

the Journalist

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On the frontline

40 years on
reporting the miners' strike

Contents



It's hard now to imagine the scale and the importance of the miners' strike of 40 years ago. It was an immense clash of industrial and political ideologies and a defining, long fought battle. The union movement suffered a painful blow and Margaret Thatcher moved on to privatise the power industries, something that may not have been possible with a strong National Union of Mineworkers.

Barrie Clement was part of The Times' labour reporting team and in our cover feature he recalls how it was to cover such a huge, moving story.

Taj Ali is one of the new generation of labour correspondents in his work as co-editor of Tribune. He takes our NUJ and Me Q&A.

Denis MacShane is also looking back to when he was in the Blair government in his diaries and he also bemoans the lack of other first-hand accounts.

Another way for journalists to tell stories is as part of internal communications for companies and organisations. Linda Harrison looks at an area of work she found more engaging than she anticipated.

And who will be telling the stories in the future? Raymond Snoddy considers the future for AI after the FT's latest move into the area. It could be used to free journalists to do more investigative work, or it could be employed to replace them. The FT is stressing the importance of human journalism – something we can all agree on.

I hope you enjoy this edition and as ever please let us know via our feedback pages and on X.

Christine

Christine Buckley
Editor
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Cover picture
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Police face more pressure over surveillance of journalists

THE UNION has welcomed a call by the Northern Ireland Policing Board for a meeting with the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) following revelations at the Investigatory Powers Tribunal in London about the police spying on journalists in Northern Ireland.

A policing board spokesperson said: "Following discussions around yesterday's Investigatory Powers Tribunal, the chair and the vice-chair of the board have requested an urgent meeting with the chief constable to seek further clarification and assurance around whether surveillance powers have been used lawfully, proportionately and appropriately in the past.

"At the June board meeting, the board's human rights advisor John Wadham will also provide members with an assessment on whether authorisation policies and procedures were correctly adhered to."

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, said:



"We believe a full board meeting should be held and that the Chief Constable should publicly clarify what precisely the PSNI has been up to. There can be no further hiding behind procedures or secret investigatory hearings. It is encouraging that the officers of the board are taking yesterday's revelations seriously and it is right that they should seek a meeting, but this is a first step."

At the Investigatory Powers Tribunal hearing in London, it emerged that police accessed phone bills of the unnamed journalists and cross-referenced them with police telephone numbers every six months. The purpose of the surveillance was to discover the reporters' sources. The documents released by Durham Constabulary show that the operation started in 2007/08 after the PSNI suspected officers were leaking information to journalists and was still in place at the end of 2017.

The names of the journalists were redacted in documents released during a hearing into action taken by NUJ member Barry McCaffrey and Trevor Birney.

inbrief...

GAZA PUSHES GLOBAL MEDIA DEATH TOLL

Last year was among the deadliest for journalists since the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) started compiling figures over three decades ago. It said that 129 media professionals were killed and 70 per cent of the deaths occurred in the war in Gaza. IFJ general secretary Anthony Bellanger said: "While we always remind journalists that no story is worth their life, there are situations where they are deliberately targeted to cover up stories."

ISRAEL CLOSING DOWN AL JAZEERA

The Israeli government closed Al Jazeera in May, raiding its offices, and blocking its broadcasts and websites. The action follows the Israeli government's repeated threats to close the Qatari broadcaster on the grounds of alleged bias against Israel.

GUARDIAN SEEKS VOLUNTARY JOB CUTS

The Guardian has outlined plans for a small number of voluntary redundancies in its editorial staff. Katherine Viner, editor-in-chief, emailed staff in May saying that although the group was in a stronger position than it was during the last downturn, there needed to be some difficult decisions across the business.

Polish journalists may strike

JOURNALISTS at Bauer, the German publisher's subsidiary in Poland, are threatening strike action over a pay demand. It is the first official dispute in the media industry since the fall of communism in 1989, writes Krzysztof Bobinski in Warsaw.

Anita Zuchora, leader of the action at Bauer, said: "We have gone through three rounds of negotiations with management, but they are not listening to our demand

for a 1000 zloty (£200) a month wage rise for all the employees. We are determined to strike if we don't get results."

If the dispute goes to a strike then this would be the first in a media company in Poland in a sector where unions are weak and organised on company lines.

But Zuchora, who is a member of the Inicjatywa Pracownicza (Workers'

Initiative) union looks forward to the day when the unions in the various companies will start to work more closely together to strengthen journalists' bargaining power.

For the moment the dispute which started last March, is embroiled in a process which includes mediation after the failure of the pay talks followed by a referendum of the employees on strike action. This will only be valid if half of the 500 strong work

force take part. If the journalists agree to take action only then can a legal strike be called.

Ironically, this cumbersome procedure was enacted in the 1990s after the government, which was backed by the Solidarity union came to power. The law was designed to make the organisation of official strikes as difficult as possible.

Bauer is Poland's largest print publisher and it also owns the broadcaster RMF-FM.

Young Orwell/NUJ awards winners

DAN PALING, a BA English Literature graduate and future Oxford master's student, and Matthew Taylor, a Pembroke College, Cambridge undergraduate were the winners of The Orwell Society young journalist's awards.

The awards, held in conjunction with the NUJ, of which George Orwell was a member, aims to recognise the writing of promising students of journalism or working journalists aged 30 or below in two categories – political opinion and arts review.

Entries were judged by a panel including George Orwell's son Richard Blair.

Dan Paling won the arts review award with his essay Natural

Beauty in The Zone of Interest, a treatise of a film adapted from Martin Amis' novel The Zone of Interest.

In the political column category Matthew Taylor won for his essay, A Life No Longer Simple, Memories No Longer Mine.

Dr Jaron Murphy, the chair of the judging panel, commented: "What was notable about this year's entries was the close attention to forms of toxicity online, including some of the negative impacts of the rise of AI, as well as to kinds of inequality in society such as housing and education. Fittingly, up-and-coming journalists are deeply concerned about how the younger generations in the UK are being adversely affected by such issues."



Dan Paling, Richard Blair and Matthew Taylor

Awards celebrate and promote the next generation of journalists

THE STUDENT PUBLICATION ASSOCIATION (SPA) crowned the University of Edinburgh's *The Student* as best publication in its annual awards, *Rory Buccheri* writes.

The event was the charity's largest yet, with more than 250 delegates from student publications across the UK and Ireland, 60 speakers and panellists, and 14 sponsors.

The awards day also seeks to provide student journalists with training, help them find careers in the media and enable them to network with other journalists both new and established.

Students attended talks with themes ranging from health reporting to freelancing, travel writing and polling in an election year as well as one-to-one workshops including CV and copy clinics, and had the chance to get a professional byline picture.

Matthew Stoddard, student journalist at *Concrete* at the University of East Anglia, said "the best part of the conference is meeting different people from different locations and sharing ideas".

He added: "My favourite panel was 'Turning gossip into news'. The panellists were honest about their experiences, and described how interactions they have with people lead to great news stories."

Lucy Dyer, category judge and editorial development manager at News Associates, said the winner of the best publication 'really stood out' for its "dedication to producing hyperlocal news which directly impacts students across all sections of the publication" and for "the quality of their investigative journalism, with some of their investigations leading to serious, tangible change to many students' lives".

The awards were sponsored by a range of industry bodies, including News Associates, Newsworks, the University of Cardiff, PA Training, Bloomberg, News UK, ABSW, Savanta, Women in Journalism, William Reed and the University of Sheffield.

GAVIN CRILLY PHOTOGRAPHY



More than 1,200 entries were submitted, making it the UK's biggest journalism awards.

Nominations were judged by a diverse range of editors and journalists from organisations including the BBC, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, Sky News, The Guardian, The Times, OK Magazine and openDemocracy.

Aubrey Allegretti, SPA trustee, said: "Student journalists have produced some phenomenal work this year. They conducted important investigative work, and kept their audiences informed and entertained in equal measure. Despite the threat of funding cuts, student journalists are still the lifeblood of their campus communities."

The next SPA chair, University of Cork student Jack Walsh, said: "The importance of student journalism cannot be overstated. Ensuring the longer-term financial stability of the charity is a top priority. Tied with it, many members face increased pressures with regards to their financing, so I want to look into how best the SPA can help support those publications who face cutbacks and an uncertain future."



My favourite was 'Turning gossip into news'. The panellists described how interactions they have with people lead to great news stories

Matthew Stoddard
Student journalist,
Concrete

Steve Bell

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The Fearless

News provider of the time period

Algorithm Bot, editor-in-chief

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Community Guidelines

- # We oppose genocide and related unpleasantness
- # We spare the feelings of victims and perpetrators
- # Always show respect and balance
- # Never use intemperate language or imagery
- # All difficult stories or jokes must be cleared by the editorial committee the day before
- # All content providers must have their continued corporeal existence confirmed by two independent sources

STV dispute ends as better pay and workload review agreed

JOURNALISTS at STV News accepted an improved pay offer, ending the industrial dispute at the broadcaster that resulted in news programmes being taken off air and almost all website news stopped.

NUJ members voted 82 per cent in favour of a deal that will see a consolidated increase backdated to January, a bonus of between £300 and £500 to all staff in July, and a possible extra bonus if the company hits 2024 profit targets. The deal represents increases of up to 6.7 per cent.

Following negotiations with the NUJ, the company will also increase the pay of journalists on mid-range salary grades in line with market rates. It has also committed to look at potential pay anomalies.

STV has agreed to increase maternity, adoption and shared parental leave pay across the business.

It also said it would carry out an exercise with the union on workload concerns and provide an inclusive, safe and mentally healthy working environment.

The breakthrough came after a second day of strike action on the day of STV's shareholder meeting on Wednesday May 1, which was attended by representatives of the NUJ and the Scottish Trades Union Congress.

Nick McGowan-Lowe, NUJ national organiser for Scotland, said: "This has been a slow and difficult dispute. Our members at STV have secured an improved



settlement not just for the newsroom but also for their other 400 colleagues across STV.

"None of this would have been achieved without the solidarity, determination and professionalism of STV's journalists – who deserve fair pay and respect within the company as the public face of STV's brand – and

the leadership of our workplace reps."

The first one-day strike saw newsroom staff on picket lines in Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow, and a demonstration at the Scottish Parliament that attracted cross-party support.

Management was forced to pull all on-air news shows, including the flagship 6pm programme.

inbrief...

READER'S DIGEST MAGAZINE CLOSES

Reader's Digest magazine, the 86-year-old title popular in doctors' waiting rooms, has closed in the UK. Its editor-in-chief Eva Mackevic announced the move on LinkedIn saying that it could not withstand the financial pressures of the magazine publishing landscape.

NEW EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AT THE MIRROR

Caroline Waterston has become the editor-in-chief of the Mirror after taking on the role on an interim basis following the departure of Alison Phillips. Waterston is a former deputy editor of the Sunday Mirror and Sunday People and deputy editor-in-chief of the Express and Star titles. She has worked for Trinity Mirror then Reach since 2001.

