

theJournalist

WWW.NUJ.ORG.UK | JUNE-JULY 2026



SHOUT OUT TO GEN Z

The media needs younger journalists

Contents



One of the best things about seeing journalism students or those just starting on their careers is their enthusiasm, ambition and love of the industry. Unfortunately though there are fewer young people wanting to go into journalism. So much so that the National Council for the Training of

Journalists has launched an initiative to get more young people interested in the profession.

In our cover feature Neil Merrick looks at the reasons why only 12 per cent of journalists are under 30.

Those young journalists may be a bit amazed to hear how much hospitality used to be part of the trade with journalists being whisked off on foreign trips, sporting events and other such perks. Helen Nugent looks back to the 'good old days of the freebie' but also points out that the hospitality usually came hand in hand with top level access and frequently led to some great exclusives.

We also have features on how the NUJ has helped members following sudden job loss and a sharp career turn.

Plus, as it's the World Cup soon Ruth Addicott catches up with football reporters keeping their eye on the ball.

I hope you enjoy this edition of your magazine.

Christie

Christine Buckley
Editor

@mschrisbuckley



Editor
journalist@nuj.org.uk
Design
Surgerycreations.com
info@surgerycreations.com

Advertising
Square7media
Tel: 020 3832 2879
hello@square7media.co.uk

Print
Warners
www.warners.co.uk

Distribution
GB Mail
www.gb-mail.co.uk

NUJ
72 Acton Street
London WC1X 9NB
info@nuj.org.uk
www.nuj.org.uk
Tel: 020 7843 3700

Manchester office
nujmanchester@nuj.org.uk

Glasgow office
nujscotland@nuj.org.uk

Dublin office
info@nuj.ie

ISSN: 0022-5541



Cover
David Woods

Main feature

14 **The young fight shy of journalism**
Media dominated by older people

News

- 03 **Strike halts STV election coverage**
Management refuse to offer pay rise
- 04 **Let's fight far right and racist abuse**
Accurate, ethical reporting essential
- 05 **NUJ calls for global tax on big tech**
Extra cash would support journalism
- 06 **Local news vital for unions, says STUC**
Scottish government urged to invest

Features

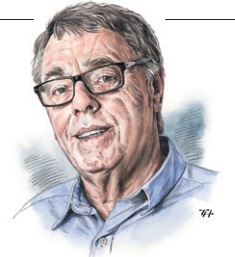
- 08 **The magical power of the NUJ's merch**
It's a symbol of the professional
- 09 **When our union came to the rescue**
Keep the faith, says grateful freelance
- 10 **The dreaded doorknock**
... its uses and abuses
- 12 **Trips, drinks and lunch at the Savoy**
Bygone days of work hospitality

Regulars

- 18 **On our patch**
- 22 **Obituaries**

On media

We give Farage an easy ride
Page 07



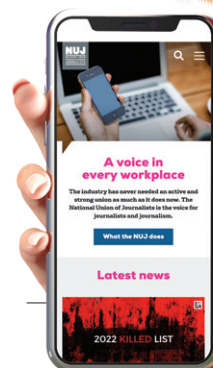
Arts

Bill Shankly's summer madness
Page 20



And finally...

Stories I've missed, by 'Scoop' Proctor
Page 23



Access all the latest NUJ news and views by scanning the QR code here or by visiting www.nuj.org.uk



Strike halts STV election coverage

ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

AROUND 100 STV staff members took strike action on May 8 – the day of the Holyrood parliament election results – in a dispute over pay. The walkout meant that coverage of the Scottish election results had to be cancelled and replaced by an episode of *The Chase*.

NUJ members at STV were joined on the picket lines outside the Glasgow and Aberdeen offices by members of Bectu, which represents technical staff. Members of both unions voted overwhelmingly for strike action in March following management's decision to offer a zero pay award.

On the day of the industrial action Nick McGowan-Lowe, NUJ Scotland organiser, said: "It's frustrating that due to the stubbornness of STV management, on the biggest



news day in Scotland for years, Scottish viewers, listeners and readers won't be able to hear what some of the most well-respected journalists, reporters and producers in Scottish broadcasting have to say. Our members would much rather be reporting the election results than standing on picket lines, but they have been driven to this action by management's indifference as

to how overworked and underpaid they are.

"CEO Rufus Radcliffe has once again failed to grasp the opportunity to end this dispute, and it is personally embarrassing for him that STV will be broadcasting reruns instead of the biggest news story in Scotland."

In January NUJ members at STV staged a one-day strike over job cuts. There had

been an overwhelming vote in favour of the strike action in December over the company's plans to make compulsory redundancies and axe the north edition of its *News at 6* programme.

Also in December Ofcom gave provisional approval to a revised watered-down version of its original plans which would see STV have a single news programme across its two North and Central licence areas, but with a guaranteed minimum amount of regional coverage. The NUJ has repeatedly criticised the plans as being bad for viewers, advertisers, and journalism.

The strike went ahead despite extreme weather at the time and considerable travel disruption, demonstrating the dedication and strength of feeling among NUJ members at STV.

Our members would much rather be reporting the election results than standing on picket lines

Nick McGowan-Lowe
Scottish organiser

NUJ pickets greet new director general

AS MATT BRITTIN, the BBC's new director general, started work on May 18 he was greeted with picket lines as NUJ members at *Newshour* and *The World Tonight* staged a one-day strike. They took the action in a dispute over rota changes. Brittin took an NUJ strike leaflet as he entered Broadcasting House.

The strike came after an overwhelming vote for industrial action.

The ballot results showed 94 per cent supported both strike action and action short of a strike on a turnout of 97 per cent. The ballot closed on May 8 and under the new Employment Rights Act, the legal mandate to

hold industrial action now lasts for a year rather than six months.

The proposed changes to rotas would lead to fewer opportunities for freelancers and increased workloads for staff. BBC management have so far rejected the NUJ's counter proposal and offer to meet, instead choosing to

implement plans that would require staff to work an additional two days every four weeks due to slightly shorter shift times.

John Sailing, NUJ broadcasting organiser, said: "Journalists at the BBC are coming under increasing pressure to do more with less. The changes being proposed

by BBC management will mean that there are fewer shifts available for freelancers and their work will need to be redistributed.

"Staff on these programmes already work unsocial hours, which mean that they either start very early, or finish late at night – including on weekends and bank holidays – and are therefore unable to spend time with friends and family."

Recruitment drive launches on May Day

THE NUJ marked May Day with the publication of the first phase of a new recruitment and organising strategy, outlining how the union can build collective power across journalism.

May Day is an ancient European festival marking the start of summer, but is now also a global celebration to mark the historic struggles for rights such as the eight-hour working day and five-day working week. It serves as a reminder of what collective action can achieve.

The strategy comes as many journalists and media workers struggle with low pay amid a cost-of-living crisis. Freelancers face growing instability, with some publications exploiting insecure working arrangements, while journalists from marginalised backgrounds are increasingly subjected to

far-right rhetoric that can threaten their ability to report safely and freely.

Polling carried out by YouGov for the TUC in 2025 found nearly three in five workers (58 per cent) have never been asked to join a union and three in 10 workers are not confident how to join one.

The strategy emphasises that recruitment is a shared responsibility, with every member playing a role. It also focuses on supporting members throughout their careers and ensuring the union remains relevant across all sectors.

**ORGANISING
DEFENDING
WINNING**

Call to fight far right and racist narratives

ACCURATE, ethical reporting is needed to counter racist narratives, the NUJ's black members' council (BMC) emphasised at the TUC Black Workers' Conference.

Kate Bell, TUC assistant general secretary, said 40 per cent of black workers face racist abuse at work and more than one in three experience verbal or physical attacks.

She linked this abuse to the failure of social media companies to prevent the spread of discrimination on their platforms.

She said: "Tech platforms give voices to those like Tommy Robinson, which enables hatred and creates a hostile environment for black people. Nigel Farage wants to rip up the Equality Act that protects all of us."

"We say no to the politics of division, no to the far right and no to racism."

The NUJ's delegation



ALEX SLATER

comprised Roger McKenzie, BMC co-chair, and Saadeya Shamsuddin, BMC treasurer pictured above.

Moving the NUJ's motion – Resisting the Far Right and Racist Narratives – Shamsuddin said: "We are in a moment where parts of our political and media landscape have made anti-immigration, anti-Muslim and anti-black rhetoric not just acceptable, but mainstream."

"We are seeing more black and brown faces in positions

of power being used – and in some cases choosing – to uphold systems of white supremacy that continue cycles of inequality at the highest levels.

"You can argue it has always been this way. But right now, because of what is happening globally and the impact it is having on people like you and me, the stakes are higher. We need journalism with integrity."

The motion, which was carried unanimously, called

on the TUC to: organise a national demonstration uniting trade unionists and communities; lobby the government to push back against divisive rhetoric; and promote media literacy alongside the NUJ's race reporting guidelines.

The importance of these guidelines and the union's code of conduct were also highlighted in a motion on the rise in racist language and abuse, which called for accountability from politicians, the media and the trade union movement itself.

McKenzie warned that the normalisation of racist rhetoric must be challenged and that confronting racism requires consistency.

"We have to call them all out – not only politicians for spewing the same words as Enoch Powell in 1968 – but also within our trade unions," he said.



We are seeing more black and brown faces in positions of power being used - and in some cases choosing - to uphold systems of white supremacy

**Saadeya Shamsuddin
NUJ's black members' council**

Pay increases agreed at ITN

THE NUJ has reached an agreement with ITN on this year's pay award, delivering significant improvements for members.

Pay increases will be applied in tranches, ensuring fair pay gaps are maintained between junior and senior roles.

Staff with full-time equivalent earnings up to and including £50,000 will receive a 3.7 per cent increase, with a minimum rise of £1,500.

Staff earning above £50,000 and up to £90,000 will receive a 3.7 per cent increase on the first £50,000,

plus 2.9 per cent on the remainder of their salary.

Staff earning over £90,000 will receive a flat increase of £3,010. This is equivalent to a 3.7 per cent rise on the first £50,000 and a 2.9 per cent increase on earnings of £50,000–£90,000, with no increase above £90,000.

Overall, the deal delivers an average pay increase of 3.5 per cent, with 88 per cent of eligible staff receiving a rise of 3 per cent or more.

Alex Maguire, NUJ organiser, said: "This is a successful outcome for members at ITN, achieved through sustained negotiation and the collective strength of the joint unions."

"While we are disappointed that, when announcing this award to staff, ITN chose to try to obscure the pivotal role of the NUJ and Bectu in negotiating this pay offer, we are certain that members know it was their unions that secured an additional pay investment of £100,000 and the implementation of tranches for this year and next."

Better terms won at Mediahuis

NUJ MEMBERS at Mediahuis, which publishes the Irish Independent, Sunday Independent, Herald, Sunday World/Crime World, Belfast Telegraph, Sunday Life and regional titles, have accepted a pay and benefits package after a four-month battle.

Of the ballots cast, 80 per cent were in favour of accepting the package. The NUJ group chapel committee had recommended a yes vote.

Last December, almost three-quarters of NUJ members who voted rejected a 2 per cent pay

increase for 2026 and a €500/£500 Christmas bonus. No recommendation was given by the committee in that ballot.

The following conditions have now been agreed:

- Paternity leave boosted from two to four weeks, with full pay for the month
- Domestic violence leave increased from five days to one month on full pay
- Bereavement leave increased – depending on the relationship of the deceased to the employee – to up to one month

- Employees aged 62 and above with at least five years' service can receive a year's gross salary tax free if they retire within one year.



NUJ takes the stage at 100th IFJ congress

THE NUJ pushed forward campaigns at the centenary congress of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in Paris in May.

