MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS

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Rhythm and booze!

Media mosh pit at Glastonbury

Going to Glastonbury this year? If so, spare a thought for the journalists who are working rather than partying there. Well at least that's the plan unless they are those who miss deadlines because they are trying to do both.

Ruth Addicott talks to some seasoned journalists who lift the lid on the challenges of the Glasto gig.

On a more sober note, we also have features on the importance of networking for career opportunities by Linda Harrison; and an examination by Stephanie Power of whether podcasts should be regulated.

On the industrial front Cristina Lago looks at how digital picket lines can be effective in strikes.

We all know that the traditional world order is under pressure along with trust in the media. We have a report on the BBC Director General's view of how the corporation can help restore trust in the news and Ray Snoddy discusses whether conventional media can survive the threats to liberal democracies.

We also have coverage of the NUJ's recent delegate meeting which sets policy directions for the union.

I hope you enjoy this edition whether you're reading it at home, at work or perhaps on Worthy Farm.

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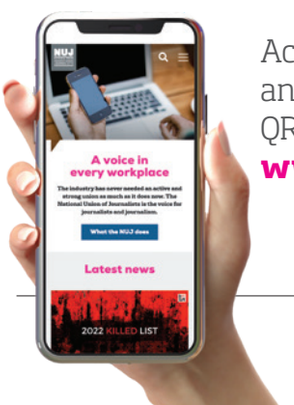

Access all the latest NUJ news and views by scanning the QR code here or by visiting **www.nuj.org.uk**

PA Media plans UK redundancies

BRITAIN'S biggest news agency PA Media is cutting 25 jobs or about eight per cent of its UK editorial staff.

Some 74 roles in the content team have been put at risk while management decides which 25 to cut.

As The Journalist went to press, the NUJ chapel at PA Media, which was officially recognised last year, was consulting its members about a formal response. It was discussing a range of options including industrial action.

Last summer PA Media was forced to recognise the NUJ chapel by the Central Arbitration Committee after a lengthy campaign and recruitment drive by the union. It was the first time the NUJ had been recognised for negotiating pay and conditions at PA since the 1980s.

The planned job cuts were announced by Jack Lefley, the editor-in-chief.

He started in the top job at the beginning of this year, after spending 18 years at the Standard in London where he became acting editor and publisher.

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In February he embarked on a round of discussions with PA Media's leading customers to determine their current and future needs.

As the chapel began consulting its members it gave a statement to PA management saying: "The PA Chapel of the National Union of Journalists is disappointed by the management decision to ignore our substantial contributions to the consultation process and continue to pursue plans to make up to 25 editorial staff redundant. We fear these cuts will affect the quality and quantity of the service to PA customers and ultimately damage PA's brand and reputation for fast, fair and accurate content.

"We are particularly concerned about the impact a reduction of dedicated political reporters in the Commons, House of Lords and Holyrood will have on reporting the day-to-day business of Government and the wider implications that has on our democracy.

"In addition, the cuts to production journalists will delay the flow of breaking news and put additional strain on our already overworked colleagues.

"We have seen little evidence to back up the management claims these cuts are needed to respond to what PA customers most value, and to make necessary cost savings. Indeed, the most recent annual accounts filed by PA Media Group hailed record revenues with growth across all areas of the business and recorded shareholder dividends of £7.5 million.

"In light of this, the voluntary redundancy package on offer is disappointing and poor. Improving this could reduce the number of those who may face compulsory redundancy."

> **We fear these cuts will affect the quality and quantity of the service to PA customers**
>
> ***PA Media NUJ chapel***

BBC aims to restore trust

TIM DAVIE, director-general of the BBC, has warned that the UK is facing a crisis of trust, which may have significant implications for cohesion, democratic stability, and economic growth.

In a speech on the future of the BBC he said the corporation can play a central role in a renewal of trust.

He said the BBC can become: "An institution that builds social capital and stimulates growth in the online, AI age."

He said this could happen through a number of measures including expanding local democracy reporters, increasing the presence of the BBC on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, and expanding the use of BBC Verify around the world.

Paul Siegert, NUJ national broadcasting organiser, said: "The NUJ welcomes the prospect of opening up more of the BBC to local communities across the UK and the promise of building trust through the expansion of initiatives like BBC Verify. This must be matched, though, with proper funding and investment. That means resourcing any expansion with journalists on the ground and considering reversing some of the devastating cuts seen in BBC Local Radio. Local teams are by far in the best position to know what's right for the audience."

More journalists jailed in Russia

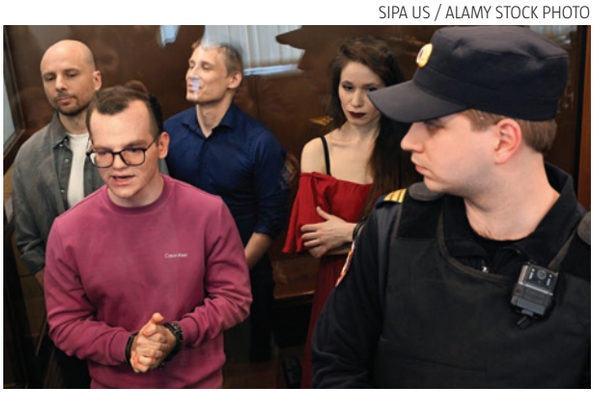
THE NUJ has joined the International Federation of Journalists in condemning the Russian government's continued imprisonment of independent journalists.

In April Antonina Kravtsova, Artem Kriger, Konstantin Gabov, and Sergei Karelin were sentenced to five and a half years in a penal colony following a closed-door trial.

The four journalists were accused of working for the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) established by former opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died in a Siberian prison in February 2024. Kravtsova, Kriger, Gabov, and Karelin argued that they were prosecuted simply for doing their jobs. Their lawyers said they would appeal the verdict.

Kravtsova filmed the final footage of Navalny before his death while Kriger had interviewed opposition politicians and reported on opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

SIPA US / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



NUJ pushes for free expression at STUC

TRADE UNIONISTS must put 'huge pressure' on the UK and Scottish governments to strengthen free expression protections and corporate liability, NUJ delegates have told the Scottish TUC Congress (STUC), Conrad Landin writes.

At the confederation's annual event in Dundee over April 28-30, unions unanimously backed an NUJ motion raising awareness of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs).

NUJ delegation leader Simon Barrow of Edinburgh freelance branch moved a motion that said they "do what they say on the can – they are an attempt by those who are rich and powerful to silence people who might criticise them and hold them to account". He highlighted the case of former MSP Andy Wightman, who successfully saw off a defamation lawsuit only for the company that sued him to enter liquidation.

Barrow said that a 2023 law change at Westminster "has strengthened corporate criminal liability and access to information" but it was "not nearly enough". He said the Scottish Government did not grasp the severity of the issue either. The NUJ motion commits the STUC to "help forge a cross-party coalition" to push for legislative change at Holyrood.

Supporting a resolution on artificial intelligence (AI) from the Scottish Artists Union, Barrow also argued that Scotland's trade union movement must "take the lead" and propose "practical steps" to safeguard workers from unscrupulous tech giants. He urged affiliates to join the fight for legal redress for copyright holders whose work had been stolen to feed into generative AI models, and for AI clauses in house agreements.

Layla-Roxanne Hill of Glasgow branch spoke in the debate on assisted dying, giving an update on the call for a reporting code of conduct adopted by the the NUJ's delegate meeting a few days before. "We're concerned the nuanced views of disabled people and disability groups are overlooked in reporting and in policy matters which have a direct impact on their lives," she said.

Delegates backed another NUJ motion, put forward by Edinburgh and district branch, on the abuse of attendance policies by employers. It called on the STUC to "develop a model sickness and absence management agreement".

This followed a recent case of a newspaper group that instituted automatic proceedings if an employee was absent for just four days on separate occasions over a year.

The NUJ also secured backing for the development of "a media literacy strategy for Scotland".

NUJ

Simon Barrow, Andy Curry, Conrad Landin and Layla-Roxanne Hill

> **SLAPPS are used by the rich and powerful to silence people who might criticise them and hold them to account**
>
> ***Simon Barrow Edinburgh freelance branch***

Worker co-operative paper remembered

SCOTTISH DAILY NEWS
IT'S GREAT TO BE ALIVE!
Golden girl Billie just refused to die

VETERANS of Britain's first worker-controlled mass circulation daily newspaper gathered in Glasgow in May to mark its 50th anniversary.

The Scottish Daily News was launched in 1975, a year after Express Newspapers closed its Scottish operation. The co-operative folded after six months.

The NUJ's Glasgow branch hosted a screening of Norman Pollock's 1976 film about the paper.

Ron McKay, who co-wrote a book about the saga, argued the paper had failed because of its lack of quality and the involvement of Robert Maxwell. He said Maxwell "took executive powers" which "just threw the whole thing into conflict".

George Welsh, who was father of chapel, had worked for the Scottish Express and spent a year on the editorial planning committee before the paper was launched.

He disputed the extent of Maxwell's influence and said "very careful thought" had gone into the paper.

"We were trying to get the Express readership," he explained. "The atmosphere was very carefully created by the editorial committee and the action committee."

Dorothy-Grace Elder edited the paper for six months after its official closure, leading unpaid workers who sold "emergency editions" shaking cans for donations.

"I don't think it's fair to criticise editorial," she said. "We didn't have enough folk on editorial for a start Those of us who were there worked our butts off."

Regarding Maxwell's support, she said: "If you are drowning in an ocean and the only ship that appears is flying a pirate flag, what do you do? Do you just say: 'Oh, I'm just going to drown?'"

LAURA KALLFELZ / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Call to restore media access to Gaza

THE SCOTTISH TUC (STUC) has joined calls for international journalists to regain access to the Gaza Strip.

At the STUC's annual congress in Dundee, the NUJ amended a motion on the war in Palestine to acknowledge the deaths of journalists and call for a restoration of access to the Gaza Strip for international media.

"Since we submitted this amendment, it has become out of date," NUJ delegate Conrad Landin of Glasgow branch said. "At least 171 journalists and media workers have been killed since October 7 2023, including Israeli and Lebanese journalists – but overwhelmingly Palestinian. That's 10 per cent of journalists in Gaza dead – the highest proportion of any profession."

Impartial circulated to a bigger area

AN AWARD-WINNING Northern Ireland title that is celebrating its 200th anniversary has increased its circulation area at a time when local newspapers are perceived to be in difficulties, *Anton McCabe writes*.

The Enniskillen-based Impartial Reporter has expanded from its core area of Fermanagh into South Tyrone.

Editor and NUJ member Rodney Edwards believes the local printed newspaper still has a future if investments are made.

"I think newspaper companies need to know the value and the importance of investing in newspapers," he said. "What we have witnessed ourselves and experienced is that people will still pick up a paper. As long as the journalism is there, as long as you invest in the journalism, the readers will follow."

At its foundation in 1825, the Impartial covered the counties bordering Fermanagh – Tyrone, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim and Donegal. Edwards admitted while stories in those counties were always covered over the years, "we didn't really give it any big details – we didn't really give it the resources it really needs".

The Impartial was the local newspaper for part of South Tyrone "but we weren't really doing enough. We have invested a considerable amount of money into making that happen."

There is now a South Tyrone edition, with a unique front and back page, and some inside pages too. The number of pages has increased from 72 to 88 which "means we have even more content from Fermanagh and South Tyrone" and the border areas of the Republic.

The expansion means the paper now covers a significant part of West of the Bann in Northern Ireland. "We want to be the voice of the West of the Bann, and do what we have always done – stand up for people, hold the authorities to account, to be the voice for ordinary people," Rodney said.

RONAN MCGRADE

Staff at Impartial, whose circulation and geographical reach have grown

There is some good news there for journalists. "We have put together a team of four freelances for South Tyrone," Edwards said.

He is pleased the paper has achieved a good growth in circulation. "To convince anyone to pick up a new paper, I think, is a great thing," Rodney said. The paper is now available in 140 extra shops. It has put on over 1,000 weekly sales.