YEMENI UNION LEADER INJURED

Mohammed Shubaita, the secretary general of the Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate and assistant secretary general of the Federation of Arab Journalists, was injured in a shooting that killed his cousin. A gunman stopped the car in which they and another relative were travelling in the capital Sanaa.

FT links up with AI giant

THE FINANCIAL TIMES has become the first big UK news organisation to strike a content licensing deal with ChatGPT owner OpenAI.

The FT was already a customer of ChatGPT Enterprise, providing access for all employees so they could become experienced in the technology and achieve creativity and productivity gains.

Under the new arrangement, ChatGPT users will be able to select attributed summaries, quotes and links to FT journalism.

Other news groups that have signed deals with OpenAI include Associated Press, Le Monde, El Pais, Bild, and Politico.

John Ridding, FT Group chief

executive, said the FT would gain "insights into how content is surfaced through AI". He said: "The FT is committed to human journalism – as produced by our unrivalled newsroom – and this agreement will broaden the reach of that work, while deepening our understanding of reader demands and interests."

Raymond Snoddy, Page 9

Union history in the making

THE NUJ chapel at the FT is to chart a history of union activism at the paper after past NUJ officials recently got together with the present chapel.

The idea for a chapel history was sparked after past reps were invited to the launch of a dedicated FT chapel website. The website will be accessible only to chapel members and will share news and put them in touch with the relevant rep from a comprehensive list of people with special responsibilities.

Alan Pike, former father of chapel, along with Tom Lynch and Andrew Bolger, who had both travelled from Scotland, and Sheila Jones, who had come down from Liverpool,

told Steve Bird (pictured centre), the current chapel head, and other colleagues about their past victories and frustrations. In the 1980s, the chapel scored wins on sabbaticals and maternity and paternity leave and, of course, pay. In the early 1990s, members resisted attempts by the management to divide journalists into print and digital for bargaining purposes.

Reps in the current chapel, which has about 300 members, said it can sometimes be hard to get young journalists to join the NUJ because they say working conditions are already so good. The history project will aim to show those journalists why that is the case.



NUJ campaigns win backing at the Scottish TUC Congress

SCOTLAND'S union movement gave unanimous support for local media initiatives, Freedom of Information reforms and a fair deal for workers affected by artificial intelligence, *Conrad Landin* writes.

At the Scottish TUC (STUC) congress in Dundee in April, NUJ delegates also spoke out on the plight of Palestinian journalists and regional inequalities at Channel 4.

Congress resolved to support "positive reforms to Scotland's Freedom of Information regime". Another NUJ motion praised the work of the Scottish Beacon, a new network of local and hyperlocal news outlets.

A composite motion on artificial intelligence (AI) urged that lessons be learned from the 'landmark deal' secured by the Writers' Guild of America after its strike last year, which NUJ delegation leader Simon Barrow said "was specifically designed to protect members from the impact of AI in generating texts, scripts and images".

He argued that AI was 'fundamentally different' from previous technological changes, saying: "We're going to require new forms of common ownership and participation in order to channel this in the right direction, particularly for generative technology – that is, AI which can theoretically replicate itself outwith our control."

Speaking on behalf of the STUC black workers' conference, NUJ national executive member Layla-Roxanne Hill seconded a motion supporting the Justice for Sheku Bayoh campaign. Bayoh died in police custody in Kirkcaldy in 2015. A public inquiry to examine the events that led to his death, the investigation and whether race was a factor is ongoing.

CONRAD LANDIN



Hill said: "It's been nine years since Sheku Bayoh died at the age of 31, and his family have not stopped fighting for justice. They relive Sheku's violent and sudden death at every hearing of the public inquiry."

An emergency motion proposed by Prospect noted Ofcom had 'conceded' Channel 4's claim that production quotas for the UK's nations and regions were higher than necessary and warned this could have negative effects on freelances working on scripted and unscripted content in Scotland.

Supporting the motion on behalf of the NUJ, Barrow said: "Public service broadcasting is the bedrock of Scotland's creative economy."

NUJ delegate Jim Symons raised the death toll of Palestinian journalists and the importance of their work while foreign press were banned from entering Gaza. An STUC general council statement said journalists had been "deliberately targeted".



Public service broadcasting is the bedrock of Scotland's creative economy

Simon Barrow
NUJ delegation leader

RTÉ members ask others to join Gaza silence

WORKERS at RTÉ in Dublin are holding monthly minute silences in solidarity with journalists killed in Gaza, and to defend the right of journalists under the Geneva convention to report freely.

They began in February when the International Federation of Journalists called a silence. NUJ members at RTÉ decided to carry on at noon on the last last Monday of every month

for as long as killings continue.

Oonagh Smyth, RTÉ Current Affairs chapel chair, said: "The number of journalists killed in Gaza had already by early December

surpassed the numbers killed in any other war. But we also want to highlight the impact on media freedom because Western journalists are not allowed to report safely from Gaza."

Emma O'Kelly, Dublin Broadcasting branch chair, said: "We feel this action is the least we can do and we urge other NUJ members to join us at the same time and post photos on social media with the hashtag #Support PalestinianJournalists"



Duo buy local paper they work for

SAM HAWCROFT, editor of the Holderness and East Riding Gazette and a long-standing NUJ member, has taken over her newspaper along with sales director Zoe Broom. The two bought the Yorkshire title from the publishers for the last 45 years, Brian and Judy Adcock.

Brian said: "It is sad to leave but I can assure all our readers that the Gazette is in good hands."

Hawcroft said: "We're going to give this our best shot. Times are most certainly hard and it won't be easy, but we're passionate about print

and its place in the modern world, as larger newspaper groups appear to be disconnecting from their communities and the internet is ever more a bin fire of hate and misinformation."

The new owners have already introduced changes, including a digital edition, an online business directory and a website shop selling books by local authors.

Hawcroft added that the paper remained proudly independent and was now entirely locally run.

Case against photographer raises 'serious questions', says judge

THE UNION'S Welsh Executive is seeking talks with South Wales Police and the three other police forces in Wales after a case against a freelance photographer was dropped in court, *David Nicholson writes*.

The move comes after Dimitris Legakis (pictured) was arrested and charged while working at the scene of a murder on Sketty Lane in Swansea in September last year.



The freelance photographer was covering a car fire set by David Clarke, who beat his 77-year-old wife Helen with a hammer before dousing her in petrol and setting her alight.

Police charged Legakis with assaulting an emergency worker, obstructing or resisting a police officer and a public order offence of using threatening or abusive words or behaviour.

The Crown Prosecution Service dropped the public order allegation and Legakis pleaded not guilty to the assault charge. The day before the trial started at Swansea Crown Court, the prosecution told the court that no evidence would be offered. Asked by Judge Geraint Walters why the decision to offer no evidence had been taken on the eve of the trial, the barrister said

the original statement taken from the police officer did not 'coincide' with what he later said in his victim personal statement.

The judge said it seemed to him "the high point of the prosecution case" was that somebody employed as a photographer was taking pictures and a police officer "took offence" to it.

Judge Walters called the case "disturbing", saying it "raised serious questions" and that something had "very seriously gone wrong."

He recorded a formal not guilty verdict on the charge of assaulting an emergency worker.

NUJ Wales organiser Pamela Morton said: "It is extremely concerning to read the details of this case, especially the judge calling the case 'disturbing'. Over the past 20 years, the union has worked with the police and National Police Chiefs' Council so that officers are clear that members of the media have a duty to report many of the incidents that the police deal with.

In March, the NUJ won an apology and out-of-court settlements for two photographers and a video journalist who were detained while covering a Black Lives Matter protest in London in 2014.

inbrief...

LAMMY QUITS LBC SUNDAY SHOW

Labour MP David Lammy has left his weekend show on LBC ahead of the general election. He has been replaced on the Sunday morning show by Lewis Goodall, the former Newsnight policy editor who is now a regular host on The News Agents podcast from LBC's owner Global.

EMMETT GOES TO ITV AFTER NEWSNIGHT

Becky Emmett, Newsnight's deputy editor, is to join ITV News, amid the BBC's overhaul of the programme which is expected to see around half of the jobs on it cut. Emmett, who has been Newsnight's co-acting editor with deputy Rosie Seed, will be head of ITVX for ITV News. She will oversee the news output on the channel's streaming service, involving its editorial strategy, live streaming of major events and commissioning original content. She replaces Chris Achilleos.

BRISTOL 24/7 DEPUTY MOVES TO SUSTRANS

Ellie Pipe, deputy editor of Bristol 24/7, is leaving to join walking and cycling charity Sustrans, which is based in Bristol, as a media officer. She has been at Bristol 24/7 for seven years, during which she was also business editor and news editor.

Progress made at PA Media

THE UNION'S long-running campaign for recognition at PA Media has taken another step forward.

The union's application to negotiate on issues such as pay moved to the next stage following a ruling by the

Central Arbitration Committee (CAC), the independent body responsible for determining union recognition.

It followed a meeting in March with the CAC's panel about who is able to become

part of the overall PA bargaining unit.

The CAC has now decided that 'the appropriate bargaining unit covers editorial roles which ultimately report to the editor in chief..

Now the bargaining unit has been decided, the next step is for the CAC's panel to make some checks on the application – for example confirming that 10 per cent of the bargaining unit are NUJ members – as the unit's composition is different from that initially proposed.

Springer to vote on strike action

STAFF working on the Nature group of science journals are balloting for industrial action in a dispute over pay. The group of magazines, which includes the world's leading science magazine Nature, is owned by the international publisher Springer Nature.

Negotiations between the union and the publisher broke down in



April despite the intervention of the conciliation service ACAS. The UK staff – which includes nearly 400 academic editors, journalists, art editors and production staff – have rejected an offer of a 5.8 per cent increase.

The ballot opened in mid-May and the union was encouraging journalists show strong opposition to the offer and vote yes to taking strike action and action short of a strike.

Assange given leave to appeal extradition

The High Court granted Julian Assange's request for leave to appeal extradition to the United States. In March he was granted provisional leave to appeal as judges sought assurances from US officials including that he could rely on the first amendment and would not receive the death penalty. In their ruling on May 20, Dame Victoria Sharp and Mr Justice Johnson determined there is an arguable case that Assange could be discriminated against, because an American prosecutor has confirmed that the first amendment might not cover foreigners in matters of national security.

Why I run a website that doesn't make any money

Doing journalism for its own sake has many positives, says **Helen Nugent**

When I set up a website called Northern Soul in 2013, I didn't really know what I was doing. I had a desire to read intelligent, well-crafted journalism about the north of England, and I wanted to see images that did the region's urban and rural landscapes justice – but that was about it.