Its delegation joined unions from around the world, and Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, was elected to the IFJ executive council after taking part in a keynote roundtable discussion on public service broadcasting.

She said: "The NUJ has a proud history of international solidarity through our work with the IFJ, contributing 16 presidents and hosting six congresses over the past 100 years. I'd like to thank delegates for their support, and I look forward to working

with colleagues from sister unions to ensure that the IFJ remains a strong voice for journalists and journalism around the world."

Georgina Morris, NUJ vice-president, moved the union's motion calling for global support for an urgent windfall tax on tech giants.

She said: "One of the key policies in our union's News Recovery Plan is our call for an urgent windfall tax on the tech giants, ensuring that a portion of the vast profits they make in each country goes back to supporting journalism there.

"It would provide immediate funding to reinvigorate the news sector – with an ongoing digital tax to provide



sustainable future funding.

"The tech giants work at a global scale and we need a global response. We need every member of the IFJ to work together – and supporting this motion allows us to begin that fight."

The motion was passed unanimously.

The plight of journalists in Iran was highlighted by NUJ delegate Hanif Mazrooei, who works for BBC Persian. He called for an IFJ campaign to support the reopening of the Association of Iranian Journalists, which was banned by the Iranian government in 2009.

He said a lot had happened in Iran: protests, a violent state response, the arrests of at least 10 journalists, an internet shutdown and war. He said: "Now more than ever, Iranian journalists need a union to defend them and their rights."

The motion was also passed unanimously.

//

The tech giants work at a global scale and we need a global response

Georgina Morris
NUJ vice-president

Union lobbies Reach AGM

THE UNION attended Reach plc's annual general meeting in May, urging shareholders to support investment in quality journalism and oppose further cuts, pointing out that the company's digital strategy depends on a properly resourced workforce.

In a letter handed to shareholders, the NUJ Reach group chapel highlighted that "big US tech companies... have sucked out the advertising spend, leaving digital income in pennies against the pounds generated by print".

The letter said: "Last year saw more than 300 skilled and hard-working journalists made redundant from Reach plc to hack out cost in the face of continuing declining revenues. This meant bigger workloads for those remaining – and less scope

to create the content that is most likely to win subscribers.

"It would be foolish and foolhardy to believe AI can be the saviour. It should only ever be a useful tool to enable journalists to do their best work."

At the meeting, the NUJ raised concerns over job cuts at newsrooms and print sites, asking the board:

"How much of the 5-6 per cent cost reductions earmarked for this year is likely to come from the redundancies of journalists?"

Piers North, Reach chief executive, said the board is "managing our cost base appropriately" and "we will always continue to look at our cost base, and our people are our biggest cost".

Steve Bell



Local news vital for unions' work

Reports by
Conrad Landin

Local journalism has ensured cuts to fire services have not been forced through without challenge

Colin Brown
Fire Brigades Union Scotland

CUTS to local news threaten trade unions' ability to defend public services, the Scottish TUC Congress heard.

Delegates at the Congress in Dundee unanimously backed an NUJ motion calling for the Scottish Parliament to invest in local journalism. It warned that STV's decision to axe its evening news bulletin broadcast from Aberdeen would mean "reduced coverage of news in the north and north-east of Scotland".

Supporting the motion, University and College Union Scotland secretary Mary Senior said local journalists played a 'pivotal role' in holding institutions to account. She singled out the work of reporters on the Courier, who exposed mismanagement at the University of Dundee.

"The local news coverage of STV and BBC has brought the issues facing workers and learners into people's living rooms.



"At a time when misinformation and disinformation circulate all too readily – pushed by billionaire tech brothers – a vibrant free press is fundamental to our democracy and for social cohesion," she said. "And let's recognise our local and regional news output supports a thriving national media output and its journalism."

Fire Brigades Union Scotland delegate Colin Brown said his union had only been able to defeat proposed cuts to the fire stations "due to the engagement of local media

outlets such as STV".

He said the "local knowledge and local engagement" of reporters "living and working in the same local communities" had been key, adding: "In a time of increasingly centralised control of media platforms... the fight to protect local journalism in local communities is our fight."

"The understanding, engagement and reach of local journalism and local coverage of FBU campaigns have repeatedly ensured cuts to fire services have not been

forced through without widespread challenge."

NUJ delegates also won backing to challenge the Scottish Government to beef up protections for freelancers.

Ministers have said bodies getting public funding, including publishers and festivals that receive money from Creative Scotland, should adopt 'fair work' practices, which include paying the living wage and ensuring an 'effective voice' for workers. However, this guidance is routinely ignored, and the NUJ motion called for it to become statutory.

"If we get pay, terms and conditions up in publicly funded organisations, that will drive them up for freelance work in the private sector too," NUJ delegate Jim Symons said.

"Staff have a key role too in ensuring that freelance pay, terms and conditions are included in their negotiations."

Law used 'as a weapon' in Zimbabwe

A ZIMBABWEAN journalist fleeing persecution attended the Scottish TUC Congress to raise awareness of press censorship.

Blessed Mhlanga spoke about how Emerson Mnangagwa's government used "the law as a weapon" to "silence opponents and terrorize citizens not through overt violence but through a captured judiciary". He was imprisoned without trial for 73 days

last year after interviewing a war veteran critical of the government.

Zimbabwean information minister Zhemu Soda condemned Mhlanga for "peddling a distorted narrative that flies in the face of reality" and said "legal frameworks designed to protect our hard-won sovereignty" were under threat of being undermined through "foreign platforms". This was interpreted by human rights

defenders as a threat to persecute Mhlanga for speaking out.

Mhlanga said: "I was flying back and, when I got into South Africa to connect to Zimbabwe, I got calls from my union in Zimbabwe, telling me not to come home because things would be very bad for me. It's this thing of punishing people without due process that scares me. They can just abduct you, and you disappear."



Fighting fake news

SCOTTISH TRADE unions have resolved to stamp out far-right fake news through media literacy education.

An NUJ motion passed at the Scottish TUC's Congress called for union branches, trades councils and campaign groups to be trained to

combat disinformation and better communicate anti-racist activity.

NUJ delegate and national executive council member Layla-Roxanne Hill (pictured right) said: "Democracies are at risk when violence is used as a political tool to promote

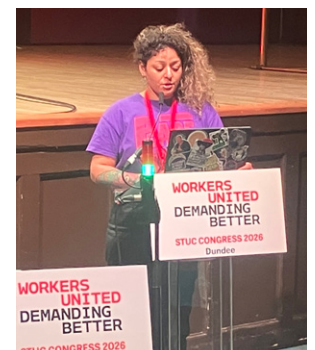
fear and hate. But the people who commit targeted violence and violent extremism are also our neighbours, friends, colleagues, family members and trade union members."

Congress called on the general council to work with the NUJ to develop a media literacy strategy, training and resources. It also called for

work with education unions to ensure media literacy is embedded in education.

"The problem runs deeper than stopping teenagers from using social networks or tightening fact-checking procedures," Hill added.

"Media literacy is a crucial skill for all citizens, irrespective of their age, social, cultural or economic background."





Woeful media scrutiny of Reform must end now

Media should say what the party and its wealthy supporters really stand for, says **Raymond Snoddy**

The future of Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer after his refusal to step down following Labour's disastrous showing in the local and regional elections will continue to rumble on across the summer. The party lost 1,496 seats, almost matched by Reform UK's 1,451 gains.

Inevitably, the list of successful Reform candidates provided new insights on Reform's vetting of applicants. Apart from the usual holocaust deniers and wife beaters, one had suggested that Nigerians should be melted down to fix potholes, another apparently cannot be traced and may have been AI generated, while Welsh Senedd member Joshua Kim, a migrant from South Korea, railed against the influx of migrants to the UK.

The role of the media in at least enabling such a dramatic change to Great Britain's political landscape is a serious issue. To what extent did the UK media help to create Nigel Farage in the way the US media chased ratings rather than questioning Donald Trump?

In Britain, was there adequate media scrutiny of Farage, what he stands for and his finances? Above all, what should the media do now when Reform not only has 1,453 councillors – at least for now – controls more than 20 councils and is consistently ahead in the opinion polls, albeit it in a declining lead?

There is little doubt the media in the UK, in particular the BBC, helped to create Farage in the way that Trump was allowed to manipulate the media in America.

Farage was turned into a national personality with the help of at least 38 appearances on BBC Question Time – a tradition now being maintained by frequent invitations for the unelected Zia Yusuf, who styles himself as Reform's shadow home secretary.

There is little doubt there was inadequate scrutiny of what should have been a major scandal that broke days before election.

There has always been a lack of curiosity about who actually paid for Farage's £800,000 house in his Clacton constituency. Then it was revealed that, just before standing for parliament, Farage had accepted £5 million from Thailand-based crypto billionaire Christopher Harborne, who has also given Reform UK many millions.

Farage is now under investigation by the parliamentary standards authorities for not declaring the gift.

The right-wing press, which raged against Sir Keir accepting £18,000 for glasses and suits and Angela Rayner underpaying £40,000 in stamp duty, was silent about Farage and the £5 million. The issue was properly tackled by the BBC's Today programme, but only the morning after the vote.

The Reform leader was also able to hold up stories in the Daily Mail and The Sun saying that the 200,000th small boat to cross the Channel was about to arrive. Little mention that the figure covered nine years, that in the past year numbers were down by 42 per cent or that the crisis was created by Brexit – the very thing Farage campaigned for.

The electoral success of Reform and Farage's claim he could become prime minister mean the media should belatedly take the gloves off.

Reform UK is a limited company owned by Farage and possibly overseas

players, rather than a normal political party. There is nothing normal about Reform and everyone associated with it, and every scrap of its finances should be subjected to the most rigorous scrutiny.

If the disaffected want to continue voting for Reform, they should at least understand what the organisation and its billionaire supporters really stand for.

Investigative reporter John Sweeney has just finished a book, *The Real Nigel Farage*, to be published in September.

Farage has in the past said Sweeney had "caused him more misery than any other in my 25 years in politics".

You can be sure that more misery and revelations are on the way for the Reform leader from Sweeney.

The difficulty in tackling Farage is that he often avoids questions and is rude and petulant when cornered by journalists. The Sunday before the elections, Farage pulled out of the Kuenssberg Show, where he might just have been asked about the £5 million.

British journalists must learn from the errors of their counterparts in the US where Trump routinely is allowed to insult women journalists while their colleagues continue as if nothing has happened.

It's time for journalists to temporarily set their rivalries aside and co-operate to make sure Farage and everything he stands for is properly examined.

The other way forward is to look at what Reform is doing in the councils it controls. The Financial Times examined Staffordshire, where Reform has been in power for a year. How were they getting on? Badly, was the FT's verdict.

Every Reform lie and false claim has to be run to ground.

Above all, Reform, the limited company owned by Farage, must not be treated as a normal British political party when it is anything but a party.

Farage was turned into a national personality with the help of at least 38 appearances on BBC Question Time

One man and his bag

When **Graeme Anderson** quit a job for an uncertain future, some NUJ merch did some heavy lifting for him



F

irst of all, I don't want to come across as weird – I'm aware an obituary for a bag might look a bit OTT.

We learn early on to value people, objects less so. And that's how it should be. But I was not prepared for the emotional wrench I felt when disposing of something that had been with me for almost as long as my 16-year-old daughter. (Not that there's a comparison, I hasten to add – I'm keeping the daughter.)

A little context, though, might help explain.

I took voluntary redundancy from the Sunderland Echo in 2014 at the age of 50, leaving as a man without a plan. I'd worked for the paper for more than a quarter of a century, the last 15 as a football writer covering Sunderland Football Club, arguably the most high-profile job on the paper with a football-mad circulation.

