

# theJournalist

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## Are journalists too posh?

The media's shameful  
class ceiling



# Contents



**A**ugust and the silly season hiatus of news is upon us. Parliament is in recess and lots of us will be enjoying holidays, hopefully without too many adverse weather conditions.

In this issue, our cover feature by Kath Grant looks at the class ceiling in journalism and how working-class people can find it hard to break into the profession.

Steve Bird, the NUJ chapel chair, talks about dealing with the issues thrown up by AI in the workplace and Neil Merrick considers how tenants are given a voice in reports on housing.

Ray Massey, the Mail's motoring editor, chats to Jonathan Sale for our media anniversary series on the birth and development of motoring writing. And broadcaster and author Michael Crick answers the questions in our NUJ & Me Q&A.

James Garrett charts a new course for members in the south west and Ruth Addicott looks at working life in Norwich.

Recently, I was delighted to accept the TUC's award for best union journal of the year. Our magazine competed in a strong field that included entries from the large unions.

Whatever you're doing this month I hope you get some time to read your award-winning magazine.

Christie

**Christine Buckley**  
Editor

@mschrisbuckley



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**Cover picture**  
Antonio Sortino



# BBC local hit by third strike in protest over output cuts

**JOURNALISTS** at BBC local radio and television in England staged a third strike on the day of the by-elections in July in the ongoing protest against cuts being implemented to local radio. Coverage of the by-elections in Uxbridge and West Ruislip, Selby and Ainsty and Somerton and Frome and other local news across the country was disrupted as local news programmes were taken off the air.

Politicians including the Manchester mayor Andy Burnham and Labour MPs Rachel Long-Bailey, Sarah Champion, Kim Johnson, Alex Cunningham, and former shadow chancellor and chair of the NUJ parliamentary group John McDonnell visited picket lines and NUJ members reported strong support from passers-by and motorists.

The BBC is cutting local content by nearly a half by merging services and cutting programmes.

The NUJ has been joined by organisations representing the blind, older people, non-league football and other groups who rely on quality news radio in the fight to save BBC local radio output. In early July a petition was handed to 10 Downing Street which was signed by more than 230 local organisations and 40 cross-party politicians. The delegation taking the petition to the heart of government included NUJ officials, politicians, and representatives of the National Federation of the Blind UK.

The campaign also has its own song – Need My Local Radio by Beldon Haigh.

Paul Siegert, NUJ broadcasting officer, said: "We're asking Tim



LUKESANTILLIPHOTOGRAPHY

Davie to pause and rethink. We believe there are ways to protect and promote digital investment without cutting much loved and valued local radio content. With an election around the corner, holding local politicians to account is more important than ever. Let's protect and promote BBC Local, not eviscerate it."

According to the BBC's annual report the corporation is Britain's top media brand with eight out of 10 adults using it each week. The report says: "The BBC overwhelmingly remains the most trusted source of news in this country and around the world, with eight in 10 UK adults consuming BBC News services each week – double the next nearest provider."

## inbrief...

### WALES URGED TO ACT TO PROTECT MEDIA

Welsh ministers have been urged to make public interest news a public service and to create a Welsh Media Institute to promote a well-funded, plural, and diverse media. An industry group created after lobbying by the NUJ's Welsh executive council. Its report - Of and For Wales: towards a sustainable future for public interest journalism - says that access to accurate news which holds those in authority to account and protects Welsh-language journalism is essential for democracy.

### EMBLEY LEAVES TOP ROLE AT REACH

Reach group editor-in-chief Lloyd Embley has left after almost 30 years with the publisher. He has been editor-in-chief since 2014 and his previous roles at Reach, which was formerly Trinity Mirror, include Daily Mirror night editor and assistant editor, Sunday People editor, and editor-in-chief of the Daily and Sunday Mirror.

### NME AIMS FOR PRINT AND SCARCITY

The NME music magazine is relaunching in print after five years of being available digital-only. There will be a glossy magazine costing £10 every two months. There will be a limited print run each time to stimulate interest because of scarcity in a similar way to the way some types of trainers and sneakers are released for sale.

## Police monitored No Stone co-writer

**BARRY MCCAFFREY**, of the No Stone Unturned film which highlighted police actions following the 1994 murders of six men in Loughinisland, Northern Ireland, had his phone unlawfully monitored by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in 2013, the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) found.

The IPT is an independent judicial body which hears complaints about surveillance by public bodies.

In 2019, McCaffrey and Trevor Birney, the film's co-writer, asked the IPT to investigate whether they had been surveilled by the service.

Upon confirmation that McCaffrey's communications had been monitored in 2013

- four years prior to the film's release, the journalists agreed to attend an IPT open hearing on July 17 this year, on whether surveillance could be considered by a tribunal due to the length of time passed.

A last-minute decision by the PSNI to avoid contesting led to cancellation of the hearing.

Séamus Dooley, the NUJ's assistant general secretary and Irish secretary, said: "By any measure this is a shocking revelation and is the cause of utmost concern. It confirms that the actions which informed the makers of No Stone Unturned were deeply rooted in a culture which has no place in a democratic society."

## The Journalist wins TUC top award

**THE JOURNALIST** has been named best union journal by the TUC at its annual communications awards.

The magazine competed against publications from the major unions.

The TUC said: "The judges were impressed by the magazine's low-cost, direct,

and effective design and diverse content relevant to the NUJ's membership. Well-written and edited with an easy-to-read layout and clear headlines, this magazine stood out for its interesting stories combined with practical tips for journalists. The mix of

relevant UK and international news related to journalism rights abroad was commended by the judges who enjoyed reading the stories."

The edition entered for the awards featured a remarkable first-person story of Jeff Farrell a sub-editor member who

took time off his job to report from the war in Ukraine as a freelance. It also included a first-hand account of the start of the public relations initiative that made RMT general secretary Mick Lynch a household name written by his press officer and former NUJ national executive council member John Millington. John won the best media story at the awards.



JESS HURD

# Global Radio plans to cut local news output and journalists' jobs

**GLOBAL RADIO**, which owns LBC, Capital, Heart and Classic FM among other radio stations, could be cutting up to 40 journalists' roles in a widespread restructuring of its news operation.

It is believed that the restructuring will see some news centres closed with the coverage of the areas they serve moving to larger news hubs.

The NUJ said the move would cause further damage to local journalism as the BBC reduces its local radio services.

The action of the broadcasters follows similar moves in the regional press.

Paul Siegert, the union's broadcasting officer, said: "This is yet another blow for local and regional news coverage. This comes at a time when the BBC also wants to cut back on its local radio output and news services and local newspapers have also been cutting back and axing journalists' jobs."



"Yet there is a real appetite from local people to know what's going on in their communities. We call on the BBC and Global to rethink their plans."

He added that the NUJ would endeavour to prevent any compulsory redundancies for its members.

Global newsrooms in Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Fareham, Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Milton Keynes, Newcastle, Nottingham and Wrexham are expected to be affected by the plans. Between three and five reporters and presenters in each newsroom are believed to be at risk of redundancy.

The broadcaster's workforce were told of the move in an email from executive president Ashley Tabor and group chief executive Stephen Miron, who said they had reluctantly concluded that they needed to make further cost savings. They said that they were sorry at the prospect of losing talented and valued members of staff.



**This is yet another blow for regional news coverage at a time when the BBC wants to cut back on local radio output**

**Paul Siegert**  
NUJ broadcasting officer

## NUJ member forcibly deported

**MANCHESTER** and Salford NUJ branch member Ghazi Ghareeb Zorab was forcibly removed from the UK on July 1 following a last-minute campaign to prevent his

deportation to the Kurdish region of Iraq.

His colleagues had been with him at a branch social the week before he was detained at a Home Office reporting

centre where he was given only five days' notice of removal.