I'd not long returned home to Manchester after 14 years in London, 10 of which were spent at The Times, and was appalled by the lamentable quality, breadth and depth of cultural journalism about the north and, from my new vantage point, the London-centric nature of journalism that routinely ignored northern stories unless they involved brutal crimes.

Writing in The Guardian shortly after the launch of Northern Soul (initially a website celebrating all northern cultural things) I set out my stall: "Northern Soul is not a listings site or a money-making machine." While the former was certainly true, I had no idea that the latter would also prove to be entirely accurate.

Which begs the question: why, after a decade, do I continue to run a website that makes no money? I'm not rich, I don't have a partner's income to rely on and there's no fat inheritance ahead. But I keep on keeping on, rain or shine (mostly rain, this is the north after all).

I suppose the main reason is simple: it makes me happy. But there is much more to it than that. There's the pure joy of beautiful writing about people, places and initiatives in the north, not to mention the community of the Northern Soul team, among them journalists, playwrights, novelists, photographers and artists. Friendships

have been forged, a multitude of organisations have been supported, and undergraduates have been mentored. Many Northern Soul writers, me included, have been offered paid work as a result of the website. There's even been a Northern Soul wedding.

While we're only small fry, we have established a formidable reputation as a repository of quality journalism. As such, our access to household names and international luminaries is pretty impressive.

Over the past 10 years, we've interviewed the great and the good, from Daniel Radcliffe, Don McLean, Billy Bragg and Sinéad O'Connor to Margaret Drabble, Maxine Peake, Lee Child and, um, Cookie Monster.

Nevertheless, it has been and continues to be a slog. My day job as a freelance journalist hovers up most of the daylight hours, so my time as editor of Northern Soul is usually consigned to evenings and weekends.

I was appalled by the lamentable quality, breadth and depth of cultural journalism about the north

Some days, I finish my paying work around 5pm or 6pm, take a short breather, then embark on a further five or six hours on my labour of love.

It's not a very northern thing to admit, but I'm proud of my achievement. In 2013, all I had was a belief that there was an appetite for well-written articles about the north of England, and an IT pal willing to help out. Today, I'm in charge of a 30-strong team, all volunteers, whose expertise ranges from national and local journalism to, among other things, film, opera, music, theatre, art, literature, food, sport, gardening, business, entrepreneurship and mental health. Whereas once Northern Soul was solely a cultural online publication, today it encompasses so much more.

I suppose I think of the site as a lifestyle magazine inasmuch as 'life' is a ridiculously broad term. Yes, Northern Soul has a northern slant, but national publications have a London slant, don't they? That doesn't stop people from all over the world reading them online. I believe that quality writing, no matter the source, has a global audience.

Over the years, the website has changed, as has the media landscape. Regional coverage in national papers will never fully recover and we have the widespread collapse of local press. In 2024, I'm less worried about the nationals' coverage of the north, which is a lot better than it was 10 years ago.

So, where is my northern website in all of this? Well, as the scope of respected local publications has waned, so the influence of, well, anyone who owns a smartphone has skyrocketed. Now more than ever, we need proper journalism with proper standards.

I want Northern Soul to continue, even if, as is likely, it never makes any money. To paraphrase a bohemian slogan, what's wrong with journalism for journalism's sake?



Keeping the humans in control and in work



The use of AI in journalism is becoming clearer, says **Raymond Snoddy**

There was a small article on artificial intelligence in the Financial Times recently, so modest that you might have missed it, yet it was a trailblazer with long-term significance.

It marked the coming together of two very different species – the newspaper group and OpenAI, the revolutionary artificial intelligence group, in an agreement to enhance ChatGPT, which burst into our consciousness less than 18 months ago.

It is already on its way to having 200 million users worldwide and its implications spread ever outwards, not least for the media and journalism.

The deal is important on two fronts – all FT employees will have access to the rapidly evolving ChatGPT tools and will be able to benefit from ‘the creativity and productivity gains’ made possible by OpenAI.

The FT will be paid for its journalism by the AI group. Such agreements have taken years to negotiate with the likes of Google and relations between the news media and the tech giants are still tense.

ChatGPT users will also be able to ask for attributed summaries and quotes from the FT including links to journalism.

The FT’s very human chief executive John Ridding has pledged, you will be glad to know, that ‘the FT is committed to human journalism’. The fact that he even has to say such a thing is perhaps a worrying sign of the times.

Apart from compensation, there are commitments to transparency and attribution, as there should be.

A template for the times – or far too good to be true?

AI featured prominently in April’s 25th anniversary conference of the

Society of Editors (SoE), where the first ever sitting prime minister to grace the proceedings – Rishi Sunak – expressed his undying attachment to press freedom. You would think it was an election year.

Pete Clifton, editor-in-chief of PA Media, recalled how at an earlier SoE conference eight years ago he had – in a very measured way – outlined modest experiments in automation to remove some of the drudgery from PA reporters on things such as charts and thought he had done well in managing expectations.

On the way home, he was startled to see on his phone trade press headlines claiming: ‘PA to be Taken Over by Robots’. In the office the next day, staff mocked up a caricature of him as a robot.

The argument is not about robots any more. It is far more serious than that. There is more than a real chance that uncaring employers will use AI to get rid of paid journalists in favour of as many AI-generated articles as they can get their hands on.

There is already evidence from NewsGuard, the news reliability measuring agency, that more than 800 online news sites are pumping out information largely untouched by human hand and of obviously questionable reliability.

Apart from the lack of verification, they share one other dangerous characteristic – they suck advertising revenue out of the market and away from established media.

Clifton told the SoE’s AI session that the technology would release reporters to do more of what PA had always done, to cover press conferences and find reliable information, which the organisation then shares.

AI was not particularly alarming as long as time was taken to explain to staff what was happening and to adopt things that worked (such as making it easier to mine archives) and throw out ones that didn’t.

Newsquest told how it has hired a dozen reporters trained in AI to spread through the organisation across the country and already a lot of time had been won back to enable journalists to cover more stories.

What became clear was there are a large number of AI-related experiments happening in newsrooms across the country, including by broadcasters.

It is equally clear there is a rough consensus that as long as the technology is handled carefully, it can be a positive for journalists, helping with research, analysis and accessing archives.

The biggest potential gain is that more time will become available for investigative journalism and covering more courts and tribunals, something that has fallen by the wayside somewhat in recent years because of stretched resources.

No one knows where this will all end, but culture secretary Lucy Frazer has set up a working group of industry specialists to look at issues such as making sure news organisations get fair compensation when their content is used by AI groups as well as the feared loss of advertising revenues.

So far so good, but media unions will have to keep a close watch on developments to ensure AI is not used as an excuse for cutting staff, and the media should be completely open with their customers on the extent to which AI is used in the creation of content.

Above all, the Ridding Rule should be sacrosanct – that the humans are always in control.



The argument is not about robots any more. It is far more serious than that

Cambridge

Ruth Addicott reports on life and work in Cambridge

W

hen you're punting on the River Cam on a sunny day, Cambridge couldn't look more idyllic.

Behind the immaculate college greens, however, lies a different reality where the town/gown divide has never felt more prevalent.

Home to a huge number of tech and pharmaceutical companies with plans to turn it into Europe's silicon valley, Cambridge is one of the fastest growing cities in Britain, but still has its problems. It was named the 'most unequal city in Britain' by the Centre for Cities in 2018 and local journalists have been affected by cuts and closures here as they have everywhere else.

One of the worst hit was the local BBC, which no longer has a dedicated TV operation in Cambridge with the news now covered from Norwich. Cambridge-based news programme Look East was pulled in December 2022 along with Oxford-based BBC South Today, despite widespread opposition from MPs, councillors and local people.

The cuts, which formed part of the corporation's digital-first policy, also resulted in a shake-up and strike action at BBC Radio Cambridgeshire, which has seen numerous departures, including of presenter Jeremy Sallis after 21 years.

BBC Radio Cambridgeshire still has two studios and a newsroom in the city and broadcasts local shows on weekdays from 6am to 2pm, followed by a regional show shared between Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Kate Palmer, senior content producer at BBC Radio Cambridgeshire, works on the breakfast show. She moved to Cambridge in 2022 from London where she was senior money reporter at The Times. The news team covers a large area across Cambridge, Peterborough and the Fens, including a large rural community of arable farmers and agricultural workers.

Stories range from poverty and local football rivalry to Molly dancing (a form of Morris dancing) in the Fens.

"It's a real interesting patch because we've got these two massively different and diverse cities," says Palmer.

"Peterborough is the biggest city in our patch and we get a lot of our stories from there. It's got the new university and there's been lots of talk about Peterborough being the focus of an eastern powerhouse. It's a growing city – there is poverty in some areas and anti-social behaviour, but it's a city with lots of opportunity.

"The Fens is very important, has a really beautiful landscape and is a distinctive area with its own traditions. One of our reporters was born and bred in the Fens and you can't always get those stories unless you're actually living there, so we try and use reporters on the ground as much as possible."

ITV Anglia has its regional headquarters in Norwich, with an additional base near Cambridge. Commercial radio company Global, which broadcasts Heart and Capital, closed its Cambridge studios in 2019. Star Radio is still based in the city as is community radio station Cambridge 105.

The main newspapers are the Cambridge News, published daily, owned by Reach, and the Cambridge Independent, published weekly by Iliffe Media.

The Cambridge News was established in 1888 and sits alongside digital platform Cambridgeshire Live. The Cambridge Independent Press has an even longer history, dating back to 1815; in 1977, it became the first paper in Britain to be printed by the D-litho method instead of hot metal. After its closure in 1981, it was relaunched in 2016 and named local weekly newspaper of the Year for five years running at the Newspaper Awards.

Alex Spencer is culture editor and senior reporter at the Cambridge Independent.

She says Cambridge is a great city, but as a single parent with two kids, she cannot afford to live there. She lives in a village 10 miles outside. "A young journalist who just wanted to rent a room could afford to live in the city, but I can't," she says.

HMSIMAGES

Get around, get away

Culture by bike

As well as more cyclists than anywhere else in the country (one in three people cycle to work), Cambridge has lots of green areas such as Midsummer Common and

Jesus Green, plus an impressive number of museums, galleries, theatres and concert venues including the Fitzwilliam Museum, Kettle's Yard and the Cambridge Arts Theatre.

To London, to Europe

Marianna Karakoulaki lives outside Cambridge in St Ives and finds it convenient for flights to Europe. She writes about migration, reporting from Greece and the Balkans,

and says: "It takes less than an hour to drive to Stansted and Luton airports." There are also direct trains to London every half hour (about 50 minutes).

A busy branch

The Cambridge NUJ branch has more than 140 members

and meets bi-monthly. The branch has hosted speakers such as Carole Cadwalladr discussing SLAPPs and Aaron Banks, John Naughton on technology as well as Tim Dawson, deputy general secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, on global issues journalists face.

Aside from the traffic congestion, which she calls "a nightmare", she says one of the problems is the "many different layers of local authority".