I probably had underestimated how much my personal identity was tied up with the role and the paper.

What to do next?

I still had little clue when I chaired a meeting of the Sunderland, Shields and Hartlepool branch of the NUJ and our guest, the indefatigable Chris Morley, senior organiser for the North and Midlands, surprised me with a freebie – a beautifully tailored shoulder bag, all pristine and still in its wrapping.

It became an indispensable part of my new work ensemble.

I took up business networking – something that seemed completely alien until I realised journalists do it all

the time, only they're selling their paper when they do it, not themselves.

In countless networking meetings, the bag gave me a degree of confidence – it was a more visible version of an NUJ press card, and a reminder that, while I may no longer work for a paper, I was still a journalist.

Over the years, I built up a living as a freelance writer who also provided PR support to local businesses.

The bag did a lot of work for me. Reporters who met me when I was acting as a PR would see it and recognise me as one of their own. Potential clients would be quietly impressed at its understated assertion that they were dealing with a professional journalist.

I ought to mention that the bag itself was perfect for a hybrid reporter/businessman – it had lots of sections for pens and pencils, laptop, phone, papers, files and essentials.

In all of those times, I always felt good walking into a meeting with it.

Once, it even helped me with a job. I was on a press call and received the red-carpet treatment from the organiser, who later revealed he was a passionate TUC man and that, when he saw my bag, he'd put me at the front of the queue.

Fast forward to today and I've finally accepted that my days as a newspaper reporter are ancient history. I'm still a journalist, though.

I work three days a week for the Local Storytelling Exchange, a national organisation of journalists building support for a rapid and fair green



The bag was a more visible version of an NUJ press card, Graeme Anderson found

transition. We highlight everyday people, organisations and companies working to create a safer, more sustainable planet.

The rest of my time is spent in PR for long-term clients.

Life has as much certainty as I'm ever likely to have and, as is the nature of things as time moves on, I recently accepted that it was time for my NUJ bag to go.

Scuffed and tatty, finally, fatally, it had developed several holes through which pens, cards and other accoutrements could make unscheduled exits.

Last year, I rang Chris to see if a replacement was possible. I was even prepared to pay for it. Unfortunately, they had been discontinued and are all gone.

But it was only when preparing to bin it that I realised I was throwing away a piece of my life that bridged all the years back to my Echo days.

It might have been a freebie but it had been priceless to me.

A shield against the world as I sought out a new life.

Today, I have a fabulous shoulder bag, all brass buckles and soft, brown goat leather. A new bag for a new era.

But it's not the same, and I didn't want to let the moment pass without tipping my hat to the constant companion that followed me everywhere for a substantial chunk of my working life and always provided me with confidence and reassurance.

Cheers for the gift, Chris, a reminder that it's often the small things we do in life that make big differences to others.



The press call organiser was a passionate TUC man and, when he saw my bag, he put me at the front of the queue

NUJ came to the rescue

Never give up your subscription – our union can take on big employers on your behalf, says **Kevin Whitlock**

I am a proud but not an active NUI member. I've paid my subs since 1991 but contact with Headland House or my fellow freelance branch members has been spotty at best. I read The Journalist and the bulletins and, back in the day, I even joined fellow members on strike a few times. However, I've never been to the delegate meeting or many branch meetings.

Like a lot of members, I've had to make cuts in my living expenses over the past decade, especially since the Covid pandemic. As a freelance, I have found work has become increasingly difficult to come by, and remuneration has shrunk. Thus, over time, subscriptions have been culled – Sky, Tidal, various online and print mags and newspapers... I even had to cancel membership of the London Library in St James' Square (a wonderful place to work).

I have to confess that I even thought about cancelling my NUI membership. But something inside told me that as a working – if underemployed – hack, I ought to remain, both for my and our trade's sake.

I'm very glad I did remain.

Six years ago, via an old colleague, an offer dropped into my lap – a freelance production editor on a monthly music magazine. The money was rubbish, but I could work flexibly and there were plenty of benefits – free CDs and records, gig tickets and so forth – and music has always been one of my big passions.

I got to really enjoy the job: I was elevated to the position of deputy editor and, thanks to increased responsibilities, was able to extract better remuneration as well as make

what I believed to be improvements to the magazine. I was content – until earlier this year when I attended what I thought would be a routine online editorial meeting.

I was told by the editor-in-chief and editor that I was no longer employed. Budget cuts meant that they could not afford me so my position was terminated with immediate effect – no warning, no compensation, no consultation, no offer of alternative employment within the company, which has around 400 employees.

I was furious. I'm old and ugly enough to have been laid off or made redundant plenty of times, but very rarely with no warning and never with no offer of compensation or pay in lieu of notice.

That afternoon I emailed the NUI for help and, within the hour, David Ayrton, the senior freelance organiser, called me. He asked about my circumstances and offered some sage advice on what to do next, as well as encouragement that I had right – and the law – on my side. He helped me focus my anger and frustration towards practical ends and increased my determination not to let the company get away with this egregious behaviour.

What was most helpful was his telling me that even though I was a freelance, I had the same rights as a PAYE employee – including pay in lieu of notice and holiday pay. He gave me some excellent pointers on writing a letter asserting my status as an employee or worker as opposed to a casual contractor and a claim for payment.

We pitched for quite an ambitious settlement. After much toing-and-froing with the HR director of

the company in question – who, to be fair, had not been consulted prior to my being budgeted out of existence – I settled on an amount that was less than we'd hoped for but which did, as David pointed out, constitute a victory these days. The money has provided me with a much-needed financial cushion in these tough times and I can move on.

One hears a lot these days about how unions are dying and irrelevant in our era of brutal US-style capitalism. I disagree. There's safety in numbers and our union has the resources to help individuals tackle big systems and corporations.

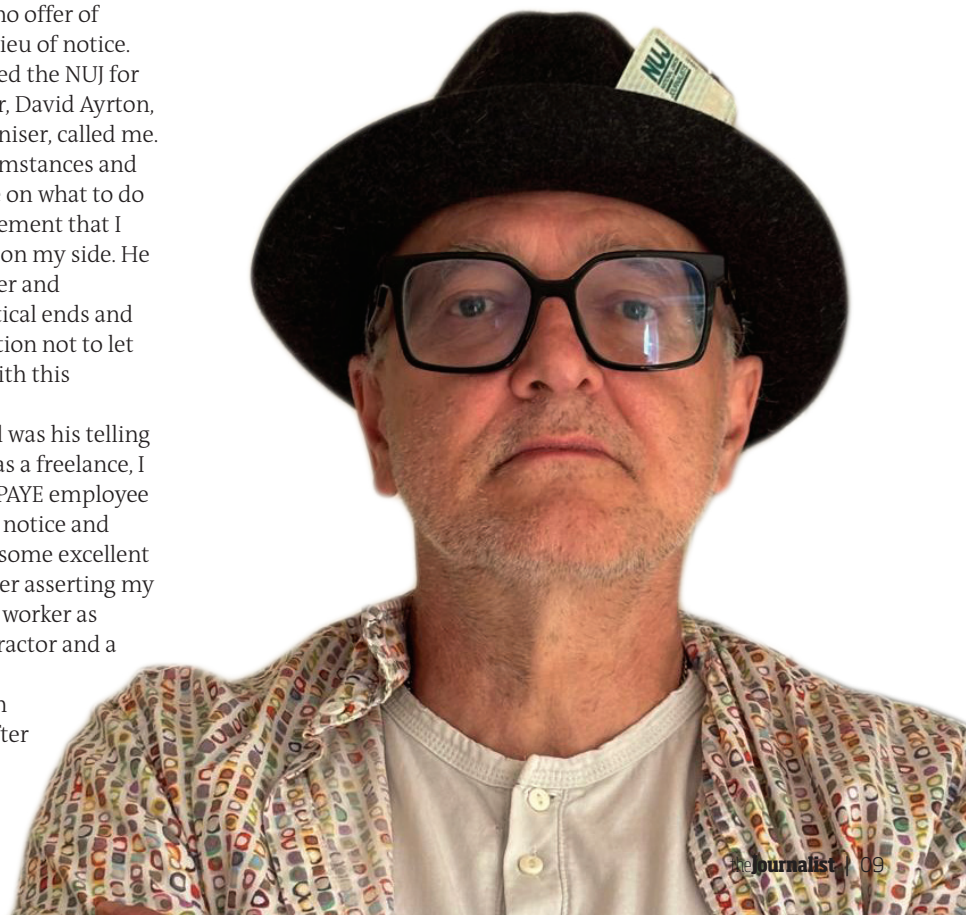
Think how much it would cost you to hire a lawyer or consultant with David's experience, expertise and understanding. Yet, thanks to our subs, we can tap into union resources for free. When my role was eliminated, I felt powerless and on the brink of financial struggle. Thanks to the NUI and David in particular, I was able to get what I was due, justice was done and I was able to get on with life.

So, if you've got to make cuts, then remember you can do without that streaming service. But, for my money, the NUI sub is priceless.



When my role was cut, I felt powerless. Thanks to the NUI, I was able to get what I was due and justice was done

Join the NUI at www.nuj.org.uk/join



Face to face on t

Ruth Addicott looks at the role of the dreaded door-knock in light of changes in attitudes and digital contact

Door-knocking has always been an extremely difficult part of the job, but with reporters working from home and a focus on clicks rather than face-to-face contact, is it becoming a thing of the past?

Criticism of the media following the Nicola Bulley case and Manchester Arena attack saw a change of approach, with media organisations liaising with press offices and law firms following the Southport stabbings instead of contacting families directly.

David Collins, northern editor of the Sunday Times, was the first journalist to interview them. He says it simplified the process and stopped the families feeling overwhelmed.

"All of them said that they found their experience of the media to be really positive and the reason for that is that the journalists based in the north of England didn't directly approach, doorstep or door-knock the families," he says.

Collins believes there has been a reset, particularly among journalists in the north, and says there has to be a 'really high' public interest reason for reporters to door-knock today.

"Most media organisations are extremely respectful. They will ask a family once if they want to do an interview and, if it's a no, they'll respect that," he says.

"The problem occurs when there are 80, 90 media organisations and international media as well – families can quickly get overwhelmed.

"I think it's beholden on every journalist and every media organisation to ask themselves the question: 'Do we think that the family do want to speak?' There are always clues – if somebody posts a big message on social media and they're very outspoken, then that might be justification."

In 2021, reporters on Plymouth daily The Herald and its website Plymouth Live took a similar stand, saying they would not door-knock neighbours following a shooting spree that left six people dead.

So what are the benefits of door-knocking and is there a place for it in journalism today?

As a former tabloid reporter, Jane Hamilton has had plenty of experience.

"I've been threatened with weapons, chased down streets, even attacked," she says. "But the moments that stay with me aren't the dramatic ones – it's the heartbreaking ones when you see the raw grief up close. Door-knocking reminds you these aren't just stories to fill space – they're real lives ripped apart. And, sometimes, being the one who shows up means you give a family a chance to

talk about their loved one. I've had relatives thank me for recognising and honouring them, for making sure they weren't just reduced to a police statement or a line in the news."

Hamilton is best known for her investigations into serial killers Peter Tobin and Bible John. (Her book on the hunt for serial killer Peter Tobin, *Hunting Shadows*, was published earlier this year.)

As well as numerous national exclusives, she helped to change Scottish Government policy on multiple post mortems on victims by highlighting the tragic story of Shaun Woodburn, who was attacked after a night out in Edinburgh in 2016.

