1766 and which has topped the World Press Freedom Index for the past 20 years, one could assume that all is well in the health of the media in this welfare state.

However, as the exhibition on press freedom rankings reminds visitors, recent state secrecy lawsuits and a court ruling undermining the legal protection of journalists have created a climate of uncertainty in the profession.

Linnahalme tells us: "Press freedom and freedom of speech are more under threat now than they have been for a very long time.

"At Merkki, we want to remind our visitors how important it is to defend these two rights which are fundamental for democracy.

"We have a lot of visitors working in the media – also people with a career in printing and graphic arts due to our Printing History Cellar exhibition and workshop.".

Merkki is a short stroll away from the bustling harbour market and Presidential Palace.

Merkki: free entry

SAAGAR TAKHI

Thailand

Phuket coast and Phang Nga Bay

If you'd rather swap a media-stuffed museum for a sun lounger, Nai Yang beach is the perfect place. And it comes recommended by not one but two fictional journalists.

If a plot involving a rowdy travel show, a blonde heroine on magic mushrooms and a sleazy Hugh Grant doesn't ring a bell, the return of Bridget Jones to the big screen may refresh your memory.

This summer you too can walk in Bridget's flip-flops just like in her Thailand adventure in The Edge of Reason. If the two journos appear to be enjoying a secluded getaway, it's because they are. Nai Yang is a less crowded and wilder alternative to the beaches of Patong, Karan and Kata.

Nai Yang is near the airport where Bridget is arrested then goes on to teach Thai inmates the moves to Like a Virgin.

Under the guise of 'doing research', you could head to Ko Panyi, a village with houses on stilts. Here, Daniel Cleaver spun a fake story of ancient Thai poetry on a romantic boat ride to seduce Bridget. Typical.

Portugal

NewsMuseum, Sintra

MIKE SERGEANT

For those of us out there who couldn't simply sit back and enjoy a week in the scorching Portuguese sun without itching for a press release, the NewsMuseum is the answer.

The first thing you see when you step in is a mock studio set complete with green screen, microphone and TV cameras. That's right: your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to pick a news story from the bulletin and present it on camera. It could be a pastel de nata festival coming to town, or maybe the latest Benfica football match.

As Europe's largest media and communications space, the NewsMuseum has something for everybody. These go from rooms telling the global history of the press through black-and-white photographs and radio snippets to a space where you can test your current affairs knowledge.

No stone is left unturned when it comes to beats. There is a gallery dedicated to war correspondence, one where bright screens narrate the history of sports journalism and a box room dedicated to broadcast where you can listen to Portugal's agenda-setting radio reporting on historic events.

A new addition is the Future of Media display, where visitors are encouraged to reflect on what the industry will look like in 2046, and how factors such as AI and technology will play a role in this.

The museum's mission doesn't stop at its exhibits. The NewsMuseum Academy is its newest branch, and is dedicated to providing training in communications and marketing to those who don't work in media.

Sintra has a long history with writing. Fernando Pessoa believed it to be one of the mystical centres of the globe, whereas, for Lord Byron, the town was "the most beautiful perhaps in the world".

The writing residence par excellence is the Palacio de Pena, with its "bewitching, extravagant beauty", as Hans Christian Andersen penned.

NewsMuseum entry: €6,50/€3,50 for journalists with ID

Palacio de Pena entry: €14/£11

USA

The Scandal Suite, Watergate Hotel, Washington

From 1984's room 101 to the Watergate Hotel's room 214 which is also a highly charged room.

Some might feel unnerved about sleeping in a room where the events that took place led to one of the most explosive scandals in American political history and to President Richard Nixon's resignation in disgrace two years later in 1974.

That said, I'm sure many journalists would feel at home – not to say we can be a bit egotistical as a profession.

The impact of those events and their legacy are also testament to what committed, dogged investigative journalism can achieve given the time and resources to pursue stories. One can only hope that the current owner of the Washington Post takes note.

Located just a mile away from the Oval Office, the Scandal Suite is full of memorabilia related to the infamous set of events including a reel-to-reel tape recorder, binoculars and a manual typewriter.

And, after a long day of sightseeing and a stroll past the pretty buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue, even the hardiest reporter will be in need of some downtime.

As you soak in the luxury of your suite, why not adorn yourself with one of the custom Cover Up robes and curl up on the bed to enjoy a re-watch of All the President's Men or the Frost-Nixon interview.

Was it not President Nixon who said: "When the president does it, that means that it is not illegal"? Why does that remind me of someone else? Never mind – might just be simpler to turn on the news. If you prefer to read, the room also has a curated book collection including some of the best reportage of award-winning journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein. There's nothing like a bit of light holiday reading.

Room rates start around $1,600 (£1,300) per night depending on season

No longer keeping it in the family

Charlie Moloney reports on a watershed development

This year marks a new dawn for journalism in the family courts, as a scheme to make them open has been rolled out to every court in England & Wales. However, there can still be obstacles.

The transparency scheme allows journalists to apply for a court order which allows them to report on family cases, as long as they do not identify the family involved. It is now presumed this order should be granted unless there are compelling reasons not to.

Although I have been a court reporter for more than six years – mainly focusing on criminal and coronial courts – I had never covered family court. In my first job working for a regional agency, my editor had believed it was not worth reporting on family courts. The restrictions meant you could never get a decent story out of it.

But the past few years have shown this conventional wisdom no longer holds true. A group of specialist journalists have been pushing for transparency in the family courts. In 2021, freelance journalist Louise Tickle won the right to report that a judge had found – on the balance of probabilities – the standard of proof in civil cases – that former MP Andrew Griffiths had raped his wife.

More recently, Tickle and family court reporter Hannah Summers won a Court of Appeal battle to name the judges who sent 10-year-old Sara Sharif to live with her murderous father and stepmother. Reports from the historically secret family courts often dominate the news cycle.

When the transparency scheme was rolled out in full on January 27, I asked the Mail Online to commission me to report from Reading family court. The first case I saw involved serious allegations of violence against a newborn baby and coercive controlling behaviour by his father.

The lawyers gave me a mixed reception. They were all perfectly affable and recognised my right to be present. At the judge's direction, they also shared documents which allowed me to understand this complex case. But, when it came to the question of whether and what I could report, it seemed many of them were in new territory.

