

# the Journalist

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## Writing wrongs

Journalists in demand as fact checkers



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**A**utumn and the beginning of the new academic year can often feel more like a new start than the calendar new year when everything is quiet post Christmas. Schools and universities begin afresh after long summers and the political parties kick off new agendas with their conferences.

We hope that the new student journalists will be encouraged to join the NUJ and stay with the union throughout their careers. In one of our features, Anttoni James Numminen looks at how the NUJ can involve students more and help them play integral parts in the union's processes and democracy.

During the autumn conference season, the NUJ played its part in the TUC's annual gathering which remained – hopefully for the last time – online. We have two pages of coverage of the conference on pages 6 and 7.

Continuing the theme of new starts, Jem Collins writes a Starting Out column on how she turned an idea which was triggered by an unexpected plunge into freelance life, into a sustainable business and a full-time job.

And our cover feature looks at the rise of a relatively new phenomenon – fact checkers, born from a need to counter disinformation culture.

I hope you enjoy the latest edition of The Journalist.

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**Cover picture**  
Pete Baker



# Nobel Prize for Philippine and Russian journalists



**PHILIPPINE** and Russian journalists Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov have jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize for their “courageous fight” through their journalism for the freedom of expression.

Ressa, chief executive of the Philippine digital media company Rappler, and Muratov, the founder and editor-in-chief of the independent Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta are the first from their countries to receive the award, which is worth about \$1.1 million.

Ressa has been subjected to numerous legal threats over her work and Rappler has been

critical of the Philippines’ Duterte administration, including its violent anti-drug campaign. The media group has also been a major player in the global fight against social media disinformation.

Muratov has vigorously fought for his newspaper’s right to report despite the fact that six of its journalists have been killed since its launch in 1993. Those killed include Anna Politkovskaya, a critic of Russia’s war with Chechnya, who was murdered in Moscow 15 years ago. Other journalists on Novaya Gazeta have also been physically and verbally intimidated.

The Nobel Peace Prize committee said that the awards to Ressa and Muratov were “intended to underscore the importance of protecting and defending these fundamental rights”. The committee said: “Free, independent and fact-based journalism serves to protect against abuse of power, lies and war propaganda. The committee is convinced that freedom of expression and freedom of information help to ensure an informed public.”



The awards were intended to underscore the importance of protecting and defending these fundamental rights

## inbrief...

### GUARDIAN SALES MADE PRIVATE

The Guardian has stopped making public its print circulation figures to put more focus on metrics that reflect its “diversity of journalism, readership and business strategy”. The decision follows the same moves last year by the Telegraph, the Sun and the Times. Last year audit company ABC ended its monthly national paper reports.

### NEWS UK STARTS WEEKLY VIDEOS

News UK is launching a video series linked to the Sunday Times as it experiments ahead of the start of TalkTV next year. The Sunday Times Culture Show will run weekly, presented by ex-Popworld presenter Miquita Oliver and the paper’s former media correspondent Grant Tucker.

### BULLOUGH FACES LIBEL ACTION

UK investigative journalist Oliver Bullough is being sued for libel for more than €500,000 in Portugal by Bornito de Sousa Baltazar Diogo, the vice-president of Angola, and his daughter. The claim relates to his book Moneyland: Why Thieves and Crooks Now Rule the World, which was published in 2018.

## FoI campaigners seek rescue cash

**THE CAMPAIGN** for Freedom of Information has launched a £50,000 crowdfunder appeal to keep it going after it failed to renew key grants.

On the crowdfunder site, it says: “We have been fighting government secrecy since 1984. Now we urgently need your

support to help make up a serious shortfall in our funding.”

The organisation, which has two full-time staff and one part-time employee, played a key role in securing the 2000 Freedom of Information (FoI) Act. It was also pivotal in protecting the

rights to FoI after the independent Commission of Freedom on Information recommended imposing fees for requests and allowing public authorities greater exemptions.

You can donate at [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/fight-secrecy](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/fight-secrecy)

## BBC acts on social media use

**FOUR** BBC journalists were formally disciplined over their use of social media during the first year of Tim Davie’s time as director-general in which he introduced new guidelines, the Press Gazette has reported.

Between September 1 last year and August 31 this year four cases among journalists working in broadcasting were formally dealt with under its internal disciplinary policy, according to a Freedom of

Information request by the Press Gazette.

The BBC didn’t provide details about the four cases, but it conceded that more incidents were probably dealt with informally by reminding staff of the corporation’s social media guidelines.

Mr Davie said that staff shouldn’t use social media to express personal views on public policy, politics or ‘controversial subjects’ to ensure the BBC’s impartiality.



### Students start monthly paper

A monthly paper produced by students from Brunel University covering Hillingdon has launched with columns from local MPs Boris Johnson and former Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell. Some 10,000 print copies of the Hillingdon Herald are distributed locally with daily updates on its website. The university funded the first edition, but it hopes future costs will be met through advertising. The editor is Rachel Sharp, a journalism lecturer at Brunel and a former Newsquest editor.

# Unions join forces to help crisis-hit journalists trapped in Afghanistan

**THE NUJ** has been working with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) to help bring colleagues out of Afghanistan following the takeover of the country by the Taliban. Many journalists with close links to the UK remain in hiding, fearful for their lives, with former BBC workers at particular risk.

Michelle Stanistreet, general secretary, has been in regular contact with the Foreign Office and the BBC which, before the Taliban's takeover, had 150 journalists in Kabul alone. A number were evacuated before the airport was closed but work is continuing to repatriate all journalists and their families who want to leave.

The NUJ and IFJ have made urgent representations on behalf of these journalists, yet there was a lack of clarity and frustratingly slow progress in getting assistance and visas to bring them to the UK.

Michelle said: "Journalists associated with the BBC and other western media outlets are at grave risk. There are reports of Taliban commanders calling for BBC journalists to be punished, targeted and attacked as enemies of Afghanistan. The UK Government and the BBC have a particular duty of care to these journalists, and more must urgently be done to secure their safe passage to the UK. We need engaged and speedy action before lives are lost."

Anthony Bellanger, IFJ general secretary, said: "The threats issued against former BBC journalists are credible and serious. Their lives are at risk, forcing many to go into hiding or keep



PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



moving night after night to stay safe. Urgent action to secure the evacuation and resettlement of these journalists with a clear connection to the UK must be a priority for the UK Government."

The union has had urgent pleas for help from journalists. These have been passed to the Foreign Office, which is logging those in the greatest danger.

The IFJ has set up a fund, within its general safety fund, to help Afghan journalists. This has received large donations from NUJ branches including £10,000 each from BBC London and BBC World Service. If you, your chapel or branch can help, please donate at <https://www.ifj.org/safety-fund.html>.



**There are reports of Taliban commanders calling for BBC journalists to be punished, targeted and attacked as enemies of Afghanistan**

**Michelle Stanistreet  
NUJ general secretary**

## All voices of the NUJ

**FREELANCE** NUJ members who have recently come to the UK or who lack confidence in their English will be able to get help from

a new initiative – All the Voices of the NUJ – from London freelance branch. Under the scheme, volunteers who speak a

variety of languages give advice in people's mother tongue, including on how the media works in Britain.

It was devised by Francesca Marchese, who said she felt she had 'slammed into the UK' when she arrived from

Italy eight years ago. She set up a group of Italian-speaking journalists in London that now has more than 110 members.

At the launch of All the Voices of the NUJ, Romana Sustar, freelance journalist

and language tutor, said each country had its own rules and just speaking the language was not enough.

To get involved, email LFB membership secretary Phil Sutcliffe at [philsutcliffe47@gmail.com](mailto:philsutcliffe47@gmail.com).



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# Broadcasting's record on diversity is 'woeful'

**MORE** women are leaving broadcasting than joining and the representation of disabled people in senior positions is woeful, according to the UK's industry watchdog Ofcom.

Its five-year review said that some progress had been made – there are twice as many people working in radio from minority-ethnic backgrounds than there were three years ago, but present trends mean the proportion of TV employees who are disabled will fall over the next five years, and so will that of female radio employees.

Natasha Hirst (above), chair of the NUJ's equality council, said: "This is a woeful performance from the broadcasting industry. Improving diversity requires a long-term commitment and a full understanding of the barriers that prevent workers from under-



represented backgrounds from entering and progressing their careers in broadcasting.

"Glossy policies and lip service about inclusion are an insult to all of us. Employers should work closely with the unions and groups with lived experience to create sustained culture change and opportunities for diverse groups to reach their potential."

Paul Siegert, national broadcasting organiser, said: "We have been telling broadcasters for some time that they need to do more

to keep hold of older women and people with disabilities.

"Often broadcasters are great at attracting disabled workers but not very good at keeping them. They need to ask themselves why this is. The answer may come if they do more to nurture and promote people from these backgrounds into senior roles."



**Glossy policies and lip service about inclusion are an insult to all of us**

**Natasha Hirst  
NUJ equality council**

NICK MCCOWAN-LOWE

## inbrief...

### MAGAZINE GROUP LOSES £13 MILLION

The National Magazine Company, which owns Hearst UK, publisher of Cosmopolitan and other glossy magazines, reported a loss of £13.4 million for last year. This year, it made nearly one fifth of its staff redundant and closed Town & Country magazine.

### SUBSCRIBERS BOOST SPECTATOR PROFITS

The Spectator more than doubled its pre-tax profits last year fuelled partly by a 40 per cent boost to subscriber numbers. Pre-tax profits at the magazine, which is a subsidiary of the Telegraph publisher Barclays' Press Holdings, grew from £666,000 in 2019 to £1.6 million.

### FORMER NEWS OF THE WORLD EDITOR DIES

Greg Miskiwi, the former News of the World news editor who served a prison sentence for phone hacking, has died aged 71. He spent 18 years at the now closed Sunday newspaper until 2005. He served 37 days in Belmarsh prison for illegally accessing voice messages and the rest of a six-month sentence at home wearing an electronic tag.

## BBC boss gets 16.6% pay rise

**TIM DAVIE**, director general of the BBC, has been given a pay rise of 16.6 per cent – or £75,000. The increase comes amid falling morale at the corporation where staff have faced job cuts and pay freezes.

Davie's pay rise was granted as the BBC was coming under increasing political pressure ahead of the next licence fee decision.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "NUJ

members gave their all over the past 18 months to provide the best possible service to the public. Their reward was a pay freeze last year and a below-inflation deal this year.

"This lavish bung for the

director general, accompanied by briefings that try to justify his pay in relation to the so-called market, is tone deaf and represents an insult to staff whose remuneration is repeatedly approached through the prism of public sector constraints."

## Fresh call for O'Hagan murder inquiry

**THE NUJ** has renewed its call for the UK government to set up a panel of international experts to investigate the murder of Sunday World journalist Martin O'Hagan in Lurgan, Northern Ireland, and the failure of the authorities to bring those who shot him to justice.

The fresh call for an inquiry came on the 20th anniversary of his killing on September 28.

O'Hagan, who was once a member of the Official IRA, had a 20 year long journalistic career covering the paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. He was an investigative reporter for the Sunday World and secretary of the Belfast and district branch of the NUJ. A supporter of radical left-wing politics, he felt journalism was the most effective means to influence change.