Hamilton says door-knocking has given her detail and depth she could not have got from a press release.

"You see the emotion, you hear the way someone speaks, you notice the things in their home or street that tell you about their life. It gave me access to stories that other reporters missed because I was there, face to face," she says.

"Sometimes, it changed the direction of a piece entirely because what a family told me was not what the police or official line was saying. It made my stories more human and more accurate."

Christine Challand has been a freelance journalist for 25 years and works for the Daily Mail Group, News International and Mirror Group newspapers.

Challand says she can only think of a couple of incidents, where people have refused to speak (one being one of Lucy Letby's best friends, who she has called on twice).

Another case that sticks in her mind was in 2021, when she knocked on the door of Alan Jackson, the brother-in-law of 'pyjama killer' Penny Jackson who had been convicted of killing her husband David.

"There was a lot of interest in the case because Penny was filmed by police when she was arrested saying she hoped he had died after she stabbed him with a kitchen knife and commenting on the fact that she was still in her Marks and Spencer pjs," says Challand, who was sent out to see several extended family members for three newspapers.

"I was thinking that Alan Jackson, the brother of Penny's murdered husband, would give me short shrift but he opened the door and said, 'I've been expecting someone like you to call'.

It turned the tide of the story after Penny's conviction because, over several cups of tea, Alan painted an entirely different story about his dead brother and said he thought he deserved to be killed and would be supporting Penny throughout her prison term."

Another time, Challand ended up having a chance conversation with a couple who thought that she



Door-knocking reminds you these aren't just stories to fill space - they're real lives ripped apart



"Your demeanour, your courtesy, your confidence, your transparency are everything."
Christine Challand, freelance journalist

"I don't think we should automatically assume that somebody doesn't want to speak to us. If we don't ask them, we deny them the choice."

Tony Harcup, emeritus fellow at the University of Sheffield and author of Journalism: Principles and Practice

the doorstep

had come about their son who had been killed in a car accident.

They were keen to get publicity for their son's inquest and it ended up a page lead in the Daily Mail.

Challand uses her experience to teach journalism students at the University of Worcester and says the majority of young people are now less willing to engage in conversation than they are to reach out digitally.

Lisa Bradley, professor of journalism at the University of Sheffield agrees.

"We were getting feedback from editors worried about the fact that trainee journalists were coming to jobs saying 'I'm not going to do that door-knock because it will be bad for my mental health,'" she says.

"Without sounding harsh, it's not about your mental health – it's about giving people a voice they might not otherwise have. You're denying people the right to have their stories heard."

The curriculum now includes a module on confidence and imposter syndrome which Bradley says has made a 'huge difference'.

Bradley says the advice and training on door-knocking has not changed. Students are taught about ethics and get real-life experience approaching people after court cases to see if they want to do a victim-led piece.

"While I totally appreciate that some would say that contacting families via social media could be seen as less intrusive, I don't agree," says Bradley. "First of all, I don't think you'd get a reply and, a lot of the time, when people are in trauma and in shock, they're not going to be checking their social media. If you wait to go through the police press office and family solicitors, you're going to get a much more watered-down, censored and sanitised version of the story."

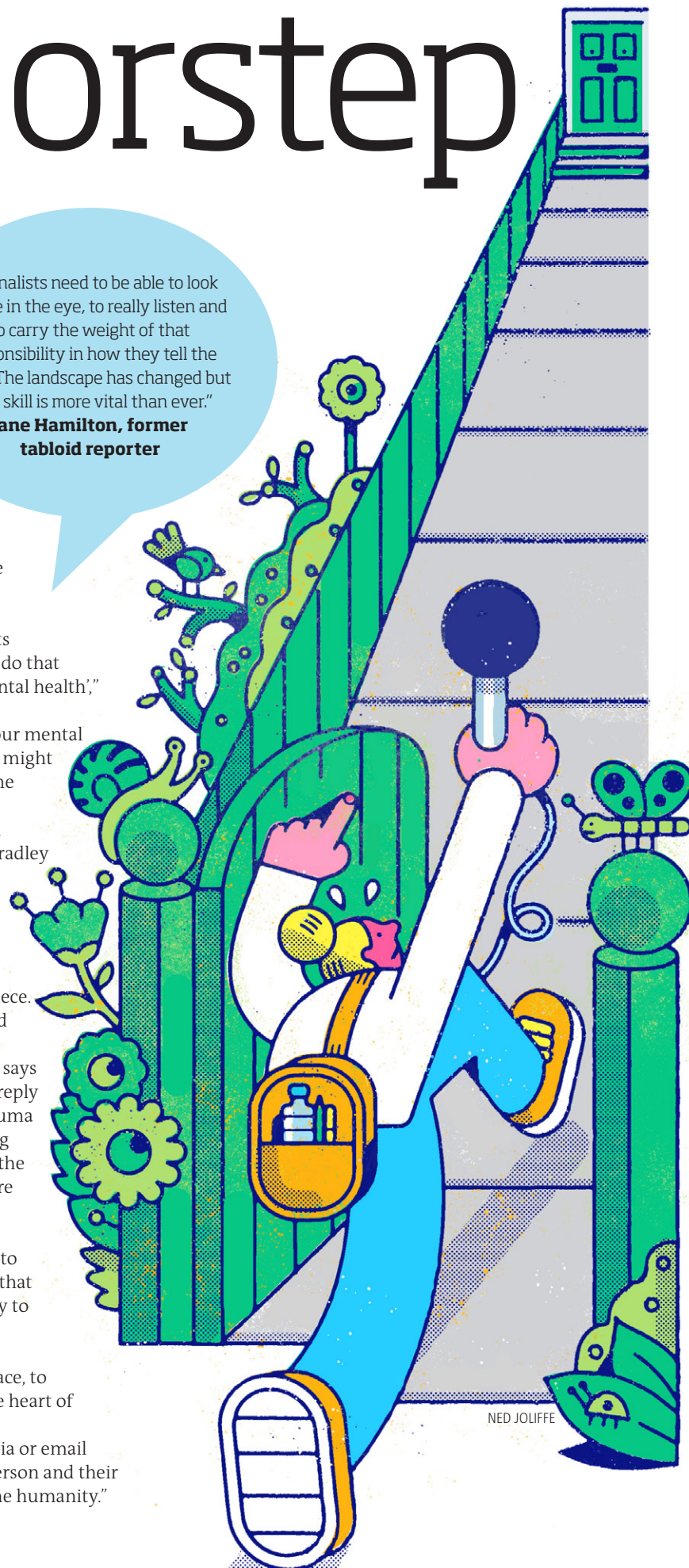
Although having a law firm or press office to field calls can help, many journalists believe that initial face-to-face contact is still the best way to build trust. And, for many, that starts on the doorstep.

"Learning how to speak to people face to face, to read them and adapt in the moment is at the heart of journalism," says Hamilton.

"Approaching families through social media or email might feel safer but, to me, it reduces that person and their grief to little more than click bait. You lose the humanity."

"Journalists need to be able to look people in the eye, to really listen and to carry the weight of that responsibility in how they tell the story. The landscape has changed but that skill is more vital than ever."

Jane Hamilton, former tabloid reporter



Human with humility

Show respect

Former tabloid reporter Jane Hamilton says: "The biggest lesson is to be human first and a journalist second. Knock with respect. Introduce yourself honestly. Never force a conversation. Listen more than you speak. Some people will slam the door, some will lash out but don't take it personally. And, when someone does choose to talk, remember they are trusting you with something precious." Hamilton's advice to younger journalists is "leave your ego on the pavement, go in with humility, and let the person guide the conversation".

Face up to fear

Freelance journalist Christine Challand urges young trainees to speak to people face to face. "It may be a cultural or confidence issue, but they have to learn to lose this fear of face-to-face communication not just in the job but in life," she says. "Even if it's 'no comment', you have a valuable line for your story."

For advice on ethics, privacy, and intrusion into grief, see www.NUJ.org.uk and www.Ipsos.com

Halcyon days or bad behaviour?



Press jollies have got rarer. What are the consequences? asks **Helen Nugent**

Desert island drinks with billionaires, moonlit husky sledding on Arctic frozen lakes and partying with Russians in designer suits brandishing Kalashnikovs. These are just a few of the press trips enjoyed by journalists in the 1990s and 2000s, a time when appearing in Private Eye's Street of Shame was an occupational hazard.

Back then, corporate hospitality was firmly entrenched in the culture, especially if you worked in business, fashion or travel journalism.

Invitations flowed freely, making it possible to breakfast at The Savoy, lunch at Restaurant Gordon Ramsay and have dinner at Mosimann's. Then, if you were still standing, you could head to Soho House for drinks.

"This was the last gasp of the old Fleet Street in all its glory: it was boozy, it was sexist, it was politically incorrect, it was not for the faint of heart but it was also often great fun," says Ruth Sunderland, columnist at the Daily Mail. "The press trips and hospitality took place in that context."

Three-hour lunches and week-long foreign trips are now consigned to the past. Attitudes to so-called 'freebies' have changed, online deadlines are constant and journalists are under pressure to feed the social media machine.

But were those freebies really so bad? For many journalists, they were an invaluable source of stories, a crucial way to forge relationships and an opportunity to build connections with people they had got to know.

Forging relationships

"My first staff job was city editor at Scotland on Sunday when I was 26," recalls James Doran, founder and principal at Pentameter Advisors, a crisis, media and communications advisory company based in New York.

"We spent much of the week navigating lunches, press trips, drinks and evening events. We'd get back to the office on

Fridays with a solid news list of exclusives."

After Scotland on Sunday, Doran moved to the business desk at The Times, where he continued to squirrel out stories through face-to-face meetings.

"The entertainment was how PR people organised relationships with journalists so that we could foster closer relationships with their clients. But we were never beholden to the PRs or their clients. Quite the opposite. The idea that you would be beholden to a PR or their client is anathema to the job."

He continues: "As a business journalist, all you needed was access – whether that was through lunches, arranged press trips or PR events. In our minds, they were there so we could get access. And, once we were inside, we could do what we wanted. The PRs knew that and that was the risk they took. We were party to that bargain because we knew, and our editors knew, that we would do our jobs properly and remain objective."