A barrister representing the baby's mother enquired which publication I worked for and asked me if I was an 'accredited' journalist. She confidently informed me I would be unable to report the case was taking place in the town of Reading because of 'jigsaw identification'. I raised an eyebrow quite high indeed at the suggestion that naming Reading, home to some 174,000 people, would jigsaw ID the family.

Barristers representing the local authority and the court-appointed guardian raised an even more troubling idea. Both argued I should not be permitted to report anything until the five-day hearing had concluded.

This proposal would have torpedoed my coverage. The whole point of the story was about the first day of the transparency scheme. A five-day delay would make that stale.

> **I hope some of the lawyers read my story and realised the sky did not fall in just because a journalist wrote an anonymised article**

Worse still, I realised the reason for this proposed delay was vague. They were concerned "people", having read my report, might turn up at the court and cause some kind of commotion.

Luckily, the case was before Judge Robin Tolson KC. He had a crystal clear understanding of the principle of open justice. In a brief application hearing, he dismissed the barristers' arguments for banning any mention of Reading and ruled that "real-time reporting" should be allowed. "Otherwise, what is the point of all this?" he questioned.

My story was a distressing read, with lots of detail but clearly nowhere near enough to identify the family. I hope some of the lawyers read it and realised the sky did not fall in just because a journalist wrote an anonymised article.

I returned to Judge Tolson's court a week later for a case involving two girls who had been taken into foster care. One of the barristers questioned my presence in the remote hearing. The judge simply replied: "That's Mr Moloney, he's becoming a regular" and assured the lawyers this member of the press 'knows the score' on reporting in family court. He even fed me a few quotes about the 'mess' the local authority was in.

This was the kind of easy relationship between judges and the press I have been accustomed to in criminal and civil courts. It made me think one day the family court could become just another part of the regional court reporter's circuit – not something to be viewed with fear or trepidation.

EXCLUSIVE Father is accused of googling 'how to make a child disabled' in bid to give his newborn son brain damage and claim more benefits in family court case

By CHARLIE MOLONEY
PUBLISHED: 11:17, 29 January 2025 | UPDATED: 14:19, 29 January 2025

Share 36 shares

A family court has heard allegations a father was googling 'how to make a child disabled' in a bid to give his newborn son brain damage to get more money from the government.

The case came during the first day of an extended transparency project which has allowed journalists to report on every family court for the first time.

It comes amid renewed concern about the way family courts are dealing with cases where there are allegations of child abuse, following the horrific murder of 10-year-

One fact, one joke, one error

So went the traditional recipe for the diary, which brings humour and scepticism to the news pages. And it's by no means all trivia, reports **Conrad Landin**

Martin Waller has a recurring dream. It's mid-afternoon, and The Times's City diary is only half full.

It's a decade and a half since he edited the column, but Waller's nightmare speaks to the difficulty of this particular flavour of journalism. "I'm not comparing it to reporting from the front line of a war or heavy investigative journalism, but you have to walk in, and you have to find six or seven exclusive stories every day, and you're getting about a quarter of a page out of them," he says.

"You're sitting in a room full of people who have really good stories, but they don't always tell you. How do you prise it out of them? You're sitting there staring at empty space."

Ever since the Evening Standard launched the Londoner's Diary – "three columns written daily by gentlemen for gentlemen" – in 1916, newspapers have flocked to balance the daily diet of hard news and invective comment with something altogether different. Quite often, diary columns will take in politics, high society and popular culture – but with a good deal more scepticism and humour than you'll find on a newspaper's other pages.

"The old line used to be, one fact, one joke and one error," says Joy Lo Dico, who edited the Londoner's Diary from 2014 to 2018. "While a regular news story would take anything in a rather straight, po-faced fashion, the diary story acknowledged there were a load of personal elements in any sort of row."

Yet as newspapers retreat from their once seemingly unassailable position at the front line of public life, so too has the diary.

The Guardian's diary column was scrapped entirely in 2014 by then editor Alan Rusbridger, himself a former diary reporter. The Londoner's Diary, like the London Standard as the paper calls itself these days, is now weekly. So too is the Daily Telegraph's Peterborough, while the Daily Mirror's diary does not appear every day.

But is this merely the death of a format – or the death of an entire journalistic approach?

The job of a newspaper diarist, after all, demands a different set of skills to news reporting. Sometimes diary stories will be found in the same places as news stories. This could be at a press conference or keynote speech, for instance – but here the diary story is usually between the lines of the event's message, in a joke cracked by the speaker or in the IT problems that plague their presentation.

Other diary stories demand an altogether different beat, made up of society parties and Westminster drinks receptions.

"You might think it would be easier to get a line out of someone when they're three champagne flutes down," former Standard diarist Marie Le Conte writes in her book Haven't You Heard?, "and you'd be partially correct, but it is harder than it seems to turn up to a party, sometimes

'Did I go too far?'

Reporting on TUC Congress some years ago, a colleague told me he'd witnessed a prominent trade union leader accidentally taking a selfie while attempting to photograph the star speaker. It went straight in the Morning Star's TUC diary column.

Then a press officer phoned: by no means did said union leader take a selfie – it was an absurd suggestion! I spoke to the source, who said it had certainly looked like a selfie – but a mistake was not out of the question. The press officer was not, however, seeking a published correction – which would merely repeat the very slight embarrassment caused.

The differentiation between diary stories and news means there's a place for rumours and jokes in a serious paper, without the need for total certainty and double sourcing.

But some readers take everything at face value, as Martin Waller learned to his cost. "The stories you lie awake at 4 o'clock in the morning worrying about – [thinking] 'oh God, have I gone too far?' – they're not a problem. The ones you think are totally innocuous are the ones that turn around to bite you. With one of them, I think I used the phrase 'eyebrows are being raised' about something, and they turned around and said: 'You accused me of a criminal offence.' And we had to backtrack on that one."

In an era of spiralling disinformation, is it acceptable for trusted news sources to have inconsistent accuracy thresholds? There's a definite danger, especially when stories are seen in isolation online, that the joke won't land.

The answer, surely, lies in media literacy – which the NUJ is campaigning for governments and public institutions to take seriously. As well as distinguishing between fake news and trustworthy reporting, there's a strong case for media literacy to include helping citizens to recognise different kinds of content.

GARY NEILL

uninvited, often not knowing anyone there, and mingle without seeming out of place, then trying to make important people stop talking to their friends and talk to you, a journalist, instead."