Immigration minister Robert Jenrick refused to cancel the flight, despite appeals from Zorab's own

MP and the NUJ parliamentary group.

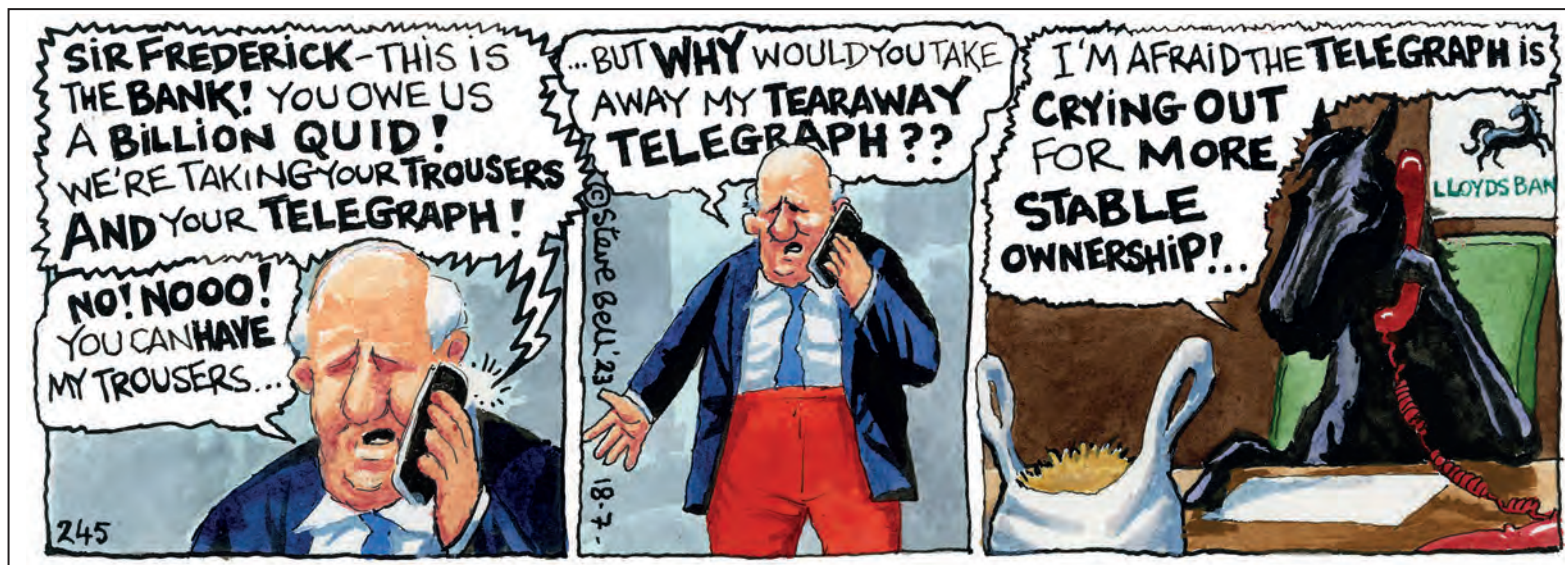
The NUJ urged the Home Office to reconsider, saying his reporting on politics made him a likely target of violent attacks and torture. Zorab was seeking asylum in the UK after

receiving threats because of his work.

Abuse of journalists' rights in Iraqi Kurdistan has been consistently highlighted by the International Federation of Journalists. In 2022, there were at least 73 cases of media and rights violations.

## STEVE BELL

## THE OWNERS





# Rally for RTÉ funding in wake of pay scandal

PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

**NUJ** members at RTÉ and other unions have protested to demand more government funding for the Irish public broadcaster. RTÉ faces uncertainty over its finances and a damaged reputation after large payments were made to a TV show host.

The new director general Kevin Bakhurst spoke to union members at a rally organised by the NUI Dublin broadcasting branch and backed by Connect and SIPTU. Branch chair Emma O'Kelly said the rally was aimed at the government, who needed to reform public service broadcasting. This couldn't be 'delivered on the cheap', she said.

She pointed to the NUI's record of demanding proper



financing of public service broadcasting based on a sustainable funding model. Séamus Dooley, NUI Irish secretary, (pictured) said many in politics and the commercial sector were opposed to public service broadcasting and that the government must be courageous in defending RTÉ.

Bakhurst told a

parliamentary committee that RTÉ had suffered "one of the most shameful and damaging episodes" in its history, after undeclared payments made to former Late Late Show host Ryan Tubridy. He received €345,000 (£296,000) over what the broadcaster declared as his pay from 2017 to 2022.

Bakhurst, a former BBC

and Ofcom executive, told public accounts committee members it was 'completely unacceptable' that the public and politicians had been misinformed by previous management over the pay.

"The public were misled as were you as public representatives. That is completely unacceptable. I want to assure you that lessons have already been learned and actions are already being taken," he said.

Part of the controversy stemmed from payments made by RTÉ to Tubridy in a 'tripartite deal' with Renault, which sponsored the show.

Bakhurst said that RTÉ shouldn't be "brokering or facilitating" commercial arrangements with contractors, and the fees in these contracts "are too high".

The former RTÉ director general Dee Forbes subsequently resigned over the pay deal.

## inbrief...

### DIGITAL EUROPEAN GUARDIAN TO START

The Guardian is to launch a digital European edition in the autumn - its first new foreign edition in eight years. This will create 11 editorial roles and the paper's European correspondents will contribute. The edition aims to meet a need for "trusted, independent English-language news that connects with European readers".

### YEMENI JOURNALISTS UNDER ATTACK

A report by the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate has revealed 40 media violations. These include eight arrests of journalists, plus eight incidents of targeted threats and three physical assaults. The report highlights the hostile environments media workers are in.

### IRISH NEWS EDITOR GOES AFTER 25 YEARS

Irish News editor Noel Doran is to step down after 25 years. He is believed to be the current longest-serving daily newspaper editor in the UK and Ireland. Before, that title would have gone to ex-Daily Mail editor Paul Dacre who served 26 years. Doran has overseen more than 7,000 editions of the Belfast-based paper and will continue to have a 'close association' with it.

## Agency staff move defeated

**A LEGAL** challenge brought by the NUI and other unions has defeated the UK government's efforts to allow agency workers to fill in for employees on strike.

The challenge was coordinated by the TUC with ASLEF, BFAWU, FDA, GMB, NEU, POA, PCS, RMT, Unite and Usdaw.

The government had proposed a change in agency worker regulations allowing them to fill staff positions during strikes. Unions had warned of the danger of this, including where agency staff had not received training to fulfil a role. The TUC said the move

could undermine industrial disputes and the fundamental right to strike.

The government failed to consult fully or heed advice. The judgment states "the approach... was to commit to the revocation of regulation 7... the advice to [Kwasi Kwarteng] was that it would be of negligible short-term benefit and probably be counterproductive".

## Tory U turn on conference fees

**JOURNALISTS** attending the Conservative Party conference in October will no longer be charged a fee, following protests from the NUI and the media industry.

The union has welcomed a decision by the Tories to scrap accreditation fees for journalists attending the assembly later this year.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUI general secretary, had denounced the decision as 'cynical and shameful'. She said it was a clear erosion of press freedom and urged a rethink of the policy, highlighting the effect it would have, effectively filtering attendees.

The £137 media accreditation fees will be refunded to those who have made the payment. The News Media Association, Society of Editors, News Media Coalition and Foreign Press Association had all criticised the charge, and a Council of Europe 'Alert' had called for a reversal of the policy.



### Ad revenue at twitter drops 50%

Twitter's cashflow remains negative because of a near 50 per cent drop in advertising revenue and heavy debt, Elon Musk said in July. This fell short of his expectation in March that Twitter could be cashflow positive by June. In a tweet replying to speculation about recapitalisation, he said: "Need to reach positive cashflow before we have the luxury of anything else." Musk said in another tweet that Twitter had not seen the increase in advertising revenue that had been expected in June. In addition, Twitter Spaces has not generated revenue yet.