### Space - the final media frontier

The Daily Star has appointed what it believes to be the first extraterrestrial affairs correspondent. It said that Michael Moran will cover the 'biggest beat in journalism'. The paper has launched an online section called Spaced Out, which includes interviews with celebrities about their reported encounters with aliens. Moran said he intends not to be so silly that people don't take reports seriously and not so dry that they don't read the stories. He joined the Star two years ago with a 'limitless appetite for offbeat stories'.

Twenty years on, page 24

# Oxford journalists praised for opposing 'greedy' fire and rehire

**JOURNALISTS** at the Oxford Mail who resisted Newsquest's plans to rip up their contracts and change their working conditions were praised by NUJ general secretary Michelle Stanistreet at a TUC fringe meeting.

Speaking in support of the Stop Fire and Rehire campaign, she said the trade union movement needed to join forces to fight "arrogant, greedy and shabby employment practices".

In Oxford earlier this year, NUJ members who threatened strike action were supported by local politicians and their community, and a settlement was negotiated.

Stanistreet said: "We must empower workers to take action when they are threatened.

"Fire and rehire is the result of unscrupulous



JESS HURD

employers hoping to exploit the 'anything goes' atmosphere created by the pandemic – a cynical power play inspired by a 'never waste a crisis' approach to running a business."

The meeting was chaired by Unite's assistant general secretary Tony Burke, who described fire and rehire schemes as "abhorrent" and

said they had already sparked a number of disputes.

Jo Grady, general secretary of the University and College Union, said that in Sheffield the UCU had worked successfully with other unions to resist the university's redundancy plans.

Barry Gardiner MP, who is leading a private member's bill in parliament to stop fire

and rehire, said employers should be subjected to penalties and appeals if they cancel contracts and fail to consult and negotiate.

He has spoken at events around the country to publicise the campaign and asked all trade unionists to get involved.

TUC congress condemned fire and rehire for attacking pay and working conditions. One in 10 workers have experienced it, with black and minority ethnic workers hit the hardest.

During the coronavirus pandemic, a quarter of all workers have seen their terms and conditions worsen.

Congress supported a motion calling for a campaign to end fire and rehire, expose employers who use it and support workers in disputes relating to it.



**Fire and rehire is the result of unscrupulous employers hoping to exploit the 'anything goes' atmosphere created by the pandemic**

**Michelle Stanistreet  
NUJ general secretary**

## Pay and conditions hit hard by Covid

**KEY WORKERS** including journalists played a critical role during the pandemic but the government did not match their contribution, the NUJ general secretary said at TUC Congress.

Chairing the fringe meeting Fair Pay for Key Workers, Michelle Stanistreet said union members who had worked hard during the pandemic needed better pay.

Graham Revie of the Royal College of Nursing spoke about the deaths of many patients taking a huge emotional toll on nurses and care workers. Demands on them were rising because many staff were leaving the NHS and not being replaced.

Sarah Woolley of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union said that despite producing food,

many of her members were struggling to afford to eat.

Workers who had lost the most during the pandemic were now faced with pay freezes and attacks on workplace agreements, said Mick Lynch of the RMT. He called for trade unions to join together in rolling industrial action.



JESS HURD

## Attacks on media workers rise

**CONGRESS** supported NUJ concerns about the increasing number of journalists coming under attack during the course of their work.

A motion on the safety of journalists, which outlined how women and black journalists face a disproportionate amount of abuse, was agreed. Incidents have risen, especially during lockdowns, with reporters and photographers accused of being 'government agents' and producing fake news.

Congress agreed that journalism plays a vital role in a democratic society. It supports the campaign to ensure journalists work without physical or verbal attacks, and urges tech giants to act on disinformation and fake news on their sites.



EDDIE GERALD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

# Call to tax wealth to fund care

**THE TUC** is calling for a rise in capital gains tax to fund social care, Frances O’Grady told congress.

She said all social care workers should be paid at least £10 an hour and that, instead of “raiding low-paid workers’ wage packets”, the Government should tax wealth to fund social care.

The TUC general secretary said that, in key industries, staff shortages are beginning to bite and supply chains are under pressure. The answer was decent conditions, direct employment and a proper pay rise.

The way to avoid the threat of low demand was to pay higher wages.

“Working people don’t hoard what they earn in offshore tax havens – they spend their wages in the local high street and that’s what



drives the real economy,” she said.

Trade union membership was rising particularly among women, and women now led the two biggest unions, Unite and Unison, she noted.

The pandemic had shown the need for equality: “Levelling up means nothing if ministers freeze key workers’

pay and slash universal credit, and the number of kids in poverty soars. If levelling up means anything, it means levelling up at work and levelling up living standards.

“Covid is not going to be a one-off. Years of austerity took their toll and it meant we fought this pandemic with one hand tied behind our backs.”



**Working people don’t hoard what they earn in offshore tax havens – they spend their wages in the local high streets**

**Frances O’Grady**  
**TUC general secretary**

JESS HURD

## in brief...

### **CAMPAIGN TO STOP CHANNEL 4 SALE**

The NUJ seconded a motion to defend public service broadcasting and save Channel 4 from privatisation. The proposer was Paul Fleming of Equity. Congress was concerned that the award-winning Channel 4 News would not survive privatisation and will campaign against any sale or merger.

### **CREATIVE JOB TERMS NEED REFORM**

The creative industries contributed £112 billion a year to the economy before the pandemic but are notorious for precarious employment, low pay, harassment and long hours. Congress said the TUC should campaign for reforms, which should ensure that publicly funded arts and culture offer good standards of pay and employment.

### **PRAISE FOR RIGHT TO DISCONNECT**

TUC Congress welcomed the Right to Disconnect in Ireland and has called on the UK government to introduce similar legislation. Concern had been raised over pressures to respond to electronic communications and calls outside working hours. Congress agreed this is detrimental to work/life balance and adversely affects family life and mental health.

## Congress seeks balance in fuel for energy

**WITH** weeks to go before the UK hosts an international climate change conference in Glasgow, TUC Congress backed a ‘balanced energy mix’ including renewables, nuclear and gas. The GMB motion, seconded by

Prospect, said tackling global warming requires “a co-ordinated international response – not the unilateral tearing down of our industries”. The motion was debated as TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady

warned that the world was moving away from carbon and towards net zero, and the Government must urgently increase investment in green technology and industry or lose jobs to other countries.

## Labour promises stronger rights

**SIR KEIR STARMER** told delegates that a Labour government would increase the minimum wage to at least £10 an hour and ensure rights for all workers from the first day of being in the job – including holiday pay, protection against unfair dismissal and guaranteed sick pay.

Zero hours contracts would be banned, and rights to parental leave and flexible working increased.

Starmer paid tribute to key

workers during the pandemic. He also praised USDAW’s Freedom from Fear campaign against violence and abuse towards shopworkers and the GMB’s support of British Gas engineers who were threatened with fire and rehire.

In addition, he highlighted a collective agreement negotiated by the Fire Brigades Union to enable firefighters to deliver food and medicine and assist ambulance staff.



JESS HURD

### **New president elected**

Sue Ferns, senior deputy general secretary of Prospect union (left), was elected president of the TUC. She took over from Unite’s Gail Cartmail, following the virtual gathering last month. Ferns grew up in Sheffield and was the first member of her family to go to university. She has a degree in industrial relations. She is the TUC general council’s lead on energy, environment and sustainability and a member of the government’s Green Jobs Taskforce.

**Barney Cullum** overcomes obstacles at the world's greatest sporting event

SIPA US / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



# Games behind closed doors

**R**eporting on an Olympics Games can be the most enriching of experiences. But the Tokyo Games started inauspiciously.

Checking into my hotel, I was advised I would be obliged to take the tradesman's lift to my room and – once I'd completed the mandatory three-day's hard quarantine – that same elevator down to the ground level fire exit would be how I'd greet the rising sun each and every morning.

I was not to show my face in the foyer until the time came to return to reception on the morning of the closing ceremony, handing in my key and settling the room service tab. Food for my first 72 hours in Asia would all come via this route, with only evening dinners catered for. Planning for the other two meals had not been accommodated for under last-minute Covid protocols once the country's state of emergency had been extended.

I expect, physically, I could have overcome the 24-hour guards, had I begun to feel extreme hunger. The

size-zero Japanese freshers guarding the exit, presumably volunteers wanting their own Olympics experience of any kind, appeared qualified for the role only in the sense that they had bought derivative black 'uniforms' for the occasion, replete with 'Security' baseball caps.

I was never going to break any of the myriad rules imposed upon the press corps to prevent interaction with locals. The documents we'd all signed to stick to our rooms and sports venues came with the threat of a £500 fine should we stray even as far as a 7/11 store without express permission. We'd signed a pledge to maintain GPS tracking on our phones at all times too.

In truth, the deterrents were unnecessary. The gravity of the fear felt by the Japanese at a time when their vaccination rates were behind those of the other nations was not lost on any participant here. Well, apart from the Georgian judokas who went sightseeing. They were rightly stripped of their accreditations.

The black belts aside, it was the athletes who made the Games. And it

was for the athletes that these Games needed to take place. "As much as I can dream, I can be," read the tattoo ink on the ribs of Australian high-diver Melissa Wu. She had broken those same bones a year previously. The re-staging of the Games – after the purgatory of uncertain postponement – represented a final window before retirement. Not that she necessarily expected a gold medal.

The 28-year-old, who carries Chinese heritage on her father's side, lost her social confidence after brutal racial bullying as a child. Diving has always been Wu's voice, she told me. The medal she won represented mere decoration for the relief at being empowered to perform again.

A further bronze was claimed by 13-year-old skateboarder Sky Brown, the youngest Brit to earn a podium place in the third century in which the Olympics have taken place.

After a sterile but sadly necessary year of Zoom interviews, what an occasion it was to attend a packed press conference once again to ask questions of the skaters.

With two Japanese athletes earning the gold and silver, every square foot was taken up by beaming local volunteers as well as writers and crew from all over the world. We were relaying one of the stories of their lives. After all the safety measures to create our bubble, we all felt safe, and we all felt like journalists again.

Having grown up in Japan, Brown knew and was fond of her counterparts on the platform, describing one as among her dearest friends. It was refreshing to see such kinship between competitors and one can only imagine how motivating it must have been for children to hear the history-maker insist that "it honestly doesn't matter how old you are – anyone can do it".

As with every Olympic Games, there were so many stories for storytellers to tell. Many of us wondered whether we would be writing them right up until we were in the arenas, having avoided the dreaded 'pings'.

At the time of writing, it was too early to say whether this will be remembered as a watershed for the regular return of international assignments after the pandemic. It felt like a beginning. The sun always rises first in the east regardless of whether there's any breakfast.

RVLISOFT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

# The strangulation of Polish journalism



**Denis MacShane** charts several years of government attacks

**F**or decades, Polish journalists have been their nation's best ambassadors. Ryszard Kapuściński reported on dictators in Africa during Poland's communist years after 1950. He did not attack the ruling regime in Warsaw – but everyone got the message.