But it's not all trivia. Diaries can shine a light on political intrigue that public interest demands should be in the spotlight. That might be a politician's family connections to big business, or an off-colour remark by an actor not sufficient for its own news story, but which people should know about – if only to make up their own minds.

In the decade he spent at the City diary, Waller had a more specific focus in the world of business.

"You're writing about people who are extremely powerful, whether they're in the City or chief executives or whatever, surrounded by yes men, and the temptation is to take them down a peg or two. That was the joy of it, to point the finger at someone and say: 'You're not that clever, are you? Ha ha!'" he recalls.

He also found serious stories – and could get away with writing about them in ways his news reporter colleagues could not.

In one instance, he was told a "straightforward lie" by a prominent investment banker pooh-poohing a story he had been briefed by a reliable source.

"Now, you couldn't write that as a news story. But I wrote a diary story saying: 'I don't think they're telling the truth.' And you can get away with that. And it turned out, they weren't telling the truth. The story was correct – they just lied about it to me."

Working on a diary can mean late nights – and, in the case of the Evening Standard, early mornings too. Lo Dico misses the "scene of the parties in London, all the social connections and the sense there was a rolling energy through town, and that I [with] the Londoner's Diary was one of the scribes and chroniclers of it". But she adds: "I have a sense that some of that energy has gone from London anyway, due to Covid."

What is certain, however, is that no one is covering the scene in quite the same way.

"It goes with the general economics of newspapers – comment is cheaper than news, paying for a whole bundle of diary stories to fill up a page didn't look so good as other accounts where you've got two news journalists filling up a page with press releases and a couple of phone calls," Lo Dico says. "The desk editors aren't getting out of the office, and the winnings from a diary story are so low that freelancers aren't necessarily going to be running round town for forty quid."

Many newspapers have struggled to make their diary columns work online where they no longer had a niche among a community of stories, providing much-needed relief after pages of hard news.

Lo Dico believes the modern-day equivalent is the newsletter. "The thing about the newsletter is that you promise an individual relationship between the writer of the column – or the organisation that's putting it out – and the reader. And that's where the diary worked – it was giving insider information to a select group of people who had subscribed to the newsletter or read that page in the paper – whereas blaring it on Twitter doesn't have the same kind of effect."

> **On a diary, he could get away with writing about serious stories in ways news reporters could not**

It's undoubtedly true that the newsletter writer uses many of the diarist's skills, not least frequenting boozy receptions and finding humour in serious settings. But is there a danger of being too familiar? Several email newsletters covering SW1, for instance, are written in a tone that suggests those outside the bubble need not subscribe, in contrast to the diary tradition of bridging the gap between reader and insider.

Meanwhile, much of political news reporting has begun to resemble a diary – albeit a dry, po-faced one.

The 'train-gate' story about former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn sitting on a carriage floor while seats were allegedly available would once have been automatically consigned to the diary – rather than blowing up into a news saga for days on end. Kemi Badenoch's statement that "lunch is for wimps", meanwhile, would likewise have been received in jest – and denied the potency it got from being reported straight.

Perhaps the diary is ultimately a victim not only of print media's decline but of its own success too.

ALL IMAGES DEREK MCCABE

Trump's golf ruck

Ruth Addicott talks to journalists about Trump and his battle for a golf course

If you're a trainee reporter working on a small local paper on the west coast of Scotland, interviews don't get much bigger than Donald Trump. Especially when you have an hour's notice and 10-minute slot in which to do it.

It was back in 2014 when Edward Harbinson got the call. Harbinson was a trainee on the Ayr Advertiser when the news broke that Trump had bought Turnberry, an 800-acre site on the west coast of Scotland, and was promising to turn it into "the finest golf and spa resort in the world".

The purchase included Turnberry Castle and a lighthouse built in 1873 by the family of Robert Louis Stevenson.

The story was huge and Harbinson decided to try to get an interview.

A week later, just after lunch, an email arrived from New York saying Trump would be available in an hour.

"The Ayr Advertiser was my first job as a journalist so, for me, it was massive," says Harbinson. "He hadn't given interviews to any of the nationals – I think I was the first to speak to him about it.

"Turnberry was always a prestigious venue, so there was a lot of surprise and, I guess, excitement."

"We got some good quotes and led with him saying there was going to be a 'love fest' between him and the community. I pitched him the name Trumpberry, but he said no to that."

Trump invested £200 million and re-named it Trump Turnberry, with the hotel and Ailsa golf course re-opening in 2016.

Former Ayr Advertiser journalist Sarah Hilley recalls attending a press conference in 2014, held in front of Trump's plane in a hangar at Prestwick airport. She was then given a guided tour of Trump's private jet.

"There was a mixture of local and national journalists and we all had to put plastic covers on our shoes as he said guests can't have dirty shoes on board," she recalls.

"The only reminder of still being in Prestwick was the blustery wind sweeping through the gaping hangar door."

Hilley recalls Trump bounding up the steps, then turning around to give a peace sign, before flying off to Miami.

Stephen Stewart was a reporter on the Daily Record and sent down to Turnberry amid the prospect of protests (he recalls comedian Janey Godley holding up a placard saying 'Trump is a c***').

"I heard him before I saw him," says Stewart. "His loud, booming voice echoed round the clubhouse as we stood awaiting his arrival. Then, there was Donald Trump talking to his son – I forget which one. He made eye contact with me and looked distinctly uncomfortable. No idea why. I and a few

Reporting The Donald impartially

When former trainee reporter Edward Harbinson landed an interview with Trump, he was given one hour's notice and a 10-minute slot. Although he wasn't expecting it to go ahead, he had prepared his questions.

The challenge was gaining answers to all the questions he needed and getting Trump to stick to the point. "As everyone knows, Trump can talk," he says. "I knew he wasn't going to confirm everything but I got some good stuff."

Former BBC journalist, Colin Wight says reporting impartially was testing, with both local people and Trump's associates accusing him of bias. "I always tried to challenge both sides," he says.

members of the press pack managed to fire off a few questions at him and he gave pat, insipid answers. Then he swooped into a golf cart and was driven away."

With some reporters left with questions unanswered, others had answers they couldn't print, such as Bryce Ritchie, editor of Scotland-based golf magazine bunkered.

"I actually had a private phone call with him not long after the purchase to talk about his plans, mainly about the Ailsa course," he says. "It wasn't an interview – he just wanted some second-hand opinion. His plans were very ambitious, perhaps overly ambitious, and I told him that. They didn't go through with everything they wanted to do, which was probably a good thing. But I found he listened to what I had to say, took advice from people who knew the venue and the industry in this country, then ploughed the cash in to get it done.