# NUJ raises freelance concerns at National Pensioners Convention

**THE NUJ'S** 60+ council delegates took part in a show of support for Unite's 68 is Too Late pensions campaign in Blackpool, during a break in the annual meeting of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC).

Covid had forced the convention, formerly called the Pensioners' Parliament, to meet online for the past four years. Although numbers were down, nearly 200 members from throughout the UK attended the two-day event.

Expert speakers led a range of panel sessions covering pensions, tax, fuel poverty, health and social care, transport, housing and digital inclusion and exclusion.

In the opening rally, Jack Jones, the TUC's pensions policy officer, challenged a widely held assumption that pensioners were mostly wealthy. He pointed out that the UK state pension was one of one of the lowest in the developed world, and one in four people in deprived areas did not live to pension age.

The NPC has been and remains a vociferous campaigner for the reinstatement of the triple lock, which Lord Bryn Davies, in his talk on the future of the state pension, said was important to retain.

During question time, Jenny Vaughan, the 60+ council's pensions lead, challenged speakers for saying "very little about the self-employed, of special interest to the NUJ, as nearly half our members are freelance".

She said many found it hard to save enough in private pension schemes. Although speakers acknowledged the issues, none had any serious solutions.

In another session, the convention heard how the NPC, along with three other older people's organisations – Age UK, Independent Age and the Centre for Ageing Better – is campaigning for an independent commissioner for older



BEV MORRISON

people and ageing in England, which Wales and Ireland have both had for many years.

Digital exclusion is one of the issues the NPC hopes a commissioner for England would champion for older people.

On the morning of the session The Future is Digital: Making it Work for us All, the House of Lords published a report that found the government had "no credible strategy to tackle digital exclusion".

NUJ delegate Jenny Sims, chair of the NPC's digital working party, was a key speaker at The Future is Digital session. She brought the report to members' attention and reminded them that the NPC's digital inclusion campaign, Connections for All, was the result of a successful NUJ resolution at their biennial delegate conference five years ago.

Since then, the NPC's membership has fallen from 1.5 to 1.1 million. It is trying to recruit new affiliate organisations, groups and individual members.

South African-born Ellen Lebethe, NPC vice-president and chair of the NPC's ethnic minority working party, said the organisation needed positive action on equality, diversity and inclusion issues if it was to recruit new members.



**Speakers said very little about the self-employed, who are of special interest to the NUJ as nearly half our members are freelance**

**Jenny Vaughan**  
*Pensions lead, 60+ council*

## Award for student achievers

**THREE** aspiring journalists have been named as the latest high achievers in annual awards dedicated to the memory of NUJ stalwart Bob Norris.

The Bob Norris Award for Achievement in Journalism winners were nominated by their university tutors.

Each received a trophy, certificate and cash from the

NUJ Solent branch, of which Norris was a former chair.

Joe Brennan, 22, who was born in Portsmouth and lives in Southsea, has completed his third and final year in

journalism. The second year took two attempts because of health reasons.

Sajidur 'Saj' Rahman, 21, was born in Poole and lives in Ferndown, Dorset. He has completed his third year in sports journalism.

Andigoni 'Noni' Needs, 56, was born in Halifax and lives in Liss in Hampshire. She studied the NCTJ (level 5) diploma in journalism at the City of Portsmouth College in 2022-23.

LEEDS AND WEST YORKSHIRE NUJ BRANCH



## Happy birthday, Radio Leeds

**WHEN** NUJ members in Yorkshire gathered to wish BBC Radio Leeds a happy 55th birthday this summer, one of its original staff members was on hand to blow out the candles.

Mike McGowan was a producer when Radio Leeds was launched in 1968 as one of the UK's earliest local radio stations. Now an NUJ life member, he has joined current staff in opposing reductions to such services around the country, standing with them on recent picket lines.

The NUJ is in dispute with the BBC over its plans to cut local radio output by almost half, including by cancelling shows and making local stations share content across regions.

"Now is the time for the BBC to get to grips with public service broadcasting and expand, not reduce, its local radio network," said McGowan. "Listeners to local radio deserve better than cuts to valued local programmes, and BBC management must rethink its plans."

# United Nations to investigate threats to BBC Persian journalists

**THE UNION** has welcomed a commitment from the United Nations' fact-finding mission on Iran to investigate the targeting of the country journalists and their families both inside and outside Iran.

The NUJ has repeatedly condemned threats by the Iranian regime against Persian language journalists reporting on human rights breaches in the country. For more than a decade, the regime has used legal and illegal tools to try to stop NUJ members at the BBC's Persian service reporting on its activities. Journalists' families have also been persecuted to exert pressure on them and stymie reporting.

Since nationwide protests erupted in Iran last autumn, the regime has intensified its campaign against journalists, including targeting BBC Persian and Iran International journalists in the UK. The BBC made submissions about the harassment of BBC News



Persian staff and reprisals against them and their families.

The NUJ has consistently pressed the UN, the UK government and others to take these threats seriously before other regimes adopt them to stop journalists reporting on rights violations. The union has also called on the Iranian authorities to free all journalists wrongly imprisoned and drop bogus cases.

Paul Siegert, NUJ national broadcasting organiser, said: "If Iran's war on journalists and independent journalism isn't stopped, other countries will follow suit.

"We urge the UN's fact-finding mission to reveal and report the extent to which the Iranian regime targets journalists using methods many of our members have reported.

"Journalists have been subjected to abuse and kidnapping threats and have had assets frozen. Iran must not be permitted to continue such practices and there must be strong international condemnation."

## inbrief...

### CALL OVER RETENTION OF MATERIAL IN UK

Parliament's Joint Human Rights Committee has urged the UK to prevent the Investigatory Powers Commissioner from retaining journalistic material where there is no public interest. It was reporting on plans for a draft Investigatory Powers Act 2016 remedial order. The act allows confidential journalistic material to be intercepted in bulk, examined and retained.

### INDIAN JOURNALIST IS FOUND DEAD

Indian journalist Abdul Rauf Alamgir was found dead in a river in Assam two days after being abducted in June. The Indian Journalists Union condemned 'the brutal murder' and called for the arrests of those responsible. The International Federation of Journalists has called for an urgent investigation into his death.

### TURKISH EDITOR IS CHARGED

Merdan Yanardağ, editor-in-chief of Turkish broadcaster TELED, was arrested at the end of June after an investigation into his comments broadcasted about Kurdistan Workers' Party leader Abdullah Öcalan. The journalist has been charged with 'raising crime and the criminal' and over 'propaganda for a terrorist organisation'.

## National World faces strike ballot

**THE NUJ** will ballot more than 300 journalists for strike action at publisher National World in an ongoing dispute over pay.

The union has been negotiating with the company since an initial claim was submitted in

February. The claim sought a pay rise to help members cope with rising costs, as well as measures to address low pay and pay inequalities.

National World has offered staff a below-inflation pay offer of 4.5 per cent, backdated to 1 April 2023.

The NUJ has stressed that the impact of high inflation and growing living expenses will be easily consumed within that award, making it a real terms pay cut for staff.

Despite extensive engagement with the company including talks at

the conciliation service Acas, the union believes that the publisher has failed to put forward a far pay deal.

The strike ballot follows a vote by members of no confidence in David Montgomery, executive chairman of National World.

## Yet more job cuts at Reach

**REACH**, the national and regional news publisher, is planning further redundancies with 11 roles put at risk of redundancy and seven job losses expected.

The cuts will affect roles in regional sport, In Your Area management and four specific roles in the Live Network.