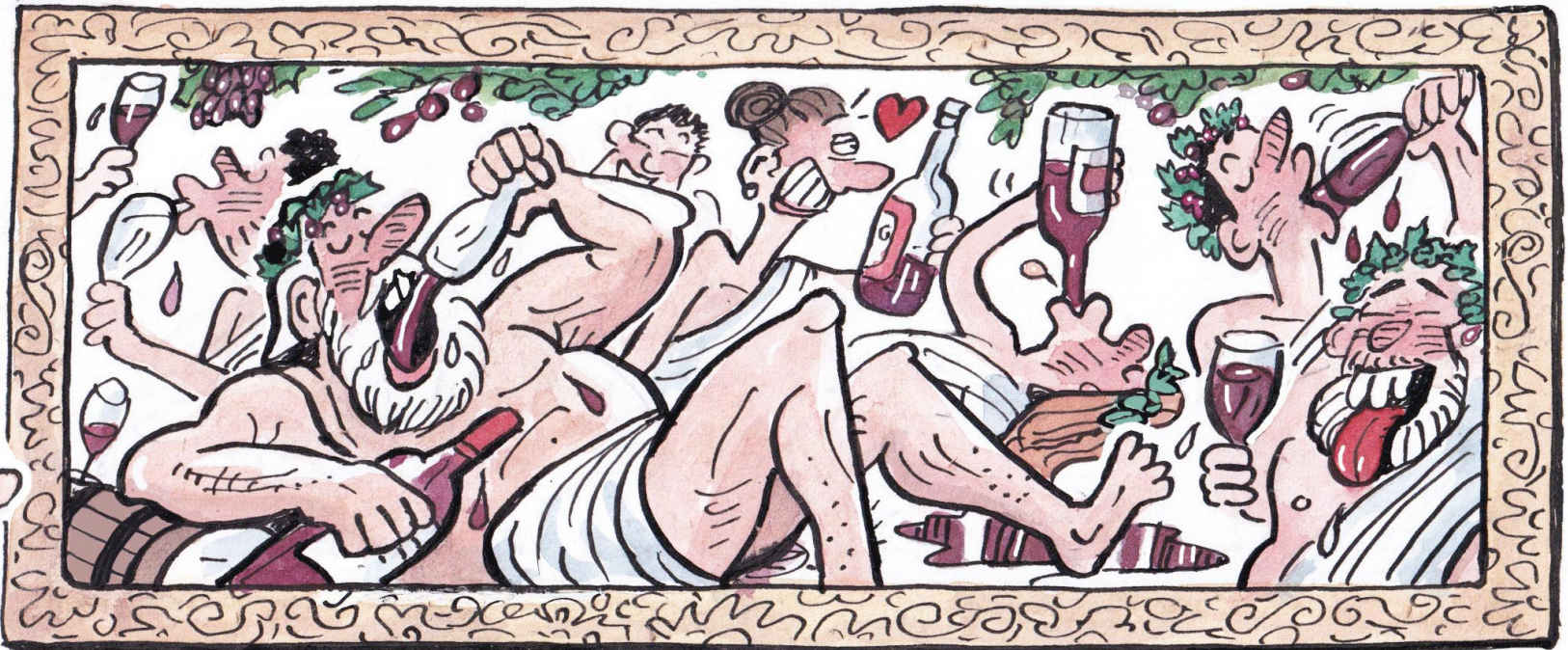
Richard Stephenson is a PR and crisis expert who has held senior communications roles at the Royal Mail and the Civil Aviation Authority. At the start of his career, he worked for City PR firms, including Citigate Dewe Rogerson. His job involved generating positivity among journalists for his clients and building trust with reporters.

He says: "It all came down to relationships. If you had them, you could use them. If you didn't, you couldn't. How you used them, and how the journo allowed you to, was up to you and them to agree the rules of engagement."

For some journalists, boozy lunches at expensive restaurants were a way of life. No one complained, provided that deadlines were met and reporters came back with stories, even if that was hours or, in some cases, days later. With the internet still in its infancy and smartphones a mere twinkle in big tech's eye, avoiding hospitality would have made it impossible to build contacts and secure scoops.

Then there was the practicality of free food and drink. For young reporters struggling to make ends meet, it was a way to survive. Meals often consisted entirely of canapés, scoffed at gallery openings and cocktail receptions, while posh city

//
Once we were inside, we could do what we wanted. The PRs knew that and that was the risk they took



FLEET STREET BACCHANALIA
by Rubens

Kipper
Williams

lunches were a welcome change from beans on toast.

It was always the case that some kinds of journalism attracted more freebies than others. With the beauty, travel and business desks having a good time of it, the newsdesk was excited if Greggs sent free sausage rolls.

Sunderland says: “The obvious concern with the largesse would be that companies were getting themselves good coverage as a result. If any of the PRs thought that, they would have soon been disabused. If companies deserved criticism, they got it regardless. Now, most journalists are too busy to take lunch and anyone coming back to the office worse for wear would be frowned upon.

“The industry is healthier, saner, more sober and no doubt better for the demise of those days. But – dare I say it – rather duller.”

Next generation

As Sunderland points out, the lack of social media in the 1990s and 2000s meant there was little fear of having indiscretions on press trips plastered all over the world. Today’s more seasoned journalists must be breathing a collective sigh of relief that camera phones are a recent invention. That said, socialising with people in the industry still helps to form contacts.

“It’s possible to forge relationships without the freebies of course,” says Sunderland. “But I do notice that a lot of younger journalists don’t seem to like talking to people on the phone, let alone meeting them.”

Fran Yeoman is head of journalism and associate professor of journalism and media literacy at Liverpool John Moores University. She believes that freebies are ‘inevitably vital’ if coverage of subjects like regional arts are to continue, given the budgets of local and independent news outlets.

“The nationals are rarely to be seen at shows and exhibitions in Liverpool, and local sites I write for don’t have the budget to

Praise and partiality: what the code says

The NUJ Code of Conduct states: “A journalist does not by way of statement, voice or appearance endorse by advertisement any commercial product or service save for the promotion of her/his own work or of the medium by which she/he is employed.”

However, that does not apply to looking at goods or services in order to inform the public. The wording in the code is to prevent journalists making paid appearances in press or TV adverts for the goods.

pay for tickets, yet coverage is really important to both the arts organisations and their audiences. But what is crucial is that trained journalists understand that this cannot compromise what they then go on to write about.”

She continues: “I have an example from this week. A PR who had offered one of our student journalists a free meal at a restaurant for a review, then followed up with another email suggesting that she can’t write about the restaurant’s unhealthy food options because of new advertising regulations. Whether or not the PR understands the difference between editorial reviews subject only to honest opinion and advertising, I wonder whether the influencers and other non-trained content creators who are also asked to review restaurants, then perhaps given similar steers, understand the media law and ethics involved.”

The conduct of influencers aside (a can of worms that requires its own double-page spread), what is considered acceptable in 2026? As a PR, Stephenson believes there is more respect for ethical boundaries on both sides of the fence.

“It’s not appropriate to go out with a corporate credit card and just get everyone drunk. However, some of my first nights out doing the job were initiations that required drinking copious amounts, keeping up with everyone else and showing up on time the next morning. That’s just not acceptable in the same way today although it no doubt still happens,” he says.

Hospitality might not be as exuberant as it was 30 years ago but it still has a place. The concern is that those vital human connections, so common at the turn of the century, are now scarce, which must surely be detrimental to newsgathering and holding power to account. Yes, the freebies of the past were sometimes gratuitous, but they served an important purpose.

Journalists learnt their trade, knew how to source a story, understood how to forge sources and always came back with exclusive content. And, if that’s not the definition of being a journalist, what is?

Journalism is an ageing profession. **Neil Merrick** finds there is a range of reasons why fewer young people are becoming journalists

Call for cub rep

When Evie Flynn applied to work at the Southwark News, the only way she could demonstrate her potential as a journalist was to show the YouTube videos she had made in her bedroom when she was younger.

She needn't have worried. Flynn was offered the post of community reporter and video journalist and, one year later, is part way through a level five diploma in journalism.

As far as the south London title was concerned, Flynn's videos showed her ability, not just to capture an audience's attention but also explain things in much the same way as a journalist. "They said they could teach me everything else," she recalls.

The problem is finding more people like Flynn. A report last year by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) showed just 12 per cent of journalists are aged under 30, compared with 23 per cent at the start of the decade.

Not only is the profession becoming older (with 39 per cent of journalists aged 50 or above) but also the prospect of a career in journalism does not seem to carry the same attractions it once did.

According to a survey carried out for the NCTJ at the start of this year, youngsters tended not to regard the news as trustworthy or representing them. They also see the job as mainly revolving around traditional reporting, rather than multimedia roles that, in some people's eyes, call for more creativity.

The NCTJ is so concerned that, in March, it launched a campaign to persuade more 14–18 year-olds to consider a career in journalism. A guide produced alongside the FT was sent to schools and colleges around the UK.

As an apprentice, Flynn spends four days per week at the Southwark News and studies for the diploma on the other day. For her, it is as exciting to be writing for the print and digital editions as making videos for social media that, thanks to TikTok and Instagram, may be seen anywhere in the world.

Video clips show life off duty, including running in the park or taking a post-work ice bath, as well as carrying out interviews in the local community.

"You can show your skills as a content creator and produce results that are highly respected," she explains. "You are not just writing for a 6pm deadline."

Flynn, aged 23, believes she was 'subconsciously' deciding she wished to be a journalist when she made YouTube videos as a teenager. At university, however, she studied history and did not get involved in student journalism. "I come from a working-class

background," she explains. "I was of the opinion that journalism wasn't for me. It seemed like an unobtainable profession."

Having moved to London in 2024, Flynn worked briefly in marketing before applying to the Southwark News. She is aware of young people who, having taken NCTJ courses, also struggle to find jobs. "The enthusiasm is there but may be the jobs are not," she adds.

Enrolments onto NCTJ courses rose by 13 per cent in 2024–25, with 1,406 students joining accredited courses. But there is a question mark over the future of courses in higher education. Last year, the government ordered universities to 'deprioritise' journalism and move funding to subjects such as engineering and nursing.

Numbers are holding up at Bournemouth University, with 90 students joining its BA degrees in multimedia journalism and multimedia sports journalism last September. The university was expecting a fall to about 60 owing to financial pressures facing some students and alternative options such as apprenticeships.

There is still a strong demand for journalism skills, says David Mascord, a part-time lecturer at the university, although some students end up in jobs that, while creative and requiring journalism skills, do not carry the title of journalist.

Tutors stress the need to learn competence in traditional areas such as media law alongside making podcasts and posting stories on social media.

"The best students really want to be journalists and go off and do wonderful things," adds Mascord.

Of course, it is possible some youngsters are put off by low pay and long working hours. One freelance in his 30s, who had more than 20 jobs before joining a NCTJ course two years ago, says he could not honestly recommend journalism because of the pay and conditions, as well as dwindling work opportunities.

To some extent, the reputation of journalists has also taken a hit following the phone-hacking scandal.

"Journalism doesn't always do a good job at selling itself," says Alan Geere, a freelance trainer who has taught on NCTJ and other courses.

For those who complete their training and find a job, there is always the question of where next?

"People in other professions can see how to make their way up the greasy pole," says Geere. "In journalism, it's often about being in the right place at the right time and knowing the right people."

But that does not mean everyone is being put off. All nine reporters across the seven print titles edited by

12%
of journalists are
aged under 30,
while 39% are
aged 50 or above



KARLA LIZETHE HUNTER

orters



Kimberley Barber, including the Hampshire Chronicle and Salisbury Journal, are aged under 30.

A valuable source of new recruits is Newsquest's young reporter scheme, which encourages would-be journalists to mould their skills while in full-time education. Earlier this year, Barber recruited a second apprentice through the scheme who was completing her A levels.

Barber also throws her doors open to students seeking work experience, including some from the University of Winchester, which focuses on broadcast journalism. "There are some young people who come in and want to do TikTok and podcasts, but there are still a lot who want to write," she says.

Students who step into Barber's Winchester office will see an old article from The Journalist extolling the virtues of shorthand carefully pinned to the wall.

"They are shocked to see our reporters doing shorthand," says Barber. "Younger people gravitate



Evie Flynn, who works on the Southwark News and sister publication the South Londoner

Social media's generation gap

IS THE reluctance of young people to become journalists linked to the way they approach the news?

During the past decade, younger people have drifted from websites to social media, where consumption of the news is "less intentional and more incidental", according to a study this year by the Reuters Institute and the University of Oxford.

People aged 18-24 generally embrace platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, although Facebook has fallen out of favour. When it comes to social and video networks,

they are more likely to rely on individual news creators to keep them informed than traditional news outlets.

It is not always clear whether these creators are journalists or influencers who are paid to promote a product or storyline.

The Reuters study found 64 per cent of those aged 18-24 consume news daily, compared with 87 per cent of over-55s. There also seems to be a disconnect between younger people's interests and what is reported by traditional media.

Nearly one-third of 18-24 year-olds (31 per cent) believe their generation is

not covered sufficiently in the news, compared with 20 per cent of those aged 35-54.