"I know he has a reputation, but I took the guy at face value and we got on really well. I always thought he was genuinely invested in Scotland and his businesses here."

Prior to Turnberry, in 2006 Trump purchased the 1,400-acre Menie Estate in Aberdeenshire and turned it into a five-star golf resort, Trump International Scotland. The acquisition, which included a former baronial mansion and wild stretch of sand dunes, meadows and woodlands, was controversial. It included a site of special scientific interest and, as concerns emerged about the environment and local residents, the story got bigger.

Trump objected to plans for a £230m wind farm, including 11 wind turbines, calling it 'monstrous', claiming it would spoil the view for golfers. After numerous legal challenges, in 2015, he took it to the Supreme Court in London, but lost.

Colin Wight, former broadcast journalist for the BBC, also had various encounters: "Trump getting off his plane on his first visit to Aberdeen with the red carpet and a bagpiper playing has always reminded me of the scene in The Day the Earth Stood Still when the alien comes out of his spaceship and steps onto earth. That's what it felt like with this larger-than-life figure arriving in cold and windswept Aberdeen."

One day, after a live broadcast on the Menie Estate, Wight got an invitation to the house to see Trump and meet his family.

"He was pleased because I'd mentioned that a local poll seemed to indicate support for the project," says Wight. "I described him at the time as a charming bully. Now I just think he's a bully. But as I and many others have found out, Donald is happy when you apparently support him, but that changes when you're perceived as an enemy. It was always difficult to try to explain that, in the BBC, we had a job to report all sides and be impartial. I don't think he ever got that."

Wight says he got on well with Trump initially and followed him around, filming him playing golf. "He kept asking me what I thought of his shots," he says.

Then, in 2008, he flew to New York to interview Trump in Trump Tower.

"I remember thinking at the time he looked quite presidential sitting at the desk in his office," he says. "I was also surprised he did the interview without anyone else there – no press officers. We later had a falling-out when he didn't like one of my reports and he phoned my editor wanting me fired. I still find it annoying that there is a sign there boasting of the great dunes of Scotland being the biggest in the world when it's just not true. But if Donald says it's true, I guess it must be!"

Photographer Alicia Bruce wanted to highlight the environmental concerns and voices of local residents (her images are displayed in the National Galleries of Scotland).

"When I first met them, their homes were under threat of compulsory purchase, with Trump labelling them 'peasants' and 'pigs' and, in spite of the media on their doorstep, they were often misled, misrepresented and misquoted," she says.

Bruce recalls being followed and chased by Trump's security. "On one occasion, an incredibly angry security guard threatened to smash my cameras," she says.

Trump handed over control of both courses to his sons before becoming president in 2017, but retained a financial interest. Reporters are now bracing themselves for a further opening this summer, the MacLeod golf course in Aberdeenshire – named after Trump's Scottish born mother.

"I heard him before I saw him."
Stephen Stewart, former reporter, Daily Record

"He phoned my news editor wanting me to be fired and ban the BBC from the estate."
Colin Wight, former BBC senior journalist

"He wanted to do a lot more work to the golf course, some of it really quite dramatic. I advised him that it could backfire with the golf press as nobody likes to see an iconic golf course effectively ripped up. He listened to what I had to say, to be fair."
Bryce Ritchie, editor, bunkered magazine

"I watched Trump give evidence against wind farms. When asked what his evidence was, Trump responded 'I am the evidence'."
Alicia Bruce, photographer

A rich seam

Mark Fisher looks at influence of political cartoons during the miners' strike

Poor Neil Kinnock. He had only recently been elected as Labour leader when the miners' strike kicked off. He was torn. Should he back the striking workers, not least those in his own constituency, or should he take issue with the NUM for side-stepping a pit-head ballot? He would not be the last party leader whose allegiances pulled in two directions.

Newspaper cartoonists had a field day. There he was, depicted by Nicholas Garland in The Daily Telegraph as a skinny bather, shivering in his trunks, the waves of the coal dispute crashing towards him. As Mac saw it in The Daily Mail, Kinnock was a floppy-tongued poodle shuffling behind a domineering Arthur Scargill, the miners' leader, on the way to the Labour Party conference.

Gerald Scarfe in The Sunday Times turned him into an elongated doll, stretched between the tugging hands of left and right with a look of eye-popping panic.

Repeatedly, he appeared as a diminutive puppet, peeping out of a miner's lamp, sitting on the lap of Margaret Thatcher or trying to free himself from Scargill's controlling strings.

"He immediately becomes the butt of the cartoons because he's got this dilemma," says Nicholas Jones, who covered the 1984–85 strike as an industrial correspondent for BBC radio. "He's torn apart for month after month. The cartoonists begin that demolition job that continued all his political life. In his first political test, he loses credibility and the cartoonists make sure the public see this in Technicolor in a very graphic way."

It is an arresting thought. Could it be that the journalists who inflicted the most political damage during this divisive strike were not the columnists but the cartoonists? They were the ones whose work had the most immediacy, bite and polemical force. Could even the sprightliest leader writer match the impact of, for example, Michael Cummings in The Daily Express imagining Scargill on a bridge about to drop a slab of concrete onto a defeated-looking Kinnock?

That is one of the many uncomfortable images in The Art of Class War: Newspaper Cartoonists and the 1984–85 Miners' Strike, in which Jones digs through his archive of press clippings to show how the bitter conflict was represented visually – most commonly to forward the opinions of pro-government proprietors.

Published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (North), the book draws with Reithian even-handedness on publications from the left and right to explore the meeting point between satire and propaganda. For every crumbling statue of Thatcher, there is a deranged-looking Scargill demanding unconditional surrender like a stuck record.

The book started after Jones went up to his loft to retrieve his 24 boxes of cuttings, subsequently donated to the University of Sheffield, covering the mining industry from the mid-1970s to 1990. "As I was turning over the pages, it was the cartoons that came out," says Jones, an NUJ member since 1960. "The ones from the right-wing newspapers are really in your face. They are as violent and as vitriolic as the social media of today. Then I looked again at all of the left-wing papers – News Line, Militant, Socialist Worker, The Miner, a host of trades union journals – and I thought I could use these cartoons as a way of talking about the year of the strike."