He finally stressed the Impartial is "a newspaper that's grounded in place, shaped by people and carried forward by legacy". On May 19, it turned 200.

Newsquest owns the Impartial, its only title in Ireland.

For the second year running, the paper was named UK weekly newspaper of the year at the Newspaper Awards. The citation praised "brilliant investigations, in-depth reporting and unique front-page design that made it stand out".

> **What we have witnessed is that people will still pick up a paper. As long as you invest in the journalism, the readers will follow**
>
> ***Rodney Edwards Editor, Impartial Reporter***

Anonymity for armed police opposed

THE NUJ and law reform charity JUSTICE have written jointly to Yvette Cooper, UK home secretary, expressing deep concern over a proposed change in the law granting anonymity to firearms officers subject to criminal proceedings following a shooting.

Both the NUJ and JUSTICE stress that this change poses grave harm to the principle of open justice.

The letter underscores the importance of access to information and securing the public's right to know the details of cases involving police use of force.

Amendments to the Crime and Policing Bill granting anonymity to officers risk shrouding cases in secrecy, preventing sufficient examination of these cases as expected by the public.

The changes would mean firearms officers receive less scrutiny than members of the public accused of committing crimes. Rigorous public scrutiny and the ability of journalists to report on cases involving firearms officers with transparency must be recognised by the UK government as central to public interest journalism.

Laura Davison, NUJ general secretary, said: "Open justice is a crucial, established principle underpinning our justice system but proposals pursued now pose grave harm to public interest journalism.

"Scrutiny through reporting by journalists plays an important role and, without an urgent rethink, government risks a reversal of transparency measures valued by the public, who recognise that a two-tiered approach with one rule for officers and another for the public is deeply flawed."

KEVIN COOPER

McKee honour on Press Freedom Day

LYRA MCKEE, the journalist and NUJ member who was shot and killed while covering a disturbance in Derry, Northern Ireland, six years ago, was honoured on World Press Freedom Day in early May.

The NUJ placed a photo of her on the wall in the Reporter Bar, a pub that celebrates publishing in the city and is decorated with photos and reports of Belfast as seen through the media's eyes.

Lyra's sister Nicola McKee Corner (pictured) attended the commemorative event along with members of the NUJ Belfast and district branch.

Numerous speakers paid tribute to Lyra at a recent seminar commemorating her life during the Belfast Festival of Ideas and Politics.

Recruit, recruit, recruit, say activists

THE UNION will mount a big push on recruitment and strengthening participation in the union after a wide range of motions were given the go-ahead at the delegate meeting in Blackpool.

The call for a plethora of organisational and participatory initiatives came in response to falling membership numbers, widespread job losses in the media industry and big shifts in the way people work so that many now work remotely and alone.

A motion from the union's south west England branch said: "There are upwards of 110,000 journalists in the UK according to Statista.com.

"On this reckoning, little more than one in five UK journalists is a member of the NUJ. This should be viewed as a golden opportunity for the union."

Paul Breeden, seconding the motion for the NEC, said: "It's the job of all of us to find new members."

A motion by the Equality Council said that media organisations have amalgamated and swallowed up regional media groups, causing a decline in genuinely local news.

It instructed the National Executive Council (NEC) to revisit discussions with the Independent Community News Network and Independent Media Association "to seek effective ways of supporting those doing high-quality journalism into the union".

Martin Shipton (pictured) moved a motion by south Wales branch seeking to reach out to many young people who are starting their careers by working alone, often under severe pressure to meet page view targets and who are poorly paid.

JESS HURD

He said it would be great if they could find solidarity with other workers.

The motion called on the NEC to launch a recruitment campaign aimed at increasing union membership in such workplaces, using introductory cut-price subscription deals to make joining the union more affordable for such journalists".

South Wales also called on translators to be allowed to join the NUJ. Andrew Draper, who has done translation work alongside journalism, said translators faced similar pressures in terms of job losses and the impact of artificial intelligence.

> **Little more than one in five UK journalists is a member of the NUJ. This should be viewed as a golden opportunity**
>
> ***South west England branch motion***

Action and training about AI

FULL-TIME and lay NUJ officials are to have training in artificial intelligence (AI) and its implications following a motion by Derry north west branch.

Darach MacDonald said: "The advance of technology has been exponential" and, while this cannot be stopped, "we can harness the resources at our disposal."

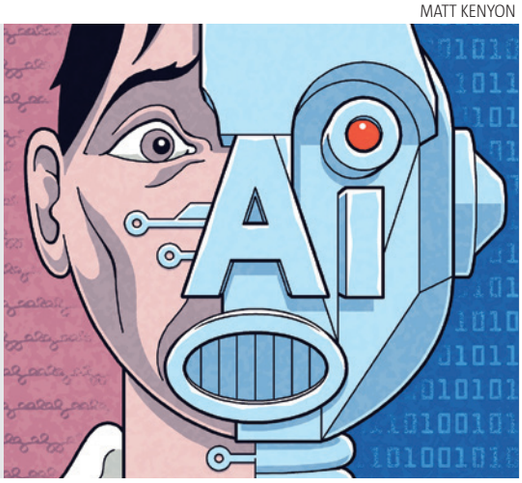
The motion noted that the NUJ's long-affirmed position is that AI is no substitute for journalism.

David Nicholson, speaking in support on behalf of the National Executive Council, said that training is crucial. He told delegates about the Fast Skills Friday course on AI in Wales.

A motion by south west England branch highlighted the potential impact of AI on jobs and workloads and its effect on undermining editorial integrity and public trust.

In another discussion on AI, Jonathan Jewell of the NUJ's health and safety committee said that activity with the TUC's working group on AI should continue.

MATT KENYON



JESS HURD

Honours for Eamonn and Jim

EAMONN MCCANN (pictured right) from Northern Ireland and Jim Symonds from Dundee were given the union's highest award at the delegate meeting – becoming members of honour.

Michael D Higgins, president of Ireland, led the tributes to McCann, who is a lifelong friend. He said the award was "a fitting and richly deserved recognition of Eamonn's life, a life lived with an unyielding commitment to truth, to justice".

He said he was known for fearless journalism and a dedication to workers' rights. Symons' colleague Jimmy Black said that Jim was an indefatigable, passionate and forceful representative who kept the NUJ's Dundee branch going. He had looked after his three children as a single parent and at the same time also studied for a degree with the support of his friends and neighbours.

No increase in membership fees

JESS HURD

SUBSCRIPTION costs for membership of the NUJ are to remain the same for at least the next two years after a move by the National Executive Council (NEC) to increase them failed to achieve a necessary two-thirds majority vote. Any changes to the rates need to be decided by the biennial delegate meetings.

There are three bands of membership. These are based on income, with those in grade 1 paying £18.85 per month, those in grade 2 paying £23 a month and members in grade 3 paying £32 per month.

The NEC called for a modest increase to ensure that the union was fully funded amid a fall in subscription income because of a decline in membership. It had proposed raising the monthly rate for grade 1 by 57p, grade 2 by 69p and grade 3 by 96p.

However, some delegates argued the rates were already a barrier to recruitment with journalists feeling they were too high.

Kitty Holland, from Dublin, said: "We can't recruit on these rates... Think about the people who can't afford to be here, the single mothers, the disabled members... it is becoming a luxury to be a member of this union."

Cordu Krubally-N'Diaye from the Financial Times (pictured) said: "We are one of the smallest and one of the most expensive unions." She said that when she talks to potential members "they expect the rates of Unison and Unite and ours are almost double".

Sian Harrison, who helped lead the recognition win at PA Media, said that the level of subs was an issue in getting more people on board.

Laura Davison, general secretary, said: "I stood to be your general secretary to build on the successes we've achieved... recruit on the bread-and-butter issues." She said she wanted to boost organising and recruitment efforts at a crucial time for the industry "but we do need resources to do that".

Kevin Cooper, a photographer from Northern Ireland, said: "Small professional unions like ourselves need to be funded. I've been freelance for most of my career... we need to pay for the union we need."

Joyce McMillan, from Edinburgh freelance branch, said it was "because we know and we care about [the cost of living], we have a system that ensures that the lowest paid contribute the least".

Delegates voted by 55.86 per cent in favour of increasing rates but the union's rules state that subscription changes need a vote in favour of two-thirds.

A composite motion that included a call by London Freelance Branch for the introduction of a grade for members earning above £50,000 a year also fell.

> **We have a system that ensures the lowest paid contribute the least**
>
> ***Joyce McMillan Edinburgh freelance branch***

JESS HURD

The union helped me get my life back

NATASHA HIRST, the NUJ's outgoing president, gave an impassioned thanks to the union for helping get her life back on track after she suffered domestic abuse.

Natasha, who is deaf and a disability activist, praised the power of the collective. She told delegates: "When I was a victim of domestic abuse and in a women's refuge, I couldn't fathom that I could be powerful, like I couldn't when I played truant as a deaf child because I felt excluded from school activities.

"Any [domestic abuse] survivor knows that justice is rarely achieved and sometimes the only justice we have is to live our lives as fully as we can. The NUJ has helped me to do that. Once I realised I didn't have to negotiate the world alone... it changed my world view... it's so important for people to realise the power of trade unions to make a difference in our own lives and for others."

Natasha said that being president of the NUJ for the past two years had been busy and varied – one day she went to a picket line in the morning and a reception for local journalists at Buckingham Palace in the afternoon.

Can freelances afford to retire?

THE NUJ'S 60+ Council is to work with other unions which have a large proportion of freelance workers to help ensure that freelances save for their later life.

The National Executive Council has also been instructed to research "ways in which saving for retirement can be made a more feasible option for many freelances than it is at present.

The move comes following overwhelming support for a motion from London freelance branch concerned about the low level of retirement provision for those in precarious work.

Jenny Vaughan of the 60+ Council noted that because many freelances were unable to set aside money for retirement, they "just go on working regardless".

TUC pensions conference, page 19

Where careers start

Rory Buccheri reports on a bumper year for celebrating the best of student publications

The annual Student Publication Association's National Conference and Awards (SPANC), which took place in Exeter in April, was the charity's largest yet, breaking last year's record with 260 delegates attending from more than 150 student publications across the UK and Ireland.

Now in its 13th year, SPANC was held for the second year in a row in the south west. The previous host, the University of Bristol's student newspaper Epigram, went home with the most coveted award of Best Publication.

The number of submissions for SPANC demonstrates that students across the UK and Ireland are keen to see their journalistic work recognised. More than 1,320 entries were submitted across 24 categories, almost double the Press Awards' 750 entries in 2024.

"It is important we keep these awards free to enter for everyone," says the SPA's longest-serving trustee and founder of Journo Resources, Jem Collins.

"Our industry is saturated with inequity in so many different ways, and the prevalence of pay-to-play awards only exacerbates this.

"When there's a financial barrier to entering an award – even if it's a small one – you're no longer running a ceremony that's there to elevate and celebrate the best people, but curating a small number of entries from people who already have a support system."

For Harriet Mogie, a third-year student at Kingston University, winning the Best Reporter award was a source of validation and a boost when it came to believing in herself and her work.

"Before going to the conference, I felt incredibly out of place, and very aware I was from a completely different background to a lot of the people there. It's something I have always been aware of going into journalism," she says.

"Hearing the different industry professionals talk about their experiences and meeting more people, I left feeling really optimistic about the future and like I had a world of options of what career path to pursue."

Chances to see your work recognised are also "a calling card to employers" and a "mark of great journalistic work", according to Collins.

"So many of our former winners are now working in the industry doing amazing things. I cannot wait to see what this year's cohort goes on to do," she adds.

SPANC is just the culmination of a year full of events and organisation behind the scenes. As a national charity representing student media, the SPA organises regional events and online workshops, and offers pastoral support to publications struggling financially owing to funding cuts by universities.