"All of their roles slightly overlap, especially with regards to transport policy/active travel and you get passed around," she says. "I was trying to find out some information on funding for the new cultural quarter/civic quarter and the combined authority and city council kept passing me back and forth with no answer ever coming – it turns out they didn't have one."

"Readers also get very agitated, thinking you are taking sides, especially on cycling and the congestion charge. I've been accused of being against both sides."

The comments got so personal that she had to make her social media private with one reader posting slurs under every single tweet.

Spencer has led various campaigns including saving a women's hostel and preventing local homes from being demolished to create a busway.

In addition, there is the Cambs Times (now digital only) owned by Newsquest and online ventures such as CambsNews.co.uk, by John Elworthy, former editor of the Cambs Times.

As with other regions, there have been closures including of the Newmarket News, Haverhill News and Ely News, previously produced by staff at the Cambridge News.

As for magazines, Bright Publishing produces lifestyle glossy Cambridge Edition, alongside FEED (for the media technology sector), Definition and Photography News.

Student website The Tab was founded in Cambridge. There are also several book publishers.

Journalist and documentary film-maker Shafiur Rahman is vice-chair of the Cambridge NUJ branch and has lived in Cambridge since 1995.

"It's a wonderful place to live but there's a lot of inequality and there's still a town/gown divide."

Donna Ferguson, freelance journalist

"You can't live there on a journalist's wage – the rent would be more than my entire salary."

Alex Spencer, culture editor and senior reporter, Cambridge Independent

"The situations at Reach and the BBC, particularly the latter's shift towards digital-first strategies resulting in job uncertainties and redundancies, have significantly impacted local members in the East of England."

Shafiur Rahman, vice-chair, Cambridge NUJ branch

His recent work has concentrated on the Rohingya refugee crisis on the Myanmar/Bangladesh border and Malaysia and Thailand, involving extensive travel – something he has found expensive and difficult.

"Early morning departures from Heathrow and Gatwick are impossible using public transport," he says. "Public transport door to door is two and a half to three hours. And then you have to factor in the checking-in time. So, quite a lengthy haul."

Also freelance, Donna Ferguson writes for The Guardian and The Observer. She moved to Cambridge from London in 2017, which has resulted in not only a better work/life balance but also a wealth of stories she says she would never have got had she stayed in the capital.

"Everyone from The Guardian lives in north London, so there have been loads of opportunities," she says. "It's just an interesting place and it has a wider national significance because of the university and River Cam."

She has written about the inequality and town/gown divide, pointing out that housing costs are high while many do live in subsidised accommodation with free meals.

"I'm sort of on the edge of it because I went to uni here. I think if you don't have any contact with the university at all, you can feel a little bit excluded from places and I think that's quite common," she says. "A lot of these beautiful colleges say things like 'no visitors' or 'members of college only'. Walking around the town, it's a different experience – it's really busy and full of shoppers – then you go into the colleges and it's quiet and has this different atmosphere."

The city is dominated by students during term time and by tourists and language groups in summer. But, on the whole, Ferguson says she has found it very welcoming. "It's full of amazing old architecture and lovely buildings and you can just walk along the river and cycle and run," she says.



A different au

Internal communications thrive on journalists' skills, and may interest you if you prefer telling to chasing stories. **Linda Harrison** reports

A few years ago, internal communications (IC or comms) wasn't on my radar. In fact, I didn't really understand what it was. I'd moved from staff journalist to freelance, mainly writing features for national newspapers. And, while I loved the variety, I was getting increasingly frustrated by having to chase pitches and invoices. Meanwhile, freelance rates were stagnating.

I needed to diversify – but into what? After accidentally finding a local IC agency on social media, I started freelancing for them – and soon found a passion for employee engagement. There were so many transferable skills with writing for staff magazines and intranets. When the agency offered me a job as an IC writer and editor, I took it. I enjoyed being part of a small team of journalists and designers producing e-newsletters, brochures and employee documents. The clients were varied, including local charities and large utility companies. I quickly realised that the industry really valued trained writers.



What is internal comms?

IC is the way an organisation communicates and interacts with its employees via a variety of tools, tactics and channels – anything from intranets to newsletters to apps.

At its most effective, it's two-way communication with engaged employees who feel listened to and involved. Research shows that when staff are on board with an organisation's goals, they are more likely to work towards achieving them.

All this is often done through storytelling – finding and sharing employees' stories to bring a company's strategy to life. And a background in journalism is a really good fit.

Existing skills, new areas

Kate Jackson, internal communications manager at the University of Bradford, spent 16 years as a feature writer at the Daily Mirror and The Sun.

Kate says: "Some aspects of internal communications will be new – spreadsheets and strategic comms plans were not things I ever needed to do as a tabloid journalist. But being able to find great stories and write engaging, accurate copy are just as essential whether you're writing for a newspaper or a company newsletter.

"Part of the job involves sending out important staff-wide messages, in which you use your skills as a reporter to boil

down information and get to the angle quickly. But there is also plenty of opportunity to get creative with your features head on, drawing out human interest stories and knowing how to present them."

While you may have more longer-term projects to manage, Jackson points out that, a bit like having a specialism, it is great to be able to get stuck into one community where everything you do links together.

Clare Martin is comms lead at digital transformation consultancy Rethink Partners, which works with NHS trusts and public sector bodies. She was a journalist for eight years, mainly focused on tech, with her roles including international editorial director at Know Your Mobile.

Martin says: "My responsibilities gradually evolved to work more closely with brands in the sector. I realised my enthusiasm for storytelling outweighed my interest in chasing news stories. This shift in focus was the catalyst for my

Moving into staff comms

IF YOU fancy a shift into internal communications, here's some advice from those who've done it:

• Leverage your storytelling skills

Highlight how your ability to tell compelling stories can enhance internal messaging and engagement.

• Understand the corporate landscape

Familiarise yourself with the business side of things.

• **Network** Connect with IC professionals through LinkedIn or professional groups, maybe at an organisation where you fancy working.

Institute of Internal Communication

Ask them for a chat – many are open to sharing insights.

• **Build your tech skills** Get to know the IC tools and platforms.

• **Start internally** If you're already in a role involving collaboration with brands and storytelling, consider how this could lead to opportunities.

• **Rewrite your CV with a comms angle** Include your skills in

communicating information, including giving tough messages.

Working in IC can be highly rewarding, with decent pay and career progression opportunities.

You can flex your creative muscle with campaign building as well as tone of voice and message development.

With employee engagement and wellbeing high up many companies' agendas, it's definitely a growth area.

• **The Institute of Internal Communication is a good source of information:**
www.ioic.org.uk

audience



transition into internal communications where I could leverage my skills in a more focused and impactful way.”

Martin says journalists have many invaluable transferable skills, including storytelling and content creation, research and analysis, adaptability and audience awareness as well as knowledge of ethics and confidentiality.

Janette Ballard was a producer and director in TV current affairs at the BBC for 20 years. She learned journalism in Northern Ireland then at Panorama. At one point, she took a position that bridged internal comms and business affairs for BBC Television.

She says: “I was looking for change, but I was not at all convinced that I had any transferable skills. I remember having lunch with a colleague and saying, ‘I can’t think of a role in any other sector that requires knowing how to shoot a sequence’. I was completely off the mark.

“I soon realised I had many skills that had made me the journalist that I was. For example, journalists can find a story and get to grips with it quickly because we’re practised in listening carefully and unafraid to ask questions. This means journalists can spot an issue, confusion or mixed messages and untangle it to find a narrative to run through it.

“We’re also skilled at making considered judgements at pace, meeting deadlines and working to budget – and communicating decisions to a team. We’re able to absorb information at speed and prioritise actions, and we have a sixth sense for lurking dangers or cringe-worthy surprises that could leave an organisation or individual exposed.”

Taking the leap - and earning more

When Anna Allatt discovered her job as a duty editor at BBC Three was being made redundant – after she had spent 17 years in a range of roles – she decided it was time for a change.

She explains: “I’d been through four or five restructures and was falling out of love with the industry. I’d been a journalist for 20 years in the public sector – could I cut it anywhere else? The simple answer to that was absolutely, yes. I’d become a bit institutionalised and, when you’re surrounded by people with a similar skill set, you don’t realise how special and useful your skills are.”

Allatt became a copywriter at a financial services company where she ended up working on mostly IC projects.

She adds: “I realised that I’d underestimated myself as my years of practical experience in telling people’s stories set me up really well. As a news journalist, you often have to understand complicated information quickly and translate it into content that your audience is going to understand. It’s no different in internal comms. Often one of your tasks is making sure employees understand the business strategy and what their role is.”

Allatt later became an IC manager, a role she describes as

being a journalist and editor but in a different environment: “I find good stories that illustrate success stories. I make sure we’re using the right platform for the right audience – and also offer a fresh perspective from people who’ve gone through a more traditional comms route.

“If you’re thinking about taking the leap, go for it. The money and hours are better too. I still remember the first full Christmas break I had in 17 years – the novelty still hasn’t worn off.”

Influence a company

When Anita Caruso moved into IC, she found she enjoyed using her journalistic skills in a different way.

She says: “Because I was working in a corporate environment, I was also learning a whole new way of working and dealing with people. I had to learn to be a more strategic thinker, and understand how a business operates and connects with its people.

“Internal comms isn’t just about writing stories. It’s an important strategic business function and, in many organisations, still doesn’t get the credit or resources it deserves – that always goes to marketing and PR. You play a crucial role in building engagement and helping people feel connected to the business and its strategy, and your work can help influence a company’s culture.”

Caruso says the most crucial skill is relationship building, including creating and maintaining strong working partnerships with stakeholders at every level.



Forty years on, **Barrie Clement** relives the 1984-85 miners strike

Hacking at the coalface

Just imagine. You've been sent out on a massive story which is unfolding in many different places at the same time. A story that is gripping the nation and filling hours of broadcasting time and square miles of newsprint. Then imagine trying to do it with a notebook and pen. No mobile, no laptop.

Such was the technology available to journalists during the miners' strike of 1984-85. I was labour reporter on *The Times* and quite often found myself dispatched to Nottinghamshire where clashes between striking miners and those who had decided to work were at their most numerous and often, most ferocious.

Luckily, it was a time when there was considerable cooperation between 'competing' journalists. There had to be. When time permitted, industrial correspondents would meet in the morning to divi up the pits where trouble was expected. We met later, invariably on licensed premises, to share information and drink far too much beer. It was a non-electronic WhatsApp group.

Stories were filed via the pub phone to copytakers. When we were out and about, we would look for overhead telephone lines, knock on the door of a house seemingly equipped with a phone, crave the householder's indulgence and file from there. Cooperation with other journalists was not quite so well developed when we were on deadline and forced to use the only phone box for miles. It was known for some reporters (not me, guv) to hang 'out of order' signs on the door of kiosks to deter punters and other colleagues.