The great Polish journalist Adam Michnik was a founding genius of *Solidarnosc*. The underground paper *Wyborcza* is now Poland's main non-conservative daily.

This century, the sparky irreverence of Polish journalists exposed the failings of previous centre-left and neo-liberal pro-business administrations.

But Poland's journalism is now a sad shadow of its former self. Since the right-wing, Catholic-nationalist Law and Justice Party (PiS in its Polish acronym) won power in 2015, there have been relentless attacks on journalism and journalists that owe more to the media management techniques of Vladimir Putin than the traditions Polish news media once upheld.

Step 1 was to remove independent journalists from key positions in public broadcasting. As soon as PiS won power in 2015, there was a wholesale purge of editors and journalists from Polish Radio and Polish TV – the equivalent of the BBC in Poland. They were replaced by PiS supporters.

Step 2 was to start using criminal libel law against journalists. Ministers, PiS-appointed judges, business oligarchs linked to the ruling party and wealthy individuals are allowed to launch "strategic lawsuits against public participants" – with the splendid acronym SLAPPs – against any

journalist or media outlet. Judges can hand down fines or even prison sentences against journalists.

The PiS-linked initiators of SLAPPs have bottomless purses. Those they attack do not. The object is to intimidate and demoralise the journalist or editor with legal cases that can last forever.

Poland's Society of Journalists, like the NUJ an affiliate of the International Federation of Journalists, has identified 187 legal attacks by PiS and its networks against Polish reporters and editors since 2016. It is tiring and demoralising and it is so much easier to report other issues that do not require questioning or challenging the government.

Step 3 is the compulsory sale of media outlets to PiS-supporting firms. After PiS pressure, a network of 24 regional newspapers was fire-sold to a firm allied to the ruling party.

Now the government has its eyes on Poland's most popular independent and balanced news network, TVN24.

This was launched soon after communism ended, with investment by France's Canal+ group. Canal+ sold it to Discovery in the US. Discovery doesn't do politics but it does believe in western norms of independent journalism.

This is unacceptable to the PiS aim of the Putinisation of Polish media. The regime has proposed a legal change saying foreign owners of any media in Poland have to be based in the European Union or European Economic Area.

At one level, this is sheer chutzpah as the EU is bearing down hard on the PiS attack on an independent judiciary. Poland faces severe sanctions if it continues to defy the European Court of Justice and insists judges are under state control as in neighbouring Russia or Belarus.

The US and especially President Joe Biden have taken pride in being Poland's very best friend in world affairs. Not any longer. The attempt to boot out Poland's top news outlet – even if the majority of Poles now get their news from social media – is playing badly in Washington.

Discovery is merging with Warner Brothers to form a \$130 billion global media giant. The idea of gay-hating Polish politicians trying to impose a Putin media model on Poland will not appeal to the nation of the first amendment.

However, a PiS lawmaker, the Sejm deputy Marek Suski, said forcing the sale of the US media giant to Polish businessmen would give the government "some influence" over TVN24. In Washington, the State Department has protested against this attack on free media in Poland. A group of senior senators on the foreign affairs committee have condemned the attempts to force Discovery out of Poland.

American lawmakers also say Nato membership is incompatible with the kind of attacks on free journalism now at the heart of the ruling regime in Warsaw.

For now, there is stalemate. There are no international bodies or mechanisms that can impose a free media on a government that rejects the very idea of it. For roughly 200 years, the ideas of democracy and progress were inextricably linked to freedom of expression and journalism. For how much longer?

**Denis MacShane is a former NUJ president and executive member of the International Federation of Journalists. He wrote the first book in English on Polish Solidarity in 1982**

“**The first step was to remove independent journalists from key positions in public broadcasting. There was a wholesale purge**”

# Brighton

**Ruth Addicott** asks journalists whether they do like to be beside the sea

**W**hen Argus reporter Jody Doherty-Cove noticed his pants had gone missing from his washing line in Brighton, he wasn't the only one in the street.

Knickers, socks and pants had been disappearing for months.

"Originally people thought it was a pervert, but it turned out to be a cat called Basil," he says.

Naturally, it made a story ('Purr-vert: thieving cat steals pants from neighbours' washing lines') and proved sometimes you don't need to look further than your back yard for local news.

Brighton has always had an eclectic mix of characters, even the four-legged kind, and has long been a magnet for journalists.

Doherty-Cove was born and bred in the city and says one of the best things about the job is the mix of stories, whether it is a dispute over a cycle lane or bombs that were made in Brighton linked to attacks in Yemen.

The Argus (owned by Newsquest) was founded in 1880 and is the main daily newspaper for Brighton and Hove. Like other titles, its staff and circulation have seen steep decline and the key to landing a job now is a good nose for news and a background in multimedia.

Doherty-Cove learnt his skills working for Brighton TV channel Latest TV and creative agency Witness BTN, where he scoured the city for good news stories and shot 60-second videos for Facebook, one of which received around 300,000 views.

"We've got a team of really talented reporters here who all have those different backgrounds in multimedia rather than just print," he says.

Meanwhile at independent news site [www.brightonandhovenews.org](http://www.brightonandhovenews.org) is focused on the issues riling local residents, be it planning applications, bars that might attract noisy crowds or traffic and travel. Editor Frank le Duc has lived in Brighton all his life and worked at The Times before moving back as deputy editor at The Argus. In 2009, he saw an opportunity and launched [www.brightonandhovenews.org](http://www.brightonandhovenews.org).

"I have strong feelings about how local journalism should work and what it should be about and one of the big challenges, I think, in the past 20-30 years with the consolidation of local newspapers is that sometimes it feels like the local identity is lost in the news coverage," he says.

"I understand a large company would want to save money by having subbing hubs or fewer district offices etc. I just feel, as far as possible, it's better if reporters are on the ground."

The site is run by le Duc and former Argus colleague Jo Wadsworth. They have one full-time local democracy reporter and a small team of volunteers.

They cover council meetings, court cases and health board meetings in person (or remotely since restrictions) and, according to le Duc, they're often the only reporters present. "For me, it's about first-hand reporting, getting to know people, winning their trust, and providing a platform for sharing what's happening that is accessible to as wide a group of people as possible," he says.

While readership soared at the start of the pandemic, advertising revenue fell. It has since levelled out and le Duc says the site often reaches well over 100,000 people.

With its vibrant entertainment scene, hipster hangouts, comedy, arts and culture, Brighton is crammed with creativity. As it is an hour from London, a lot of media workers commute. As well as quality of life, anything goes and there is the added bonus of being next to the sea. A downside is the price of property, especially for those on a meagre wage.

In addition, the pandemic has left many freelancers in a precarious position relying on SEISS grants (if they can get them) and alternative revenue streams.



## Getting ahead

### Vary what you do and focus on pay

Prepare to diversify in both content and who you work for, says freelance journalist Norman Miller. "Find and focus on better-

paying outlets – even more important in an era when so many outlets are offering pitiful rates," he says.

### Network

As well as the Brighton and

Sussex NUJ branch (which has 270 members), the city has a lot of groups and co-working spaces where freelancers can share skills and opportunities.

### Makes sure you can afford to live here

Compared to many places,

the cost of living is steep. "Housing is through the roof," says PR Natasha Wiseman. Brian Williams, NUJ branch secretary for Brighton and Sussex, says: "It's pretty tough for journalists in Brighton because the salaries generally paid are not Fleet Street salaries."

### Go local

Frank le Duc, who launched [www.brightonandhove.com](http://www.brightonandhove.com), says there are opportunities for journalists to serve their home town. "It's not easy, and you probably won't get rich, but it feels worthwhile and it's great fun if you enjoy being a journalist."

Caroline Sullivan is a freelance music journalist for The Guardian and Metro and lost work when all live gigs were cancelled.

"I made up for it by doing obituaries," she says. With obit editors wanting to replenish their stock, it turned into a handy new niche. "It's amazing the things that research throws up about people that you've never read before," she says.

Sullivan moved to Brighton from London in 2012 and she has never regretted it. For her, the only drawback is having to leave a gig in London early to catch the last train back to Brighton.

Freelance journalist Norman Miller also lost work in the travel and food and drink sectors. He turned to writing business features and says outlets like BBC.com that cover a diverse range of topics were "a lifesaver". He has now taken a full-time role as senior press officer at the University of Brighton.

One area where work has not dried up is the water industry. Natasha Wiseman is the former editor of trade magazine Water & Waste Water Treatment and she moved to Brighton from Bolton eight years ago. The first thing she did was join the local NUJ branch and made some contacts who are still friends today. In 2014, she set herself up as a freelance PR consultant.

"I could see from the quality of some press releases coming across my desk as an editor that there was an opportunity to do a better job," she says. Within a year, she was earning more doing PR than she was as an editor.

Wiseman says the best thing about Brighton is the positive mindset. "People want to collaborate and see the potential in things," she says.

She now runs a small PR agency – WiseOnWater – and is

"It's quirky and fun but also a big place with a lot going on. It provides every itch that a local journalist wants to scratch."

**Jody Doherty-Cove, The Argus**

"There's a lack of cynicism among people here that makes you think you can do anything"

**Natasha Wiseman, WiseOnWater**

"It's a mini London with less of the aggravation and hassle."

**Caroline Sullivan, freelance journalist**

"I grew up here and couldn't wait to get away. And when I did, I couldn't wait to get back."

**Frank le Duc, [www.brightonandhove.com](http://www.brightonandhove.com)**

about to launch an independent, public-facing positive news platform in September called Make Water Famous.

"It's a growth area," she says. "There's no shortage of information, technology, science, environment, public health, arts and culture – wherever water touches people's lives, there's a story to tell."

BBC Radio Sussex has a base in Brighton, employing around 20 staff. As well as commercial radio station Capital Brighton, there are the independent, not-for-profit Radio Reverb, Brighton and Hove Community Radio, and Platform B.

Paul Sawtell, broadcast journalist for BBC Radio Sussex, has lived and worked in the city for more than 15 years and recalls BBC reporters working out of 10 district offices across Sussex and Surrey when he first joined in 1998. "Gradually these all disappeared," he says. "We have two political reporters though, one for Sussex and another for Surrey, who can attend meetings and scrutinise local authorities."

Although the pandemic restrictions meant no guests, Sawtell and a band of colleagues worked in the office throughout the pandemic.

"It kept me sane," he says.

JPI Media's newspaper The Brighton & Hove Independent suspended its print edition during the pandemic and has relaunched as the Brighton Indy.

Alongside Sussex Life magazine, Brighton's independent titles include Latest (property, entertainment and city guide), Absolute magazine and BN1 Magazine.

So, apart from keeping an eye on the washing line, what advice would Doherty-Cove give? "If you're young, move to the centre, if you're older move a bit further out. And make sure you've got enough pens and notepads because you'll soon run out."



# Facts of the matter

Misinformation is coming under the scrutiny of fact checkers. How does their work fit in with journalism, asks **Neil Merrick**

**C**hecking facts has always been a vital part of journalism. Now, thanks to the half-truths and outright lies that thrive on social media and can be repeated in today's news, it has become established as a profession in its own right.