The redundancies are another blow to journalists who are deeply concerned about job security and whose morale is low following several rounds of redundancy. Chris Morley, NUJ Reach national coordinator, said: "This is the third set of redundancies within Reach this year and the uncertainty this brings is clearly extremely distressing for those put at risk and

has a corrosive effect throughout the workforce.

"We understand that previous savings targets may not have been met so these jobs are now in the line of fire.

"We are looking for a line to be drawn under the massive £30 million cuts total set at the beginning of the year to counter poor trading conditions."

# Reach

### Ipsos criticised for 'polemic' finding

The NUJ's ethics and disabled members councils have urged regulator Ipsos to insist on ethical reporting and criticised it for not acting over harm from negative narratives about disabled people and benefit recipients. Following more than 600 complaints about a Telegraph article headlined 'Exactly how much of your salary bankrolls the welfare state?', Ipsos said the Editors' Code of Practice hadn't been breached. NUJ president Natasha Hirst said: "To suggest the persistent negative framing of disabled people is mere 'polemic' demonstrates a shocking disregard for the consequences of this rhetoric."



## **Benedict Cooper** describes the scramble to cover the Nottingham murders

# Local knowledge critical in news

**T**hrough the dim light of the pub, I noticed a group of people slumped over a table, looking tired, sombre and shaken. If you didn't know the context, you might think they'd just come from a wake.

But I did know the context and who they were. This was a table of local journalists who had come from a vigil – the same heartbreaking vigil that I and thousands of people from all over Nottingham had just attended. Here we were, coincidentally in the same pub, trying to process it all over a pint.

Two days before, Nottingham had woken up to shocking news. Three people were dead and three more injured, brutally attacked in the street by an as-yet unidentified person or persons. In those first, nervous hours, there was more confusion than clarity.

One person had been left dead on Magdala Road, a quiet residential street north of the city; two students had been killed on Ilkeston Road in Radford, a rough, rackety area near the university, and three more had been mown down by a van in the centre of Nottingham. Shortly afterwards, the alleged attacker was arrested in Hyson Green.

If you know Nottingham, you know all these names, where they are and how far apart they are from each other. Geography was key to this story, certainly in those first hours.

But to the national reporters freshly arrived, it was all new. Even – and here's what grated – to those whose patches included Nottingham. So I found

myself being asked where all these places were and why that was so important. I had to point one journalist in the direction of Old Market Square – the soul of the city, and the setting of the vigil – from 200 yards away.

Newspapers have cut staff back to such an extent that reporters are now spread dangerously thin around what their editors might call the provinces. At some national papers, regions where millions of people live are covered by one lonely reporter.

Meanwhile, publishers continue to hack away at budgets, leaving papers run by skeleton staffs, while closing whole offices. Hundreds of local reporters now work entirely remotely, denied the vital, formative experience of working and learning in a newsroom.

On Wednesday June 7, BBC East Midlands journalists joined NUJ colleagues nationally in walkouts to protest against cuts to regional radio programming. Six days later, they were doing their best to cover one of most tragic events in Nottingham's history.

The sudden and horrifying attacks highlight just how vital expert local journalism is. They also exposed how vulnerable and remote communities will become with more cutbacks.

Reporters shouldn't need to ask for directions around cities in their own patches. It should not be the case, as it is in the East Midlands, that a major



publisher has one overwrought photographer covering an entire region for several papers, none of which have offices.

And it is unforgivable when community programming is being slashed by a publicly funded broadcaster as part of an obtuse cost-saving agenda.

It is one thing reporting a major, hopefully rare event – but that was only one day. As an experienced local journalist and friend puts it: “Real journalism is about doing that every day. It needs to be talking about the caretaker who takes disadvantaged children fishing and teaches them about life, or the young students in Nottingham who can’t afford their debt.”

There was no joking that morning. But I do remember a sardonic comment that it had taken a tragedy of this scale to get national journalists to come to Nottingham.

Sadly, this wasn't far off the mark. They did come, and they muddled through mispronounced street names and geographical blanks with the help of local reporters. But if publishers and broadcasters continue to neglect local journalism, those people simply won't be on the ground when it really counts.

Major events might receive only facile coverage from overstretched, here-today, gone-tomorrow journalists, satisfied too soon that the story is wrapped up – when really, locally, it is only just beginning to sink in.

**To the national reporters, the city's geography was all new. Even - and here's what grated - to those whose patches included Nottingham**



# When scandal hits one of the BBC's own



Sun shone harsh light on the Edwards story, says **Raymond Snoddy**

**A** newsagent in the native Wales of suspended BBC News presenter Huw Edwards has announced that it was no longer selling The Sun.

The internet has been awash with vitriol aimed at the popular daily amid calls for a boycott of the tabloid following the sad story of Edwards' online involvement with pictures of a young man.

The story, the arguments went, was a monstrous invasion of the privacy of the man who solemnly announced the death of Queen Elizabeth II and who then covered her funeral and the subsequent coronation of King Charles III with dignity.

It was a typical example of Rupert Murdoch's gutter journalism and part of the plot by Murdoch to undermine the BBC by exposing one of its most respected figureheads.

There is absolutely no doubt that Murdoch hates the BBC and its universal licence fee and public service commitment, and would like to see it either broken up or forced to turn to voluntary subscription financing.

Even now, when Murdoch no longer owns Sky, the extensive free-at-the-point-of-use BBC website limits his ability to charge for online news.

There is also no question that, over the years, The Sun has been responsible for some truly squalid stories such as the vilification of Liverpool football fans over the Hillsborough disaster.

The problem is the Edwards story is not one of the above. It is a great scoop and a story that deserved to be told, even though some of the details are still in dispute and the police have determined that no criminal offence has been committed.

At the heart of any examination of The Sun's journalism is the fact that the paper was approached by the mother and stepfather of the young man because they were concerned their son's involvement with the television personality enabled him to finance a drug problem.

They came to The Sun weeks after they had first approached the BBC on the issue and either no action was taken or, at the very least, no effective action. They did not ask the Sun for money so 'cheque-book journalism' was not an issue.

The controversy did become more murky when the young man issued a statement through his lawyers denouncing the Sun story as 'rubbish' and claiming that nothing 'inappropriate or illegal had taken place'.

It is noticeable, however, that no details were given on what, if anything, the parents had got wrong in their interview with the Sun.

Because the police are no longer involved, the BBC inquiry has had to deal on its own with a raft of complex issues, including the gulf between the accounts of the parents and their son.

As BBC director general Tim Davie has acknowledged, it could take a couple of months to untangle.

Final judgements should await the publication of that inquiry but the questions – and even some of the answers – are already relatively clear.

It ought to be possible to find out whether Edwards did pay £35,000 to the young man and whether indecent images were involved.

It is already obvious that the BBC's complaints procedures have been exposed yet again – Davie only found out about the impending scandal little more than a day before the story broke.

It is admirable that the BBC properly covered the story. Yet it also probably went over the top on the scale of the coverage, which helped push into the shade more important stories – such as former prime minister Boris Johnson failing to hand over his mobile phone to the Covid inquiry.

There are also the matters that came to light after the Sun exposure; BBC staff were already investigating Edwards' behaviour and three young colleagues said they had received 'inappropriate' messages from him. It has echoes of the power imbalance that ended Philip Schofield's career at ITV.

Is Edwards entitled to say what he does in private is his own affair even though many would find his behaviour bizarre?

Not when the gap between his public persona and the reality of his life is so wide and when BBC News has to be backed by authority and integrity. Not when there are allegations that money from him fuelled a serious drug habit. And certainly not when young BBC staffers receive unwanted attention from a powerful colleague.

Former Sky political editor Adam Boulton says The Sun was right to bring the Edwards issue to public attention.

Journalists hold the behaviour of other powerful public figures to account, whether illegal or merely unwise, to account so must be accountable themselves. In the end, there will be lessons to be learned for the BBC. For Edwards, it could come down to the clause in his contract against doing anything to bring the BBC into disrepute.