Casting a keen professional eye on all this is cartoonist Steve Bell, a regular contributor to The Journalist. In the foreword to the book, he recalls his attempts to "redress the massive weight of opinion" against the strike with his 'If…' strip cartoon in The Guardian.

"I was beavering away right through the Thatcher period and was biased against her from the word go," says Bell. "Everything she did, especially at the time of the miners' strike, was getting my goat and I was on the offensive. The editor, Peter Preston, very creditably, let me get on with my propagandising. I was working against the mass of opinion, which is the stuff in the book from The Sun, The Express and even The Observer, sadly."

He continues: "They were very fine cartoonists, all well paid, but the case you were getting from them was entirely biased. I look at Trog, who I have always admired incredibly, and his take on it was completely imbalanced. He is a wonderful, powerful cartoonist but he concentrates on all the negatives and the sense that this was a tragedy unfolding."

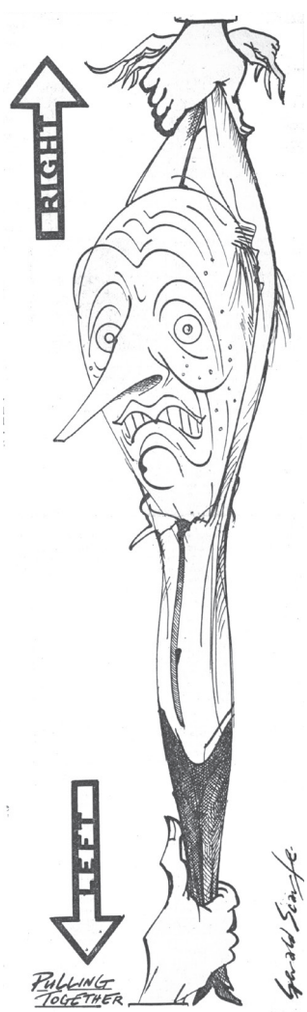
Jones can only agree: "I believe that the cartoonists were furthering the propaganda of the Thatcher government."

It was a theme he first explored in 1986 in Strikes and the Media, which looked at the way the Thatcher government, as he saw it, had manipulated the media agenda against the unions. He came to accept that, working for the BBC, he was one of those being manipulated.

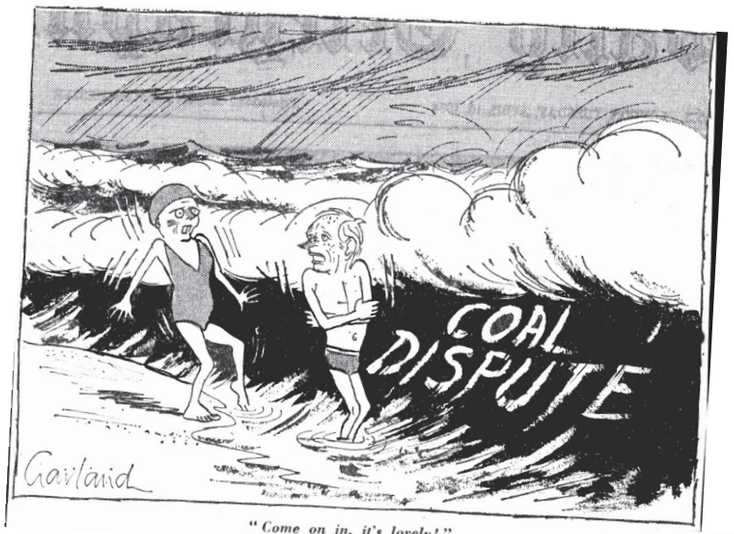
"Especially towards the end of the strike, we found ourselves swept along by the government agenda, which was to break the strike and get the miners back to work," he says. "Did I become a cheerleader because all of my focus in those final months was on the return to work? We all thought that was the most important storyline, but that was exactly what the government machine wanted us to do. The more we could sustain the return-to-work stories, the greater the despondency."

Beginning in Yorkshire in reaction to proposed pit closures, the strike started in March 1984 with the walk-out of 6,000 workers and escalated into a year-long conflict. The stakes were high. Thatcher saw victory as central to her union-busting agenda. For the left, it was a crucial last stand against the ravages of the free market.

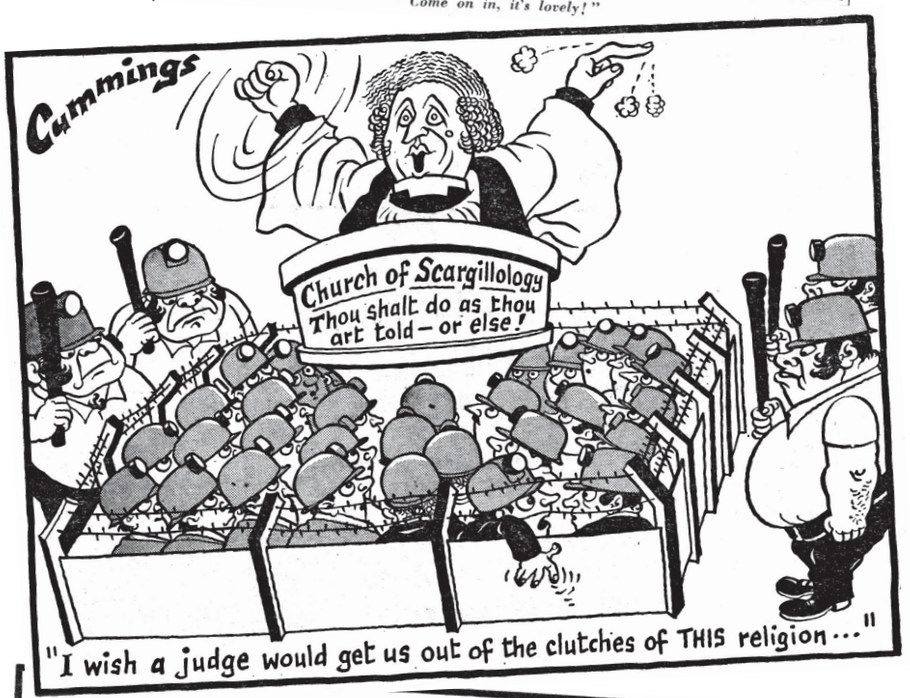
"It was an awful year and it brought back terrible memories," says Bell, who put up two Kent pickets at his



Immediacy, bite and polemical force: below: Gerald Scarfe; right from top: Nicholas Garland; Michael Cummings; Trog; Steve Bell



"Come on in, it's lovely!"



home in Brighton. "It was a terrible defeat for the labour movement, which has never recovered."