"We've now got 232 member publications across the UK and Ireland, and it's mandated in our constitution that membership will always be free," adds Collins. "That's tens of thousands of people able to access community, training and support they wouldn't otherwise be able to access."

The SPA is entirely volunteer run, with a team of fewer than 30 people involved as trustees and executive, project and regional officers.

While conference panels tackled a wide variety of topics from covering your local patch to sketch writing and making your features sing, the SPA's annual general meeting brought up the tricky topic of future-proofing the charity.

"The SPA is where I truly found the people that understood me and support me to this day. I know I'm not the only one who feels that way," says Collins.

"But the SPA is less than 15 years old and is entirely run by volunteers who all do this around full-time jobs and study. It's really, really important that the SPA continues but it needs support – from both our members and the wider industry."

Newly elected chair Matthew Stothard is optimistic about the future, and grateful to have inherited "solid foundations" from former chair Jack Walsh.

"I'm honoured to be leading the SPA into the next year. In the coming year, we will particularly be looking to enhance our offering of training and networking events to ensure our members see SPA support them throughout the year, as well as at our national conference," says Stothard.

A key strategic focus for the coming year is maintaining strong relationships with alumni who are now working in the industry.

"Some of the best careers start in student journalism," says alumni officer Alex Cooper. "We want to connect those who have gone on to make an impact in the media industry with their former student publications. If you are keen to keep in touch with the place where it all started for you, then please join our alumni network."

> **We want to connect those who have made an impact in the media industry with their former student publications**

NICK MATTHEWS

We need to recognise the perils of populism

Can conventional journalism survive threats to liberal democracies asks **Raymond Snoddy**

The breakthrough by Reform in the recent local elections in England, following the surge in support for populist politicians everywhere from the US and Germany to Italy and Hungary, raises serious questions about the future of journalism.

How should journalists respond? In the wake of authoritarian and often bizarre behaviour by President Donald Trump, can conventional journalism even survive the current threats to liberal democracies?

According to broadcaster Sir Trevor Phillips, the rise of what he describes as Right Populism looks set to become "the most severe test of the Fourth Estate's claim to be a vital feature of modern democracies since the rise of hippy radicalism of the 1960s".

The challenge is real. Journalists are facing an anti-establishment force dedicated to tearing up the global consensus on climate change, the value of multinational institutions and the balance between national interests and global responsibilities.

"So far, we are failing the exam," argues Sir Trevor in the introduction to a new book, Pandering To Populism? Journalism and Politics in a Post-Truth Age.

Sir Trevor believes there are difficult questions over the boundaries between reporting and campaigning.

For him, the answer is clear.

"Journalists are not equipped to be moral philosophers or judges. Our job should be that of observers or analysts. Anyone who wants to be an anti-populist advocate should get themselves elected," he believes.

According to Sir John Curtice, the pollster and distinguished professor of politics at the University of Strathclyde, populists succeed by persuading voters that 'the establishment', dominated by a self-serving elite, has failed them. Therefore, a populist party that shares the 'people's values' is the only way to get the country back on track.

Sir John argues that populism is ingrained in more UK voters than just those opposed to immigration. Even when attitudes to migration are taken into account, the apparently growing number of Reform voters are, he explains, distinguished by low levels of trust and confidence in government.

European editor of ITV News James Mates fears journalism is facing "a perilous time" as Europe's populists are "feeling the wind beneath their wings".

We are now seeing the same 'anticipatory obedience' by the media and other institutions in America as happened in Eastern Europe – the bending of the knee to those in power to keep access to that power.

There has been not only a loss of trust in traditional journalism, Mates believes, but also a loss of "shared truth".

According to research by North Western University's Medill Journalism School, Trump won 91 per cent of counties where there was no professional source of local news. Mates fears we may be heading the same way in Europe.

In much of what was East Germany, visiting journalists are likely to be greeted with the words, "Oh, you're from the Lügenpresse" – the 'lying press'.

Mates believes the late 2020s are likely to see a tug of war between European governments trying to fight off vigorous attempts by the White House and US-owned tech giants to push Europe down a populist road.

> **Trump won 91 per cent of counties in which there was no professional source of local news. Such 'news deserts' are often in poorer areas**

Certainly, it is a perilous time for journalism "but not uninteresting", Mates believes.

Like many other journalists and analysts, Bill Dunlop, former editorial director of the pan-European channel Euronews and president and chief executive of Eurovision Americas, the US arm of the European Broadcasting Union, laments Trump's assault on American media and journalism.

Many examples of this, including lawsuits against broadcasters and denying access to the likes of the Associated Press for refusing to call the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of America, are well known. Then there is Rapid Response 47, a social media account that aims to get the administration's opinion out within minutes of breaking news.

"It's an Orwellian mix of re-tweets of Trump's Truth Social rants, clips from right-wing television channels hailing administration successes and Trump-style personal insults about Democrats," says Dunlop.

Yet Dunlop sees reasons for hope. Two-thirds of eligible Americans either did not vote for Trump or did not vote at all, leaving a massive potential market for considered journalism if the media can find new customers. This era will pass, he predicts.

"The challenge will be for journalism to adapt itself and emerge at the other end as strong and relevant as when the era began. With vision and imagination, but most of all with courage, that can be more than met," Dunlop concludes.

Indeed – but there must absolutely be no pandering to populism by journalists and the media.

Raymond Snoddy is a co-editor and contributor to Pandering to Populism? Journalism And Politics In A Post-Truth Age published by Bite-Sized Books?

JUAN ROBALLO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The assistant you should never trust

AI can rehash press releases and do research but can get things very wrong. **Neil Merrick** looks at Impress advice

As anyone who's been stalked by their AI assistant will say, artificial intelligence can be a pain in the neck.

Copilot, the AI assistant created by Microsoft, will happily offer to write the next paragraph of your story – providing you give it a precis of what you require that does not exceed 1,000 words.

Why are so many media organisations getting excited about AI? Is it just a way of saving money, with AI tools carrying out more tiresome research – or are journalistic standards at stake?

Among the sceptics is Peter Jukes, co-founder and executive editor of Byline Times. It is better, he says, to regard AI assistants as over-enthusiastic trainees who are keen to help out but whose work needs careful looking over.

"Never trust that mendacious, eager intern," he told a webinar organised in April by media regulator Impress to launch guidance on using AI in newsrooms.

According to Jukes, AI is potentially a better research tool than Google, with less need to scroll through links that are out of date or promoted for commercial reasons. But that is not to say you can trust AI.

"It does dive a bit deeper but like anything, you [need to], verify, verify, verify," he says.

It is hard to gauge exactly how much journalists use AI or the precise role it plays in creating news. In March, The Independent launched Bulletin, a platform 'for seriously busy people' that uses Google Gemini, an AI chatbot, to create bullet point briefings. These are checked by journalists before publication.

Regional titles owned by Newsquest have been using AI to gather stories from council reports and other documents since 2023. It is up to reporters to input ideas and check the quality of information provided.

Editorial development director Toby Granville told a Society of Editors conference in April that Newsquest employs 36 'AI-assisted' reporters to turn press releases into stories, helping free up other journalists for meatier tasks.

A consultation by Impress at the start of this year showed 84 per cent of members want strong guidance on AI. Half had a negative view of AI, with just 19 per cent seeing it as positive.

Andrea Wills, chair of Impress's code committee, says the regulator is most concerned about unethical uses of generative AI, for example when using tools such as ChatGPT. The committee is keen that publishers employ AI in an ethical and responsible way.

Impress's guidance says publishers should:

> **We must never use AI in a way that's materially misleading but we also want to use it creatively**

Schumaker quotes were AI-generated

- Always provide editorial oversight for AI-produced content
- Be transparent with audiences about AI use, including clear labelling.
- Fact check information produced by AI
- Take care over data put into AI tools and avoid infringing copyright
- Do not use generative AI to depict real events
- Do not share personally identifiable information when using AI.

AI makes mistakes. Research by chatbots and other AI tools therefore needs corroboration in the same way as other sources. In addition, it is biased, with no recognition of equality and diversity.

Matthew Eltringham, a senior editorial adviser at the BBC, told the Impress webinar that, before using AI, BBC journalists are instructed to prompt Copilot and other tools by asking them to create an image of a sailor on a bike.

"Almost 98 times out of 100, you'll get a white male wearing a Jean Paul Gaultier style sailor's outfit on a bike that looks roughly like a Harley Davidson," he says. "Almost certainly, he will have a bit of designer stubble on his chiselled jaws."

An AI-generated 'interview' with Michael Schumacher, published by German celebrity magazine Die Aktuelle two years ago, flagged up the dangers of using generative AI and misleading audiences. Although the editor was sacked, it took another year for Schumacher's family to win compensation.

The BBC is looking into the use of AI to anonymise people's voices, while maintaining authenticity.

"We must never use AI in a way that's materially misleading the audience but we also want to use AI creatively," says Eltringham.

Tech giants such as Microsoft want to be seen to be working alongside journalists, not threatening jobs.

Krishna Sood, who leads on AI at Microsoft, says the firm is keen to collaborate "on solutions that make newsrooms stronger" while creating efficiencies.

Perhaps, therefore, AI should be given the occasional opportunity to prove its worth but approached with extreme scepticism and under no circumstances allowed to set the news agenda or make editorial decisions.

"It doesn't make choices," warns Peter Jukes. "It has no skin in the game."

A precarious and privileged world

Barrie Clement reports on a study of who is working in journalism now

Despite the stated aspirations of the great and the good in the media world, British journalists remain rather upmarket.

Just one in 10 are from an ethnic minority or a working-class background, according to a report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. British journalists are overwhelmingly white, university educated, 'privileged' and far more likely than the rest of the population to have been privately educated. Men are on higher salaries than women, and are more likely to have permanent contracts and occupy managerial roles.

The analysis also paints a picture of an increasingly precarious profession with a continuing shift away from permanent to freelance work.

The 40,000-word study makes depressing reading for those of us who thought there might have been some progress towards diversity.

There is, however, a glimmer of hope for trade unionists. Considerably more journalists identify with the Left since a similar study was conducted in 2015. And union membership, a 'notable feature of journalism', has increased from 44 per cent to 52 per cent, although the report doesn't specify which union...

The analysis is based on a survey of 1,130 journalists conducted between September and November 2023. It found that 90 per cent of respondents were white and 91 per cent university educated. Some 60 per cent were from a family where the main wage earner was a manager, director, senior official or professional and 11 per cent from the family of an 'associate professional' – making a total of 71 per cent from a privileged background.

Around 22 per cent went to a private secondary school, compared with six per cent of the population. Only 12 per cent grew up in a working-class household and they were less likely to be employed by the national media.

Women and ethnic minority journalists were less numerous among the over-50s, which suggests that they may experience less job satisfaction, says the report.

The 2015 study found that 54 per cent identified with the Left; this was 77 per cent by 2023. Around 71 per cent are not religious, compared with 38 per cent of the general population.

Employment conditions continued to deteriorate with some 30 per cent doing extra work outside journalism. The proportion on permanent contracts dropped from 74 per cent in 2015 to 65 per cent in 2023 – a year when the median annual income was between £37,501 and £45,000 after tax. Men, those aged 40 or over, those whose main employer was a broadcaster and those who worked for publicly owned media had higher salaries on average.

Most of us worked from home at least three days a week, perhaps owing to the after-effects of covid and the kind of work we do. The distribution platform most used was websites (97 per cent). This was followed by social media (80 per cent), print (74 per cent), email newsletters (62 per cent), podcasts (56 per cent), news apps (53 per cent), radio (39 per cent), television (36 per cent) and messaging apps (32 per cent). The media format most used was text (95 per cent); followed by photographs (77 per cent); video (69 per cent); audio (67 per cent); and graphics, cartoons, illustrations or animation (50 per cent). Some 79 per cent produced stories using a combination of formats.

Just seven per cent worked in newsrooms that had automated news text production and 10 per cent with personalised news distribution. Journalists felt less secure in these jobs and less free to select news stories.