After the inquiry, a quiet resignation might be best for all concerned, giving Edwards time to rebuild his life and mental health.

Whatever the outcome, it is unlikely he will present television news again.

**Journalists hold the behaviour of other powerful public figures to account, whether illegal or unwise, so must be accountable themselves**

# Norwich

**Ruth Addicott** talks to journalists about their lives and work in Norwich

**W**

hen Norwich-based journalist Rob Setchell met 101-year-old war veteran John Lister in 2020, Lister told him about his loneliness after losing his wife of 70 years to Covid.

Setchell was covering the story for ITV News Anglia and, afterwards, put an appeal online for people to send Lister a Christmas card. It went viral and almost 20,000 cards and presents from as far as Australia turned up at Lister's home.

"John's carers said he would stay up late reading his cards and that, when he died a few months later, he knew people cared about him," says Setchell.

Setchell has covered hundreds of stories over the years, but Lister's story not only stayed with him but also showed the impact that local news still has.

Setchell moved to Norwich 10 years ago and, like many journalists, ended up staying.

"It's a fantastic place to be a journalist," he says. "Norfolk is jam-packed with colourful characters, beautiful locations and interesting stories.

"If you want the buzz of a lively city, it's on your doorstep, but, if you want the peace of the coast and countryside, it's a short drive away."

Once the second largest city in the UK, Norwich has suffered cutbacks like everywhere else but remains a main base for media with two daily newspapers, major broadcasters, B2B publishers and a rising number of freelancers.

ITV Anglia, BBC Look East and BBC Radio Norfolk are based there. Commercial radio stations Heart (Global) and Greatest Hits Radio (Bauer) have newsgathering opportunities, and

Future Radio, run by volunteers, is one of the longest-running community radio stations in the UK.

Jenny Kirk is a reporter, producer and presenter for BBC Look East which covers Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire.

She has lived in Norwich 18 years and says it's a great patch to cover: "All life is here. There are rural and coastal stories, inner-city issues, social deprivation and extreme wealth, and it's a centre of excellence for academia, research and science."

One of the big stories recently has been the crumbling cliffs on the Norfolk coast. Kirk was filming in Hemsby in March as people's houses were being demolished – a clip she posted on Twitter had more than 5,000 views.

Norwich has two daily newspapers, the Eastern Daily Press ([www.edp24.co.uk](http://www.edp24.co.uk)), founded in 1870 – once England's biggest-selling regional morning paper – and the Norwich Evening News ([www.eveningnews24.co.uk](http://www.eveningnews24.co.uk)), founded in 1882. They cover Norfolk, northern parts of Suffolk and east Cambridgeshire and are owned by Newsquest, following its acquisition of Archant in 2022.

Staff at the EDP and Norwich Evening News had been based at their historic headquarters in Prospect House since the late 1960s, but the building was sold to an insurance company in 2019 and most of the reporters now work from home.

The city is also a major base for B2B publishing. BizClik (which claims to be 'one of the UK's fastest-growing digital media companies'), Finelight Media, Littlegate Publishing and Outlook Publishing produce a range of national and international magazines and all have headquarters in Norwich.

Phoebe Harper moved to the city as a student with no intention of working in B2B journalism but found it a good way to get experience. She is now editorial director at Outlook Publishing.

"Norwich has a lot of opportunities in this field," she says. "Since I started work here two and a half years ago, the editorial team, which I oversee, has tripled in size and the



## Find your route and join in

### Look at ways in

Phoebe Harper, editorial director at Outlook Publishing, urges journalists to consider trade media. She wanted to be a travel journalist, but with no training and little

experience, struggled to find a job. Since taking a junior editor role at a B2B travel magazine, she hasn't looked back and has developed it into the kind of lifestyle brand she wanted to write for.

### Loose connections

Richard Clinnick, editor of Rail Express, says the only drawback to Norwich is connectivity. Although the city is less than two hours by train to London, Norfolk has

no motorway and Clinnick says phone reception can be patchy: "It is getting better, but we've got a big issue in the county with broadband."

### Mutual union

Travel Weekly reporter Samantha Mayling recommends getting involved

with the Norfolk NUJ branch: "When I moved to Norwich, I attended as many meetings as possible, as it was a good way to keep in touch with other freelancers and staff journalists. It was useful to ask for advice and feel supported and part of a journalism community."

company continues to grow. It began as a three-man operation 10 years ago, and now we're almost 60 people strong."

Although the editorial team is small, with six people, Harper says B2B publishing is a great way for early career journalists to build skills and confidence. Norwich is also more affordable than nearby cities such as Cambridge.

"Culturally speaking, Norwich is incredibly rich with fantastic arts venues – Norwich Arts Centre and the Playhouse to name just a couple. It also has the National Centre for Writing. And it has an endless calendar of events including the City of Literature Festival," she adds.

Travel reporter Samantha Mayling agrees. Mayling moved to Norwich from London in 2005 with her husband and two young children looking for a better quality of life. She works as a reporter for London-based trade title Travel Weekly, which adopted hybrid working during the pandemic. She also freelances, writing press releases for World Travel Market.

"My husband and son go to Norwich City FC regularly – the football ground is in walking distance – and there are plenty of cultural activities such as gigs, theatre, cinema, museums, walks and talks about history, literature and nature," she says.

"It's big enough to be a major cultural and commercial hub, but easy to get around – we cycle to most places in the city – and the countryside is on our doorstep."

With two universities, the University of East Anglia and Norwich University of the Arts, Norwich also has opportunities for student journalism.

The University of East Anglia's broadcast journalism courses are taught in the former Heart and Radio Broadland studios in the city centre. The move came about after former course director and BBC and ITV journalist Mark Wells spotted the opportunity days before the studios were about to be demolished. The students now have access to studios to

"I've always found it an extremely rewarding and inspiring place, with an endless selection of great cafes to scribble away in, brilliant independent bookshops (The Book Hive), and events to connect with other writers."

**Phoebe Harper,**  
editorial director,  
Outlook Publishing

"It's a great place to bring up a family."

**Samantha Mayling,**  
reporter, Travel  
Weekly

"Don't expect to find a huge amount of work locally, but as a base, it's wonderful."

**Dominic Bradbury,**  
freelance journalist  
and writer

create radio, podcast and TV output and can respond rapidly to developing news events..

Students have also had experience at BBC Look East and Radio Norfolk, including working on the rolling autocues, producing programmes and TV breakfast show handovers.

Wells says that Norwich is a great place for journalists to start out, but it can often be overlooked: "Hopefully, its designation as Unesco's City of Literature will help put that right – it's not for nothing that Norwich markets itself as the City of Stories," he says.

The Norfolk NUJ branch has members across Norfolk and Suffolk, who came out in support recently following the industrial action at the BBC. NUJ Norfolk branch chair John Ranson says: "Quite a few of us are freelance and work remotely. The union does feel like an important place where journalists can come together and get some mutual support which they may not be able to get in an office."

The branch is keen to hear from members in the region.

Freelance journalist Dominic Bradbury grew up in Norwich and moved back 20 years ago after working in London. He specialises in architecture and design and has written more than 20 books and contributed to the FT, The Times, The Telegraph, House & Garden, World of Interiors and Wallpaper. He also works as a consultant assisting architectural and design bodies and does copywriting.

"I find it a really creative environment and love being based here," he says. "It's now fairly easy to get down to London by train, as long as there are no strikes, so I still spend a good deal of time in London working on stories and catching up with editors." Although local freelance work is more difficult to find, Bradbury has noticed more writers and journalists moving to Norfolk and back to Norwich. As he says – that's a great endorsement.