Fact checkers may work alongside or within the media, refuting spurious claims and flagging up dodgy data. Some also keep a close eye on the media, taking journalists to task for getting things wrong.

But what is it like moving from journalism to full-time fact checking and are the two roles materially different?

Pippa Allen-Kinross joined Full Fact, the UK's largest independent fact-checking service, in early 2020. Previously senior reporter at Schools Week, she saw it as a natural career move that allows her to continue reporting while digging deeper into misinformation.

Much of the past year has been spent on stories surrounding the pandemic. This includes dispelling myths emanating from social media, as well as challenging claims or statistics thrown around by Boris Johnson and other politicians.

"I didn't feel I was leaving journalism," she says. "Misinformation is something that people are really aware of. I felt it was important to be part of an organisation that is dealing with inaccuracies."

Allen-Kinross is acting deputy editor in a nine-strong editorial team at Full Fact, most of whom have a background in journalism. Before publication, articles are checked by at least two other team members.

"It was something I had to get used to," she adds. "I've worked in local journalism where it's pretty much self-publishing."

Full Fact was set up 12 years ago by a cross-party group of peers and media professionals who saw the need for an independent fact-checking charity. Funded through grants and donations, it has doubled in size since 2018 and now employs more than 30 staff. It also enjoys a strong media presence, with a weekly slot on Times Radio and occasional appearances on BBC 5 Live and Newsnight.

Neutrality lies at the heart of its operations, says Allen-Kinross. "People are aware of the political biases of news organisations," she adds. "We strive to make it clear that we're the honest broker and don't take sides."

Full Fact criticises nationals for claims made about Covid

and other topics, as well as stories created from Twitter polls. But overall, it tends to focus its attention on politicians. This means keeping a close check on claims made in Parliament just after midday most Wednesday afternoons.

Here, speed is of the essence. "If we're checking something Boris Johnson said at Prime Minister's Questions, the impact will be greater if we publish straight away, rather than wait three weeks," says Allen-Kinross.

Patrick Worrall, head of Channel 4's FactCheck service, is sometimes asked why his team does not check on Johnson in real time while the Prime Minister is speaking in the Commons. But it can take a while to verify many facts and demonstrate the scale or importance of any falsehood.

"People often express frustration that we don't accuse

## Ferreting out falsehoods

**AFTER** four years as lead fact-checker at The Ferret, Alastair Brian has no doubts that it is more rewarding from a professional point of view than traditional journalism.

Set up in 2017 to complement The Ferret's investigative news platform, Ferret Fact Service (FFS), keeps watch on politicians and other opinion formers in Scotland, as well as on conspiracy theories put forward about Covid.

At the start of the pandemic, FFS was constantly updating its Covid page to dispel myths from social media and elsewhere.

"There was a vacuum of information that was filled

with falsehoods," says Brian, who previously worked at STV News and BBC Scotland.

FFS operates at arm's length from The Ferret's news team, allowing FFS to be seen as non-partisan. Both are funded through reader members or supporters.

"We wouldn't write a news story based on a fact check. It opens us up to accusations of bias," Brian says.

Brian's main interest is research. This includes digging deeper into topics than would be usual in traditional journalism.

Working for FFS also provides something that many journalists can only dream of - time to investigate a story properly.

"If you work in breaking news, it can be a bit of a hamster wheel. You spend a lot of time doing things to surface level," he says.

One of the most gratifying things is seeing a fact check from The Ferret quoted in a debate or used to debunk a lie or myth. "It's heartening to know it's not just you that's pushing out your work," he adds.





people of lying, or don't go in hard enough on politicians," says Worrall. "It's not a crusade. We want to give people the benefit of the doubt and try to be fair-minded."

Channel 4's FactCheck was set up for the 2005 general election before going full time five years later. Its small team consists of Worrall (whose background is in local and national news) and Georgina Lee, a former civil servant.

A fact-checking service is always more likely to check on the Government than the opposition, he adds.

In addition, fact checkers should consider whether a lie was deliberate or malicious, plus the impact it is likely to have – if any – on people's lives.

The BBC's Reality Check, which employs 12 journalists, is one of the newer fact-checking teams. Created for the 2015 general election then reactivated for the EU referendum, it also now operates full time and is as likely to report on international affairs as UK politics.

It attempts to "live fact-check" Prime Minister's Questions as well as debates held during election campaigns, though explicit criticism of the government or individual politicians is rare.

"We don't just focus on Boris Johnson. We focus on Keir Starmer as well," says Rupert Carey, editor of Reality Check.

The crucial thing, he adds, is to place claims and falsehoods in context so reporters can explain the bigger picture to the BBC audience: "We don't want to get bogged down in semantics. It's about adding valuable analysis across BBC news."

Fact checking and verification are becoming part of journalism training. Last year, Full Fact started delivering an online module for the National Council for the Training of Journalists. "We see fact checking as an integral part of the journalist's kit bag," says Pippa Allen-Kinross.

For the past two years, Full Fact has worked with fact-checking organisations in Argentina and three African countries to develop an online tool that automatically flags up and checks claims that are verifiable.

The tool, funded through a grant from Google, breaks speech down according to the type of claim being made, then labels parts of sentences that can be checked reasonably easily. Potentially, this allows fact checkers to investigate hundreds of more claims each day.

But do not expect machine tools to do all the work. Fact

checking frequently involves scouring the internet to uncover long-lost documents or wading through statistics. Chatting to contacts is also vital.

"You should not be afraid to pick up the phone and talk to people," says Patrick Worrall at Channel 4. "You need to get the most out of sources, but fluency and data in graphs really helps."

Allan Leonard, editor of FactCheckNI, says many people, including academics, are pleased to talk over research they carried out, rather than risk journalists quoting sections of lengthy reports out of context.

Set up in 2005, FactCheckNI sets out "to investigate the claim not the claimant". Its roots lie in encouraging participative democracy. It tries to avoid being a reactive service, instead setting out to explain issues crucial to understanding current affairs in Northern Ireland.

This means working closely with bodies such as the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

"I can ring up a government department and get whatever I want," says Leonard. "I'm not a journalist who upsets their boss. I'm just a nerdy stats guy."

FactCheckNI sometimes pays journalists for research. Members of the public may suggest claims that need looking into. The important thing is to get to the truth and dispel myths, especially on social media. "We look at what's trending, what goes viral, and what has potential for harm if it's not investigated," adds Leonard.

So, what skills are needed to be a fact checker? Besides an ability to work with data, Rupert Carey points to the need for an enquiring mind and a healthy degree of scepticism. "You can't take everything as read," he adds. "You need the appetite to probe more deeply into what people are saying."

It also helps not to desire recognition. Fact checkers are unlikely to gain much kudos for beaver away in the background and pointing out others' inaccuracies. Attempts to create short segments around fact checks for Channel 4 News proved unsuccessful, says Worrall.

An apology from a politician is also probably out of the question. But there may be the satisfaction that, providing a lie is never repeated, the efforts of a fact checker have ensured more people are aware of the truth or at least less aware of something that is false.

**It's not a crusade. We want to give people the benefit of the doubt and try to be fair-minded**

# Looking to the future



KIERANWHITE-KWMEDIA

Student members and the NUJ benefit each other, says **Anttoni James Numminen**



Harry Williamson joined the NUJ in his first year of journalism studies after the local branch's membership officer spoke at a student newspaper meeting.

Now a graduate of the University of Stirling,

Williamson says that joining the NUJ has already benefited his career and given him invaluable resources for covering tough subjects while he was a student journalist.

"In my four years at Brig, Stirling's student paper, I had to cover some difficult stories, including reports on deaths, trauma and suicide. NUJ resources were invaluable in ensuring not only did we report these the right way but also that, as young journalists, we were coping with the situation."

Williamson, who was editor of Brig, highlights the usefulness of having the NUJ in case of potential problems, such as the paper being deprived of funds. In addition, as he was able to identify himself as a journalist, he avoided repercussions when covering the likes of student occupations and protests.

"Probably the most invaluable resource was the student press card issued to me by the NUJ," he says.

"I have reported on a lot of protests and demonstrations, including anti-Trump demonstrations, independence marches and the Stirling vigil for Sarah Everard. Being able to identify myself as a journalist prevented any conflict with the police while at these events and in some cases, they even avoided us and left our teams alone to do our job.

"For any student journalist, one of the best things you can do is join the NUJ – the advice, network and resources are invaluable."

However, student participation is low in many branches. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic, with meetings coinciding with online lectures, and stretched finances may have made students cautious about signing up, especially if they are not aware of what membership offers.

In Edinburgh, student members account for "more than one in 10" freelance branch members, according to branch secretary Mark Fisher.

Covid-19 has hit student involvement in branch activities, he says: "During the pandemic, it's been hard for students to

be involved, not least because our meetings have clashed with teaching time at Edinburgh Napier University where we have a lot of student members.

"When Covid-19 hit, the first meeting we had to cancel had been set up by students. We'd asked four journalism students to talk about their dissertations. The idea was to give students a voice in the branch and to let non-student members hear what the next generation of journalists is interested in."

So what steps can branches take to better involve students?

Fisher says that student-focused events have been successful and can encourage students to get more involved. Visits to universities and staying in touch with student newspapers is also helpful.

"For a few years, we have appointed a student rep who acts as a conduit between students and non-students. My feeling is students are keen to be involved but need to feel welcomed," he says. "They're more likely to come to a student-themed meeting where they know they'll be among friends than a regular meeting, for example. The branch has to make a bit of an effort – and, because of the nature of academic courses, it's work that has to be done every year."

The Manchester and Salford NUJ branch prides itself in being particularly active when it comes to engaging student journalists, with students sitting on the branch committee and taking part in organising campaigns and meetings.

The branch has also been active in promoting student recruitment across the UK. At this year's delegate meeting it put forward a motion, supported by the national executive committee (NEC), calling for the NUJ to develop a national student recruitment strategy.

Branch secretary Kath Grant says: "We believe student recruitment is critical for the long-term health of the union and our branch encourages student members to participate as much as possible."

She adds that while "all branches have to deal with a certain amount of routine business", it is important to make time for and listen to student journalists.

Recruitment of student members benefit all. As Grant puts it: "We have had examples of students covering



**Students covering demonstrations have been challenged by the police - the NUJ has been able to step in**





PAT STOCKLEY



IAIN MCLEAN



MARY FAGIOLI

demonstrations for student newspapers and other publications who have been challenged by the police – the NUJ has been able to step in and help.”

Mary Fagioli is a student journalist and photographer who had been a member of another trade union but joined the NUJ after realising she needed more protection. Fagioli, now based in Italy, says she appreciates the regular emails.

She says “the most important” part of membership is that the union “acts to uphold free information”.

But information about the union still fails to reach or influence many student journalists. Even large journalism courses rarely have their own chapels.

A fourth-year journalism student at Robert Gordon University, Finlay Jack, says he has “never once seen any advertisement for the NUJ, anywhere, be it in university or on social media”.

Jack says that throughout his time as a journalism student, no one asked him to join the union. He adds that he was put off by the cost, not knowing rates are considerably lower for students (£36 for the duration of a course).