One piece of cooperation I particularly remember was with Patrick Wintour, then my opposite number on the *Guardian*. Paul Routledge, who was *The Times*' labour editor and had unrivalled contacts in the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), wanted a first-person account about the police

stopping men crossing from Yorkshire, where the strike was pretty solid, into Nottinghamshire, where it wasn't. The police were trying to limit the number of flying pickets demonstrating outside collieries. The strategy made that part of England feel like a police state. Invariably, not all the men stopped at the border were striking miners or intent on joining picket lines in Nottinghamshire.

Routledge, some of whose forebears had been miners, arranged for me to hitch a lift with two Yorkshire NUM members to see what was happening at the border. We were stopped and sent back, which Wintour and I duly reported in our respective newspapers. Routledge was not pleased with me because he had arranged the whole thing and it was meant to be exclusive. There was a limit to cooperation and Routledge (these days a senior writer on the *Mirror*) was fiercely competitive. While playing a straight bat in *The Times*, he was also passionately pro miner and gave £50 a week to the support group at Frickley Colliery in South Yorkshire.

He also gave £2,500, in five donations of £500, from his libel winnings from the *Daily Express*, which had accused him of writing Scargill's speeches and his autobiography, all of which was untrue. The money was given to a range of pit support groups such as the Dirty Thirty in Leicestershire. Thousands of pitmen in that county refused to strike apart from the Dirty Thirty, a sobriquet which started as a slur but became a badge of honour.

The rival betrayed

OVER THE past few months, we've seen many potted histories of the 1984-85 miners' strike to mark its 40th anniversary. Suffice it to say that the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) fought to keep pits open - and lost.

The defeat of the NUM was followed by the defeat of the print unions at Wapping. The most powerful unions were vanquished and the whole of the labour movement suffered and continues to do so.

There is a little-discussed postscript to this mining industry tale. The Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM), created for the Nottinghamshire pitmen

who worked throughout the strike, expected the government to 'go easy' on their pits. They hoped - indeed expected - their loyalty to be rewarded by the government. Roy Lynk, president of the UDM and one of its founders, was one who did.

Although the Notts pits were considered to be more viable than those elsewhere - and generally they

remained open for longer - the axe was hovering.

Seven years after the strike, the industry in Nottinghamshire had been halved. Immediately after the conflict, there were 27,500 miners in the county at 25 collieries but, by 1992, there were 10,800 workers at 12 pits.

In October of that year, Lynk staged a week-long protest 1,200 feet below ground at Silverhill colliery. It closed just months after his protest.

Who knows what would have happened if the Notts pitmen had joined the conflict? Certainly, the thousands of tons of coal they produced in the big-hitting Notts pits helped the Tories break the strike.



The Yorkshire miners found a way around the policing of the county borders. My abiding memory of the conflict was the sight of hundreds of Yorkshire miners marching over fields towards Nottinghamshire. They resembled a ragtag medieval army, complete with banners, flags and helmets chanting their hatred for the Thatcher government and the 'scab' pitmen. A large part of me admired the resistance of those cross-country plodders in the face of overwhelming odds but another part realised it was rather sad – a futile but courageous attempt to defeat the undefeatable.

Pit villages in Yorkshire – and elsewhere – felt as if they were under the control of an occupying power. Rather than rely on local police, whose members might have sympathy for the strikers, officers were drafted in from elsewhere, quite often the Met. Miners' homes were routinely searched without warrants by officers trying to find errant pitmen.

They were operating like Thatcher's private army. In postwar Britain, the police sometimes trumpeted the fact that they would not take sides in an industrial dispute. It was, as Hamlet says, more honoured in the breach than the observance. In this dispute, there was no such pretence.

The authoritarian tactics extended far beyond the north of England. Miners from east Kent, where there were three remaining pits, were routinely stopped from entering the Dartford tunnel in case they were going to Nottingham to join picket lines. These days it is bizarre to think that not only were there collieries in the Garden of England but also that the men who worked in them were, along with the south Wales miners, among the most militant in the NUM.

As the strike wore on, the press became increasingly unpopular with the strikers. Predictably, the hard-right Sun

was loathed. The tabloid displayed a hysterical hatred of the NUM and all its works, denouncing union president Arthur Scargill as 'mine fuhrer' and loyal NUM members as 'scum'. That meant journalists who told pickets they were Sun reporters were risking a barrage of abuse – at the very least.

I think striking miners simply considered The Times to be impenetrably posh (unlike its labour reporter) and therefore not really worth bothering about. On one occasion, I approached a couple of particularly well-built pickets outside a pit, accompanied by Charlie Rae, The Sun's equally well-built if rather portly industrial reporter. I told the miners who I was and they asked Charlie to identify himself. Pointing at me, Charlie said, in his best Glaswegian accent: "I'm with him." He lived to fight another day.

The conflict, as seismic and tragic as it was, had its lighter moments. Pickets were often arrested for shouting 'scab' at miners crossing picket lines, so they resorted to shouting, 'sausage, chips and beans'. Magistrates found it embarrassing to sentence someone for shouting a lunch order.

Reporting the strike was by no means a doddle. On occasion, we'd be outside working pits for the three daily shift changes, the first at around 5am, the second at lunchtime and the last one at about 10pm. Shift changes meant picketing and picketing meant eminently reportable street theatre.

So it was tough but it was nowhere near as tough as working down a pit or trying to survive as a striking miner whose family benefits had been cut by a ruthless government trying to starve them and their families into submission. During the strike, 9,808 miners were arrested, 7,917 charged, 200 jailed and 966 sacked for taking industrial action.

Collieries in 1984: 173. Today, none.

9808

During the strike 9,808 miners were arrested, 7,917 charged, 200 jailed and 966 sacked for taking industrial action

STAFF/PA/AFP

2012 POPPERFOTO



2008 GETTY IMAGES



Human side of the story

Immigration coverage is moving beyond scaremongering. **Neil Merrick** reports

Did you hear about the asylum seekers who help homeless people through charities, sometimes donating part of their weekly allowance?

Unless you read the Dorset Echo, the story may have escaped your attention. It certainly didn't make the national media, in spite of interest in the Bibby Stockholm, a barge turned into makeshift accommodation for men awaiting asylum decisions.

Last December's suicide of an Albanian man who was living on the barge, moored in Weymouth, was widely reported and garnered some sympathy. Otherwise, the human side of the Bibby Stockholm story has been largely ignored.

In January, the Dorset Echo reported that several asylum seekers moved from hotels around the UK were volunteering with local charities. A man from Pakistan said he gave just over half his government allowance to homeless people for food.

"Me and my friend, we get given £9 a week," Azad told the Echo. "Out of that, we always try and buy some food for the homeless people in Weymouth. I spend £5 on food for the homeless people and £4 on myself."

With much of the national media entwined in the government's anti-migrant agenda, it is often left to local journalists to present the other side of the asylum story.

Last year, Metro Radio and The Chronicle newspaper in Newcastle both reported how businesses in North Tyneside were supporting a campaign for asylum seekers to be allowed to work so they could fill vacancies.

Ellie Kumar, senior news editor at Metro, says the story was an important one to run in a predominantly white, working-class area. "I'm a person of colour," she says. "I feel there is a sense in the national media of it being 'people coming over and taking your job'."

Nobody chooses to become an asylum seeker or refugee, she adds. "People in this part of the country were not being told the other side of the story."

A national campaign to lift the ban on asylum seekers taking paid work while awaiting decisions was launched six years ago, but received limited media attention.

The North Tyneside story was flagged up by IMIX, a communications agency set up by former journalists which helps smaller charities publicise their work with refugees.

Jenni Regan, IMIX's chief executive, says it tries to interest reporters in 'value-led, humanising and supportive' stories but it does not focus solely on 'celebration' stories. "It's about adding context," she says.

Katie Bryson, an IMIX regional media co-ordinator, stresses the importance of building trust between the refugee sector and reporters. "National journalists don't always spend time building relationships and trust," adds Bryson.

Arguments over media coverage of asylum and immigration have raged for years. In the late 2000s, the parliamentary joint human rights committee called for stronger guidance over the language used by journalists. Three years ago, a YouGov poll found that 57 per cent of people in Britain thought the press portrayed immigration negatively, with 45 per cent saying the same of broadcasters.

In 2022, the Independent Press Standards Organisation concluded that a Sunday Express story on child asylum seekers was misleading and distorted Home Office data. But

Conversation reset

IT IS more than two years since Hedi Mehrez (pictured) was appointed as Reach's first race reporter. After working for a range of the publisher's titles in southern England, he is now based at Kent Live.

Mehrez was delighted to take up the post in 2021. "There is not enough diversity in our industry," he says. At Kent Live, he provides extra insight into the lives of people arriving by boat, while helping to reset the conversation around refugees.

Part of it comes down to language, with the word 'migrant' and terms such as 'BAME' no longer

used in Reach reports. "The word 'migrant' adds to the negative narrative because it's used by so many people on the right," says Mehrez.

Having built contacts with charities, he is introduced to people who risked crossing the Channel in small boats to claim asylum.

He is sometimes asked by charities to show previous articles. "They want to be

sure about the kind of journalist you are," he says.

Born in France, Mehrez learned Tunisian (a dialect of Arabic) from his father. This helps in basic communication with people from Syria and North Africa, although he uses a translator for more complex conversations with Arab speakers.

Last year, Mehrez led a Reach campaign calling on the government to provide safe and legal routes for asylum seekers hoping to reach the UK.

While some stories attract negative comments on social media, others are received positively. "That's something I'm really proud of," he says.



2024 SOPA IMAGES



earlier this year, it backed a Mail story about 'fake' asylum claims that involved undercover reporting.

Occasionally, journalists are required to refute myths stemming from the media. It is more than 15 years since a tabloid in Scotland claimed Roma people in part of Glasgow were selling their children on the street. Yet the myths and prejudice surrounding Govanhill's Roma community live on. "It was a taxi driver who told someone who told someone," recalls Catriona Stewart, now a writer at the Herald. Stewart, who lives in Govanhill, ensures voices of Roma people and other immigrant communities feature prominently in her stories.

At the start of 2024, the Herald invited Roza Salih, a councillor and former refugee, to write a fortnightly column. Salih was one of the 'Glasgow Girls' who, 19 years before, had prevented the deportation of a Kosovan woman and her teenage daughter.

Born in Kurdistan, she arrived in Scotland with her family in 2001. Her columns cover topics such as refugees' contributions to British life, as well as Home Office delays in processing asylum claims. "The Herald said they were happy to give me a platform to put over my views," she says.

While much of the reaction is positive, Salih receives comments from readers telling her she is not really Scottish, or words to that effect. "You get angry but you have to control yourself," she says. "There are so many barriers when you move to live in another country but, at the end of the day, we are all human beings."

Refugees and asylum seekers are generally keen to speak to reporters if they think they will get a fair hearing. Kumar recalls

interviewing an asylum seeker at a charity event: "It was about talking to her as a person, not a case study or as a number in the immigration statistics."