People in social housing have historically had a bad press – if any coverage at all. This is changing, says **Neil Merrick**

# Tenants make the news



he reaction of residents at Grenfell Tower could not have been more

damning. “Where were you? Why didn’t you come here before?” they asked Jon Snow as he visited west London within hours of the tower block catching fire.

During the coming months, the former Channel 4 News presenter was candid about the impression that visiting Grenfell in 2017 left on him as a broadcaster. Along with other journalists, he felt on the wrong side of a sociopolitical divide that meant the opinions of council tenants rarely made headlines.

Six years since the fire that killed 72 people, and with the final report of the Grenfell inquiry still awaited, has the attitude of the media towards social housing changed?

More than four million UK households live in homes let by housing associations or councils, although you wouldn’t know it from visiting a typical newsroom.

“The vast majority of journalists don’t live in social housing and most never have,” says Daniel Hewitt, investigations correspondent at ITV.

During the past two years, Hewitt has done more than most to keep social housing in the news, exposing the squalid conditions in which some tenants live, including severe cases of damp and mould.

When he first came across poor conditions in a council flat in Croydon, he was forced to explain to colleagues in the newsroom why the story was of significance beyond south London. “I showed them the footage,” he recalls. “It was so horrific that it was enough to put it on the national news.”

Hewitt’s stories coincided with the championing of tenants by social media activist Kwayo Tweneboa, who became a thorn in the side of social landlords, including the housing association that let a flat to his family.

Last year, such stories found extra resonance when a coroner ruled that a two-year-old boy, Awaab Ishak, had died in a Rochdale flat due to damp and mould. Suddenly, national and local reporters were interested in the issue, flagging up conditions in some of the worst social housing.

According to Hewitt, the roots of the story lie in local journalism and, in some cases, were being reported prior to his exposés on ITV. “They had been seen as uber-local issues,” he says. “Nobody had put the jigsaw together.”

Coming so soon after Grenfell, these stories only served to demonstrate the ‘culture of disparagement’ shown to tenants by some landlords, says Robert Booth, social affairs correspondent at The Guardian.

Booth covered the Grenfell inquiry throughout its four years.

Though coverage varied from month to month, the appetite of Guardian readers for Grenfell-related news remained strong right up to the inquiry’s conclusion last November, he says.

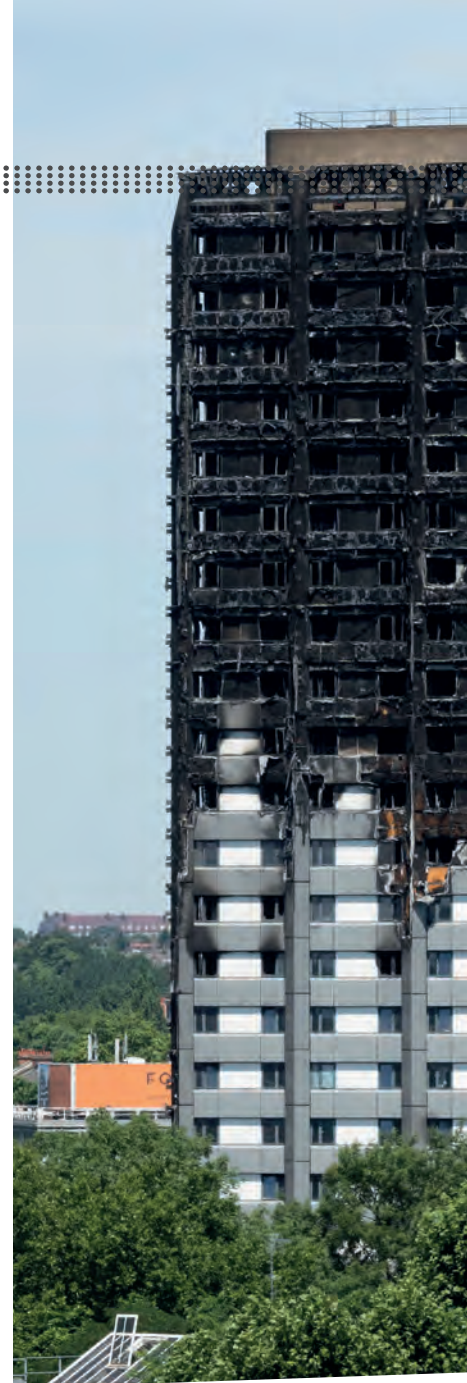
By then, however, the media lens had already broadened to general fire safety in high-rise flats. This meant reporting on the plight of leaseholders, who were (and still are) being asked to pay hefty bills by building owners to improve safety.

Here, parts of the media felt on safer ground as they were, in effect, championing homeowners, even if the people affected own only the lease to their property.

At the same time, the Rochdale case means attention is still focused on tenants. More journalists are asking questions about how social housing is funded and where blame lies for poor-quality homes.

“It’s not just about bashing landlords,” adds Booth. “One of the dynamics of the social housing story is that tenants are rising up and advocating change.”

Previously, tenants were best known to the wider public for appearing in prime-time TV documentaries such as *Benefits Street*, numerous programmes about bailiffs





ALEX MACNAUGHTON / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

and, more recently, Channel 4's 60 Days on the Estates.

A council estate was seen as something to escape from, with those who remained often labelled scroungers by right-wing tabloids.

There is also a significant change here, says Jules Birch, a freelance journalist and blogger, with terms such as scrounger less likely to appear in headlines. "It's hard for the right-wing media to get away with that post-Grenfell," he says.

Hannah Fearn, another freelancer who previously edited The Guardian's network for housing professionals, says the interest generated by Grenfell and the Awaab Ishak case led to more enthusiasm for housing stories among commissioning editors. "You can pitch ideas in a way that you never could before," she says.

Stories calling for more housebuilding (rather than just preserving green fields) are more commonplace, with less fixation on property prices.

"The media has cottoned on to the fact that rises in house prices aren't good news for the general population," adds Birch.

The new interest in housing has spawned a flurry of books written by journalists. Pete Apps, deputy editor of Inside Housing, wrote a detailed account of the Grenfell tragedy, while Vicky Spratt, housing correspondent at the i newspaper, wrote a book on problems faced by tenants in social and private rented housing.

Freelance Kieran Yates, who writes about culture and social affairs, wrote All the Houses I've Ever Lived In, describing her life as she moved from home to home as a child and young adult.

Yates, who reported on Grenfell for the BBC and Vice, is interested in the

impact of housing on wider society. The musicians she interviews are most likely to hail from council estates.

"It is important to revisit the narrative in the media, which has been about demonising social housing and working-class people," she adds. "People like me, who lived in social housing, are not represented in the newsroom."

With about 20 per cent of UK households now renting privately, newsroom conversations are as likely to be about problem landlords as the difficulty of buying a home. Private tenants are an important audience for titles aimed at younger people.

Among those renting, Fearn points out, are children of senior editors. "It's affecting the lives of senior journalists on nationals," she says. "Once you get into private rent, you start writing about renting across the board."

Jon Land, former editor of the magazine 24Housing and now head of content at the Housing Quality Network consultancy, says coverage of poor-quality

homes has 'blown a hole' in the reputation of social landlords. This means many are nervous about talking to journalists, even when they have good news.

"Journalists are taking a far more sympathetic approach to tenants and the poor deal they are getting," says Land. "Landlords are seen as the problem."

Maybe that is the way it should be, with the media holding landlords to account. Housing secretary Michael Gove is never far from TV bulletins, parrying journalists' questions about cuts in government funding and making threats against errant landlords.

When Gove took part in a TV interview on the Rochdale estate where Awaab Ishak died, the tenant he spoke to declined to appear on camera, preferring to stay anonymous. But that is unusual.

In most cases, says Hewitt, tenants want publicity. He continues to receive emails from tenants in poor housing. "People don't contact ITV about conditions in their home lightly," he says. "They do so out of desperation."