Within the NUJ, student members have raised issues including voting rights and the amount of support. Some members think that because students’ subs are so low, it is not worth allocating too many resources to them.

However, Professor Chris Frost, NEC member and former NUJ president, says the union’s rules already do a lot for students and were revised at this year’s delegate meeting.

Frost, who is emeritus professor of journalism at Liverpool John Moores University and chair of the union’s finance committee, adds that the NUJ regularly campaigns on issues directly or indirectly linked to student journalists and, while

**Opposite page: Noelle Vaughn, LFB student rep; above left Victoria Rosenthal, also a LFB rep; above right Harry Williamson, who found the NUJ ‘invaluable’; and Mary Fagioli who joined for ‘more protection’**

he “would prefer that [students] could vote as well” at meetings, he does not see it as a major issue.

Though students cannot vote because they are associate members, many are still keen to make their voices heard in the union and improve their and their colleagues’ rights.

“The NUJ should remember to include student members’ needs, concerns, opinions, and rights in their decision-making for industry-wide initiatives and ones specifically for student members,” says Victoria Rosenthal, one of two student representatives on the NUJ’s London freelance branch (LFB) committee.

She says that, while student members value the support they do receive, they often find themselves in desperate situations and “would benefit from some form of financial support, like NUJ Extra, or links to services or charities that provide financial support or resources for basic needs”.

She and fellow student LFB representative Noelle Vaughn are gathering student feedback on improving NUJ support.

Attitudes towards students are already “very supportive and welcoming”, says Vaughn: “There is a lot of proactivity in terms of providing advice to students who will be starting out to help avoid exploitation and to encourage whistleblowing. Having this kind of protection is invaluable when starting out.”

Was panic over War of the Worlds hyped up by the media? asks **Jonathan Sale**

# WHAT PLANET WERE THEY ON?

**T**he Daily Chronicle began the saga with the words: “Dead men from Mars”. It soon turned out that they weren’t men and they weren’t dead but it was the right planet. “A message received from Mars – remarkable story from Woking” was a typical splash from the early Mars-attacked editions of the evening papers. Again, it wasn’t a message but a crew of alien invaders that lurked in a projectile from the Red Planet. “The Martian came out and massacred an entire battalion of the Cardigan Regiment,” added the next day’s Sunday Sun.

All that was fake news or, rather, fiction news from early chapters in *The War of the Worlds*, the still-gripping 1898 novel by HG Wells in which blood-drinking monsters with death rays stalked humans living in rural locations along the railway line out of Waterloo. On October 31, 1938, the Orson Welles wireless adaptation prompted this front page headline in the *New York Post*: “US probes ‘invasion’ broadcast: radio play causes wide panic”.

Professor Patrick Parrinder, author of *HG Wells, Science Fiction and Prophecy*, points out that nobody who read the book in 1898 seemed to panic.

“I have an extremely dog-eared first edition in which the original owner recorded his opinion in pencil on the last page: ‘awful rot’. On the other hand, *Nature* and *The Spectator* took it seriously as imaginative science.

“As for the Orson Welles broadcast, there is some controversy nowadays about how ‘real’ the panic was and how much it was blown up by the media in retrospect.”

The original radio waves of the original broadcast would have reached Mars in at most 20 minutes and, by now, will be entertaining any listeners on a far-off planet 83 light years away from us, such as the planet known to its friends as PSO J318.5-22, a gas giant with six times the mass of Jupiter in the Capricorn constellation. Let’s hope it gets a good reception there in both senses.

Meanwhile, back on earth, *The War of the Worlds* has continued to be fought, with new editions of the book, films, television adaptations and, of course, radio versions. The answer to David Bowie’s query, ‘Is there life on Mars?’ is yes, in a way.

While most radio waves merely disappear into the ether, the Orson Welles production began making waves of a different kind while the programme, which shifted the location from Britain to the US, was still being transmitted.

The documentary format was rather too authentic for many listeners. The broadcast, on the evening before Halloween, began with some innocuous dance numbers by Raymond Someone and his Otherwise Forgotten Orchestra – then suddenly: “We interrupt this programme...”

And what an interruption: an explosion had just been detected on Mars, followed by a mysterious object crash-landing in flames near

Princeton. This turned out to be a large cylinder, the top of which was unscrewed from the inside to allow non-human creatures to emerge, and... the microphone went dead, as did the reporter.

According to Welles later, the nation panicked: “Highways were jammed with cars, people who were in the cities were going to the hills and those people who were in the hills were going to the cities.”

A tsunami of terror swept over the nation, particularly over parts of it specifically named in the broadcast. Worried citizens phoned the police and government departments, desperate for information about “eyewitness reports” of aliens on stilts stomping around the country.

At the press conference next day, Welles played the innocent. The talented 23-year-old claimed to be bewildered by the kerfuffle. For a start, he declared, it had been announced as an event dated in 1939, ie the following year, which was surely a clue that it couldn’t be happening in

## The interplanetary war runs beyond a century

**THE WAR** of the Worlds has never gone out of print since it was published - it first saw the light of day as a serial in magazines and newspapers in 1898..

With its setting shifted from Surrey to New York State, it morphed in 1938 into a new life form in the Orson Welles radio version that had gullible listeners heading for the hills in terror.

Mutating into La

Guerra de los Mundos, the radio version leapt down to Chile and then to Ecuador.

In Britain, the BBC provided non-inflammatory radio versions in

1950 and 1967.

Back in the US, in 1953 Paramount launched the first film, which was remade in 2005 by Steven Spielberg.

In 2012, two straight-to-DVD mini-movies were battling it out.

Over the decades, there came a Classics Illustrated

comic, a graphic novel from Best-Sellers Illustrated and an iPad adaptation.

Jeff Wayne gave us his musical versions, with the album in 1978 and his latest stage show currently invading the nation.

The interplanetary war goes on: from the Warner Brothers’ weekly TV series in 1983 to the BBC three-parter with Rafe Spall in 2019 (“and beyond”, as Wellsian mastermind Peter J Beck puts it).

Wells’s yarn is the galaxy’s gift that goes on giving.



RAJKO SIMUNOVIC / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

# FAKE RADIO 'WAR' STIRS TERROR THROUGH U.S.

Story on Page 2



**"War" Victim**

Caroline Cantlon, WPA actress, listening to this radio in West 49th St., heard announcement of "smoke in Times Square." Running to street, she fell, broke her arm.

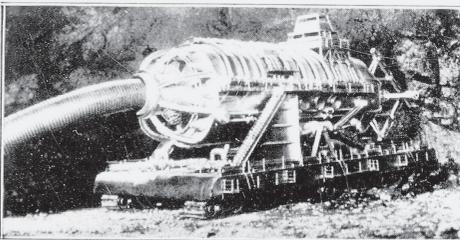


**"I Didn't Know"**

Orson Welles, after broadcast, expresses amazement at public reaction. He adapted H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds" for radio and played principal role. Left: a machine conceived for another H. G. Wells story. Dramatic description of landing of weird "machine from Mars" starts last night's panic.

(By Associated Press)

—Story on page 1



SHAWSHOTS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

In his wonderfully thorough study of Wells's novel and Welles's broadcast, author Peter J Beck proved that there was another hoax: the mass hysteria wasn't all that massive.

His book, *The War of the Worlds: from HG Wells to Orson Welles*, convincingly argues that the next day's sensational headlines were well over the top, being purely the result of the brief time between the end of the programme and the papers' deadlines. Later factchecking revealed that streets described as being packed with panicking citizens were in fact as quiet as usual at that time in the evening. When promoting his programme – and himself – Welles appears to have been gilding a whole garden of lilies.

The episode may have made Welles's reputation but it was bad news for ufologists, according to a speaker at a more recent conference on unexplained aeronautical phenomena. Did the stories about the populace fleeing from the fictional aliens prompt 'the authorities', in an attempt to avoid any similar traffic jams of panic-stricken folk, to conceal any evidence of the actual aliens who could well be all over the place?

Be that as it may, the Welles broadcast lived on, copied by other nations, each of whose creative teams customised the story to fit in with the geography of their own cities.

Ecuador seems to have been the most extreme example and, as it is an account from a British diplomat rather than Orson Welles, there is much less doubt about its accuracy. In 1949, the citizens hearing the radio broadcast about Martians invading Quito were first of all terrified then, realising they had been fooled, were so furious that they rioted and burnt the broadcaster's premises to the ground. There were several deaths – the only ones on this earth that could rightly be attributed to Martians.

Back in 1938, the broadcast had concluded: "This is Orson Welles, ladies and gentlemen, out of character, to assure you that *The War of the Worlds* has no significance other than as the Halloween holiday offering it was intended to be, the Mercury Theatre's radio version of dressing up in a sheet and jumping out of a bush and saying 'boo!'" Welles, playing the newspaper editor in *Citizen Kane*, has the memorable line expounding his character's instruction to get a picture of a non-existent war: "When choosing between the truth and the legend, print the legend." And, in both cases, it was a great legend.

1938. However, if you listen to the recording of the drama (available online today) he can be heard intoning ominously that the events were taking place "in the 39th year of the 20th century", ie 1938.

He was on surer ground by pointing out that the play was one of a weekly series from Mercury Theatre and that announcements had been made at the beginning, middle and end of the broadcast to the effect that it was a dramatisation of the Wells novel. Move on please: nothing to hear here.

Yet once it had been made clear that there were no Martians attacking, another myth was born, thanks to the immediate headlines: "Wave of mass hysteria" (New York Times). "Thousands in Fear" (Herald Tribune). "Terror Through US" (Daily News). The incident has gone down as a demonstration of human gullibility, if not of the madness of crowds, an accidental hoax.

In the same way as the first listeners came to their senses and realised the Martians could be ruled out, in due course revisionist academics came along to cast doubt on the degree of the hysteria.

# Starting Out

**Jem Collins** has begun a full-time job - a role that she created herself from her Journo Resources start-up



**I**'ve been freelancing since 2016, when I was told the company I worked for no longer had the budget to pay me.

It was my second journalism job. Since then, I've dabbled with a few part-time staff roles, but freelancing was my steady gig. I preferred the certainty of making my own luck rather than being at the whim of someone else's strategies or budgets.

Recently though, after five years, I returned to a full-time staff job. The difference? This is one I created for myself.

Journo Resources, the social enterprise I run, was set up shortly after I was let go from that staff job five years ago. Aged just 24 with no connections and no real idea how I would continue to pay the rent, I felt completely lost.

How do you even find freelance gigs? How much do journalism jobs pay? What should a pitch or job application look like? When I talked to friends, I didn't find answers so much as my own questions reflected back at me.

At 3am one morning, in sheer frustration, I registered a domain name and started pulling together resources I thought people like me might find useful. It didn't feel like a lot but it was something tangible. It started with a list of all current journalism graduate schemes, updated once a month. It sounds simple but it didn't exist anywhere else. It still doesn't now.



There was never a grand plan for Journo Resources but it seemed to resonate. People started following, so I ploughed in as much time as I could around shifts, pitches and part-time jobs. I didn't have any money to invest, so it grew slowly, as I tried to figure out a plan along the way. We've never taken any kind of investment - not only did I not know how, but also it wouldn't have fitted our ethos of a community - supporting each other and, crucially, keeping everything free for users.