Its symbolic importance to both left and right at a time when daily newspapers had a combined circulation close to 15 million leads Jones to make a startling observation: "No British industrial dispute has equalled the pit strike for generating so many cartoons." In quantity and reach, those cartoons were at the vanguard of a ferocious political battle.

"Every cartoonist worth his salt had contributed to a newspaper or a magazine during the strike," says Jones. "When I give talks, people have come forward and said, 'I remember those cartoons and they were a bit frightening. I didn't like them.' The cartoons of the right-wing newspapers had a tremendous impact."

He adds: "You only have to look, for example, towards the end of the book when the newspapers are reporting what they say is violence and the miners are increasingly being represented as thugs. They have baseball hats and hoods. The imagery becomes quite vicious, which is a transformation from the jollity of the cartoons in the opening months."

Cartoons would often come into their own on slow-news days. Jones recalls spending tedious hours lurking outside meeting rooms in the hope of gleaning some titbit of information from the negotiating table. Turning those scant details into a scintillating radio report was next to impossible.

The cartoonists, by contrast, had no such problem: they could make merry with the intransigence itself. Witness Les Gibbard in The Guardian portraying Scargill sitting opposite Ian MacGregor, the chairman of the National Coal Board, their view of each other blocked by an upturned table. Their cross-armed silence was the story.

"You can do things in cartoons that you can't do in text," says Bell. "And the power of the image is colossal."

To today's reader – even one well versed in 1980s industrial relations – the visual references can seem abstruse. Yes, you can get Keith Waite's sight gag in which Scargill and Thatcher have near identical hair-dos, but why did Giles portray a football team running onto the pitch at Wembley and why, like figures in other cartoons, did they have plastic bags on their heads?

"A cartoon gives you a very precise feeling of what it felt like to be alive at that time," says Bell. "They always include layers of cultural references."

In this, Jones is an invaluable guide, contextualising the jokes as he takes us through the stages of the dispute. Giles, for example, was thinking not only of the strike but also of an upcoming England international, while the unusual headwear was a reference to MacGregor arriving for talks in Edinburgh mysteriously hiding his face beneath a green carrier bag.

"It's the power of the noises off," says Jones, recalling the jokes prompted by a photographer spotting a can of hairspray in Scargill's briefcase. "I needed to explain them but they are fun. They bring together, as well, the continuing propaganda effect – how these events help perpetuate the propaganda themes."

For Bell, the question is less about the skill of the cartoonists than about the purpose to which they are putting that skill: "Cartoons are an attacking medium. You're always laying in to someone. But more often than not, cartoonists are laying into the wrong people. They're laying into people they're paid to lay into."

The Art of Class War: Newspaper Cartoonists and the 1984-85 Miners' Strike, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (North), out now *https://tinyurl.com/2a4pkw5s*

by **Mark Fisher**

arts

Books >

How to Save the Amazon: a Journalist's Deadly Quest for Answers

Dom Phillips and contributors
May 27, Manilla

Completed after the journalist's murder, this is the book Dom Phillips was working on with Bruno Pereira in June 2022 when the two men were shot dead in the Brazilian rainforest. What remains is a manual for fighting ecological destruction.

We Were There: How Black Culture, Resistance and Community Shaped Modern Britain

Lanre Bakare
April 17, Bodley Head

The Guardian arts correspondent looks beyond the capital to tell the story of black Britain from the 1970s to 1990s in towns such as Liverpool, Cardiff, Birmingham and his native Bradford – a history that for too long has been unknown and unexplored.

The Marriage Vendetta

Caroline Madden
April 24, Bonnier Books

The Irish Times journalist branches into fiction with a novel about a former pianist who takes drastic action against her husband's infidelity after they have upped sticks to Dublin for his work.

https://tinyurl.com/23ck74vf

Comedy >

Jonny and the Baptists: the Happiness Index

On tour, May 17–June 21

The personal and political come together – as do music and laughs – in an attempt to measure the nation's happiness not quite in the manner envisaged by David Cameron. Dates in Oxford, Glasgow, Norwich and elsewhere.

https://tinyurl.com/29wsyuk4

Nish Kumar: Nish, Don't Kill My Vibe

On tour, May 12–24

Returning to the UK after gigs in North America and Australasia, the TV regular shares his latest thoughts on climate change, income inequality and the political state of the world.

https://tinyurl.com/2ao47wwf

Exhibitions >

Emma Spreadborough: You Mustn't Go Looking

Photo Museum Ireland, Dublin, April 29–June 29

The photographer's first Irish solo show considers the changing face of religion and politics in Northern Ireland, taking inspiration from a Brian Friel play, Dancing at Lughnasa.

https://tinyurl.com/2ywg3rkp

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas

The Whitworth, Manchester, Until September 7

The Roma-Polish artist reflects Romany culture and history in textiles and fabrics with strong story-telling content.

https://tinyurl.com/22w2xceu

Festivals >

Knockengorroch Festival

Galloway, May 22–25

Survival is the theme of this year's event with a line-up of roots and dance-music artists who embody "resilience, innovation and a deep connection to land and culture". Names include Kinnaris Quintet, Mungo's Hi Fi Soundsystem, Moxie and Omega Nebula.

https://tinyurl.com/2bmhe4c8

Films >

And an Army of Women

General release, April 25

Julie Lunde Lillesæter's inspiring documentary tells the story of a group of women in Austin, Texas, who joined forces to challenge the police and judicial system that had allowed their

In depth

Finding a way and football

NUJ life member Jeff Brown might have stood down from his role as BBC Look North presenter last year, but he has not settled for the quiet life.

In January, he launched the first series of Jeff Brown's Sporting Greats, a podcast on BBC Sounds (series two is already under discussion), and is now looking forward to a tour of The Bench, his play about love, loss and football.

Back after an acclaimed run at the Customs House in South Shields, the play is about a single mother and a newly signed footballer who meet by chance on a park bench. Despite their differences - Vicky is a hard-up carer with a terminally ill mother, Adi is a high-flying Afro-French sportsman - they find they have much in common.

"It's a love story but it's about poverty, racism and trying to find your way in the world," says Brown, whose the play is touring the north east and Cumbria.