Just 18 per cent of journalists said they had 'never' experienced safety threats over the previous five years. Gender was significant; some 22 per cent of women journalists had experienced sexual violence in the previous five years and 60 per cent had felt 'stressed out' in the previous six months compared with 49 per cent of men.

Those working for local and regional media gave more importance to roles related to the functioning of democracy, such as to 'provide information people need to form political opinion'.

There was concern that the uncritical use of AI could decrease public trust in journalism. Without doubt, the next study in about eight years will have considerably more to say on that issue...

> **Seven per cent worked in newsrooms with automated news text production. They felt less secure**

UK Journalists in the 2020s. Who They Are, How They Work And What They Think. Edited by Neil Thurman, Imke Henkel, Sina Thaesler-Kordonouri and Richard Fletcher. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/uk-journalists-2020s

Poison, probity and podcasts

Unsubstantiated and false claims can be spread by influential podcasts. Should they be regulated for accuracy and fairness? asks **Stephanie Power**

In November 2024, the Diary of a CEO podcast proudly announced it had reached one billion streams, more than any other UK podcast. A month later, the BBC World Service's Global Disinformation Unit reported the series was amplifying misleading information about health. In an analysis of 15 health-related Diary of a CEO episodes, they found each contained an average of 14 harmful health claims. Suggestions that polycystic ovary syndrome, autism and cancer can be 'reversed' or treated with diet went against scientific evidence.

At the end of one episode, where a doctor said the covid vaccine had had a 'catastrophic net negative effect on society', presenter Steven Bartlett offered a disclaimer of sorts, saying that he was aiming to present different views for listeners.

"I'm not an expert in health," he said, "but I think the place that I've got to now is to present every opinion that I can. And, hopefully, people will be able to make up their own minds."

Hopefully people will make up their own minds?

When it comes to audio purporting to be factual, I'm old school. I was trained by BBC Radio 4. It turns you into a pedant. "It's Trades Union Congress and trade unions," I might shout at the radio. "SobozLIE not SoBOZlie," I say to football commentators. And, Steven Bartlett, it's fewer deaths, not less.

But this misses the bigger point. Sticking any views or misinformation out on a podcast and hoping people will make up their own minds... that's serious.

It is not just Diary of a CEO. Valerie Wirtschafter, a data analyst at Washington DC's Brookings Institution, looked at 8,000 episodes of popular political podcasts in the US, finding around one in 10 included potentially false information.

"Due in large part to the say-whatever-you-want perceptions of the medium, podcasting offers a critical avenue through which unsubstantiated and false claims proliferate," she says.

Ritula Shah is a radio presenter, formerly of Radio 4's The World Tonight and PM, now at Classic FM. She's also on the board of the Voice of the Listener and Viewer.

She thinks some podcasts should be subject to some form of regulation: "It depends on the content. If I am making a podcast about paint colours, as long as I'm not making claims about my paint that would transgress advertising standards, I could probably be left to my own devices. But anyone making a podcast about health issues should have to be able to substantiate any claims."

She says regulation could operate on a complaints basis, like Ofcom: "Whether it is possible to regulate them in exactly the same way as the bounded media is questionable. But I don't think that we can have this mixed environment where you've got very regulated broadcast media and then have this kind of free for all on the side. It's bad for the existing public service broadcasters and it's bad for the audience. There should be some broad editorial guidelines that you operate within."

Do others agree? Shah and I are both part of a group of producers, presenters and executive producers working on programmes from BBC Studios, Wondery, Goalhanger, Tortoise Media, Global, The Guardian and The Evening Standard. There are 47 of us in one WhatsApp group, many of whom are ex-BBC, and we meet online once a week under the banner of The Feast Collective. I asked them, in my own tiny MORI-style poll, whether they thought podcasts should be regulated.

Of the 30 who responded, all but one said they thought there should be some kind of regulation. One suggested a kitemark, a symbol of podcasting excellence. Someone else suggested we set up a group to police it.

Brett Spencer is a senior lecturer and director of the Centre of Podcasting Excellence at City St George's University in London. He agrees this would be difficult, saying that before you even start, two issues would need to be decided.

"First, what is a podcast? We are now seeing the proliferation of podcasts moving from audio to video. So are you regarding a podcast as being audio only? Or is it anything that is audio and video? Do you have to then regulate YouTube?

"The second challenge is: who is responsible? Ofcom regulates TV and radio via the broadcasters BBC, ITV and Channel 4. But for those who put out podcasts – Apple and Spotify etc – they insist they are not the publisher, just the platform. So they are not responsible. Are you then going to hold everyone to account – ranging from people in their bedrooms to massive production companies?

Spencer also says if you bring in regulation, then the bigger shows may be unfairly targeted: "Ofcom works on a complaints basis. So if you brought in podcast regulation,

Further reading

- Brookings Institution research: ***https://tinyurl.com/246c3pmt***
- BBC story on Diary of a CEO: ***https://tinyurl.com/4ab9suty***
- Voice of the Listener and Viewer: ***https://vlv.org.uk***

people would complain about the big shows. It wouldn't expose the next Andrew Tate, growing an audience under cover of darkness. Some of the worst content won't be what is complained about. You will be disadvantaging the most popular content."

Shah disagrees: "If someone is making a podcast with a conspiracy theory and 200 people are listening, that wouldn't be ideal, but you can't monitor everything. But if those 200 people become 200,000 or half a million, then it probably should be hitting radars."

Maybe on a smaller scale, how do I and, more importantly, younger listeners know how to find the truth in a podcast?

Spencer and I both worked at Radio Five Live.

"There's clearly been a change in standards," he says. "You and I used to work in a newsroom, but those days are moving on. This is the democratisation of audio. We are in a changing environment we might not like but it's a change in audience demand. It's very hard to put the genie back in the bottle."

In the UK, traditional broadcasting is regulated by Ofcom. The Broadcasting Code for television and radio covers standards in programmes, sponsorship, product placement as well as fairness and privacy. What it doesn't really cover is podcasts, except those broadcast on BBC Sounds, which come under the code. So, while podcasts are subject to defamation, contempt of court and copyright laws (in the UK), they are not regulated for accuracy or fairness.

I asked Ofcom what they thought about this state of affairs. The response was: "Any changes to the status quo, ie whether podcasts should be regulated more widely, would be a matter for government and parliament."

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport said it had no plans to regulate podcasts but "will continue to monitor this issue and the wider regulatory landscape".

Spencer runs an MA in podcasting, the first standalone course of its kind in the UK, possibly the world. There are student bursaries from Goalhanger and Spotify, and the course has a relationship with 17 podcast companies that provide work placements for students.

"All the broadcast journalism and podcasting students at City do media law and media ethics. The podcast industry could see there was a funnel of people who were content creators who didn't have that background in law or ethics or defamation, or an understanding of what you can and can't say. There's also a proliferation of people from social media worlds and they don't have any journalistic background whatsoever. Industry backs our course because they know anyone from us comes out as a fully rounded individual."

Both Spencer and Shah say the world of podcasting is going through a 'wild west' phase. Shah says the line between broadcasters and podcasters is becoming increasingly blurred. While there are no plans for regulation now, that could change.

The CRTC, the Canadian version of Ofcom, has considered regulating podcasts. On a Teams call, Scott Shortliffe, its vice-president of broadcasting, explained that the new Online Streaming Act had given it authority over online output but largely not social media. The CRTC put podcasts under the social media heading and asked if they made a 'material contribution to the broadcasting system as a whole'. "We do not see right now that podcasting materially contributes, but it is something I think we will be asked about in future because there is a point of view that podcasting is more analogous to radio."

I think our own news and political podcasts do materially contribute to the broadcasting landscape in the UK. But, after talking to Shortliffe, a penny did drop. It all depends how you view podcasts. If you see them as an extension of radio like I have done, it makes sense to regulate. But if you see them as audio on social media, you're wading into a minefield.

Perhaps this whole question says more about traditional journalists trying to navigate a fast-changing landscape, but then again, maybe Shah and I ought to start playing around with a few designs for that kitemark.

Get out there and get on

From finding events to nailing your pitch, **Linda Harrison** gets networking advice

For many journalists networking is 'definitely a dirty word', says Jenny Holiday, a career happiness coach..

"It's associated with corporate life, events with bad coffee and name badges. But that needs to change because it really is a way to get more clients and work, as well as to build your confidence. The journalism industry is a busy place – when I see a post looking for people for shifts or a contract, there are often replies in the hundreds. It's competitive and it's harder than ever to secure work."

Holliday believes the key to effective networking – in person and online – means being active rather than passive.

"You're being present, which shows you care about what you do and you're proud of what you offer," she explains. "You're not lurking – you're showing up. Journalists need to network to get ahead of those pile-ons when it comes to work. When it comes to online networking, standing out is crucial. Networking using LinkedIn can be a 'no-no' for journalists. But, if you want new work and to see the jobs before they land in newsletters, you need to be networking online too."

Love it or loathe it, networking can be a game changer, something Natalie Trice has personal experience of.

Trice, a publicity expert, media commentator and author, says: "Just over a year ago, everything felt like it was falling apart. My dad's health was declining as his dementia deepened, and my business felt like it was hanging by a thread. I forced myself to attend a local networking event for International Women's Day in Devon, hoping for connection. But instead, I found myself in a swanky hotel surrounded by women who clearly hadn't read the memo about supporting one another. I left feeling deflated, invisible and thinking maybe networking wasn't for me."

But Trice joined a Mums in Business International coffee and chat. That one small step changed everything.

"It connected me not only with local business owners – some mums, some not – but with women across the UK, the US and even Australia – and I just wished I'd taken up the opportunity sooner. These were people who wanted to grow, collaborate and cheer each other on and, through that space, I found clients, suppliers, genuine friends and confidence.

"When my dad did pass away, that same community lifted me up and held me together, which goes to show that networking is more than your finances. It's about community."

Because of those connections, Trice has had some amazing opportunities. In March, she spoke on stage in Belfast for International Women's Day, which she describes as a "full-circle moment from where I'd been just a year earlier".

> "It really is a way to get more clients and work

Find - or start - the right events

Many events are shared on social media, so it is worth following journalists or event organisers. Eventbrite is great, and it is worth joining industry-specific groups and pages on social media. For example, Holliday is an admin for the No.1 Freelance Media Women Facebook group, where events are often posted. Women in Journalism also runs networking events.

Some national organisations run events locally, like Business Buzz. Look outside your niche and find what works for you – early mornings, lunchtimes or evenings.

Trice adds: "Put it in your diary, making it a non-negotiable. And go with intention, whether that's finding collaborators, suppliers or simply getting out of your PJs and into the world. The right room can change everything – not just your business, but your life – and I am testament to that."

When she could not find the networking space she needed, Leona Burton created her own. Mums in Business International is now a global community of more than 400,000 women.

The aim is a second date

Adrian Ashton delivers training workshops for start-up business on networking.

He says: "Some people refer to me as spider-man because I have an amazing web of contacts that mean I can always seem to find the person that someone else needs for any given situation."

Four-point plan

- Don't go in without knowing where your emergency exit is (for example, a pretend fake call from a sick relative)
- Always have a game plan. Why are you spending time there instead of working on client projects?
- Remember, you're not there to sell, just to get invitations for a second date with people. The follow-up is everything.
- Try to leave an impression or have an easy way to be memorable when you're following up. For me, this involves my shiny red helmet (I try to cycle to events). Online, it's my Zoom background card - a sea of Lego bricks, a laundrette or one of my oversized props.

Burton says: "As a mum of six building a business around my family, I often felt out of place in traditional networking rooms. So, I created a space where mums and women from all walks of life could show up as they are and find the support they deserve. Networking changed everything for me, and it can for you too, if you find the right space."

Connection before cash

According to Burton, true networking begins when you feel seen, heard and accepted exactly as you are.

"If you have to pretend to fit in, it's not your room," she says. "Focus on relationships, not results, because connection comes before cash. The best collaborations, referrals and opportunities often start as simple, human conversations, so nurture those relationships without expecting instant returns.