Back in Weymouth, Laney White, co-ordinator of the Portland Global Friendship Group, which was set up to welcome men sent to the barge, says the story is now driven more by social media.

She praises the Echo for reporting on how asylum seekers work with charities, but says other stories seem to reinforce local prejudice against asylum seekers.

White regrets that the paper did not switch off comments beneath Bibby Stockholm stories sooner. "They have to tread a fine line," she says. Editors at the Echo did not reply to requests to be interviewed for this article.

It is not only local media that wants to reflect the bigger picture. The Metro newspaper ran Immigration Nation, which was created and edited by James Besanvalle. An Australian, he wanted to challenge the negativity he met when he arrived in the UK eight years ago. "I was seeing a lot of misinformation and scaremongering around immigration," he says.

More than 130 first-person articles had appeared by last December, when Besanvalle decided the series had run its course. Some were positive, describing experience of studying, finding partners or jobs but others highlighted racism along with hurdles posed by the immigration system.

Last year, an asylum seeker from Iran wrote about being trapped in a hotel room while right-wing protesters shouted abuse in the street and set fire to a police car.

"I wanted to give a voice to the voiceless," says Besanvalle.

57%

A YouGov poll found that 57% of people in Britain thought newspapers portray immigration in a negative way

Election for the Editor of The Journalist

The National Union of Journalists is inviting applications for the post of Editor of the Journalist, the Union's journal for members.

The post is subject to election by ballot of the NUJ membership every five years. It is a part-time post offered either as a 2 day a week (fixed days by agreement) contract of employment or as a freelance contract, for a period of 5 years. If employed, the position would be based at the NUJ's head office in London or the union's Glasgow or Dublin office.

Eligibility

To be shortlisted to stand in the election, you must be:

- a full member, dual member, member of honour or life member of the Union
- with five years continuous membership
- and your contributions must be paid up under Rule.

Additionally, a shortlisted candidate must:

- have the skills necessary to perform the range of duties required of the Editor of the Journalist magazine and associated digital content, carried out to high levels of editorial and ethical standards and in accordance with the NUJ Code of Conduct and Membership Responsibilities

The Ballot

The ballot will be run by Civica, the organisation appointed as the independent scrutineer for the election.

The Term

The successful candidate will hold the position for five years after which they will be subject to re-election at intervals of five years.

Application Pack

The Application Pack may be obtained from the NUJ website **www.nuj.org.uk**. If you are having trouble downloading the application pack, please email **personnel@nuj.org.uk**. The closing date for receipt of completed applications is **Noon, Monday 24th June 2024**

Voting in the Election

In order to vote in this election, you must satisfy the following criteria:

- be a full member, dual member, member of honour or life member of the Union and
- not be three calendar months or more in arrears.

Don't miss your chance to vote, visit the members area of the NUJ website at **www.nuj.org.uk** and check that all your details are up to date.

Ballot papers are mailed out to your home address. Please contact us as soon as possible, at **editorelections@nuj.org.uk** if you have visual accessibility requirements.



What made you become a journalist?

Growing up in Luton as a young Muslim man, I saw my town and my community routinely misrepresented in the media. I felt the stories of working-class people were never adequately or accurately told. I figured the best way of trying to change that was to get involved.

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

I've worked in a cab office, a takeaway and a factory. I spent a year working as a project manager within the civil service. The work-life balance was great but the work was nowhere near as interesting or fulfilling as journalism.

When did you join the NUJ and why?

I joined the NUJ last year. Working as an industrial correspondent, you certainly learn a thing or two about the importance of trade unions in fighting for your rights in the workplace.

Are many of your friends in the union?

Some of them but not nearly enough.

What's been the best moment in your career?

Winning the Royal Society of Literature's Giles St Aubyn award

for my forthcoming book *Come What May, We're Here to Stay*, which explores the rich tradition of political activism in the British South Asian community.

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

I worked in a bread factory, doing 12-hour night shifts on minimum wage. The work was through an agency and we'd sometimes make the long commute to work only to be told there was no work for us on that particular day. The hours were long and the work itself was monotonous and physically demanding. I'd often come home with swollen feet and back pain.

And the best?

Industrial correspondent at Tribune Magazine. There is nothing I enjoy more than reporting and writing my own stories. I took on this job in the midst of the biggest strike wave in decades. It was a

baptism of fire and I was learning something new every day. My job involved amplifying the voices of those on the picket lines. While there was a great deal of discussion on the impact of industrial action, I was interested in telling the human interest stories behind the strikes.

What advice would you give someone starting out in journalism?

Pour your heart and soul into your work and you will reap the rewards. Develop a niche. Don't be afraid to ask for advice – from anyone and everyone. If you can afford to visit the people and the places you write about, do it.

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

Ambalavaner Sivanandan, Tony Benn, Arundhati Roy, Malcolm X, Shapurji Saklatvala, Toni Morrison.

NUJ & me

Taj Ali is co-editor of Tribune magazine

Who is your biggest hero?

Malcolm X.

And villain?

Adolf Hitler.

What was your earliest political thought?

I remember seeing the front page of the Luton Herald and Post, our local newspaper, on Luton South's Margaret Moran fiddling her expenses. I felt most politicians tend to work in their own self-interest. I still think that today.

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

That there is greater investment in specialist reporting, that attempts are made to save local journalism from collapse and that we have more working-class journalists.

And fears?

Cutbacks and redundancies across the board rendering a profession that is already incredibly socially exclusive even more difficult to access.

How would you like to be remembered?

As someone who was sincere.

Creative skills highlight how war affects life and work. **Tom Fennelly** reports

Kurdish reporters show war stories



Two Kurdish journalists, now living and working in the north east of England, are using their creative skills to improve understanding and awareness of the impact of war and conflict on refugees forced to flee oppression and persecution.

Their latest collaboration with Newcastle-based Skimstone Arts was exhibited in Newcastle city library for Holocaust Memorial Day 2024, which had the theme of Fragility of Freedom.

Kurdish Iraqi photojournalists Ako Ismail and Shahor Omar have worked with Skimstone Arts to produce a thought-provoking exhibition, *Fear or Freedom?* This includes fragments of real-life stories, poems, songs, photographs, drawings and lyrics contributed by artists, photographers, musicians and young people in the area.

Contributors include those with first-hand experience of war from Bosnia, Ukraine, Kurdistan Iraq, Guatemala, Poland, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Iran, as well as Holocaust survivors.

The exhibition, which ran until January 24, was made with the fine art department at Newcastle University.

Ismail and Omar, both freelance members of the NUJ, fled their homeland in Iraqi Kurdistan. They have been closely supported and mentored by the Sunderland, Shields and Hartlepool branch of the union.

In 2022, they created a powerful short documentary film, *The Smell of Apples*,

and an exhibition titled *One Day Changes*, showing human stories about the long-lasting impact of war and its consequences on their homeland and its border in the Middle East. The exhibition and film were staged and screened in three cities in England and were acquired by Durham University.

Ismail, who lives in South Shields, was inspired to make the film after documenting the daily life of children in a refugee camp. He thought about how one day changed their lives entirely – language, space, home, friends and all else – but still they lived in the moment, playing and making friends.

“We can learn from that story; the children were so brave not to give up regardless of what happened to them.”

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

He saw war as a child and it opened his eyes. “I used to hear the sound of explosions,” he says – they were his morning alarm from a young age.

“When I started to work in the media, I was only 19. I had an idea to work for peace, not war. I want my photos and film to show the brutal aspect of war.”

Both have experienced trauma in their families and their own lives through war and oppression, and the risks of working in the media because of terrorism, censorship and repercussions including kidnapping, death threats or even being killed.

Tom Fennelly of the NUJ speaking at the opening of the *Fear or Freedom? Holocaust Memorial Day* exhibition watched by Smajo Beso OBE, founder of the Bosnian Genocide Educational Trust, and Skimstone Arts artistic director Claire Webster Saaremets

They have witnessed political instability and unrest first hand and talk about how, as photojournalists, they need to document what is happening “for it to be real, to be witnesses and a proof to people across the world”.

The pair have dedicated their lives to documenting the impact of war on Iraq and the lives of refugees.

After years of reporting in an area that carries high risk for broadcasters, the pair have been forced to leave behind all that is familiar and flee to another nation, settling in the north east.

Ismail, 29, started out as a journalist at the age of 15, working for local and international news outlets. He trained with journalists from the BBC and Sky. He was heavily invested in recording the daily lives of people, especially children, as they were forced into refugee camps in the northern region of Kurdistan after ISIS attacked Iraq in 2013.

A multi-talented documentary-maker, photographer and writer, he covered the war in Iraq and Syria from 2007.

Ismail said he never expected to become a refugee. He came to England without family or friends, arriving in Birmingham in 2015 before relocating to Sunderland then South Shields.

“I am constantly fearful for my colleagues – this year, many more journalists have been put behind bars for trying to broadcast the truth.”

Both Ismail and Omar are now active NUJ members and are supporting efforts by their branch to encourage more journalists in the area to join and to promote professional development.

“When I started to work in the media, I was only 19. I had an idea to work for peace, not war. I want my photos and film to show the brutal aspect of war

A lowdown on life in government

Diaries breathe life into political history, says **Denis MacShane**

I have always enjoyed good diaries. They are much closer to journalism than a formal memoir or biography written by an outsider. More than a newspaper, a political diary is the genuine first draft of history.

Years ago, I worked in US archives for a study of the origins of the Cold War and trade unions in various countries. American universities had a tradition of recording interviews with leaders in different sectors – politics, military, diplomacy, medicine and, after US trade unions helped Roosevelt defeat German and Japanese supremacist nationalist ideology, union leaders. Extracts from these contemporaneous interviews were like diamonds to weave into the texture of a narrative based on dry government documents, union resolutions and speeches.

So, when I became an MP in 1994, I felt I had a small duty to record daily what I heard in the Commons, No 10, the Foreign Office and in the tea rooms, bars and restaurants where politics was done far from the public gaze.

I also wanted to record the interface between MPs, ministers and political journalists. The first bitter lesson was that the iron rule of ‘off the record’ was ignored by any lobby journalist if there were good quotes to make a story come alive.

Tony Blair thought I was too friendly to journalists – maybe because of my NUJ past. On a plane trip when I was minister for Latin America, he, Cherie Booth and I occupied the first-class cabin where we dined on polystyrene

chicken chunks and gossiped about union bosses’ qualities. Top marks from Blair for John Monks and Bill Jordan – not much for the rest.

In business class were Confederation of British Industry chieftains who were meant to get multimillion pound contracts thanks to Blair’s presence. I was the only Spanish speaker on the plane. But the CBI people assumed if they spoke English a little louder, the smart, educated, multilingual business leaders of South America would buy anything at whatever price.