"Young people are asking how they fit into that world," says Craig Robertson, a research fellow at Oxford. "It can feel quite alienating."

The report, published in March, suggests a lack of young voices in newsrooms may be a reason why coverage is seen as failing to represent younger generations fairly.

"Newsrooms are quite cautious about experimenting too much but there is some necessary tinkering that needs to go on," adds Robertson.

towards us as we have a traditional newsroom where they can be among other more experienced journalists and learn the trade."

More young journalists are learning on the job. Izzy Lepone joined the LocalGov news website as entry-level assistant editor in 2025, roughly two years after leaving university. Editors believed that what she did not already know about local government, she would quickly learn.

Lepone's interest in journalism grew while she was at university, where she wrote for two student magazines, and she is keen to explore the full range of media.

"Writing is my passion but multimedia is the way forward," she says. "People's attention spans are changing and young people are looking for short-form content."

It remains to be seen whether the many options open to journalists are enough to attract more young people, especially those who believe news should be more focused on their generation and want to tell stories via video while being less reliant on the written word.

While this also means journalists are developing a higher profile and jostling for attention with influencers and others on social media, young reporters such as Flynn see it as the media moving with the times, perhaps helping to diversify the profession.

"There is a shift in the way that people get information about current affairs towards TikTok and Instagram," she says. "Mainstream news organisations need to jump onto those trends."

Coping with re

Linda Harrison looks at the mind hacks and techniques that can aid resilience

Freelance journalists are certainly no strangers to rejection. You come up with a brilliant idea for an article, spend ages crafting a pitch and email it to an editor.

Days or weeks later, you receive a ‘thanks, but no thanks’. Or worse, the dreaded tumbleweed...

When I first started freelancing, some days it didn’t bother me at all; I knew rejection came with the job. But there were others where I didn’t bounce back so easily. I’ve always been curious about why – and what techniques other journalists have in their back pocket to keep going.

The industry is changing so quickly. With more freelancers pitching, tighter editorial budgets and fewer editors to pitch to, what’s the secret to building resilience?

Leila Ainge is a psychologist and host of the Psychologically Speaking podcast.

“Rejection hits our sense of identity and belonging before our pride,” explains Ainge, who is a member of the British Psychological Society and a researcher specialising in imposter phenomenon, identity and resilience in freelance and independent workers.

“Journalist’ isn’t just a job title; it’s a social identity, a group you belong to, gain status from and feel recognised within,” she

adds. “This in turn might make us more avoidant as a coping mechanism. We might try to stay safe in our group identity by pitching for easy work or take fewer risks in our pitching.”

According to Ainge, when goals are framed around avoiding failure, people feel more disappointment and stress.

Don’t take it personally

Catherine Balavage Yardley is a freelance writer and author who’s written for The Sunday Times, Newsweek and Metro.

Her advice about having a pitch rejected? “Let it sting.” “It hurts to be rejected,” she says. “That is a normal feeling. After the sting, move on and don’t linger on it. There are many reasons why a pitch is rejected. Either way, don’t take it personally.”

Eve Menezes Cunningham is a freelance journalist, author and podcast host. She’s also a trauma-informed and neuro-affirming therapist, coach and senior-accredited supervisor.

She says that while dealing with rejection is a large part of being a freelance journalist, this does not make it easy.

“To be resilient and positive overall, it’s important to let yourself feel all the feelings, just not wallow or let the feelings stop you,” she advises. “Who can you talk to? It might be a friend, partner, therapist, coach or someone else who gets it. Someone who knows the pain and who gets that it’s an occupational hazard, and isn’t going to either minimise how you feel or try to talk you into a different career.

“Connecting with other freelance journalists in a friendly and supportive online group can be really important. I’m still friends with some I met starting out.”

There are many reasons a pitch doesn’t land and it’s often nothing to do with the quality of the idea



How to benefit from criticism

Criticism can be hard to take – but you can flip it to your advantage. Helen Jane Campbell (pictured) is a coach for creative people, including journalists, and runs Write The Book, a membership group for authors-to-be.

• How do you prefer to receive criticism?

Criticism can be useful when shaping careers, so be curious about how to invite it,

whether written or verbal. You might not get the choice, but knowing your communication style gives you a head start.

• Think about how you offer feedback

Getting comfortable with giving feedback might help you become more resilient about receiving it. Look for opportunities to practise and reflect on how it feels and what works for you.

• Get comfortable asking for feedback

Ask for LinkedIn testimonials. Inviting positive views can be a great way to warm up and

start seeing feedback as part of daily life.

• Change perspective

We could choose to view criticism as information, research or data, not as an attack. Ignore views that are just mean or badly delivered, accepting only input that supports growth and learning.

• Finding the value

In creative roles, we often put a lot of ourselves into our work, so negative feedback can sting and feel personal.

Taking a step back allows us to reframe what’s happening.

If someone’s taking the time to feed back and has put genuine thought into it, you might want to thank them. Or start a dialogue to learn more.

• Practise

The more we give and receive feedback, the more normal it feels. After the initial discomfort, we might see how it can help and, perhaps, make some changes. This doesn’t mean changing ourselves – just honing our expertise.



rejection

Menezes Cunningham adds that it is also important to remember that it is not personal.

“Using this information to help make you better will increase your resilience and help your career,” she says. “It’s important to honour how you feel and not try to fast forward or repress the pain. Especially if, like so many freelance writers, you’re neurodivergent. Rejection sensitivity dysphoria is one of the most painful elements of ADHD, and the pain doesn’t mean you have to give up on your writing or other dreams.”

Caroline Harrap is a freelance journalist, editor and trainer who’s written for a range of titles, including BBC Travel and The Guardian. She is also a co-director at the Society of Freelance Journalists (<https://freelancesoc.org>).

Harrap says: “As a former commissioning editor, I’ve been on both sides of the fence, and it’s worth remembering they are under pressure from all sides. Also, they are always swamped with emails.

“There could be any number of reasons why a pitch doesn’t land and these are often nothing to do with the quality of the idea. Maybe the editor has already commissioned a similar piece. Perhaps they have used up all their budget. Or they may not have even seen your email if they were deluged that day.”

You can also turn a ‘no’ into your secret weapon.

Harrap explains: “If an editor does take the time to send a rejection, that is, in fact, a win. It may not be the desired outcome but, presumably, they thought the pitch was strong enough to warrant a response. That’s a definite win in our book.

“It also offers an opportunity to find out what it is they do want. Are there any gaps they are looking to fill in the coming months? What are they not getting pitched that they wish they were? Is there anything they need an extra pair of hands for?”

Keep the momentum going

Menezes Cunningham says one of the best bits of advice she received when starting out in 2004 was that for each rejection, send two more pitches within 24 hours.

She says that includes pitching again to any editor who gives ‘even a smidgeon of encouragement’. Or you might re-angle the rejected idea for another title.

“Action is a wonderful antidote to despair but stop trying to be a robot. You’re a human,” she says. “Your sensitivity is a wonderful thing and can make life more painful sometimes. Honour that. Find ways to be gentle, caring and tender with yourself when you feel wounded. You might want to put together a rejection bag or box with reading/music/comforting fabrics and anything else you can draw on when you’re feeling down.”

Ainge agrees that momentum is key.



For every rejection, send at least one other pitch. Success is often a numbers game. Patience is essential



She says: “This is really about interrupting an avoidance or rumination pattern that we might have learned about avoiding situations where we might fail or be criticised. So taking immediate action interrupts that old avoidance pattern and teaches the brain that rejection is survivable.”

Balavage Yardley, a former actor, whose latest novel *Where the Light is Hottest* offers a peep into the acting profession, is another fan of the ‘pitch again’ technique.

“For every rejection, send at least one other pitch,” she advises. “Success is often a numbers game. Patience is essential for a successful writing career. Distract yourself with something else or a new project.”

You can turn pitching into a challenge. Ainge points out this was once popular on TikTok as ‘rejection therapy’.

She explains: “Rather than avoiding rejection, for example, set a goal to get rejected x amount of times. This works because the brain feels more motivated and less anxious when working toward opportunities – even if it is a rejection opportunity – rather than trying to avoid failure.”

And tumbleweed? There are techniques to reframe this too.

“Ghosting is so rubbish because the brain keeps replaying unfinished situations – the Zeigarnick effect,” says Ainge. “To break the loop, you can nudge or gift yourself psychological closure. For example, logging the pitch as a completed attempt after x amount of days, or setting a follow-up date so your mind can literally move on.”

Harnessing a community can also be a powerful antidote.

Harrap says: “At the Society of Freelance Journalists, we offer support and solidarity for the good times and the bad. For example, in addition to our Slack channel, we also run a weekly online coffee break. Come and join us.”

Finally, keep going – you never know when you might suddenly get a ‘yes’ to a previously unanswered pitch.

“My record is a year,” says Harrap. “And a friend of mine got a commission after two years. Never give up hope.”



Ahead of the game

From travel to exclusives – football journalists tell **Ruth Addicott** about knowing the score

In a world of restricted access, stage-managed press conferences and bans being handed out to reporters like yellow cards, how do you get four world exclusives on Cristiano Ronaldo in one day?

For Samuel Luckhurst, then chief Manchester United writer at the Manchester Evening News, it was simply a good contact.

Luckhurst, now Man Utd correspondent at The Sun, broke a number of exclusives including Ronaldo going to Man Utd instead of Man City and the appointment of Jose Mourinho.

Known as ‘the dressing room leak reporter’, he had contacts that were spot on – when Mourinho was asked for team news at a press conference, he looked at Luckhurst and said: ‘Ask him.’

Luckhurst says some of his best contacts have come via social media. It was actually his wife who alerted him to a source tweeting him credible information.

“I took notice of him and he has become and still is a very good source,” he says. “Hard-hitting opinions do have cut-through now and will get you noticed. If you’re able to echo supporters’ sentiments, supporters who have credible information will be inclined to go to you.”

Although it proved beneficial for Luckhurst, he says he

would think twice about engaging with people online now and it is not something he’d advise young reporters to do.

Aside from the football, the best part of the job is the travel.

“It’s a dream to go to these places, whether it’s Washington, Melbourne or Seville,” he says. “Then you get something like Astana in Kazakhstan thrown in – it’s eye-opening to experience a different culture somewhere so remote and somewhere you’d never go.”

One memorable trip was the journey in Turkey from his hotel in Istanbul to Galatasaray stadium. With the motorway gridlocked, Luckhurst and his colleague decided to bail out of their taxi and make their way on foot through the Turkish fans, who are known to be among the most feared in Europe.

“That was fine,” he says. “Then, when I got there, I discovered I didn’t have an accreditation pass and my name hadn’t been put down. Within 10–15 minutes, it was sorted, but that was probably the most stressed I’ve ever been trying to get to a stadium.”

Jon Colman grew up watching Carlisle United on the terraces with his dad and has been named Regional Journalist of the Year at the British Sports Journalism Awards nine times.

He has covered the club for the News & Star and The Cumberland News since 2005. Back then, he would just phone the manager or grab a player in the car park for a 10-minute chat. Now, although he still has good access, there is a weekly press conference.

Tricky talks and valuable chat

Go off track

Sports journalist Jon Colman advises preparing for a difficult press conference.

“Have a few different angles, maybe go off the

beaten track, have a bit of depth to your questions and a bit of length to your list of them,” he says.

“Everyone has some sort of story.”

Find a mentor

Colman says a good mentor can make a huge difference and credits his first sports editor, Vic Gibson, and John Walsh, who gave him

work experience at the age of 15.

“I’ll never forget how much I valued and still value them,” he says.