"Give first, support, share, connect. Great networkers are generous and, whether it's sharing a useful contact, offering encouragement or spotlighting someone else's work, showing up for others builds trust and community."

Think about why you're showing up. Are you seeking visibility, accountability, creative energy or just connection? Find people who share your values.

Holliday also advises doing some detective work beforehand: "Look at who else is attending. Are there certain people you want to try to make a point of introducing yourself to? See if there is anyone else going who you already know."

Be ready to swap business cards or take people's details. And always follow up, preferably via email or LinkedIn. Networking is a process, not a one-event experience. And avoid a hard sell.

"You're not there to shake hands on a new contract but to meet people and get to know them – to begin the relationship that might lead to work," says Holliday.

"That slow burn might feel frustrating, but it's about building your work circle and sharing what you do rather than sealing the deal."

How to combat nerves

Grace Fogarty is a pitch expert and director at Present With Grace. She helps small business owners nail their pitch.

She says: "Your networking pitch is a golden opportunity to show people who you are, the value you offer and what you are like to work with. Your service, offer or business is like a blockbuster film and your pitch is like your trailer. Your pitch needs to spark someone's interest enough to make them want to take the next step to working with you. Perfecting your pitch is essential if you want to make the most of networking."

To combat nerves, Fogarty advises practising your pitch out loud as much as you can. "Knowing what you're going to say when it's your turn to speak will help you feel calmer," she advises. "Physically preparing yourself is important too, so try taking some deep breaths to calm your nerves. Listen to your favourite uplifting song and put on an outfit you feel incredible in so you feel on top of the world when you leave the house. Your energy will radiate and people will want to speak to you."

Think about what you want people to know about you. Holliday explains: "Sure, you're a journalist, but what's your niche and, crucially, what do you specialise in? Then when you're asked 'So, what do you do?', you have a clear pitch that sounds natural.

"You can also invite a friend or freelance colleague – although I do find that going with a mate means you chat to them instead of meeting new people."

Finally, don't give up if your first networking event isn't right.

"Not every group will be your group," says Burton. "But that doesn't mean you don't belong. Keep going and the right space will feel like home, and that can change everything."

Grace Fogarty, from Present With Grace, on how to nail a knock-out pitch

Fogarty says: "Focus on painting a picture of how you can solve the problem someone faces and how their life/business will be better after working with you. Your audience will always be thinking, 'What's in it for me?' They care about the solution, not the process you take to provide it."

Top tips

1. Be clear on what you're promoting. Focus on one offer at a time to keep your message simple

2. Know who you want to attract. A pitch that tries to appeal to everyone will appeal to no one

3. Keep it short and sweet. Introduce yourself in one sentence by sharing your title, who you help and what you do.

4. Get creative. Don't be afraid to have fun by using language you would normally use when speaking to a friend. Bonus points if you can make your audience laugh

5. End with a clear call to action. Spell out exactly what you want someone to do if they'd like to work with you and keep it simple.

More information: www.linkedin.com/in/gracefogarty

Never cross a (digital

Online activism, including strike action, is proving successful. **Cristina Lago** reports

Technology is shaping how we work - and how we protest. With workers scattered across locations and time zones, digital picketing is a powerful tool.

One NUJ activist who understands the power that digital pickets have to mobilise members and raise public awareness about industrial disputes is Matt Capon, former chapel chair at The Mirror and a member of the negotiating committee during the 2022 pay dispute at Reach.

Capon managed the Mirror NUJ chapel account on X (then Twitter). He created the @MirrorNUJ handle in June 2020 to engage with union members during the covid pandemic lockdowns when staff were being furloughed and the company announced its first wave of redundancies.

"We were all working from home and the best way to engage with people was online," explains Capon, who is now a freelance video journalist and a visiting lecturer in the Department of Journalism at City University. "I kept the account ticking over because I could see that having an online presence was important for union and audience engagement. It helped draw together new and existing NUJ members, younger and older."

Through the X account, Capon kept his chapel members up to date with developments during the dispute at Reach while also attracting new workers to the union, which saw a large influx of young members on the back of the negotiations.

Mirror teams that would usually work separately, such as the national sports desk and the Westminster political reporters, would come together thanks to the online organisation orchestrated through the X digital picket.

The account also helped interaction between NUJ branches and other trade unions and counteracted publicly in the Twittersphere Reach management's line about the dispute.

A shifting from stereotypes

Despite these results, Capon says membership-led bodies and trade unions "are very scared of" the digital pickets concept.

"One of the problems trade unionism has is that we use a language that can be very archaic: signing off with 'solidarity', calling people comrades... Online engagement doesn't suit that type of vocabulary and isn't comfortable with internet culture or web audiences," Capon says.

Digital pickets talk about what's going on and why people are going on strike in a way that is "free from preconceptions", but activists can struggle to find a middle ground between the official union line and a language that is more free flowing.

"Those two languages are not always compatible," adds Capon. "Online, you have to work really hard to shift away from the stereotype of, 'Oh, so you're an unhappy union member and of course go on strike.'"

Among posts plastered with the #JoinAUnion hashtag and links to the NUJ's website, The Mirror chapel's X account is full of memes and gifs popular in the internet culture with a twist relating to the Reach dispute. (The account's bio includes: 'Check back here for updates, sarcasm and memes.')

Law on online picketing

The Trade Union Act 2016, which came into effect on 1 March 2017, introduced restrictions on trade unions, including the requirement to appoint a picket supervisor who must be readily identifiable on the picket line, familiar with the Code of Practice on Picketing, and carry a letter of authorisation.

It is unclear how this would work in a digital picket line designed to prevent workers from working online. Digital trade unionist activities are developing and no legislative framework governs digital organising.

The Employment Rights Bill, expected to come into force next year, should remove some of the provisions that the Trade Union Act introduced, including the requirement for the union to appoint a picket supervisor.

"That's going to be quite a comprehensive overhaul of existing legislative provisions, including those that relate to picketing," explains Neil Todd, partner at Thompsons Solicitors' trade union law group.

Neither the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 nor the Trade Union Act cover picketing or were designed with a digital element in mind, he adds.

Todd adds that the Code of Practice on Picketing is about conventional picketing in person: "It isn't considering digital picketing activity."

The Employment Rights Bill does not deal with picketing but recognises the importance of digital activities for trade unions. For example, it provides for them to enter into access agreements with employers. These enable union officials to meet, support, represent, recruit or organise workers and/or to facilitate collective bargaining.

These rights comprise physical access to a workplace and/or the right to communicate (including digitally) with staff. Unions were keen to secure these because of the importance of digital access in engaging and recruiting members.

EKIN YALCIN / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

) picket line

"When there were management meetings about what was happening in the preamble to the strike, I would have a meme or video ready that I could post while they were in the middle of the meeting," continues Capon. "It wasn't designed to put [management] on edge but instead to be reactive in a way that email or newsletters can't be. It was designed to be used online in a way that changed that communications mix."

One of the memes Capon is most proud of is 'Spider-Man Pointing at Spider-Man', which pokes fun at the Daily Record using Mirror copy in its 1 September 2022 issue to make up for a shortfall in original content because NUJ Scotland members were out on the (physical) picket line. Ten of the first 17 pages of that day's Daily Record had been copied from the Mirror.

The meme, well known among millennials and Gen Z, is from a 1960s episode of the Spider-Man cartoon series, featuring two Spider-Men accusing each other of being impostors. The meme has been widely used since the early 2010s, often to mock people or groups that claim to be different but act similarly.

Capon also ran polls asking users how they felt about the introduction of a four-day working week in the newsroom (93.5% of the 123 votes received supported the idea) or if they would consider leaving journalism for a better paid job (68.4% of the 76 users who voted said 'yes, it's a no-brainer').

Backfiring risks

However, Capon says that the content he was creating through the X account and his style were rubbing some officials at the NUJ London headquarters up the wrong way.

"I know that but I didn't really care because the account wasn't to satisfy Headland House," Capon admits. "It was to engage with people and make a talking point. A picket line online needs to have that sense of energy about it that isn't rooted in older, more traditional language."

In response to these remarks, NUJ senior organiser Andy Smith says: "The use of social media by the Mirror chapel really helped engage members during a dispute that involved a large number of remote workers. We do need to make sure the language we use is appropriate for the people we're addressing and the medium we're using but there will be differences in style and content between official union comms and anonymous Twitter posts."

Smith's colleague Chris Morley, Northern and Midlands senior organiser, adds that Capon did "valuable work" as an NUJ Mirror rep to engage existing and new members. Nonetheless, he makes a distinction between "communicating internally to members and on social media to the outside world".

"Matt had particularly good skills in getting a union message out on social media that could resonate with those who might be on those platforms," Morley says. "Our members are journalists who now must use social media extensively for their jobs and are usually best placed to assist in local campaigns.

"But there are certainly risks with social media and great care has to be taken in making sure reps do not overstep the mark and open themselves up to disciplinary action or expose the union to damage legally. It can be a very useful weapon in a campaign but could also easily backfire."

Cooking up a boycott

Last year, The Times Tech Guild, the union representing tech workers at The New York Times (NYT), asked readers "to honour the digital picket line" and not play popular NYT games such as Wordle and Connections or use the NYT Cooking app during their strike action.

Morley warns about the unintended consequences that a digital picket calling for a product or advertiser boycott could have on workers as this could be perceived as an "attack [on] core revenue for the media business in dispute".

"Members in dispute are normally quite cautious about that because of the potential for it to harm the business to which they will need to return to earn their living. It is also true that when the financial basis of a company is directly targeted, the reaction of management is likely to be more severe," he says. "In my experience, this is deemed a nuclear option to be used in only the most exceptional of circumstances."

Mirror memes: grumpy cat and the Spider-Men memes were reactive and immediate in a way email or newsletters cannot be

JUSTIN KASE ZFIVEZ / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Pensions job only 'half done'

Reforms to boost saving – and riskier investment – were the topic of a TUC conference. **Jenny Sims** reports

Something had to be done. People weren't saving enough for retirement, so auto-enrolment was introduced with government cross-party support. It was a great success, but the job's only 'half done' union leaders, policy analysts, politicians and other speakers at the TUC's pensions conference 2025 agreed.

Today, despite auto-enrolment, people still are not saving enough for retirement, particularly freelances, the self-employed, women and low earners.

In recognition, and to tackle wider pensions savings and investment issues, the government is to publish a pensions review (phase 2) and also introduce a pensions bill later this year.

The TUC is supportive, in principle, of the government's aim to ensure a better financial future for all retirees. However, leaders expressed concern about. They were also worried about the increased freedoms to 'risk take' by the new mega pension funds; the composition of boards of trustees because of increasing numbers of professional trustees compared with employees or union representatives. In addition concern was expressed about the governance of boards and transparency.

The last keynote speaker of the day, Nausicaa Delfas, chief executive of the Pensions Regulator, summarised: "After decades of hard work... in the pensions world, we're all at an inflection point. We have a chance to build on the success of the past and make pensions work for everyone.

"The pension challenge facing us as a society is the need to make sure that after 20, 30, 40 years of pension savings, people have enough to support themselves financially in older life."

She said that the fact that for the first time, eight in 10 workers now invest in pensions was "a fantastic success story – but a story that's only half written" because many people still face uncertain outcomes in later life. She acknowledged the issues are particularly acute for women and low and medium earners.

She went on: "We have a generation of people who were never offered a pension when they joined the workforce, who missed out on the defined benefits system which were available to some, and have since only been automatically enrolled in defined contributions much later in life."

The next stage of reform will be "to make the system as best it can be to improve outcomes for pension savers," said Delfas.

The pensions bill is expected to introduce measures that will radically reshape the market. It will aim to prevent people with defined contributions from losing track of their pension pots saved with different employers. Electronic dashboards will enable people to "connect with their pensions".

At the start of the conference pensions minister Torsten Bell, former chief executive of the Resolution Foundation, said the second stage of the pensions review will aim to "start the country investing in its future".