4m

More than four million UK households live in homes let by housing associations or councils

## 'Get the tone right'

**FILMING** people who live in a squalid council flat requires more than just interviewing skills.

Reporters have a duty of care to tenants who flag up problems, even if they ask to be featured on TV, says Daniel Hewitt.

When Hewitt began filming the awful conditions in some social housing, he reminded tenants that they, along with their homes, would be seen by millions of viewers.

To ensure they were happy with appearing on TV, he visited families with producers the day before filming,

and discussed their options and any fears.

"There is a thin line between exposing an injustice and gawping in a Benefits Street type of way," he says.

Thanks to Hewitt and ITV, some tenants were rehoused, though that often took time and meant keeping in touch with the residents after they had featured on the news.



"The important thing is not to regard anyone as a case study," he says. "You have to get the tone right. Part of that is getting to know the person."

Last year, he was a witness before a House of Commons committee that was investigating housing problems. Prior to the session, he admits, he felt more nervous than at any time in his life.

Appearing with him were tenants who had contacted ITV about their living conditions, and were also about to be questioned by MPs. "I felt part of my role was to be there and make sure they were OK," he says.

DINENDRA HARIA / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

# A question of

## Barriers and attitudes keep working-class people out of journalism, **Kath Grant** finds

**C**racking the 'class ceiling' is essential if journalism and news coverage are to become more representative of today's society, according to the latest Diversity in Journalism report from the NCTJ. However, it emphasises there are no easy answers to how people from disadvantaged backgrounds can be brought into the media industry.

Joanne Butcher, chief executive of the NCTJ, says: "We must encourage those from all walks of life into journalism, remove the barriers and support people in their careers so they can join the decision-makers. We all need to work together to make this happen."

She is adamant that the industry needs to place equal value on alternative, non-graduate entry to boost and promote recruitment, and has announced new outreach work with partners in the media and education. She says it will increase recruitment of school leavers onto NCTJ further education college courses and will help diversify cohorts on accredited university courses.

Other plans include publicising access to training and funding for it at a time when there has been a drop in the employment of journalists because of severe job losses.

Despite generally grim times for the industry, a small amount of progress has been made in improving diversity but the lack of journalists from working-class backgrounds remains a concern. Journalists are much more likely to come from households where a parent works or has worked in a higher-level occupation – one of the key determinants of social class.

Seventy-two per cent of journalists had a parent in one of the three highest occupational groups compared with 44 per cent of all UK workers. A relatively low proportion of journalists have parents in skilled trades at only eight per cent compared with 20 per cent for all those in work. Younger, more junior journalists tend to be less socially diverse than senior editors who may have begun work when journalism training was funded.

With job losses in the regions leading to fewer staff opportunities for young journalists, many are being forced straight into freelancing when they leave university. However, those from working class families cannot afford to work for little or no pay until they have established themselves as freelance journalists.

Robyn Vinter writes for national newspapers including The Observer, The Guardian, the i newspaper and the Sunday Mirror. Based in Leeds, she was formerly a reporter at the Yorkshire Post, and previously ran The Overtake,

an investigative news website for young people.

"Middle- and upper-class people set the standard of what a journalist looks like, sounds like, what their manner is like. And everything else is inferior. If you can't assimilate, you can't survive."

She adds: "Look at how many working-class news reporters are on TV. It's either none or it's impossible to tell because they were forced to assimilate."

Working-class journalists are often trusted more when they are out on stories "but, inside the newsroom, you can see people look at you like some kind of specimen when you're talking", she notes.

She often felt less valuable when comparing herself to colleagues and saw her lack of skills as a polished public speaker and the difficulties she found in voicing her own achievements as personal failings. She says: "These are not real failings. They're not even important for my actual job."

Kate Bohdanowicz is from a working-class family in Nottingham and moved to London in 1995 after leaving university. As a child, she had free school meals and school uniform vouchers.

She couldn't afford the NCTJ course after university so ended up in various jobs, then found work at a press agency and a celebrity news agency. For a while, she was their Irish stringer, based in Dublin. Back in London, she freelanced on the diary desks at the Evening Standard and Daily Express and worked as a staff journalist at the Express for 11 years before returning to freelancing.

"No one ever asked me about my qualifications. I was just brought in for a shift and, if they liked me, I would get another one. The Express was full of all types of people – the Standard wasn't, at least not in the Diary section. Everyone there was posh or connected in some way."

There was a traineeship scheme at the Express that recruited people from different backgrounds. However, the NCTJ qualification was required so this excluded some people financially.

Bohdanowicz realised that journalism was full of 'dynasties' where the same family name crops up again and again as children of established writers are given jobs: "It's sad as these people aren't necessarily the best people – they are just the best-placed people."

Jennifer Walley trained as a journalist on an NCTJ pre-entry course 40 years ago when training was still funded. She had wanted to be a journalist from the age of 11 and was the first of her family to stay in education beyond the statutory leaving age because she needed two A levels for the course.

Her first job was on a weekly newspaper in Greater Manchester after she wrote more than 100 letters inquiring about vacancies.

"We had no phone at home so I used public phone boxes or

**I was comfortable speaking to anyone but I have worked with some journalists who feared going onto council estates**



# f class

the local newsagent's shop if I needed to make or receive calls about interviews," she recalls.

Freelancing was more convenient after she had her children. However, computer technology was revolutionising the industry during the 1980s so she returned to a staff job on a regional evening newspaper to avoid missing out on training. For a while, she worked on an industry-wide scheme that partnered newspapers with primary schools in their areas. "Children from all kinds of backgrounds learned about newspapers. It was a great way for them to get involved in their local newspaper and consider journalism as a career."

Julian Brown started working as a press photographer in the early 1980s after completing a photography course at Wigan college. He rang dozens of newspapers, eventually speaking to someone on the desk at the Lancashire Evening Telegraph in Blackburn. "First of all, he rebuked me for phoning on deadline day, then put me through to personnel because they had a vacancy for a trainee photographer."

Later, he worked as a staff photographer on The Burnley Express and as a freelance photographer in newspapers and PR. He has seen opportunities for photographers disappear over the years and doubts if journalism would have been an option for him if he were starting out today.

"The Burnley Express paid for me to do the NCTJ photography course in Sheffield. That gave me an enormous amount of confidence," he says.

He found his strong regional accent was an advantage in journalism, with people only speaking to news reporters he was working with because they trusted him.

"Journalists with a posh accent were not taken seriously – people wanted to know 'Who is he and what's he doing here?'"

This was also Rachel Broady's experience. "I was comfortable speaking to anyone but I have worked with some journalists who feared going onto council estates and into what they thought were rough pubs. Some wouldn't even get out of the car," she says.

"Assumptions were made about working class people - such as that only people on the dole lived on council estates. Being working class made me a better journalist."



ANTONIO SORTINO

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## AI poses huge risks to staff, such as physical and political surveillance, warns **Steve Bird**

**I**n the spring, about 30 NUJ reps from media companies around the UK met in Birmingham to discuss the state of journalism. During the lunch break, strikers from the nearby Amazon warehouse were invited in to build solidarity.

As they described their work conditions, they conjured up a dystopian scene. They talked about low pay and punishing levels of supervision. The most moving account – and the most inspiring – was of the appearance of the first GMB strikers emerging through the fog at midnight, walking past ranks of surveillance cameras and security fencing.

To the journalists, this experience of being managed by computer metrics, having personal space stripped away and being deskilled and micromanaged was alien and shocking.

Few foresaw that just a few months later this picture of a shifting balance of power between human and machine would be being discussed as a part of the very near future, not just for Amazon warehouse workers but for everyone.