For a long time it felt like I was stuck in a catch-22 - too big to fail, too small to fly. Until, finally, after five years of juggling, we reached a turning point. In a sentence I still find unbelievable to type, Journo Resources is now one of the UK's leading resources for journalists, despite being built in snatched hours with no staff.

Tens of thousands of people use our journalism jobs board - the only one to refuse jobs without salaries. Our community has shared thousands of real examples of their salaries, CVs and pitches, and we give personalised advice every week. Perhaps more crucially, it has now reached the point where I can pay myself a small salary.

The money comes from several pots, added over time. We take job advertisements, offer affiliate partnerships, have a subscriber option for community members to 'give back' and offer annual sponsorship deals to organisations. I'd be lying if I said this was part of a strategic plan - and I'm still trying to get past the discomfort of asking people for money.

And so, at the start of August, I sat down to my new full-time job, one I'd spent five years building. I was joined by two part-time trainee journalists, funded through the government's Kickstart scheme, and we still have our tiny team of freelances working on job sales and admin. This might sound bizarre but I felt lost. Without the drumbeat of clients, pitches and shifts, I really was in full control of my time.

What should I be doing? Who should I be chasing? What were my priorities? Again, there was no one to ask. And, really, shouldn't I know what I was doing? This transition has been one of the steepest learning curves I've experienced. I can now tell you way more than you'd ever care to know about staff pay, taxes and pensions - and how none of these systems are joined up. This article is my first piece of writing in weeks, though this is something I hope to change as we grow. I'll always be a journalist at heart.

Both myself and Journo Resources have grown a lot over the past five years but the industry remains as confusing as ever. We still have a media that doesn't look like the people it serves. Pay transparency is still a work in progress. And far too many of us are based in London.

There are a lot of people doing good things to fix this, but it's going to take an effort from all of us to tackle the most systemic problems in our industry. I'm still working out how my new job works, but I hope Journo Resources will be part of fixing what's wrong.

**“ Tens of thousands of people use our journalism jobs board - the only one to refuse jobs without salaries ”**

@Jem\_Collins

# Mental health is too often overlooked



Studies highlight journalists' wellbeing, says **Raymond Snoddy**

**T**here has always been an inherent tension in the air between media academics and practising journalists – the ancient gulf between teaching and analysing and actually doing.

There is a half way, slightly more respectable stage – hackacademics – those who were journalists and use that experience to inform their teaching and research.

As a generalisation, rather than being cynical, tough guys, journalists tend towards being thin skinned. They are not always welcoming of critics of their work, particularly when it comes from media academics exploring this or that perceived bias.

Yet a recent conference on the Future of Journalism held by the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Culture demonstrates just how enormous the range of topics being investigated by media academics is, including of course, investigative journalism.

The virtual conference, featuring, four simultaneous live streams, dealt with everything from local and regional reporting of Covid to sexual harassment in African newsrooms, one hundred years of letters to the editor in Danish newspapers and an ethnographic study of the working lives of women journalists in Saudi Arabia.

The conference dealt with more than 220 papers. But two papers with complementary themes stood out for their immediate relevance dealing with the difficult reality of the working lives of many journalists.

One is by Mark Deuze, author of *Media Life*, which shows how embedded and interconnected media is in everyday life, and Johana Kotisova, from Charles University in Prague. The

title: *Journalism as an Occupational Hazard: Understanding the Mental Health and Well-Being of Journalism*.

The other, *Vitrolic Public Harassment of Journalists on Social Media*, is by Marcel Broersma from Groningen University in the Netherlands. The second topic, which could of course lead to some of the problems highlighted in the first, warns that journalists are increasingly becoming victims of harassment on social media, particularly if they are women, people of colour or from religious minorities.

In places like the US, covering a political beat can lead to heaps of abuse and the creation of what the Washington Post described in an internal memo as 'a malicious mob mentality, fuelling online campaigns'.

One was launched against Post political reporter Seung Min Kim, who was accused of sinking the nomination of Neera Tanden as President Joe Biden's choice as budget director by showing a hostile Tanden tweet to Republican senator Lisa Murkowski.

Whether she should have done that or not, the point is that employers encourage journalists to engage on social media to attract and maintain audiences, and staff have to walk a tightrope between being personal and remaining detached and impartial.

According to Broersma, when journalists make an online gaffe or provoke an online row, they are often not supported by their newsrooms.

"Becoming victim of trolling and concerted personal attacks regularly results in personal trauma, self-censorship and reporters getting fired or quitting their jobs," he warns.

The idea that the very work of being a journalist is an occupational hazard comes from a Poynter Institute report.

The threat to mental health can be caused by what is close to a perfect storm – covering emotionally laden events, conflict and trauma combined with decades of newsroom restructuring and redundancies.

Then you add the pressures of working remotely during Covid; a survey last year found 77 per cent of journalists were suffering from work-related lockdown stress.

Deuze and Kotisova emphasise that mental health problems arise not just from intense emotions experienced at work. Ill effects 'often result from a commitment to suppress those feelings'.

They argue that the concept of wellbeing is understudied and that the happiness of journalists is a blind spot in journalism studies apart from a clear link between professional autonomy and job satisfaction.

A sense of wellbeing and happiness is important because it can act as 'preventative maintenance' for journalists, enabling them to ward off potential problems and breakdowns.

But what makes journalists happy?

You don't have to be a journalism professor to know that. Apart from being lucky enough to have a job that pays the mortgage, the definition of happiness for journalists is as old as the hills – scoops, impact, attention and being followed up by rivals.

The wider implications of the two research papers are that journalism studies and media employers should pay as much attention to mental health as physical safety.

Employers, if they have not done so, should also clarify the rules of engagement for social media and resist panicking at the first hint of a Twitter storm, which can pass as quickly as an autumn shower.

**“Mental health problems arise not just from intense emotions at work but also from suppressing those feelings”**

by **Tim Lezard**

# arts

## Festivals >

**Dundee Mountain Film Festival**  
November 25-27

This festival's motto is "Inspiring outdoor adventure since 1983" – and the event showcases an international programme of speakers, as well as award-winning films and exhibitions of art and photography.

<https://tinyurl.com/4pa3uwr5>

## Film >

**The French Dispatch**  
Released October 22

Described by director Wes Anderson as "a love letter to journalists", this film brings to life a collection of stories from the final issue of an American magazine published in a fictional French city.

The film is heavy on star names, including Benicio del Toro, Adrien Brody, Tilda Swinton, Frances McDormand, Bill Murray and Owen Wilson.

<https://tinyurl.com/ywduh2v7>

## Comedy >

**Sindhu Vee**  
*The Alphabet Tour*  
On tour throughout October and November

The former investment banker hits the road for her rescheduled tour. It's all about the hair we want, the friends we have, and living with the vast

difference between virus and viral.

<https://tinyurl.com/52cayf58>

## Katherine Ryan

*Missus*  
On tour throughout October and November

Having previously denounced partnership, Katherine has since married her first love... accidentally. Her new show looks at life, love, and what it means to be Missus.

<https://tinyurl.com/2mx2e79>

## Theatre >

**Hamlet**  
*Young Vic*  
Until November 13

Cush Jumbo makes her Young Vic debut as the Danish prince in Shakespeare's tale of power, politics and desire. The director Greg Hersov promises that she'll be a "new kind of Hamlet".

<https://tinyurl.com/f7mmhjzd>



## Manor

*National Theatre*  
From November 16

Moira Buffini's darkly comic play sees Ted, the charismatic leader of a far-right organisation, join a group of strangers in sheltering from a violent storm in a run-down manor house. This explosive mix of people must survive the weather and each other.

<https://tinyurl.com/zxrzsh24>

## Exhibition >



**Martin Parr: 40 Years of Photography in Ireland**  
*Roscommon Arts Centre until October 29, then on tour*

Martin Parr has been taking photographs in Ireland for two decades. He records the visit of the Pope and horse and cattle fairs, and explores the new wave of corporate American influence in Irish society and the shadow of an impending Brexit.

<https://tinyurl.com/323czf4a>

## Books >

**French Leave by Chris Proctor**

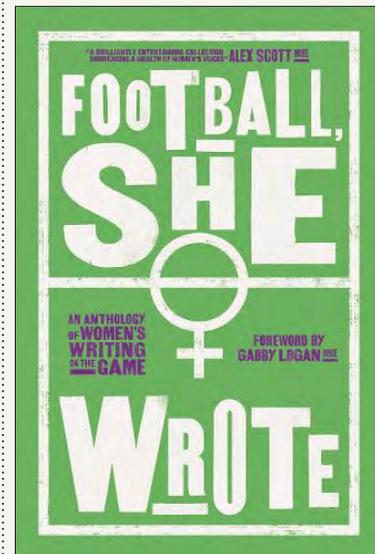
This novel by The Journalist's And Finally columnist shows two pictures of rural France, one seen through the eyes of ludicrously self-indulgent ex-pat Brits, and the other recalled by confused Jean-Marie, who is trapped in its past. French Leave has great reviews on Amazon for its storytelling and hilarity.

<https://tinyurl.com/jed9cs>

## An Inky Business by Matthew J Shaw

This 240-page tome looks at those who made and read newspapers from the British civil wars to the Battle of Gettysburg, revealing fake news has dark early-modern echoes.

<https://tinyurl.com/6kubumz2>



**Football, She Wrote: an Anthology of Women's Writing on the Game**

This collection showcases the finest pieces from 20 female sportswriters who capture the spirit and diversity of the game they love with memoirs, profiles, interviews and talking points.

<https://tinyurl.com/y9b6z7p8>

**The Prime Ministers We Never Had by Steve Richards**

Journalist and commentator Steve Richards looks at 11 prime ministers we never had – including Healey, Heseltine, Miliband (x2) and Corbyn – examining what made each of them unique and why they failed to make the final leap to the very top.

<https://tinyurl.com/d7ez9z95>

## Spotlight >

# Life in the local lane

Hundreds of journalists could have written *Panic as Man Burns Crumpets*. It is a searingly honest, funny, poignant and personal account of working in the regional press in which feature writer and columnist

Roger Lytollis' optimism lasts only until budget cuts kick in.

Those of us who have worked at local papers will recognise the characters – "the people in my newsroom must have been

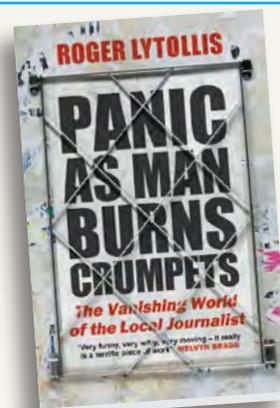
moonlighting at every paper in the country," Roger tells Arts. Laugh at his weird and utterly ridiculous stories, discover the people he interviews and reminisce about the good old days.

Those who have not had those experiences will learn of a bygone era when reporters, feature writers, photographers and subs

were valued, and when 'clickbait' and 'versioning' were merely figments of some beancounter's imagination.

So, yes, hundreds of journalists could have written this book, but only Lytollis has. I doubt anyone could have done it better.