He pointed out the UK is a low-investing country: "Only one G7 country, Germany, invests less than us."

Kate Bell, TUC assistant general secretary, expressed the TUC's willingness to work with government, employers and unions on the pensions review.

Though supporting more risk-taking by the big pension funds, including local government pension funds, the TUC wants to see more employee and pensioner membership on trustee boards to ensure regulation, oversight and good governance.

Key points of the review include:

- There will be far few fewer but larger pension funds, with the aim of reducing management costs and getting better returns for savers
- The government wants funds to be bigger risk takers and invest more in the UK and in structural projects such as solar panel farms and new reservoirs
- Some local government funds have already accessed the National Wealth Fund to invest in community projects
- Concerns were expressed about the governance of pension boards. The TUC and others are calling for more employees and savers to be represented among trustees.

Wrapping up at the end of the day, Jack Jones, TUC policy officer for pensions, told a packed hall of union members it was likely to be the last time they would be able to hold their annual pensions conference at Congress House, a grade II listed building, and the TUC's headquarters in central London. (It has been up for sale since 2024.)

Only a few weeks after Jones' prediction, it was confirmed that Congress Centre will cease trading as a conference and events venue on June 30.

Ruby Chagger, the centre's conference and sales manager, said: "After more than 25 years delivering world-class events in our iconic building, we're saddened to have reached the end of this era."

> **A generation were never offered a pension when they joined the workforce and were only automatically enrolled much later**

LLEWELLYN / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The stamp of authenticity

Invisible watermarks that cannot be erased should protect trust and creators, says **Andrew Wiard**

Can I believe my eyes? Is this real? This tiny button within online pictures may soon reveal the answer. It's the newly launched Content Credentials icon (CCI). I prefer to think of it as the symbol for authenticity (or otherwise). Although created mainly for photographs, it is also being developed to cover audio and video productions.

This is not some kind of inert kitemark. It's interactive. One click triggers what the art world – where fraud detection is a serious business and millions are at stake – calls provenance. Right there on screen.

It starts, crucially, with origin – is this a photograph? Or a photorealistic creation of generative AI? Then, as the photographer (or other producer) decides, this is followed by its life cycle, any modifications and a range of other information, which could include authorship and ownership.

The CCI is the culmination of the work of the Content Authenticity Coalition (CAI), instigated by Adobe and now supported and developed by the widest possible range of organisations.

How does it work? Some cameras already insert the necessary code into photographs as they are taken. Some AI companies do the same with every image generated. Adobe itself both recognises and preserves the code in camera originals, and encodes its generative AI pictures (selling you either fact or fiction).

If the origin is not automatically encoded on creation, it can be added later using open source code or through Photoshop or other Credentials compliant software. Other information can be added, such as notices of subsequent modifications to the image, including which tools and processes were used to make those changes.

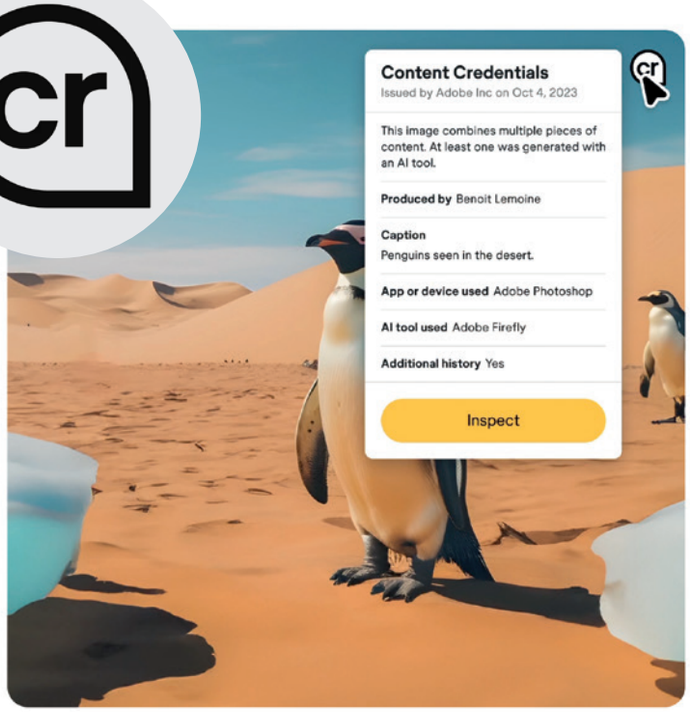
The goal is trust and authenticity – but the CAI is careful not to assert that Content Credentials guarantees 'truth'. What it guarantees is provenance – origin and history.

How reliable is the guarantee itself? Adobe and partners are going to considerable lengths to preserve and cryptographically seal the information recorded, including any changes, using both invisible watermarking and digital signatures. The procedures and technical details are beyond the scope of this article, but the crucial point is that they are designed to ensure that its integrity does not rely solely on image metadata, the usual source of provenance information.

This is because, like all metadata, it can be altered or stripped out, intentionally or otherwise. And it cannot be locked. The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1998 offers only limited protection. It prevents removal of metadata, but only insofar as it identifies the copyright owner. It requires intent, so is ineffectual against the defence of innocent infringement. It's unlikely to be made an absolute liability offence any time soon.

Adobe has pioneered a solution to this previously insuperable problem without the need for legislation. Here's how. By using the cloud. No, not their paid-for Cloud subscription service – this one is separate and free to all Photoshop and Lightroom users. In seconds, photographs can be uploaded there, leaving a thumbnail and duplicated metadata, then returned to the photographer for publication. If metadata is then stripped, the CCI can redirect viewers to identical information, all there secure on the cloud.

> **This is not some kind of inert kitemark. It's interactive. One click triggers provenance. Right there on screen**



That's Adobe. Others will be planning similar schemes. Software will need to be Content Credentials compatible. Websites and platforms will need to recognise the CCI. Web browsers too. So far, Chrome has the necessary extension. All this is, as they say, a work in progress, still under development.

There's a grand design but no controller. Technical standards and specifications are set by the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA), combining the work of the CAI and Project Origin, a Microsoft and BBC initiative tackling disinformation in digital news.

It all depends on participating organisations – publishers, software companies, social media platforms, agencies, broadcasters – choosing to adopt the process and putting in place the tech to enable it.

They will be establishing a world standard – de facto, without the need for legislation and complicated international treaties. In adopting this CCI process, organisations, international and otherwise, will be formally endorsing it.

It's not a new method; this is how the International Press Telecommunications Council set the global metadata standards upon which Content Credentials now relies.

Given the numbers and authority of those involved, this can surely now be only be a matter of time. What the icon displays will become required reading. Absence of evidence is not evidence of fraud but, in our business, trust is of the essence.

In future years, the CCI should become as ubiquitous as the copyright symbol. This is an idea whose time has come.

APEX NEWS AND PICTURES AGENCY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Mud, sweat and beers

Ruth Addicott gets the lowdown on creating on-site Glastonbury publications

Flying over Glastonbury in a helicopter with the late photographer Mick Hutson, leaning out and looking for the ultimate shot, is an experience Pat Gilbert will never forget.

It was 2008 and Gilbert was editor of Q Glastonbury Review, a 72-page magazine produced and sold on site from 2003 to 2013.

"It was mad," he says. "There was a staff of 25 – seven photographers, 10 writers, picture editors, sub-editors, and so on, and we were billeted in caravans and tents backstage. I always saw it as being like Mash, the TV series about the hospital in the Korean war and we all took to wearing Hawaiian shirts and combat fatigues."

The magazine went to press on Sunday night and was bussed to the site on Monday morning.

"It was very difficult keeping order because some people couldn't help but get caught up in the festival atmosphere," says Gilbert.

One writer went to review the dance tent and was meant to come back and do the write-up the following morning.

"He turned up about midday, covered in green body paint, half naked," recalls Gilbert. "He had no recollection of the night before, let alone be in a fit state to write about it."

The lack of sleep, alcohol, basic conditions and constant deadlines took their toll and tempers got frayed.

"People got fed up and were missing their loved ones, they'd be crying, there'd be people losing it," he says. "It was a long five days down there at times."

Gilbert remembers one year being particularly memorable. At 9pm on the Sunday night, the photographer who was supposed to betaking pictures of the headliner for the front cover had his camera and £2,000 equipment stolen in the pit. They had no front cover, the sub had gone to see Elvis Costello and there were two pages incomplete. After frantically writing copy and finding a new front cover, the line went down and the tech guy said: "I don't think it is going to go to press."

"We were sitting there for about an hour, waiting," recalls Gilbert. "Then, about midnight, he said, 'They're there – they can print'."

Jon Bennett was founding editor of Q Glastonbury Review when it was launched in 2003. His tactic was to send the older, teetotal members of the team to the later shows as they were less likely to go AWOL.

"Temptation was everywhere – it was like trying to herd cats," he says.

Bennett's first experience of Glastonbury was 1995, after a nine-hour journey from Newcastle in his Mini. "The first thing I saw was people jumping over the fence and you could hear

Be prepared and just keep smiling

If you are asked to cover the festival for the first time, take a few tips: Entertainment journalist, Jon Bennett, says: "Glastonbury has always been about who you know. Try and get stuff set up before you go."

David Hutcheon, Mojo's world music correspondent, recalls the days when it was a CND festival and the "battalions of police looking for a fight". His advice is: "Don't take a car, camp on elevated ground, visit all the fields, take earplugs, spare earplugs and, if you're doing a write-up, be a punter, not a backstage sage."

Music journalist Phil Sutcliffe recalls the time he was nearly set upon in the middle of a Leonard Cohen set: "I was being an old geezer saying, 'Please stop talking, people here want to listen'. There was about five of them and they looked as though they were about to kill me." His advice is to "keep smiling" and move to a better spot.

BRIAN RASIC/GETTY IMAGES

drug dealers offering Es and wizz constantly, it was pretty lawless," he recalls. "That changed after '99."

After the 'super fence' was built in 2002, the event became more mainstream, professional and profitable.

The other change was access. In the early days, artists shared the backstage bar with journalists. Now, Bennett says, there are 'worlds within worlds' and, unless you've got the clout and contacts or work for the BBC, it is much more difficult.

"We used to have a section called 'How was it for you?' asking celebs about their weekend," he recalls.

"In 2004, when Oasis played a show that was uniformly regarded as disappointing, I walked up to Liam Gallagher and went 'What did you think of last night?' He went 'I didn't like it'. I said 'Why?' and he went 'I don't like Glastonbury full stop. It's full of students.' There was no PR with him, no shepherding."

Bennett says the shot in 1995 of Robbie Williams in a red tracksuit with Liam Gallagher would be harder to get today.

"It's like when you get on a plane and you turn left or turn right," he says. "Even though you're in the supposed hospitality area, there is another cordoned-off area which is where Kate Moss is, who is spending 20 grand for three days on a Winnebago."

Matt George, news editor at PA, has also seen a transformation. He first went as a reporter for the Western Daily Press to cover the drug dealing and stabbings in the early 1990s. In 1995, the paper started working with Michael Eavis and launched a magazine that was produced and sold on site.

"That was quite a difficult undertaking in those days as there was no mobile communication at all," he says.

They sent the photos back to Bristol with friends on motorbikes and they had to write all the reviews by hand and take them to the Oxfam tent, which was the only place on site they could find a fax machine.

"You couldn't head there until after midnight when the bands had finished, so it turned almost into a 24-hour day," says George.

He also recalls "the mud" of 1997. "We were driving down in the van and there were police warnings for people not to show up because conditions were so bad. It felt like we were driving towards a hurricane or something."

Aside from trying to keep sheets of A4 paper dry, the physical effort trudging back and forth to the Oxfam tent still haunts him to this day.

One of his favourite memories was flying over the festival with the photographer in a hot air balloon. His worst was in 1998, when a sewage truck went past and, instead of siphoning up all the sewage, blew it back out.