Finally, economy class was full of political editors. They jumped on me demanding to know: what had Blair eaten? What had Cherie said? Blair’s reaction to the latest politics from London? My lips were sealed and I settled down to a glass or two and the juicy political gossip that is the lifeblood of Westminster whether in the Strangers’ Bar or 30,000 feet over the Andes.

I went back to the snoring first-class cabin. But one person was awake and glaring at me. ‘You’ve been talking to journalists,’ Blair said. I spluttered my denial but of course he knew me and, in my 18 years in the Commons, I had more fun and better information from journalists than from fellow MPs.

Political journalists often write memoirs – *Strange People I Have Known* by Andy McSmith, a political reporter for the *Daily Telegraph*, *Mirror* and *Independent* and author of many



LEE THOMAS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



books on politics, is as good as they get. But none keeps a diary. This is a shame as historians need raw, shameless history not the bowdlerised stuff in the posh Sundays.

It is surprising how few MPs of the Blair-Cameron era kept real diaries. Robin Cook wrote a sort of diary, *Point of Departure*. Alan Duncan serves up lashings of revenge on David Cameron and others who didn’t recognise his talents – but contemporaneous it isn’t.

Labour hasn’t had a serious diarist since Tony Benn. But his record of endless meetings and endless cups of tea have no human touches. The star diarist of my generation of Labour journalists who became MPs is Chris Mullen. Yet, although witty on the Master (Blair to you and me) and John Prescott, he was never close to big decisions taken in the ministries in which he served. His second volume was written after he left Parliament and is really a notebook about his life in the north east.

I wrote 2.2 million words and the first (perhaps only) volume covers Blair’s first government over 1997-2001. It is 416 pages long but I still had to cut out half of what I had recorded. The whole diary will be deposited in a university or foundation archive.

I now hope someone is getting ready to write the diary of the next Labour government. It won’t have the drama of the unbelievable antics of the Brexit-era Tories. But future historians will thank anyone scribbling into the night about being on the inside.

Denis MacShane was MP for Rotherham 1994-2012 and served in the Foreign Office for eight years. *Labour Takes Power, The Denis MacShane Diaries 1997-2001* is published by Biteback

“One person in the cabin was awake and glaring at me. ‘You’ve been talking to journalists,’ Blair said. I spluttered my denial

by Mark Fisher arts

Books >

Our Country in Crisis

Kwajo Tweneboa

July 18

Orion

The social housing activist looks at 'Britain's housing emergency'. He draws on his experiences and those of Grenfell survivors and the parents of Awaab Ishak, the toddler whose death was caused by mould. He takes inspiration from countries that are getting it right.

<https://tinyurl.com/259xwesg>

Made in Manchester

Brian Groom

Out now

Harper Collins

Once a political editor on the FT and editor of Scotland on Sunday, the long-time NUJ member provides 'a people's history of the city that shaped the modern world' from the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 to the rise of Oasis.

<https://tinyurl.com/2cerw496>

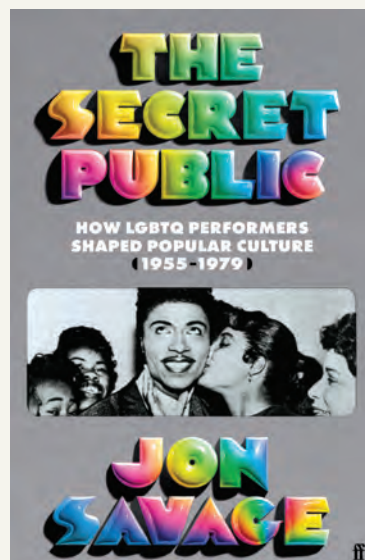
The Secret Public: How LGBTQ Resistance Shaped Popular Culture (1955–1979)

Jon Savage

June 6

Faber

The music journalist and author charts gay culture from the margins to the



mainstream from 1955 to 1979, considering figures such as Little Richard, David Bowie and Sylvester.

<https://tinyurl.com/2yeq77d4>

Exhibitions >

Cold War Scotland

National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh

July 13–January 26

Scotland's landscape made it a prime base for allied preparations during the 40-year stand-off between the US and the USSR. The country was also a centre for Cold War protest and activism, which this exhibition considers.

<https://tinyurl.com/2bum68ha>



Zanele Muholi

Tate Modern, London

June 6–January 26

The lives of South Africa's black lesbian, gay, trans, queer and intersex communities are charted in more than 260 images.

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

Festivals >

Galway International Arts Festival

July 15–28

Audiences for last year's multi-arts event exceed 400,000. Similar crowds are expected for Annie Mac, Jess Glynne and Passenger in 2024.

<https://www.giaf.ie/>

Belfast Photo Festival

June 1–30

The UK and Ireland's largest annual international festival of photography attracts more than 100,000 visitors. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, it showcases national and international contemporary photography.

<https://tinyurl.com/22br2xff>

Camden Roar Festival

Camden People's Theatre, London
June 4–22

Guardian critic Brian Logan is artistic director of CPT, which celebrates its 30th anniversary with a three-week festival of all things Camden. The flagship production is *Grills*, which pays tribute to the Camden Lesbian Centre and Black Lesbian Group in the 1980s.

<https://cpttheatre.co.uk/whatson/GRILLS>

Films >

Green Border

General release

June 7

Director Agnieszka Holland tells a story of refugees from the Middle East

In depth >

The beginning is Nye

The UK's first postwar government is in the theatrical air.

In 2022, Caroline Bird's play *Red Ellen* dramatised the life of Ellen Wilkinson, the 1945 minister of education. This year, Lindsay Rodden's *Jennie Lee* paid tribute to the first minister of the arts, while Tim Price's *Nye* looked back to Aneurin Bevan and his battle to create the NHS.

Now Paul Unwin, co-creator of *Casualty*, is retelling the story of Clement Attlee's government in *The Promise* at the Minerva Theatre in Chichester.

"It is the story of the most radical and remarkable British government of the last 100 years," says

the playwright. "The promise was the welfare state, the NHS, education and housing – and they delivered."

Although the last to open, his script predates the others, having been shelved during the pandemic.

Unwin finds it fascinating that so many playwrights have



been thinking along the same lines.

"There is a real interest in what will be if we have a Labour government," he says.

"Whether a modern government could do the same, I don't know."

He is, however, less interested in making a partisan point than in capturing the drama of a high-stakes political moment. It is a play about politics before it is a political play.

"It is about characters who happen to be politicians and happen to believe they have a moment of destiny," he says.

"It's like *The West Wing*: the bickering, the fighting, the passion that pulled this thing off.

and Africa trapped in the 'green border' between Belarus and Poland. Trying to reach the EU, they are caught up in a political crisis.

<https://tinyurl.com/28e9pd4v>

Orlando, My Political Biography

General release

July 5

Director Paul B Preciado asked 26 trans and non-binary people to play the gender-shifting central character in Virginia Woolf's Orlando in this award-winning documentary.

<https://orlando.film/>

Music >

Classical Pride

London

July 3-7

This five-day event kicks off with Classical Drag, starring Vinegar Strokes, Freddie Love and Beau Jangles, and culminates with Oliver Zeffman conducting the London Symphony Orchestra.

<https://www.classicalpride.uk/>

Theatre >

Kyoto

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

June 18-July 13

The UN's climate conference of 1997 is the setting of a political thriller by Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson about the race to the world's first legally binding emissions targets.

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/kyoto/>

ECHO (Every Cold Hearted Oxygen)

Royal Court, London

July 13-27



A new performer appears every night in a play that mirrors the uncertainty of being a refugee by having an actor with no idea of what they will be doing.

<https://tinyurl.com/yry7b3ss>

Spotlight >

A Suez theory

Can there be anything left to say about Winston Churchill? Glasgow branch member Graeme Bowman suggests a new angle.

As we reach the 80th anniversary of D-Day and, in November, the 150th anniversary of the former prime minister's birth, Bowman has uncovered evidence to suggest Churchill's commitment to the British empire put him at odds with the architects of Operation Overlord on the European front.

"When you step back from the drum-and-bugle stuff of 1939 to 1945 and place it in the context of Britain, the empire and how important Suez and the eastern Mediterranean were, it gives you a much richer understanding."



says Bowman, whose self-published book, *Empire First*, sets out his case.

"There's not a single Churchill speech encouraging the British people to rally around this great enterprise of liberating Europe from the Nazis," he says.

"Suez was Britain's highway to oil and empire. I would say Churchill was profoundly unenthusiastic about Overlord and wanted to lock the allies permanently into the Mediterranean theatre."

Empire First: Churchill's War Against D-Day, out now

<https://tinyurl.com/235wun83>

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inviting letters, comments, tweets



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DENIS CARRIER

Mullin and the best of investigative journalism

I read with interest in The Journalist, Chris Mullins' personal account of how the British establishment effectively ganged-up on him for highlighting what turned out to be one of the greatest miscarriages of justice ever recorded in the UK - the imprisonment of six innocent Irish men for the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974. (Loony MP backs bomb gang' The Journalist April-May 2024)

Hats off to Chris. This was investigative journalism at its best.

The issue he explored wasn't just the horror of the 21 people killed in Birmingham but more so how the British establishment colluded to put away men who had nothing to do with the killings.

The Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven were also wrongly jailed in 1976 over explosions in pubs in Guildford and Woolwich.

This begs the question how many more were jailed by British judges for crimes they didn't commit?

In the meantime, an extraordinary fact has emerged about Birmingham and Guildford thanks to the work of Tanya Gupta of BBC South East.

She reported on March 24 2021, that the families of those killed in Birmingham and Guildford were refused access to classified files by a tribunal of inquiry which stated "it would prejudice National Security."

Tanya reported that the files are likely to be locked away for between 84 and 100 years! In my opinion, this is code for saying that British security services had a role to play in both bombings!

From my research, it appears the plan was to turn English people in Birmingham and Guildford against the local Irish communities where a lot of financial donations for the IRA cause were sourced.

None of the establishment print media picked up on the March 21 revelation ensuring that not only did certain Irish families suffer a miscarriage of justice but now some English ones are being denied the truth as well!

Thankfully, BBC South East saw the merits of this story. But, if the Beeb had to function like a tight-ship commercial broadcaster, this info would, in all likelihood, not come to public attention at all.

Ken Murray
Irish Eastern Branch

The NUJ has staged 'an act of union Brexit'...

I was shocked to learn that the NUJ national executive council has decided to quit the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and even more surprised that such a decision was taken without any discussion with the membership of the union.

No branches were consulted over the proposal, not even the union's three continental branches, in Brussels, Paris

and Amsterdam. The decision is an act of union Brexit, except it has been done quietly, and without any internal debate.

As someone who was closely involved in both the International Federation of Journalists and the EFJ for 24 years, I know well that there have long been tensions over their respective roles and responsibilities. Splits in recent years have undermined international solidarity and weakened both organisations.