Say yes to a coffee

John Cross, chief football writer at The Mirror, says

reporters need to be punctual, adaptable, enthusiastic and make an impression.

He advises: “Never turn down the opportunity for a coffee or a chat – you never know where it might lead.”



“You did get to know people a bit better and, when you’re answerable to the person you’re reporting on face to face rather than a couple of stages removed, that’s maybe a different sense of responsibility,” he says.

Aside from promotions, cups and playoffs – “your emotions go haywire on days like that” – the stories that stay with him are about players who have opened up about mental health issues and abuse, and an interview he did 20 years ago with a player whose son was fighting for his life with leukaemia. He saw them again recently.

The rest of the time, he is usually stuck in traffic. “I remember going to Crawley one year – it was a six- or seven-hour trip,” he says. “I got to the ground and the kit man came out and said, ‘I think this could be in doubt here’. I had to turn around and go home.”

A personal highlight was being invited on a pre-season trip to Ibiza with the team. “It was heck of a trip – but we weren’t in a smartphone era then,” he reflects.

John Cross, chief football writer at The Mirror and chair of the Football Writers’ Association, has covered the game for more than 30 years.

He says the biggest worries are deadlines and different time zones at major tournaments. He recalls the England versus Colombia game at the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia which went to extra time and penalties: “I ended up writing three intros. You’ve got to be so tight and so on the button.”

While working on print, digital and video platforms, podcasts and broadcasting – and enjoying the mix – Cross believes the relationship with newspapers is still valued. He recalls Harry Kane after he missed the penalty in the quarter final against France at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

“Rather than stew on it, he wanted to talk and he came over to the newspaper faces that he knew,” he says. “It was a very difficult interview, but we were incredibly sympathetic, respectful and grateful that he chose to talk about it. He was in tears but, equally, it was an interview that was powerful and that is the relationship that is still strong.”

Like most journalists, Cross has had the occasional run-in,

“If it’s a tactical change or a row or something behind the scenes, the best journalists get it.”

John Cross, chief football writer, The Mirror

“Getting accreditation is difficult. You don’t want people to think ‘we won’t let her in if she’s going to say something’”

Zoë Hitchen, football photographer

“If you’re fair, balanced but opinionated, that will get you noticed.”

Samuel Luckhurst, Manchester Utd correspondent, The Sun

“It’s a dream job. I don’t think any of us should lose sight of that.”

Jon Colman, sports reporter, News & Star and The Cumberland News

including with former England manager Steve McClaren, who was so irked by one of his questions that he stormed out of a press conference.

So, what’s the art to doing a post-match interview?

Cross says he always tries to start with a positive and that it is important to think about what you are going to say and phrase questions in a respectful way, even in difficult circumstances.

“It’s about getting the answer to the question you want and, I think, sometimes people can go in and be too critical,” he says.

Cross has seen many bans being imposed on reporters over the years and experienced it himself when The Mirror was banned at Chelsea. He had to buy a ticket and watch from the stands. “It’s a horrible state of affairs when a club bans a reporter and should always be the last resort,” he says.

Although the success of the Lionesses has had a huge impact, a recent survey by Kick It Out showed a 67 per cent increase in reports of sexism and misogyny since the last season, with online abuse a major concern. Zoë Hitchen began her career as a photographer with Bury FC and suffered constant abuse from rival fans at away games.

“I got sexist chants from the crowds and I was groped by a mascot on more than one occasion,” she says.

Although she complained, she was told it was ‘banter’ and, after being followed out of the ground and threatened by a group of young men, she stopped working pitch side altogether.

Hitchen says although complaints are now taken more seriously, sexism has moved online. Hitchen believes there is a reluctance among women to speak out (she experienced a backlash herself after speaking to the BBC). She now mentors young female photographers working in football and believes a lot more could be done to improve women’s safety, including fixture times.

Hitchen’s passion for the game keeps her going to matches and she is working on a project called Girlfans with photographer Jacqui McAssey. This shines a light on the lifelong and sometimes overlooked female fans and local communities, who – just like the reporters – can’t get enough of the beautiful game.

by **Mark Fisher**

arts

Books

Unions of Our Own

Daniel Gross

Out now, Haymarket Books

The co-founder of the Starbucks Workers Union – a part of Industrial Workers of the World – provides ‘eight building blocks to change work and the world’. Drawing on personal campaign stories, Gross explains how to design your own union and win.

Footprints

Lionel Morrison and Liz Morrison

June 9, Haymarket Books

Subtitled *A Black Journalist’s Fight Against Apartheid in South Africa* and

in Exile, Footprints is the late Lionel Morrison’s recollections of being the youngest defendant in the 1956 Treason Trial, serving time in prison and fighting racism in Britain.

Exhibitions

Beneath/Beofhód

Photo Museum Ireland, Dublin

May 28–July 5

Shane Hynan explores the social, cultural and historical place of peat bogs in the Irish Midlands. Using the word Beofhód, meaning ‘beneath the sod’, he reflects everything from the ancient Celtic past to the environmental concerns of today.

Sandra George

City Arts Centre, Edinburgh

May 30–September 27

Social activism, disability rights and youth empowerment are shown from the perspective of the black female photographer and community worker who died in 2013. Photographers’ council member Matt Aslett is organising a panel discussion of working-class women photographers during the run.

Through a Mirror, Darkly

Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow

June 5–October 11

Naeem Mohaiemen’s three-channel film goes back to May 1970, when American students protesting against domestic racism and overseas wars



were met by state violence. This is part of Glasgow International, the citywide festival of visual art (June 5–21).

Design and Disability

V&A Dundee

From June 5

This is a showcase of the contributions of disabled, deaf and neurodivergent people to design, art, architecture, fashion and photography since the 1940s. Rapturously received in London, the exhibition calls for more equitable approaches to design.



Festivals

Tolpuddle Martyrs’ Festival

July 17–19, Dorset

Commemorating the farm workers in west Dorset who formed a trade union in 1834 only for their leaders to be sentenced to seven years’ transportation, the festival celebrates the achievements of the movement. NUJ member Mark Thomas is on the line-up of comedy, music and talks.

Green Gathering

Piercefield Park, near Chepstow

July 30–August 2

The off-grid festival explores low-impact living via music, arts, activism, spoken word and crafts. There is an all-day programme of talks by radical thinkers and a whole field dedicated to campaigns.

Film

Ish

July 23

Imran Perretta’s film, co-written by Enda Walsh, is about two 12-year-old boys dealing with the fall-out from a police stop-and-search in Luton. Touching on racial profiling and facial recognition technology, the coming-of-age tale was well received at the Venice Film Festival.

Music

Classical Pride

Barbican and other venues,

London

June 10–14

Conductor Oliver Zeffman’s

In depth

On the ball

NUJ life member John Keith was with Dixie Dean on the day the footballer died at Goodison Park in 1980. He was also in the company of Bill Shankly whom he had invited out for a publisher’s lunch.

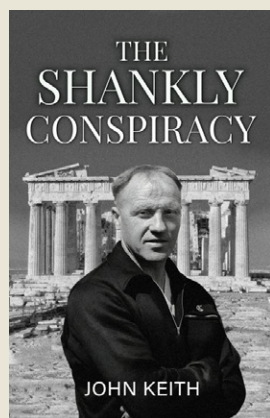
As a staff sports writer on the Daily Express, he had befriended the footballing titans and would write books about them both.

“The last thing Dixie ever saw in his life was Everton scoring a goal against Liverpool,” says Keith.

The two men continue to haunt his imagination. Last year, he wrote his first novel, *The Shankly Conspiracy*, a fictional account of the Liverpool manager’s unexplained long weekend in 1967.

“Every summer, Bill Shankly would say he was going to quit,” says Keith. “They used to call it Bill’s summer madness. But this particular time, one Saturday in March 1967, Everton knocked Liverpool out of the FA cup and Shankly wrote a letter of resignation.”

The club knew better



than to go public and, sure enough, Shankly reported for work the following Wednesday.

His absence gave Keith an excuse to move into fiction, combining the little-known anecdote with his interest in the Elgin marbles. What if a Greek campaign group had captured Shankly and used him as a bargaining tool?

“The novel took longer than my other books, but it gave me more satisfaction because your brain has to



get into the mode of fiction,” he says.

Returning to reality in January, Keith will air his new documentary, *Dixie: the Goal King*. It will mark 120 years since the birth of William Ralph Dean, who scored a record-breaking 60 goals for Everton in the 1927–28 season. With commentary from Gary Lineker, the film will premiere in New Brighton, near the Dean’s Birkenhead birthplace. Everton high scorer Graeme Sharp will join Keith for a Q&A.

“When we were filming at the Mersey ferry, every single person that passed had a story about Dixie Dean,” he says. “We took half a day to do half an hour’s shooting. He was everybody’s legend.”

The Shankly Conspiracy, John Keith, Pegasus; Dixie: the Goal King, Floral Pavilion, New Brighton, 22 January

programme ranges from violinist Charlie Lovell-Jones playing the work of LGBTQ+ composers through history to Sir Ian McKellen joining a Baroque Ball and the London Symphony Orchestra playing Michael Tilson Thomas and Maurice Ravel.

Theatre

Atlantis

Theatr Clwyd, Mold

June 6–July 4

Minerva, Chichester

July 18–August 15

A veteran of Greenham Common faces the loss of her house on the Welsh coast due to rising sea water. Can her old-school crusading spirit save the planet? Emily White's play is described as tender, urgent and darkly funny.



A Fine Idea

Arcola Theatre, London

June 10–July 4

Playwright Christine Bacon asks how eight billionaires have as much wealth as the poorest 50% on the planet. President Truman introduced 'international development' in 1950 – why has inequality only got worse?

The Cramlington Train Wreckers

On tour

July 8–12

This play by NUJ member Ed Waugh tells of 1926 General Strike, focusing on the eight Northumberland miners who derailed the Flying Scotsman. The men will also be commemorated at a Northumberland Miners' Picnic on June 13 at Woodhorn Museum.

Spotlight

250 years of the US

At a time when the world is recalibrating its relationship with the US, it might seem strange for a festival to be putting the states in the limelight. It is, however, for this very reason that Nicola Benedetti, the gifted violinist and artistic director of the Edinburgh International Festival, chose to make America central to her 2026 programme.

Marking 250 years since the Declaration of Independence, the programme looks at the good and the bad that has come out of that nation. It includes All

Rise, an epic symphonic work by Wynton Marsalis, as well as visits from the Los Angeles Philharmonic and San Francisco Ballet.

Then, turning to a shameful passage in the country's history, the Legacy Museum presents an hour-long event called The Legacy of Slavery. Reminding us of the UK's complicity in the



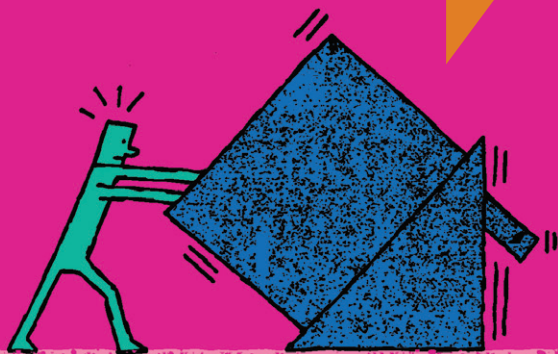
exploitation of human beings, it explores abduction, trafficking and trading, as well as the cruel philosophy that underpinned those actions.

Founded by the Equal Justice Initiative, the Alabama museum offers an immersive retelling of America's history of racial injustice.

Its first international exhibition recounts the story of millions of enslaved Africans and exposes the myth of racial hierarchy, leading to lynching, segregation and the racism of today.