"The stage sinking was fairly strange as well," he recalls.

BBC culture reporter Ian Youngs recalls sleeping in his car boot as it was the only dry place he could find.

He has covered the festival 10 times, first for the Western Daily Press, then the BBC. He remembers the floods of 2005 when more than 400 tents were submerged and local fire crews were drafted in to pump water off the site.

"That was eventful because I left my wellies in the car," he says. He was wading to his car (barefoot so he did not ruin his trainers) when flash floods caused havoc.

"I could see the tops of tents poking out of the water and this guy literally swimming back to his tent," he says. He got a quote and a picture using his phone (a relatively new concept then).

Neil McCormick has been going to Glastonbury since the 1980s. He's covered it for The Telegraph since 2011, when he says the gig was effectively "to sober up long enough to scramble together 500 words on a Sunday afternoon".

"Now we are feeding the voracious mouth of rolling blogs, shooting video segments for social media, taking instructions from distant editors who are themselves following the non-stop action and picking up threads from the endless BBC TV coverage, with the result that you wind up writing mini reviews and catch-up reports all day and night long," he says.

He wore a Fitbit one year and clocked up over 60 miles. "Glastonbury wrecks me," he says. But, like others, he is lured back for more.

"The impact of hundreds of thousands of revellers singing along at the Pyramid stage beneath huge skies and a silvery moon is something that stirs me deep inside," he says.

"I love Glastonbury, but it is the toughest working weekend of the year for me and getting harder with every passing year."
Neil McCormick, chief music critic, The Telegraph

"It's not like being a foreign correspondent but it's as close as a bunch of music journos get."
Phil Sutcliffe, music journalist

"We vowed we'd never ever do it again and, by next year, we were absolutely chomping at the bit."
Pat Gilbert, editor Mojo special editions, and former editor, Q Glastonbury Review

"Glastonbury used to be a niche interest, now it's like the Grand National – it's like Glyndebourne."
Jon Bennett, journalist and launch editor, Q Glastonbury Review

A snapshot of newspaper history

Finding his pictures spurred *Jeff Wright* to write about how papers were put together in the past

A lot of older NUJ members have probably been there before. An elderly relative dies. The sad business follows of sorting out their possessions. Among them are boxes of old photographs and no one really knows the answers to the who, what, where and when questions.

Recently, I discovered a couple of boxes like this in my own loft. But I'm not dead yet – well, not at the time of writing. I really should do something about these photographs, I thought, before they end up in the post-mortem skip. So I did. I made a book. It won't be on Amazon though, it's just for family and friends.

Two Kodak photographic paper boxes had followed me through changes of job and address over about 60 years. I certainly hadn't treasured them and nor had they been part of a clear-out. They just sort of survived.

Inside the boxes were a jumble of old personal pictures and some memorabilia. And about forty 15 × 12 inch prints, most of which had decorated the front office of the Uxbridge Weekly Post in the early 1960s. After a short time up on the wall in reception, they had been put away in the boxes in my locker and never thrown away.

These images from the early 1960s are the only surviving photographs from my 15-year career as a press photographer. They aren't the best I ever took and they aren't great pictures – just some of the better published photographs that we used to display in the office now and again. Like many photographers in the past, we didn't tend to keep our pictures for posterity.

I went on working as a newspaper photographer for 10 years after these were published but never kept any more. While I worked on four of five newspapers in my career, none of their photographic archives have survived. All went into landfill. Thousands of images that my colleagues and I created, now of genuine historical value, are lost.

I decided to use these survivors as the basis for a book that is a social historical resource, a memoir of what it was like to be a press photographer on a local weekly newspaper in the chemical photography and hot metal days of the 1960s.

Much later, when I left newspapers and took a degree in history and politics, I spent two years doing postgraduate research into the origins of press photography in the late 19th century. The sort of evidence I found most difficult to trace was the basic nuts and bolts of how the job was done. Using the surviving photographs, I chose to go beyond simple captions to weave a wider context, which goes some way towards explaining why and how the images were created.

At the time, every newspaper's photographic department had its own way of getting pictures on a page. I set out to write a 'manual', an A- Z sequence of an imaginary typical job. I wanted to explain how we worked on the Weekly Post to get photographs in that week's paper, and to capture the various stages in the process from job chit to the presses rolling.

The terms 'heyday' or 'golden age' of the press are perhaps overstated. But time is against us as hot-metal journalists, and it's not on the side of the local and regional newspaper.

When I worked in my bit of Middlesex in the 1960s, a reader going into a local newsagents with threepence or fourpence to spend on their weekly local paper had the choice of about 14 newspapers across the different areas. Most towns or suburbs had at least two competing titles to choose from – one suburb, Hayes, had four options. Today, only one print newspaper of that era survives on my old patch.

This represents a dramatic loss of skills: staff reporters, photographers, subs and the various printing trades of compositors, Linotype operators, machine minders and delivery drivers.

> **"It's a small, specific contribution to recording the lost world of local news in a throwaway age**

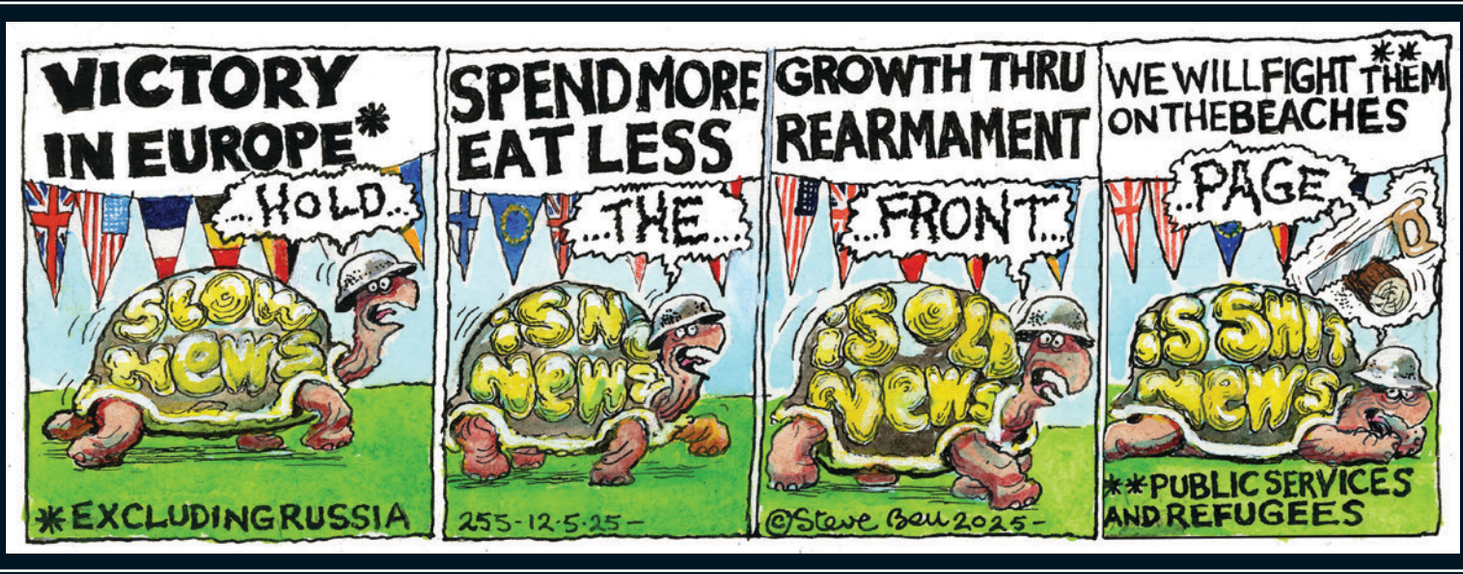
My plan is to donate a copy of the book and the surviving photographs to Hillingdon local history archive, the area of the now defunct Weekly Post. It's one small, specific contribution to recording the lost world of local news in a throwaway age, when what is real, what is true, seems constantly under assault.

If there are other photographers out there who have wondered what to do with their personal archives, whether print or digital, I'd like to encourage them to think about donating their work to their local archives. In fact, any journalists from the hot metal days might consider laying down their memories of the job.

I don't mean yet another book like the ones we've all read of the funny, quirky tales of local journalism. And definitely not stories of the great and good or death and disaster. Just the day-to-day stuff of how we did it – how we got pictures and stories on the page.

Editorial to Photographic
Date Saturday, September 21st
TIME
2 p.m.
PLACE
HAREFIELD HOSPITAL,
[Just past Town Centre]
HAREFIELD.
Other Details
Gordon Fate
[See if Sylvia wants a special picture when there]
Sylvia going

Steve Bell


VICTORY IN EUROPE*
...HOLD...
SLOW NEWS
*EXCLUDING RUSSIA
SPEND MORE EAT LESS
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GROWTH THRU REARMAMENT
...FRONT...
SOW NEWS
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WE WILL FIGHT** THEM ON THE BEACHES
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SSHH NEWS
**PUBLIC SERVICES AND REFUGEES

by **Mark Fisher**

arts

Books

It Used to Be Witches

Ryan Gilbey
June 5, Faber

The New Statesman and Guardian film critic looks at the big screen from an LGBTQI+ perspective, mixing memoir, interviews and cinema history.

The Genius Myth

Helen Lewis
June 19, Cape

The BBC Radio 4 presenter and staff writer on The Atlantic questions how healthy it is for us to buy into the idea of the tortured artist and the rebel tech disruptor. Who gets to be called a genius – and what does it say about the society who named them so?

Comedy

Rory Bremner: Making an Impression

On tour, until June 22

This promises not only politics and mimicry but also candid conversation from the seasoned satirist who is welcomed at each gig by a different host. Find out what happens when an impressionist steps out from behind his masks.

https://tinyurl.com/24u64vjy

Sara Pascoe: I am a Strange Gloop

On tour, June 21–March 29 2026

Just back from a major tour of Australia, the familiar panel-show face stays on the road for the next few months, sharing her sharp observations about family life and post-IVF motherhood.

https://sarapascoe.co.uk

Exhibitions

Wael Shawky

Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, June 28–September 28

This solo show from the Egyptian artist includes screenings of Drama 1882, about the conflict that led to Britain's occupation of Egypt, and Cabaret Crusades, which presents the crusades from an Arab perspective.

https://tinyurl.com/29w7k93f

Abstract Erotic

Courtauld Gallery, London, June 20–September 14

Three pioneering feminist artists, Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse and Alice Adams, are brought together in a group show celebrating the humour and sexuality of their sculpture.

https://tinyurl.com/2575ucs8

Tu i Tam/Tyt i Tam

The Gallery at Loading Bay Bradford, July 3–27

These photographs by Tim Smith and Marta Szymańska show Polish and Ukrainian people living in the UK. The exhibition is part of Bradford's UK City of Culture programme.

https://tinyurl.com/25qu9j9t

Festivals

Galway International Arts Festival

Various venues, Galway, July 14–27

The first acts to be announced in the multi-art form jamboree include Mogwai, Kingfishr and Sophie Ellis-Bextor who is supported by Natasha Bedingfield.

https://www.giaf.ie

Sheffield DocFest

Various venues, Sheffield, June 18–23

Previous guests in the annual celebration of the documentary have included David Attenborough, Stacey Dooley and Idris Elba. The programme includes premieres, discussions and immersive VR events.

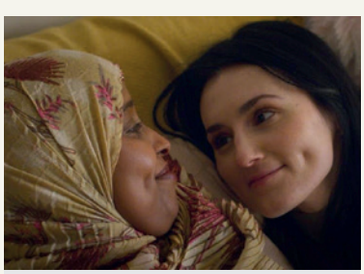
https://tinyurl.com/23mopypr

Films

Lollipop

General release From June 13

Daisy May-Hudson's hard-hitting



In depth

A frank and fearful war story

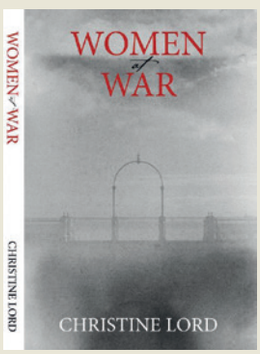
Don't be fooled by Christine Lord's calm and measured prose. In her debut novel, Women at War, the freelance investigative journalist and film-maker writes with the clarity you would expect from someone who cut her teeth at BBC Portsmouth. There is, however, nothing easy about her material.