Interested in the pressures faced by young people, Brown took inspiration from his role as patron of Sunderland Carers. "I hear a lot of stories about youngsters caring for their mums and dads," he says. "Also, your background as a journalist means you're always researching stuff, so getting all that in and finding the interesting bits and pieces was fascinating."

He modelled Adi partly on Britt Assombalonga, the Congolese player who joined Middlesbrough in 2017 after stints with several UK clubs. Brown also consulted his friend Gary Bennett who, in 1984, became only the second black footballer to play for Sunderland.

"I spoke to him about his experiences of being, at the time, one of the few black faces in what was overwhelmingly a white community," says Brown.

The charity Show Racism the Red Card will be present at every performance and will help with a schools programme.

"Being a football fan all my life, you hear that undercurrent of racism from the terraces. It isn't as bad as it used to be, but it still bubbles under.

"To think the play might have a wider impact on the community is mind-blowing."

The Bench, on tour, May 22-June 21, https://tinyurl.com/2bbfbmnv

Jeff Brown's Sporting Greats, BBC Sounds, https://tinyurl.com/22vf2gh9

rapists to walk free. This is a landmark story with global relevance.
https://tinyurl.com/24url8gz

Julie Keeps Quiet
General release, April 25
#MeToo drama about an elite teenage tennis player (Tessa Van den Broeck) whose coach becomes embroiled in a scandal, which puts pressure on her to speak out.
https://tinyurl.com/2xqy85jy

Theatre >
Public Interest
Loading Bay, Bradford, May 21–31
Politics and music collide as a cast of rappers and DJs look at real cases of joint enterprise that expose the prejudice suffered by many young working-class people. Zia Ahmed's script is staged by Common Wealth for Bradford 2025.
https://tinyurl.com/23qunmrp

The Herds
Manchester, London, date tbc
The team behind Little Amal, the 12-foot puppet of a refugee child, goes on a marathon journey from Central Africa to Norway with a herd of life-sized puppet animals, all of which are endangered by global warming. Director Amir Nizar Zuabi hopes to add emotional urgency to the statistics.
https://tinyurl.com/28zlynba

Keli
On tour, May 10–June 14
Composer Martin Green hooks up with brass bands to mark 40 years since the miners' strike in a show about community, creativity and music that combines history with one woman's story. Bryony Shanahan directs the National Theatre of Scotland production.
https://tinyurl.com/26wpcdjh

Spotlight
Radical secret city

How well do you know your city? Once you have ticked off the regular tourist spots, what stories are left untold? In Glasgow, Katherine Mackinnon (pictured), Henry Bell and David Lees are filling in the gaps.

They have researched the people's history of the city for a series of two-hour guided walks. Running from spring to autumn (year-round for private groups), Radical Glasgow Tours highlights political struggles from the 1915 rent strikes to a Home Office immigration raid on a flat that was halted by a mass protest in 2021. After an eight-hour stand-off, the police released the two men they had attempted to detain.

One route is dedicated to socialist campaigner and early-20th century revolutionary John Maclean. Another focuses on the women who were central to the red Sunday school movement, the anti-apartheid campaign and the fight for equal pay. Another considers refugees who arrived from Spain, Chile, Belgium, Poland and elsewhere.

Geographical tours include Radical Southside (covering anti-fascist protest and left-wing theatre), Radical West End (suffragettes and the Sheku Bayoh campaign) and George Square (long-standing place of civic protest). A Red Clydeside tour is in development. "It would be great to invite NUJ comrades to come along," says Mackinnon.
Radical Glasgow Tours, https://tinyurl.com/2c3mwtce

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Many years with the NUJ by my side

£50 prize letter

My thanks to many colleagues and friends who have wished me well in my retirement after a 45-year career in journalism.

My thanks too, to the NUJ, which has been a faithful and reassuring companion throughout.

I have felt a debt of gratitude to the union since the early days of my career, when it paid my wages during 14 weeks of a lockout by management in a dispute over the introduction of new technology at The News Portsmouth from December 1984 to April 1985.

Management claimed we were on strike, but there was an important distinction. We were willing to work on new computer technology, adopting some processes formerly performed by compositors – but only with agreement on training, remuneration and changes in terms and conditions.

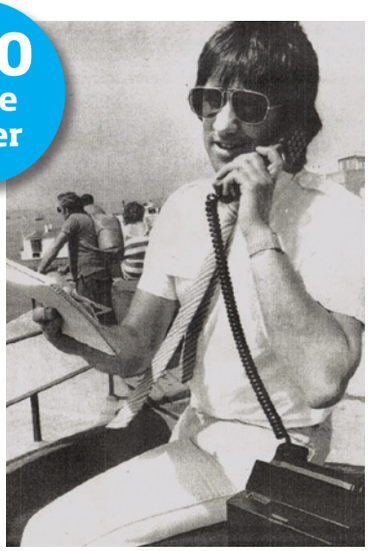
Our dispute ran simultaneously with struggles in Fleet Street as management embraced a new way to maximise profit with fewer staff. We finally returned to work having won that agreement, paving the way for others in the industry. I recall we won some extra pay, a strict timetable for the new way of working, agreement on retraining compositors who wished to become journalists and some things that remain to this day: free eye tests and ergonomic assessments.

The union's tireless help and support were never forgotten by me or my colleagues. I am delighted I have now been given life membership of an organisation that has been an ally in several tight corners as I found myself at the centre of company reorganisations or 'streamlining' by managements as the industry adapted to shifting sands.

As part of a long career at The News, Portsmouth, and the Chichester Observer series, I spent the last five years working from home, most recently for Newsquest.

Retirement feels like a great time for reminiscence and I wrote a piece on my LinkedIn page: *https://tinyurl.com/3r33h6k7*.

Like many journalists of my generation, I began on a typewriter and finished on a smartphone. The article mourns the passing of newsroom traditions such as the old banging out ceremonies. But my family ensured I ended my career on a high as I finished my last shift to be greeted by my loved ones including three young grandchildren banging saucepans in my honour in our living room. It felt like a fitting finale to what, at times, has seemed like the hardest but also the best job in the world.



Shot from a 1984 staff newsletter captioned: "More new technology hits the news room at Portsmouth as journalist Alan Cooper reports direct from the scene of a story using the 'Vodaphone' radio-telephone system"

Alan Cooper
Southsea

FOI and other legal battles reach beyond England

Reading Ian Weinfass's article 'A right to know' (December/January), I was reminded of the episode of Yes, Minister when Sir Humphrey Appleby, asking his predecessor how things were at the Campaign for Freedom of Information, was told: "Sorry, I can't talk about that!"