The Legacy of Slavery, Playfair Library, Edinburgh, 8–30 August

Moved house or changed your email address?



Please let us know.

You can update your membership record on the website nuj.org.uk or email membership@nuj.org.uk

NUJ
NATIONAL UNION
OF
JOURNALISTS

Southwell, Tyrrell & Co.

Tax Consultants

We are an established firm based in the City, specialising in handling the taxation and accountancy affairs of freelance journalists. We have clients throughout the UK.

We can help and advise on the new changes under Making Tax Digital including helping to set up the MTD compatible software and bookkeeping.

Our services include accounts preparation, tax reporting, business start-ups and advice on possible incorporation, payroll services, management accounts, bookkeeping and more.

For further details, contact us on

T 020 7606 9787

E info@southwell-tyrrell.co.uk



Gordon Snell

Prolific author of children's books, TV scriptwriter and lifelong member of the NUJ Gordon Snell has died at the age of 93.

Gordon Thomas Frederick Snell was born in Singapore, which at the time was under British control.

As a young boy, he was taken to Australia by his mother in order to find him a boarding school.

Singapore was invaded by Japanese forces in February

1942 and Gordon and his mother both remained in Australia. Back in Singapore, Gordon's father was taken prisoner by the Japanese.

After the war, the family moved to the UK where Gordon completed his secondary education at Dauntsey's School in Wiltshire. He later attended the University of Oxford.

Gordon went on to become a freelance producer at the BBC in London. It was there he met the journalist and author Maeve Binchy

who worked in the London office of The Irish Times.

They took an adventurous hovercraft trip to Boulogne together but found their conversation so engaging that they never saw the French city.

The couple got married in 1977 and later moved to Dalky, a coastal town near Dublin. At home they wrote in the same room, enjoying a warm and loving relationship that lasted until Maeve's passing in 2012. Maeve was a well-liked and warm-hearted individual, who had become famous for her witty and well-written journalism in The Irish Times and also as the author of numerous bestselling novels.

Gordon's first book for children, *The King of Quizzical Island*, was published in 1978. His total output amounted to more than 40 books, published in Ireland, England, Australia, Canada and the US; some were adapted for BBC and RTÉ radio and TV programmes. He also wrote TV scripts for *Wanderly Wagon*, a children's show on RTÉ.

Gordon died peacefully at home on April 29. His well-attended funeral service at the historic

Victorian Chapel in Dublin's Mount Jerome cemetery and crematorium combined sadness at his passing with uplifting and amusing reminiscences of his happy life with Maeve.

Mourners included the Irish Labour Party leader Ivana Bacik, the Booker Prize-winning author Roddy Doyle and many other friends and relatives.

At the service, Sean Dromgoole, whose parents Patrick and Jenny were close friends of Gordon and Maeve, recalled Irish Times journalist Donal Foley telling colourful stories at the wedding and famous poet Adrian Mitchell reading "a beautiful poem about love that he had written just for them".

In a tribute at the ceremony, Sarah Binchy, RTÉ Radio producer and niece of Maeve, recalled how "entering Gordon and Maeve's house was like stepping onto a magic carpet: a place of laughter, adventure, endless celebration of the small things as well as the big things in life"

Deaglán de Bréadún



Jim McDowell

Belfast Branch member Jim McDowell, who has died in his 77th year after a period of ill health, was a major figure in Northern Irish journalism.

He spent more than half a century in newspapers, filing

his last column two weeks before his death.

McDowell – he was known by his surname – was best known as editor of the tabloid *Sunday World's* Northern Ireland edition.

After the murder of his colleague Martin O'Hagan, McDowell used the paper to campaign for justice for O'Hagan. He named the people he believed to be the killers and published their photographs.

That was his style. On becoming editor, he turned the *Sunday World* towards investigation. It took on criminals and paramilitaries, named names and exposed injustices.

He and his paper suffered. Journalist Jim Campbell was shot and badly injured. The offices were petrol bombed. McDowell received more than two dozen death threats. His house was fortified and he was beaten up in Belfast City Centre. At one stage, he had to leave Northern Ireland.

In 1993, which seemed one of the worst years of the Troubles, he decided a phone poll for peace was

needed. The editors of both Belfast's morning papers joined with him. More than 160,000 rang in within 24 hours – extraordinary in the time before mobiles.

McDowell was born in August 1949 in the working-class Donegall Pass area of Belfast, near the city centre, one of four children to Jim and Cherry McDowell. His father was a labourer. He was educated at the local primary school. When he passed the 11 plus, the local clergyman came to the house and berated his mother. Who did she think she was, assuming a boy from an unskilled working-class background could go to Annadale Grammar School? His mother chased the clergyman away.

McDowell's life-long love of print began in the home. His father was a greyhound-racing enthusiast who bought three daily newspapers to follow the sport. His son devoured them.

McDowell entered journalism because he rescued a young boy from a river. A journalist from the *Newsletter* interviewed him. He

said his ambition was to be a journalist on that paper. The editor interviewed then hired him.

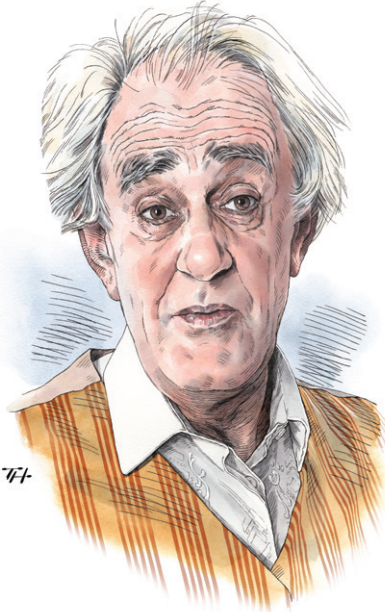
After some years on the *Newsletter*, McDowell became editor of its Sunday title, the *Sunday News*.

He was supportive of colleagues and principled. In the early 1980s, journalists on *Newsletter* and *Sunday News* walked out. As editor, McDowell chose integrity over career and struck with his colleagues. He lost his editor's job. For a time, he and two friends were the Ulster Press Agency.

Big in build and personality, McDowell enthusiastically lived life to the full. In his earlier years, he was a useful rugby player. In his 30s, he ran a marathon in less than three hours.

At his funeral service, a friend summed McDowell up with lines from *Flower of Scotland* – 'When will we see your like again'. His wife, Lindy, daughter Faye and sons Jamie and Micah survive him.

Anton McCabe



Missing Mandelson and a load of other scoops

There's a story to be found wherever you go. So why do I overlook so many? asks **Chris Proctor**

Early this year, I was on a train from Leeds with my friend David Felton. David is a news man through and through – one of those who trod the path from local to national papers, and his career culminated with the role of news editor. Our different outlooks – I was more PR and features – became vividly apparent as we chatted.

I was moaning about how lazy it was for early morning news programmes – especially the Today programme – to constantly call in completely irrelevant has-beens to comment on the day's events.

"They might as well call it Yesterday," I grumbled.

It seemed that most mornings of the Corbyn era featured some footnote from the Blair government bleating on about how different it was in their day, which is frankly unsurprising given that their tenure was in a pre-decimal age. You had to get out a history book to find out who they were, even if they had been anybody then.

"What are they on the news for?" I demanded.

David raised his eyebrows. It was obvious to him. They were engaged to air the criticisms that current politicians would like to make but the timing was inconvenient. No one wants to be seen to be disloyal to the leader: much better to get someone else to do it for them. Everyone from Jack Straw to Neil Kinnock was cabled in to say what they would do if they were in government, rather overlooking the fact that, even when they were, they didn't.

"And last Sunday," I complained, "they had Mandelson on the Sunday telly show. Mandelson! I mean, if you want a definition of 'yesterday's man' you need look no further. He's been sacked more often than a football manager, and now added US ambassador to his list of places he's been given the poke. He's a nobody. Why doesn't anyone want to interview him?"

David's eyes widened. "Because he's news," he told me.

In David's newshound approach to life, you couldn't go wrong with Mandy.

"He'll either make himself look shifty, make someone else look awful or come up with some terrible indiscretion," he told me. "I'd have him on every day."

"Nonsense," I told him. "He's chip paper. You'll never hear of Mandelson again."

In this matter I concede I was not entirely accurate. The attentive will have noticed his name has cropped up in the ensuing six months.

Mind you, I should have reconciled myself to the fact that my mind didn't fit a news desk some years ago when I was in Brighton at a TUC conference. I'd been working like a fish and felt in need of a break and a breath of fresh air so, after lunch, I skipped the guest speaker in favour of pottering off to the pier with a lady friend. I hasten to add that this was a long-standing relationship, not someone I had met between motions. I try to steer clear of clichés in life as in writing, avoiding them like the plague.

The pier was pleasantly empty; even the dodgems were queue free. We took in the sea air and the waltzers before ambling back toward the centre – where we were faced with a deluge of

delegates scuttling away from the hall and marching towards us like an invasion force. Even I realised something was up.

I had missed the prime minister announcing that the United States had been attacked more shockingly than at any time in its history. A world-changing atrocity had taken place and I was the last person in the county to find out. I was licking an ice-cream while the Twin Towers collapsed.

Rather less dramatically, I was once invited to a press gallery lunch which was addressed by the chief of the defence staff, Baron Stirrup, who I regretted, as an airman, had no cavalry background.

All I recall of his address was his frightening clipped precision, and the way he dealt with questions. He snapped out answers like they'd been posted in advance and he'd practised them in front of a mirror for a month.

I was fascinated, but also thought it was easier to find an unfinished bottle of wine than a line of copy. Not so the correspondents, who were buzzing. I'd missed all kinds of references to budget cuts, service pensions and military housing. I'd heard the mentions but missed the stories. I consoled myself by thinking it wasn't my field. But then, did I have a field? If only I'd listened at the National Trust open day.

All this is rather disturbing. It sounds like the CV of a journalist who is desperate not to be employed.

But it all reminds me of advice I was given when I ushered myself into the business of writing: there is a story everywhere you go: and there is an interesting tale to be told by everyone you meet. I still believe that implicitly. But it does worry me how many corking scoops I've missed on the road.

//
A world-changing atrocity had taken place and I was the last to find out. I was licking an ice-cream while the Twin Towers collapsed
//

REASONS TO JOIN



Ending the Gender Pay Gap

A Press Gazette analysis showed that 91 per cent of UK media companies paid men more than women and 85 per cent of men got better bonuses and it's a similar picture in Ireland. One magazine group's gap was almost 37 per cent. Opaque, unfair pay structures and unlawful sex discrimination are contributing factors. The NUJ negotiates on transparent pay structures, progressive work-life balance policies, better maternity and paternity deals and fair recruitment procedures.



Be Part of a Collective Voice

As a member of the NUJ you are part of a united force championing the rights of media workers and defending attacks on press freedom. Successful workplaces are those where the management and workers share the same aims and talk to each other. Being a member of the NUJ means giving yourself and colleagues a real voice at work.

Respect at Work

The NUJ challenges work cultures which lead to bullying and harassment. It will represent you if you experience this behaviour. It uses its collective voice industry-wide to argue that media workers are treated with respect. We promote workplaces where workers and managers are constructive with their criticism during the creative process, and the union publishes codes of conduct and dignity at work policies.



Are you keeping good company?

Join the NUJ today at
nuj.org.uk/join

You can contact the NUJ at:
info@nuj.org.uk
or for membership queries at:
membership@nuj.org.uk

Tel: 020 7843 3700
Follow: @nujofficial on Twitter

NUJ
NATIONAL UNION
OF
JOURNALISTS

www.nuj.org.uk