In what reads as a fictionalised memoir, Lord recounts the closing months of the Second World War from the point of view of German women displaced by destruction and political turmoil.

Although a story of survival, complete with a will-they-won't-they romance, it is uncompromising in its detail of what such survival requires. This is a tale of hunger, death, trauma, racism and rape.

Based on interviews with those who had grown up under the Nazi regime, Women at War focuses on Greta, the 14-year-old daughter of a police officer loyal to Adolf Hitler.

When he goes missing, Greta's mother, Helga, senses the tide turning against her antisemitic worldview and takes her family on a life-or-death trek towards Berlin.



A story most commonly told from the viewpoint of men – be they romanticised heroes or disillusioned soldiers – here takes on a dark edge, as Lord describes the sexual and economic pressures, in addition to the straight-ahead violence to which the women are subjected.

"One serving young officer in the army told me he was glad to have read my book, as it gave him a really good perspective of what it is like being a woman or child caught up in conflict," says Lord, who is giving talks throughout this 80th anniversary of VE day.

In similarly reflective mood, Preston-based life member Barry McLoughlin is the author of Lancastrians on the Frontline, a collection of profiles of Second World War veterans based on interviews across his 50-year career.

In five portraits, the former Blackpool Gazette and Lancashire Post journalist profiles representatives from each of the four armed forces in theatres of war stretching from Germany to Japan, and West Lancashire to West Africa, via the Atlantic and the North Sea.

Women at War, https://womenatwar.uk/

Lancastrians on the Frontline, Progressive Press, https://tinyurl.com/28fjdw53

drama is about a woman (Posy Sterling) who finds herself homeless and separated from her children after being released from prison. Officialdom comes out badly as she tries to rejoin her family only to face a wall of institutional indifference.
https://tinyurl.com/22dfs5wx

From Hilde, With Love
General release from June 27
This tells the true story of communist resistance fighter Hilde Coppi. In Andreas Dresen's film, Liv Lisa Fries plays a pregnant Coppi who is accused by the Gestapo of helping transcribe radio messages from Moscow as part of her work with the anti-Nazi movement.
https://tinyurl.com/2y9tfgfa

Theatre

The Estate
National Theatre, London, July 9–August 23
Adeel Akhtar plays politician Angad Singh who becomes an unexpected leadership contender when a scandal forces out his party boss. Can he make a difference or will his past catch up with him? Daniel Raggett directs Shaan Sahota's debut play.
https://tinyurl.com/264nex6a

Ordinary Decent Criminal
Live Theatre, Newcastle, and touring from July 23
NUJ member Mark Thomas reunites with playwright Ed Edwards to star as a recovering addict who signs up to a liberal prison experiment in the wake of the Strangeways prison riot. Charlotte Bennett directs.
https://tinyurl.com/28gp5m4f

Spotlight

Pits in the picture

In 1985, the NUJ gave a loan for the publication of Blood, Sweat & Tears, a photo book on the miners' strike. The loan was paid back and profits given to a fund for sacked miners.

London magazine branch member Mike Simons has republished an expanded edition with a view to renumerating the photographers whose work did so much to communicate the severity of this dispute.

"I always thought at the time they were poorly acknowledged and today find their work splashed across the internet with no acknowledgement, still less any payment," says Simons.

Some of the pictures appeared in Still the Enemy, the 2014 film Simons helped produce, and in Ken Loach's film The Old Oak.

"We have produced a book that the photographers will be proud of and which will help inspire the next generation of union activists," he says.

Also looking back to the strike – and pretty much every industrial dispute of the era – is Roy Jones, the pipe-fitter turned Morning Star reporter who joined the NUJ in 1982.

Reminiscences of a Worker Correspondent is his memoir, reflecting on everything from Communist Party election campaigns to Rupert Murdoch's move to Wapping.

Blood, Sweat & Tears, Miners' Strike Publishing, https://minersstrike.com/

Reminiscences of a Worker Correspondent, Manifesto Press, https://tinyurl.com/29wnd98y

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STANLEY MATCHETT

Stanley Matchett

Since he died in March 2025 at the age of 92, there have been many thoughtful words spoken by photographer Stanley Matchett's colleagues.

Working for the Belfast Telegraph for many years, he was the consummate professional. While he took time to set up his subject, he was also adept at capturing the fleeting moment as he did with what has been called the iconic image of The Troubles.

On Bloody Sunday in January 1972, he photographed Bishop Edward Daly coming out of the Bogside in Derry, bent over, waving his blood-stained handkerchief escorting the fatally wounded Jackie Duddy as he was carried from the battleground.

The photo was circulated around the world – the impact was powerful. Looking back at the day, Bishop Daly praised the brave photographer who put his life on the line to bring the horror to the public.

Four years ago, Stanley took part in UTV's programme Frontline. He chose to revisit Donegall Street in Belfast, where seven people were killed at the height of The Troubles.

It must have been difficult for him to relive the devastation, walking among the dead and the injured when, through the acrid smoke, he recalled seeing a paratrooper comforting a girl who had been seriously hurt and, again, his picture of the man gently holding the injured teenager made the news. He was moved by the image as were thousands of others.

Although The Troubles were a major part of his portfolio, his was a broad lens, taking in fashion shoots, publicity photos and portraiture. Stanley also captured shots of the Beatles during their performances in Belfast in 1963.

In 2003, Stanley was appointed an MBE for services to photography.

He was named Northern Ireland Sports Photographer of the Year on three occasions; he also won Press Photographer of the Year as well as the Rothmans Press award.

In addition, he was an accomplished teacher. Every year, he held classes in County Donegal, where he took his pupils to beautiful and challenging locations, encouraging them to produce their best work, always with his wife Mo who was both his assistant and his constant support.

Stanley Matchett claimed many front pages and, whether he was working for features or news, he was caring and dedicated, an expert and a thoroughly charming man.

Anne Hailes

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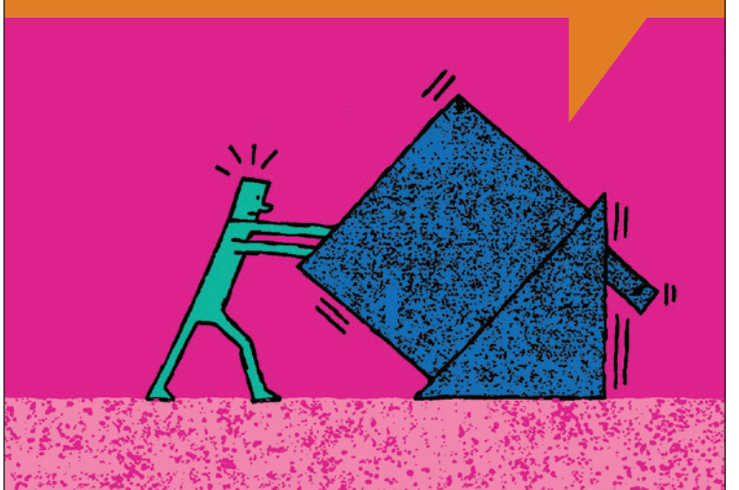

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I miss the papers, even those I didn't much like

The social impact when a title closes is all too often overlooked, says **Chris Proctor**

I've never been to Denmark, and know very little about that land apart from bacon, Lurpak and that it's probably on Trump's 'to buy' list. I knew it had a Post Office – PostNord – because I once interviewed one of its officials but I had little detailed knowledge of its activities except that it delivered letters. Well, from the end of this year, it's stopping that.

It seems a rather unusual business plan for a postal service but I gave up trying to understand capitalism when I realised Karl's magnum opus lacked brio. But, although I never felt affection for the Scandinavian post, I mourn its passing. I feel the same about chilblains and the Hillman Imp – not to mention the News of the World.

People don't appreciate the social impact of losing a newspaper. The demise of the NoW means that vicars with a penchant for knickers and nude skiing can now run around scot-free, confident that no correspondent lurks in the bushes eyeing their eccentricities. Ladies Whiplash flaunt themselves with abandon knowing no newshound peers through their grubby windows. Pop singers consume Mary Juana in open view and Fake Sheikhs, having no natural habitat, are consigned to the dole queue.

I had no great affection for the News of the World but I miss it. For one thing, it gives me one less subject to complain about, which is the essence of the column writer's trade. It also removed a vital tool from my mother's identification kit for which of our neighbours were 'common'.

And now the Indie has gone underground and the Observer is threatened with being run out of town by a ruddy tortoise and London's Evening Standard totters under an assumed name once a week on its rusting newsstands.

My melancholy about the Standard surprises me as I only picked it up for the Friday crossword and I nurture a particular dislike of ex-Chancellor Osborne who edited it for a bit. His only journalistic experience was a short spell as a freelancer – and suddenly he's an editor. Funny how everyone can do our job.

Ozzie's weird. When he was 13, instead of playing marbles and learning to smoke like the rest of us, he was busy changing his name, adding George to Gideon and Oliver. Maybe he thought Gideon was too common.

More pertinently, a friend of mine was given the pokey from the ES Diary, accused of gross decency.

The Standard also fed the public a daily diet of disaster about the capital's transport system. You would see grown men sobbing into the newsprint as they despaired of ever seeing home and family again. Every issue featured electricity failures, malign leaves, undefined incidents and/or staff shortages.

The Standard once ran a front page blazoning the dubious 'news' that Great Western were using second-hand braking systems they had purchased from Tyres Are Us (Belarus). This was on a day that complementary copies were placed on the tables of westbound trains as a treat for passengers.

It was a splendid sight to see them being retrieved, snatched from commuters' hands. Understandably, the train company didn't want ticket holders to ease themselves into their seat and peruse a story advising them that they were slap in the middle of a major safety hazard.

> **You would see grown men sobbing into the newsprint as they despaired of ever seeing home and family again**

The property section dwarfed the news pages. It heaved with adverts for houses I couldn't afford to stand outside, never mind live in. Who, apart from Feathers McGraw, is interested in details of a five-bed semi in Belgravia?

Yet I miss it. Like when you get used to a rash and look for it in the morning.

Do you remember when you looked down the Tube and every face was covered by a newspaper? It looked like a line of washing. And they were useful things to hide behind when someone with a crusty guitar started shouting Streets of London at you. Yesterday's paper Ralph-McTelling yesterday's news.

Mind you, the editions that remain are now scrutinised more diligently since we began worrying that we'd never see another one. At three quid a throw, there's no more browsing and skipping. Every page is regarded with gimlet eye. I even look at the motoring section.

Then there are the largely unconsidered ecological side-effects of diminishing newsprint. No fire was raised in the grate without the assistance of yesterday's papers. Every washed floor was laid with newsprint for its drying capacity. The final buff of a polished shoe relied on them. Not to mention chips. Their unavailability has led to wasteful petroleum firelighters, microfibre absorbent cloths, synthetic sponges and polystyrene boxes. These considerations alone should be sufficient to insist on the retention of proper paper newspapers.

One day, we will come to appreciate how much we are losing as newspapers become critically endangered. We will value our departing friends. Generations to come will be seen trawling the streets, seeking out back copies in bins, like Danes searching for a letter box.

REASONS TO JOIN

The National Union of Journalists

Is the voice of journalism in the UK and Ireland for all media, communications and PR workers. It represents staff and freelances working in newspapers, news agencies, broadcasting, magazines, online, book publishing, social media, copy writing and as photographers and illustrators.

The NUJ supports members throughout their professional careers, provides a collective voice for industrial issues and freelance rights and defends press freedom.

Ending the Gender Pay Gap

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

Be Part of a Collective Voice

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

Respect at Work

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

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