<https://tinyurl.com/yfyauk6b>





# TechDownload

**Chris Merriman** on technology for journalists

## byte size...

### HEARING THE TRUE RECORDING

Whereas most headphones are designed to optimise music, reference headphones (also called studio headphones) recreate the original recording exactly, so you can clearly hear any problems and imperfections. Great for podcasters and broadcasters, the Sennheiser HD 560S Reference Headphones are comfortable to wear, even for long periods. Perfect for 'critical listening' (reviewing!), they are a must for creators. They're available from Sennheiser directly for £169.99.

[www.sennheiser.co.uk](http://www.sennheiser.co.uk)

### BIG SOUND AND WATER RESISTANT

The KYGO B9/800 Google Assistant Speaker is one of the best of its type I've ever used. It has a big 10W sound, reasonable battery life (around eight hours per charge) and it's water resistant (IPX7) so you can use it in our weird British weather - heck, it even floats! Mine lives in the bathroom. It's about £35 on Amazon.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B07KWC665D/>

### FREESAT BOX THAT'S 4K READY

Like the Humax Aura we featured earlier this year, the Freesat 4K Recordable Set Top Box is UHD/4K ready, and offers streaming services alongside around 170 free TV and radio channels. The 500GB-2TB hard drive stores loads of recordings and, with a wealth of streaming services, it's a proper one-stop shop. Prices start at £199.99 for the 500GB version

## A DECENT DIGITAL NOTEBOOK

**I**'ve always preferred making notes by hand. It's less fiddly, more versatile and lets you exercise your rusty shorthand. Despite the march of progress, I've never found a genuine digital alternative - until now.

The reMarkable 2 is the holy grail - the e-paper surface (like a Kindle) feels like paper when you write, accurately captures your handwriting and doesn't mistake your palm for the pen and leave marks all over your writing. There are a variety of pens, thicknesses and ink colours, and a myriad of paper templates, including lined, music staves, to-do lists and planners.

You can wirelessly send your scribbles to the phone app for backup or to turn them into printed text,

which it does even if you write like a GP in a hurry. You can file your notes in virtual notebooks, and file multiple notebooks into subject folders, so you're not flipping back and forth between lots of pages trying to find that vital bit you're looking for.

At £399, it's not a modest investment, but to use one is to be convinced of its value - it's one gorgeous gadget with the rare honour of getting into my everyday-carry list - it's that good. A joy to use and a logical progression from analogue notebooks.

[www.remarkable.com](http://www.remarkable.com)



## > Mini computer for writing on the go

**P**ocket-sized computers went out of fashion with the rise of the tablet, but British manufacturer Planet is reinventing them - and they're

a great way of writing and filing copy on the go.

The Cosmo Communicator can be a mobile phone, but opening the clamshell reveals a screen and a QWERTY

keyboard with full-sized keys. It runs Android out of the box but you can install other systems such as Sailfish and Ubuntu.

It works with regular and eSIM, offers 128GB RAM with a

memory card slot, and there's a 24MP camera. It's too bulky to replace a phone but is far easier to type on. It retails at £721.20 but you can get 30 per cent off (£504.84) with the code COSMO30.

[store.planetcom.co.uk](http://store.planetcom.co.uk)

### PLAN DAILY TASKS

#### Run your routine

Tiimo is an app designed primarily for people with ADHD but, even if you're not one of them, this alternative calendar can help you manage your time. It's designed for recording your daily routines - the stuff too dull for your main diary that you may forget - anything from watering the plants to sending your invoices. You can choose the frequency and length of each activity and get notifications of how long you have left to complete each one. It's available for iOS and Android, and priced on a sliding scale, which is a nice touch.

[www.tiimoapp.com](http://www.tiimoapp.com)

## A SUBTLE SMARTWATCH

**W**hen you ask people what they dislike about smartwatches, often it's the fact that they don't look like watches. Fortunately, French brand Withings has been churning out hybrid watches for a decade - classic watches with all the smarts of a fitness tracker.

The Scanwatch, its current flagship device, disguises a huge set of features in a case that looks and feels like a high-end watch. A second dial measures your steps and offers activity tracking, sleep tracking, ECG (heart rhythm), heart rate and SPO<sub>2</sub> measurements (blood oxygen), as well as alarms, stopwatch and phone notifications, and integrates with Withings Health Mate phone app. It is available in multiple colours and two sizes, and prices start from £208 (38mm) or £233 (42mm) depending on the strap.

[www.withings.com](http://www.withings.com)





## Cliff Cocker

Cliff Cocker was already in his seventh decade when he became the Morning Star's culture and books editor in 2010. Over the next 11 years, he would reshape the paper's arts coverage to

compete with the major broadsheet supplements, and all on a shoestring budget.

Cliff, who died from cancer and Covid in August, had worked as an editor on the English language Soviet Weekly in the 1980s and returned to journalism as a sub on the Star in 2009. An active member of the NUJ, he was political education officer for the Star chapel in his later years and would end diatribes about stalled pay negotiations with the verbal sign-off 'Disappointed, of Dollis Hill'.

His first and enduring love was the theatre. Born to Communist parents in Liverpool in 1949, Cliff took the starring role in school productions at Alsop High. He spotted the talents of a younger boy, Alexei Sayle, and would invite him to perform at impromptu shows in the sixth form common room. The pair formed an enduring friendship. Some years after leaving school, Cliff invited Sayle to join his Threepenny Theatre company, which put on Brechtian cabaret in trade union halls and community centres across Britain. Delivering a funeral tribute, Sayle said he owed his successful comedy career to Cliff.

Cliff and his wife Mary Adossides later directed, performed and taught drama in 1970s Paris and 1980s Addis Ababa, where he worked closely with ANC activists exiled from South Africa. After his

spell at Soviet Weekly ended with the abrupt dissolution of the USSR, Cliff returned once again to teaching. He developed a pioneering drama course at the College of North West London, which spawned a number of alumni who went on to successful acting careers.

At the Morning Star, Cliff would regale younger colleagues with story upon story of political struggles and gargantuan boozing sessions. Though not averse to grumpiness and even shouting matches, more often he could be heard declaiming Shakespeare's soliloquies as he entered or exited the building.

Continually lobbying to expand the paper's culture pages, he developed dozens of new writers into astute reviewers, while publishing contributions from established writers as varied as Attila the Stockbroker and Jonathan Meades.

Cliff had explored travelling to Cuba for pioneering cancer treatment, but died before he could realise his hope to 'support the revolution and all that'.

He is survived by Mary, daughters Jane and Lizzie, and grandchildren Millie, Orla and Arin – and the many, many artists and writers he encouraged and inspired.

## Conrad Landin



## Mitzi Bales

With the passing of Mitzi Bales, who died in May at the age of 93, book branch has lost its most remarkable and best-loved activist.

Mitzi was one of five sisters born and raised in Wheeling, West Virginia, during the Great Depression. Their parents kept a store and, even though money was tight, tried to help their impoverished local community. Mitzi's strong sense of solidarity against social injustice stemmed from these early experiences.

After majoring in journalism at West Virginia University, Mitzi went to Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labour Relations. Thereafter, her career combined journalistic work and trade unions in one way or another.

After spells in Tokyo and Brussels, Mitzi moved to Washington, DC, to work for the Washington Post, then to New York City. Finally, she moved to London to work for a union as newsletter editor and, although she continued to travel for interest, London was her home for

the rest of her life.

Mitzi joined the NUJ in 1968 and, having found her way into book publishing, where unionisation was developing rapidly, became a founder member of the book branch in 1973.

She remained an essential part of the branch's infrastructure for the rest of her life, occupying most branch offices at one time or another – except treasurer, for which she declared herself dangerously unqualified. From her time starting a chapel at Aldus Books to her last staff job at HarperCollins, she was a mainstay of grassroots union organisation.

When she eventually went freelance and much of her union activity moved to branch level, her sociable and empathetic personality made her brilliant at chapel liaison work.

The 1970s and 1980s saw many fierce battles for trade union rights. Mitzi was always up for solidarity work and picket line attendance, putting in early-morning stints on the suburban Grunwick picket line or visiting in her lunch hour if the dispute was in central London.

One of the hardest-fought struggles in the NUJ's books sector was the series of three strikes between 1979 and 1992 in defence of trade union recognition at Robert Maxwell's Pergamon Press in Oxford – the first two being the only strikes ever won against this notorious bully. Mitzi was steadfast in her support, often turning up unexpectedly just when the NUJ strikers were most in need of sustenance and encouragement.

Mitzi was also active in the wider union. She

served for many years on the appeals tribunal, where she is remembered as diligent, committed and always seeking to be fair to all parties.

She was also an elected trustee of NUJ Extra from 2014 to 2020 and was valued there as compassionate but level-headed in casework, as well as an enthusiastic informal fundraiser. In 1999, Mitzi became a member of honour of the NUJ. She had contributed richly in her 30 years of membership, but still had 20 years of service to give.

Outside her NUJ work, Mitzi had a rich political and cultural life. A life-long socialist and internationalist, she was an active supporter of Musicians for Peace and Disarmament, helping to promote their concerts.

She loved travel, art and design, and read voraciously. She liked beautiful things but felt no need to own them long term – her distinguished collection of studio pottery was eventually presented to the Paisley Museum.

Perhaps Mitzi's most outstanding feature was her gift for friendship. People were immediately drawn to her liveliness, warmth and interest in them and, once in her circle, usually remained in touch with her.

She is much missed and will be remembered with love by her family in the US, her NUJ colleagues and her myriad friends in the UK and across the world.

## Annie Pike



## Austin Mitchell

Austin Mitchell, the Labour MP for Great Grimsby until 2015, former journalist and academic, has died aged 86. He was the first chair of the NUJ's parliamentary group and a strong defender of media freedom.

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, said: "Austin served as first chair of the NUJ parliamentary group in 2003 and brought his enormous knowledge, based on his own experience with BBC and Yorkshire Television. He was an accomplished broadcaster and brought his commitment to transparency into his work as an MP.

"With John McDonnell MP, the first secretary, Austin put in place a structure that has enabled us to keep media freedom, employment rights and standards and the protection of public service broadcasting on the political agenda. He was a strong advocate for the rights of reporters and photographers, and we were appreciative of his support."

Before entering parliament, Austin had a career in broadcasting with the BBC and Yorkshire TV where he worked from 1969 to 1977 as a reporter and presenter of *Calendar*, its regional news programme. He was also a frequent contributor to *The Yorkshire Post*.

The NUJ's parliamentary group, a cross-party group of MPs and peers, represents the voice

of journalists and media workers in the Houses of Commons and Lords and champions media freedom in the UK and overseas. It was pressure by the group and debates highlighting the crisis in local news that led to the influential Cairncross review of a sustainable future for journalism.

During one of his last debates in the House of Commons on local newspapers, John McDonnell MP paid tribute, saying: "I want formally to thank my honourable friend the member for Great Grimsby for his services to the NUJ in the House. He has championed a free and flourishing media in this country and the critically important role of journalists. I place on the record all our thanks for that."