While accepting that Weinfass's article was specifically hooked on the 20th anniversary of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 coming into force, I can't help but feel slightly disappointed that he did not even mention the equivalent Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, which also came into force on 1 January 2005. This is not least because it could have provided him with far more examples of government intransigence regarding FOI requests, especially those identified as coming from journalists rather than members of the public.

Katy Clark, a Scottish Labour MSP for West Scotland, has been working for several years now on her Freedom of Information Reform (Scotland) Bill, which would extend FOI coverage to "all bodies delivering public services and services of a public nature", as well as strengthening existing processes and improving enforcement.

She's consulted widely, including with journalists, and its ideas do appear to be gaining growing cross-party support, so – unlike in Westminster – there's at least some potential progress in strengthening FOI legislation in the UK rather than weakening it—even if it would affect only north of the border.

I think it's well worth reminding all contributors to The Journalist to keep in mind the legislative powers of the devolved administrations – as well as Ireland, of course – if only to show how developments can add colour to UK-wide issues.

Paul Fisher Cockburn
Edinburgh

Erroneous clichés besmirch our media

After 42 years in print and broadcast journalism, maybe I'm getting grumpy in old age as my hair slowly disappears and turns a brighter shade of grey, but I felt I had to write in about inaccuracies that are slipping into everyday journalism that are misleading and incorrect.

Three in particular spring to mind – and 24-hour news channels like BBC and Sky are blatant offenders.

The most obvious one is where a presenter says; "The prime minister/secretary of state will give a news conference shortly." I've always been taught that the words are 'press conference'. Conference is an extension of the word 'confer', which means to gather or assemble. The press confer but news does not, hence the term 'news conference' is not accurate.

The next one is the phrase "has captured the imagination of the public". An event can't be imagined if it's real so the term should be "has captured the attention of the public".

Finally, the most overused and wrongly stated term is where broadcast reporters describing flooding say "the river burst its banks". Engineers will tell you that is almost physically impossible. The correct term is 'the river overflowed its banks'.

Am I alone in observing these misleading terms or are there any other ageing journalists out there in media land who bemoan the demise of accurate descriptions in our rapidly changing newspaper, digital or broadcast media?

Ian Murray
Irish Eastern Branch

Forget the news, people want trivial twaddle

Smut and nonsense are favoured in the media – but they aren't news, says **Chris Proctor**

I've got a distant relative called Toby and I hope his mother doesn't read this as he's a wastrel. Not just a common-or-garden loafer but a dedicated, full-time good-for-nothing. Half man, half duvet, he makes sloths look like highly toned athletes.

He was bemoaning the lack of progress on three essays he hasn't written that should have been handed in months ago and complaining about the endless length of his university terms which eat into his snorkelling and skiing habits when he told me that, if his studies go as badly as he fears, he might have to become a journalist.

So just to recap: he's bone idle, shows no interest in people who aren't serving him an iced negroni, doesn't like writing and is utterly indifferent to deadlines. So he thinks he might turn his finger – a whole hand would be too much to ask – to journalism.

I said with that attitude, he could go far. I didn't specify.

(The antithesis of Toby's spectacular apathy was a Glasgow scribe I once knew who was so tied to his trade that he could not bear to put pen to paper without payment. He hated writing cheques, and said he wouldn't give an autograph if he was asked. This was never put to the test, but he once invoiced his mother for sending her a holiday postcard.)

Anyway, my new fear is that Toby is going to get his wish: he's not only going to become a journalist: he's going to make it – big.

Why? Because it requires a certain type of person to provide the hollow nonsense and insignificant twaddle that the modern consumer appears to crave. They want to know about gents who've been nipped in the Maldives (very painful), Meghan Markle's sarnies or a man who injects gel into people's posteriors in Harley Street.

Lacking any human qualities, Toby is no doubt fascinated by this trio of trivia – to the point that he would be prepared to get out of bed – or at least sit up – to report on them. He, not me, has a finger on the pulse of British culture: he knows what people want. And it's not Gaza, equality or sustainability. I regret to say it's smut.

Most of us were more relieved than anything when the Sun stopped showing pictures of topless models on its third page. Apart from anything else, it was grubby. You didn't want to sit on the tube next to someone who was examining a young lady's anatomy. It was uncomfortable, like being squashed up to a person chewing raw onions or picking his nose.

Remarkably, it is only 10 years since this daily dirt ceased to be shovelled: January 2015.

Anyway, it did stop and well done the No More Page 3 campaigners.

Well, we thought it had ended. But now: at the slightest excuse, it's back – bigger, bolder and bouncier than ever.

There was a lady at the Grammys, an actors' school prize day, the marvellously named Ms Censori, who popped off her coat to reveal that she was wearing a transparent dress that made it look as if she was in her birthday suit.

Is this news? I can see it could be a cause of concern. She could catch her death of cold for one thing – or was her lack of clothing a sign of the perilous state of the US economy? Or does it show a dearth of psychotherapists in that nation?

One thing it's not is news. And yet the 'story' featured in just about every media outlet on the globe apart from Tehran Today.

To qualify as a news story, there used to be some minimum criteria, like you had to report something unexpected or point out what was going to change as a result. Nothing was going to change as a result of Ms Censori popping off her togs at the Grammys. She had nothing to change into.

Now I accept that if Keir Starmer divested for a press conference this could be considered a photo-opportunity. In fact, given the public perception that our leader is a charisma-free zone, it might not be an ill-advised PR stratagem. It may even be news. (On the other hand, Mr Putin sitting on a horse with his top off is not a lead story. It's just weird.)

Gentlemen at the Grammys occasionally trudge along a red carpet without a shirt but they are dismissed as racetrack losers rather than media sensations.

All of this makes me wonder how effective the 'no topless models' campaign has been, and if we need another one. Why is a déshabillé lady unsuitable for The Sun but fair game for the broadsheets?

And then I come back to Toby. He would have reported the Ms Censori story. He didn't need to research it. He didn't need to write it. All he needed to do was pick up his mobile phone, an activity he is (just) capable of undertaking and there you go – he's lined up worldwide exposure.

Meanwhile, I'm trying to flog a nib to a diary.

> **"I wonder how effective the 'no topless models' campaign has been. Why is a déshabillé lady unsuitable for The Sun but fair game for the broadsheets?"**

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