Now the NUJ is adding to these divisions. This will only make matters worse. Part of the argument is focused on the idea that the 'Eurocentric' approach of the EFJ is at odds with union solidarity globally. This is an echo of the anti-Europe rhetoric of Gove, Farage and Johnson in their successful campaign to get Britain out of the European Union.

As far as I know the NUJ is the only UK and Ireland national union to split with

a European industry federation in the post-Brexit era. This breaks with the united front that the TUC has maintained since Brexit. It is a shameful decision.

Aidan White
Member of Honour, former
NUJ National Officer, general
secretary International
Federation of Journalists and
general secretary European
Federation of Journalists

...not Little Englanders, nor Little Europeans

As a founder member of the European Federation of Journalists the NUJ's core commitment has always been the promotion of international solidarity. The EFJ was established as a European regional group of the International Federation of Journalists.

When the EFJ leadership decided to push through a motion changing the rules to allow non IFJ members into the EFJ – including non-unions – the NUJ

was forced to review our relationship. One-third of the EFJ's elected leadership now comprises of representatives of unions who have split from the IFJ and it is surprising that Aidan has not referenced the damage caused to international solidarity by the co-ordinated exit of a group of European unions from the IFJ.

The EFJ steering committee this year considered producing its own press card in competition with the IFJ. Last year the NUJ was excluded from motions

circulated by the EFJ general secretary in the name of so-called European unions.

Aidan is aware that the relationship with the EFJ has long been discussed at NEC and was the subject of a specific motion at DM 2023. To imply that Continental European branches, in particular, should have been consulted is reflective of a view that the EFJ is really all about relations with the EU. That's a surprising and disappointing perspective.

EFJ membership is not linked to the

EU. It is precisely because of the NUJ's commitment to internationalism that we are not prepared to be part of a body which no longer fulfils its function as a regional body but frequently act in opposition to the IFJ.

We are neither Little Englanders, nor Little Europeans.

Seamus Dooley
NUJ assistant general secretary

Thank you for your feedback!





Cecil Purdy

Hugely respected local journalist and NUJ life member Cecil Purdy has died in his 94th year in his native Cookstown, Co Tyrone.

Cecil was a strong trade unionist. He was a stalwart of the union's old Mid-Ulster Branch. This covered a large and mostly rural part of Northern Ireland.

Cecil was one of a handful of dedicated activists who held the scattered membership together over many years. It was always a hard struggle and activity fell away in the changed situation after the mid-1980s. Eventually, the branch was wound up and Cecil became a member of the Derry North West Ireland branch. Unfortunately, age and health prevented his playing an active part there in later years.

He contributed significantly to the union. He represented us on the National Council for the Training of Journalists. He was on the union side in a series of meetings with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the former police force in Northern Ireland. Those led to the police providing a much better information service to the media.

Cecil was an old-style journalist, in the best sense. He was noted for the excellence of his shorthand. He had an unparalleled knowledge of his home area of East Tyrone and South Derry. He made that knowledge available to readers, and the community held him in the highest regard. Court staff particularly respected him.

It was a time when a big part of a journalist's work was

covering the petty sessions in many quite small towns. (Petty sessions have long been abolished, replaced with more centralised magistrates' courts.)

Northern Ireland's Troubles were particularly intense in his home patch. Throughout those years, he was admired for reporting that was both sensitive and accurate.

He was also keen to help train up younger colleagues. He insisted on fact-checking and balance in reporting. A common piece of advice from Cecil was: "If in doubt, leave it out."

He was one of the last of a whole generation of journalists. His death removes a link with the Northern Ireland local press of the post-World War Two years.

Cecil began his career with the Tyrone Courier in Dungannon. Quite early in his career, he moved to the Mid-Ulster Mail in Cookstown. There he stayed until retirement.

He also regularly supplied copy to the regional dailies in Belfast and to broadcasters, which brought local stories to a wider audience.

On a personal basis, Cecil was known to enjoy a game of darts. He played bowls for a local club. Cookstown has a strong hockey club, and he was a big supporter.

He was predeceased by his wife Dinah. He is survived by his daughter Laura and son Norman as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Anton McCabe

Michele with South Yorkshire branch members Alan Yearsley (left), Phil Turner and John Quinn (front)



Michele Vincent

Hundreds of mourners attended the service and tributes for former Rotherham Advertiser reporter and NUJ member Michele Vincent, who has died aged 69.

Michele, who was described as a lover of life and all living creatures, died on February 29 after a short illness. She worked at the Advertiser, under the independent ownership of Garnett Dickinson Publishing, as a reporter and district news coordinator between 2000 and 2014 – returning afterwards on a regular basis – making many friends across the community. For 20 years, Michele was secretary of the NUJ's South Yorkshire branch.

Phil Turner, former veteran father of chapel at the Rotherham Advertiser, said: "It was a privilege for me to work with Michele, much of that time sitting across from her on the opposite desk in the Advertiser newsroom.

"She was kind, caring and compassionate – wearing down even the grumpiest colleague (and that's saying something) with her good humour and legendary politeness. But she was always a principled trade unionist and socialist, supporting the Palestinians and strikes, opposing injustice, racism, sexism and LGBT+ discrimination.

"As a trainee in 2005, she unhesitatingly joined our chapel's pay strike – and the picket line – despite the risk to her apprenticeship. As union rep, Michele was the first person to go to for support in a dispute – a dear friend and loyal colleague.

"Michele will be sadly missed and fondly remembered by all who knew her."

Julia Armstrong, chair of South Yorkshire NUJ branch, said: "Michele was a dedicated and active member of the union and acted as our branch secretary for many years. She was always an absolute joy to work with and a very caring person, for instance in giving excellent support to an asylum seeker branch member. We all miss her terribly."

Born in Weymouth, Dorset, Michele attended 12 schools before studying politics at Durham University. She met her partner Geoff in London in 1976 and moved to Sheffield 12 years later, working at the students' union before retraining as a journalist.

Geoff said: "Above all, Michele was a people person, be it with family, friends or colleagues. And strangers, who didn't feel strangers for long. She might have entered the Guinness Book of Records for the number of birthday cards she sent.

"In the many cards that came to her when she was ill and after her death, certain words and phrases were repeated – special, kind, fun, quirky, lovely, funny, loyal, welcoming, generous."

Their son Richard said: "Walks with her would often take a lot longer than predicted as we would have to stop all the time so that she could rescue various things that were in harm's way, such as slugs, snails, bees or, most often, worms."

Andrew Mosley and Phil Turner

Fated to stay in our lanes of language



Once in a specialist niche, you just can't escape, says **Chris Proctor**

It's soothing to hear English mispronounced by football managers. It's like we're all in the same club. Their anarchic constructs, perverted use of tenses and unintelligible mouthing reassure us; their assaults on British syntax confirm that they know the trade. It makes them insiders.

Only last weekend I heard one of their number mention – and this is verbatim – “We’ve come out strong in the second half and then the ref’s shook us with the red for Bonzo.”

(On reflection, it might not have been Bonzo. It could have been some other O, like Deano or Robbo. But it certainly ended in O. All footballers’ names do).

The uninitiated may find it difficult to decipher this patently im-parse-able sentence. Habitueés, though, will find solace in the formula, just as they will applaud the choice of ‘We’ve come out’ over the hackneyed ‘We came out’. After all, ‘came out’ has been around for years. Decades. Julius Caesar was always coming out of Gaul and overcoming Vercingetorix when I was at school.

Jules even had a phrase along the lines of, ‘I came, I saw, I conquered’. Pithy, yes – but dull. A football manager mouthing anything so basic would be laughed out of court (or pitch) even if he had just come, seen and conquered.

I’m impressed that overseas football managers are able to conform with football jargon and its attendant attack on syntax. All manner of nations are represented in the Premiership coaching fraternity – Spanish, Portuguese, German, Australian – and they’ve all mastered English very tolerably (with the possible exception

of the Ozzie). But then, having achieved this linguistic feat, they are required to deconstruct and distort it into the required football Esperanto.

I was mulling this over as I listened to Angela Rayner at a recent Press Gallery lunch. She has a different problem: she wants to rid us of the distortion placed on her words by Hansard. She doesn’t want Hansard correcting grammatical errors. She doesn’t want to be tidied up.

My concern is that when she gets into government, she’ll drive the Hansard reporters from their stalls and cast them onto the streets with nothing but grammar to support themselves. What will they do then? I propose the Premier League employs them to tutor managers in ‘proper-speak’.

I anticipate major change.

“So you got a good thrashing today?” a reporter will enquire of Brentford FC’s Danish Mr Frank.

“I would remind my learned and honourable friend that the impact assessment of a single event is not inevitably reflective of an overall resolution.”

“Are you looking for a back-up striker?”

“This raises the questions of the resources authorised for such purposes, notwithstanding general consolidation, and regarding maintenance of authorised current obligations.”

But, fair play, football managers do their spiel well. They serve up what their audiences want to hear and, like us, they prioritise knowing their audience. It’s as important as hitting deadlines or spelling names.

I imagine, with their niche communication skills, there aren’t many other jobs football managers could turn their hand to. We’re often in

the same position. If we’d like to change specialism, there’s a mountain to climb. It can happen, but generally we’re typecast at an early age like those actors who never escape hospital wards or only appear in *Midsomer Murders*.

Once you begin as a City, motoring, personal finance or sports journalist, you find you’ve signed up for life. You speak the language. It’s easier to slip out of Wandsworth under a grocery delivery van than move desk.

I’ve been on the other side of this. I remember interviewing for a page designer when I was working for the postal union. One application looked spot on: bags of experience, good references and serious enough to have researched our organisation.

I still feel slightly nauseous when I recall the chap scurrying in, anxious to show us some recent work. But he hadn’t been working for unions: he’d been on a medical magazine. So he opened up explaining his choice of columns, favoured fonts and positioning of images – then whisked out a spread of close-ups of mouldy body parts, pus-filled eruptions and severed organs. It looked like the aftermath of a Bullingdon Club banquet.

I’m afraid we’re obliged to stay in our zones. We can only hone our skills by staying in our specialist subject character. When we meet our peers at receptions we will find one of our number bemoaning the temperature or shortage of white wine (food section), another consulting upcoming fraud trials (finance) and another pointing out that it is a meatball slider of two halves (sport). One will be prodding the person in front of her and saying, ‘Give us a fish finger. And where’s the ketchup?’ (Labour Deputy Leader specialist).

Football managers’ assaults on British syntax confirm they know the trade. It makes them insiders



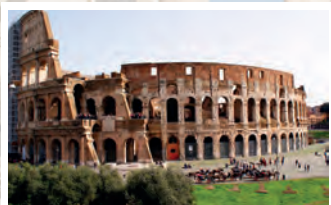
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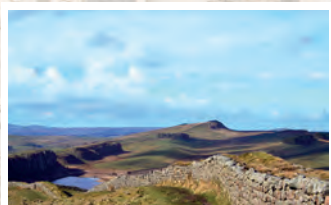
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