Austin Mitchell's reply was: "It is a pleasure to stand here as the chair of the NUJ parliamentary group but, to crack a Ken Dodd joke, it is a pleasure to be standing anywhere at my age... We want to encourage good journalism and good local journalism and we want to raise standards.

"We have a situation where a fifth of local government units have no local paper to carry on a critique of the local authority and its activities. That is tragic when we consider that all politics is local politics. Everything is local, in fact. Our roots are local, and we need local discussion and active journalism to keep us on our toes and to provide proper effective scrutiny of local government."

He supported his local newspaper the *Grimsby Telegraph* and the *Yorkshire Post* and called for newspapers to be made community assets, as well as defending the BBC from government attacks on the licence fee.



## Rodney Rice

Tributes have been paid to the veteran RTE journalist, pioneering broadcaster and NUJ member Rodney Rice, who has died aged 76.

Rodney started out as a reporter on RTE's current affairs TV show *7 Days* in 1968.

He moved to radio in 1972 where he presented the mid-morning show *Here and Now* before beginning a 25-year run hosting *Saturday View* in 1984.

He also hosted the annual *Worlds Apart* series

that covered issues in developing countries.

Michael D Higgins, Irish president, said: "The news of the death of Rodney Rice, broadcaster, journalist and producer, will have been heard with sadness by all those with an interest in politics and global justice, in particular by all those to whom he introduced a world of freedom, struggles, inequality, famine and forced migrations. That aspect of his four decades of work for RTE was pioneering work. His was one of the earliest, bravest and most consistent voices in opposing apartheid in South Africa.

"Through his investigative work, and particularly his weekly programme, he sought to promote debate and understanding of Irish public affairs. In doing so, he helped to shape RTE's current affairs broadcasting, and the public's evolving expectations of the national broadcaster's role in this area.

"But above all else, generations of Irish people and educators will be aware of how much they appreciated his work in bringing the voices of

the world's poorest and most marginalised people into Irish homes, through his reporting in the *Worlds Apart* series, and through his support for the work of many of Ireland's development organisations, which continued even in retirement."

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, said: "Rodney was a consistent and fearless opponent of apartheid and a pioneer in his coverage of the developing world, always providing a platform for the voiceless.

"His weekly *Saturday View* was compulsive listening, not least because he eschewed the cult of personality, mediating not dominating debates. *Worlds Apart* provided a window on the wider world and served as a reminder of our obligations to those beyond our shores.

"The greatest tribute we can pay to Rodney is to remain true to his authentic values at a time when global solidarity is so essential."

He is survived by his wife Margo, children Cian, Caitriona and Eoghan and seven grandchildren.

© KEVIN COOPER PHOTOLINE



# Twenty years on and no justice over killing

There needs to be an inquiry into Martin O'Hagan's murder, says **Séamus Dooley**

**A**t a simple May Day ceremony in Transport House, Belfast, in 2002, Marie O'Hagan unveiled a plaque in honour of her murdered husband Martin.

Marie and Martin's daughters, Martina, Cara and Niamh, later walked with NUJ colleagues led by John Barsby, president, and Mary Maher, cathaoirleach, of the Irish executive council, in the annual May Day parade through the heart of Belfast.

Of the many events marking Martin O'Hagan's brutal killing at the hands of the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) on September 28 2001, that May Day gathering was perhaps the most fitting.

O'Hagan loved the Belfast May Day celebration; Kevin Cooper's picture vividly captures his pride in carrying the NUJ banner every year.

At that May Day rally in St George's Market, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions condemned the murder of O'Hagan and the sectarian killing in the same year of Catholic postal worker Daniel McColgan, who was also shot dead by loyalists.

Martin O'Hagan. Daniel McColgan. Messengers. Workers. Victims.

O'Hagan would have been the first to warn against a hierarchy of victims and the NUJ believes the families of all killed in the Troubles and their aftermath are entitled to seek answers where there has been a failure to secure prosecutions.

O'Hagan was an investigative reporter for the Sunday World and secretary of the Belfast and district branch of the NUJ. A former member of the Official IRA, O'Hagan had served time in jail as a young man before committing himself to journalism.

He was a believer in radical left-wing politics and felt journalism was the most effective means to influence change. He was fearless and tenacious in exposing corruption by gangsters and paramilitaries.

During his career, he was targeted by paramilitaries on all sides of the political divide, including being kidnapped by the Provisional IRA. Violent Belfast loyalist Billy Wright, whom he nicknamed 'King Rat', was especially incensed by his journalism.

**Nothing has transpired to dissuade those of us who believe the failure to secure prosecutions may be rooted in fear of exposing collusion**

In 1992, Wright, then a member of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), had attempted to have O'Hagan killed. Later, Wright's splinter group, the LVF, attacked the Sunday World's Belfast office.

Four years later, O'Hagan was gunned down near his Lurgan home in the presence of his wife. The Red Hand Defenders, an operational codename for the LVF, claimed responsibility.

In marking the 20th anniversary of his callous murder, we should remember all those killed and injured in Northern Ireland. While celebrating O'Hagan's journalistic legacy, we must be mindful of the grief of his family, for whom anniversaries and events are a painful reminder of their great loss.

In 2013 the Public Prosecution Service of Northern Ireland reviewed the file on eight suspects arrested by the police and concluded there was insufficient evidence for prosecution. Northern Ireland's Police Ombudsman has also dismissed the possibility of investigating police failures in the case.

Since 2017, the NUJ has been calling for an independent, external investigation into his murder, and has asked the British and Irish governments to appoint international experts to do this.

The uncomfortable truths will not be exposed without an external inquiry into every aspect of O'Hagan's death, including the quality of evidence gathering and any links between Loyalist paramilitaries and the security forces.

The failure to bring those responsible for the murder of O'Hagan to justice is a stain on the history of policing in Northern Ireland.

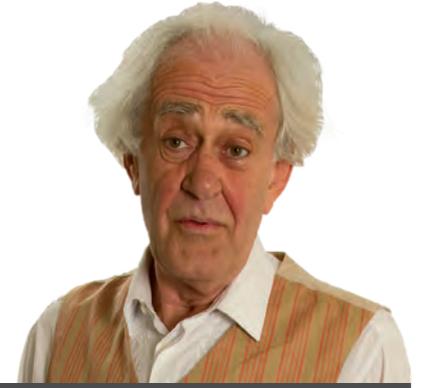
After his death, his colleague Jim Campbell, former northern editor at the Sunday World, warned that those responsible would not be brought to justice because members of the LVF gang involved were "paid police informers".

Campbell, who was seriously wounded in a UVF gun attack in 1984, also said police knew the names of O'Hagan's murderers within hours of the drive-by shooting.

Nothing has transpired over the past two decades to dissuade those of us who believe the failure to secure prosecutions may be rooted in fear of exposing collusion between the security forces and those involved in the murder of a brave journalist who knew too much.

We will never accept that O'Hagan's killing should simply be filed as an unsolved murder.

# If it's written down, then it must be true



Papers are credible but can be disheartening, **Chris Proctor** finds

**M**y family needed to get away after all the lockdowns. Bags packed, car hired and sandwiches at the ready, off we voyaged to distant climes. Well, Yorkshire.

It was marvellous, but that isn't the point. I was going to tell you about the lady in the newsagent's where I added to staycation joys by purchasing a ream of local papers.

Watching my purchases, the woman in question sniffed and tutted simultaneously, which is actually quite a tricky manoeuvre, and said she didn't buy newspapers any more. "They're full of bad news," she told me. "I listen to the radio."

As a scribbler with a deep attachment to print, I pointed out that this wasn't entirely rational. It didn't make the news any better. It was the same news, told differently. No, she said. It's not so bad on the radio.

"If you see it all written down in black and white, it's more depressing," she said. At that point, her husband, identifying me as a Londoner and therefore a Covid risk, hurried her away so I couldn't continue my investigations.

But I think I know what she meant. There is an enduring myth that if you write something down, it becomes more authentic. It looks binding and unretractable in its 24-hour permanence.

We don't apply ourselves to the same extent to the TV, the radio or a podcast. We're always aware of background noise, domestic demands or desirable distractions. Voices on the radio could almost be someone gossiping: what

they say is not so definitive as the written word.

A friend told me about being stopped at the port in France this summer to have her Covid status scrutinised. She was asked if she was double vaccinated, and said she was. To make absolutely sure, she was then required to sign a 'déclaration d'honneur'. Obviously, you have to tell the truth if it's going to be there in black and white.

OK. This golden rule has its exceptions. Party political manifestos, for example, like those undertaking not to raise taxes, or the promise of enriching the NHS by £350 million a week as a result of Brexit. But at least we have physical proof of the government reneging, even if it does us no good.

It's interesting that people buy newspapers when something that they consider momentous occurs – when online or broadcast reports just won't do. For the paper industry, September 1997 will always be Diana month: sales rocketed. And the day Thatcher resigned, newspaper advertising boards were instantly snaffled, the headline taken home for savouring or framing. Having it in writing proved it really had happened.

Of course, it doesn't always work. Even when you see it in print, you still doubt that a Lancaster bomber has been found on the moon, that there is a statue of Elvis on Mars or that a London bus has been discovered in Antarctica. But even these joyous porkies demonstrate the power of the 'black-and-white' syndrome. If someone had told you these stories,

they would have been heard, dismissed and forgotten, like Theresa May. But we remember them.

All the same, it is a sad state of affairs when potential readers are scared away from our efforts, fearful of doom, gloom and dejection. We need more stories that amuse as well as inform, like the marvellous ignoble Ig Nobel awards. These are handed out each year to scientists carrying out the most bizarre research. This year's winner was a Cornell University experiment involving hanging rhinoceroses upside down; they wanted to assess if the animals' health might be compromised by slinging them by their legs under a helicopter. Another outfit is engaged in controlling cockroaches on submarines.

As ever, the locals, those great sources of all our national stories, show the way. They tell readers what's going on in their area, and do it without drama or sensationalism – and sit these stories alongside very amusing tales.

The papers I bought in the Yorkshire newsagent included the headline 'Missing man found in pub', recorded details of a duck race at a summer fair, noted that St Mary's church is now open daily but will be closed on Sunday, and described a convention of members of HAPPY, otherwise known as the Hedgehog Appreciation Prickly Pals Yorkshire.

If we learned lessons from the locals, the source of all our best stories, my fellow customer in Leyburn could stroll fearlessly to the newsagent, confident as Joni Mitchell that she'd be able to see life from both sides now.

“**People buy newspapers when something that they consider momentous occurs**”

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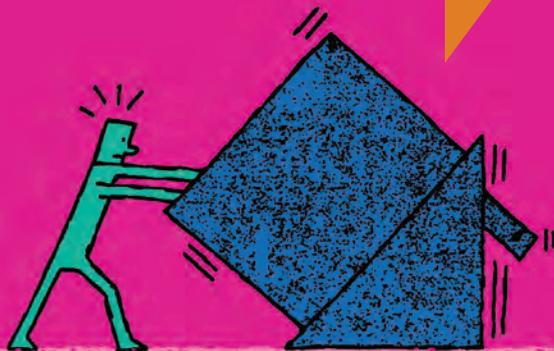
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