At the heart of the matter is AI – the revolutionary technology that seems capable of performing almost any intellectual task that a human can do. Its advent has been described by Microsoft founder Bill Gates as “fundamental as the creation of the microprocessor, the personal computer, the internet and the mobile phone”, and by Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, as a technology with prospects that are “unbelievably good”. But, hinting at the capacity for such vast processing power to learn independently outside human control or be used to develop dangerous technology, Altman also told StrictlyVC, ominously, that the new tech could mean “lights out for all of us”.

Massive investment and the steep growth of computer processing power means these scenarios are no longer fantastical and many are fast becoming a reality. AI is already having an impact in workplaces.

Mary Towers is a leading member of the TUC's working group on AI. "Since Covid, there has already been a significant amount of AI technology rolled out", with workers being used as a "live experiment", she says.

"This is not restricted to the gig economy," she adds.

## Giving evidence at a committee on the Data Protection and

Digital Information Bill in May, Towers said: "Twenty per cent of German people and 35 per cent of Spanish people are subject to algorithmic management systems at the moment."

And the ability to delegate communications and admin to AI is about to become widespread. Companies including Microsoft and Google are already testing versions of generative AI to add to the software they provide, including Gmail and Google Docs.

So it is no surprise that admin and white-collar workers are being seen at particular risk. In June, multinational HR company Challenger, Gray and Christmas reported that 4.9 per cent of monthly job losses were attributable to the effects of AI.

Newsquest has advertised for its first 'AI-powered journalist' with the role involving "efficiently upload and manage a high volume of stories, using time-saving AI tools and techniques".

Fears about the future of journalism were outlined in stark terms in a motion passed at the NUJ Delegate Meeting (DM) in April: “This DM is concerned that such is the pace at which artificial intelligence (AI) produces apparent news content, our entire information ecosystem could become unbalanced.

“AI has the capacity to economically disadvantage individual creators – particularly visual creators such as photographers, videographers, illustrators and cartoonists. Their work is potentially scraped, without their permission, credit or payment, and used to create content that competes directly with their work.”

In political and cultural terms, the prospect of technology that can exactly mimic the tone, appearance and context of content from reputable news outlets, for example, could take the generation of fake news and false accounts to a new level. It also raises the question of how to protect unique content, as well as individual style and 'voice' in media work.

This is about not just plagiarism but also individual ownership rights in a world where media production is being created at scale based on past work.

Towers is concerned that the UK has no AI-specific laws, with no equivalent of the EU's AI Act. "This is a huge worry for us," she says. While the EU, Canada and the US are developing legislative controls (Canada has mandatory algorithm assessments), the UK's white paper has no statutory footing.

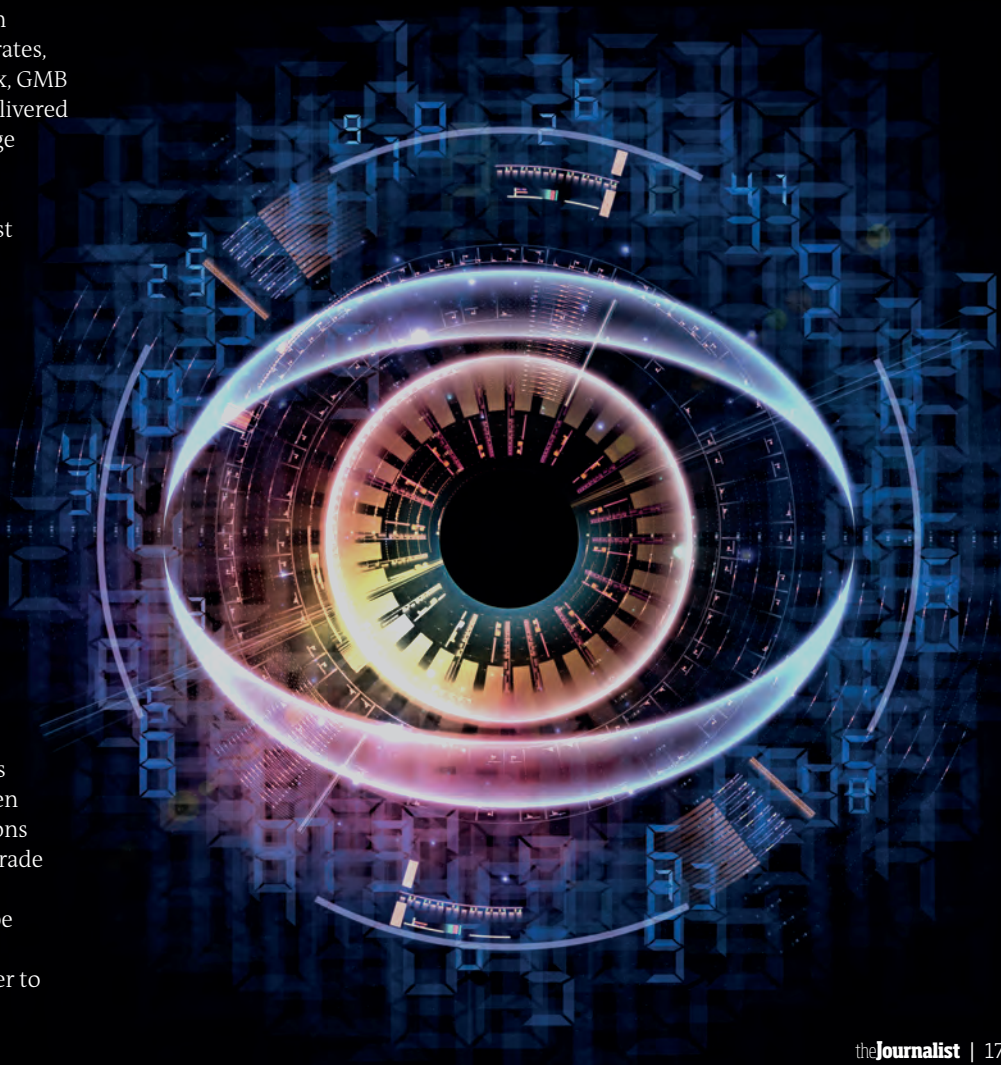
**This technology, which ought to be wonderful, is being developed in a society that is not designed to use it for everybody's good**



**To paraphrase  
from George  
Orwell's 1984,  
if there is  
hope, it lies  
with the unions**

|||||

**Steve Bird is chair of the FT NUJ chapel and a member of the NUJ newspaper and agencies industrial council**



It can be very difficult to tell whether an image is genuine, says **Andrew Wiard**

# Is seeing still believing?

**T**he picture opposite above is a fake. I don't mean it's photoshopped or edited. It was never a photograph in the first place. But it still won first prize in a photographic competition.

Its creators Absolutely AI confessed: "The surfers in our image never existed. Neither does that particular beach or stretch of ocean. It's made up of an infinite amount of pixels taken from infinite photographs that have been uploaded online over the years by anyone and everyone."

Fakes like these are now ubiquitous, and ever more realistic and convincing.

The other 'photograph' here was not just a fake picture but also fake news, made with artificial intelligence (AI) text-to-image generator Midjourney. This was used to introduce a Turkey/Syria disaster appeal, which has now disappeared along with any money raised.

This is frightening. It strikes at the heart of everything we do. It goes way beyond the doctoring of authentic photographs. Professional photographers can guarantee their work with film or raw file originals. But with AI there are no originals, just word prompts entered into a text to image generator.

So, what to do when we can't trust the evidence of our own eyes?

One answer is to identify fakes.

Both the UK and the EU, with its forthcoming Digital Services Act, are proposing the compulsory labelling of AI pictures, which will make a dramatic difference. But this is not foolproof. We also need to guarantee the reality, the authenticity of the pictures we create.

The solution here lies in digitally identifying genuine photographs, at

the moment of creation, and establishing their provenance, digital truth fighting digital lies.

This can be done today and with no need for legislation. Here is how it works. A digital code inserts provenance information into every photograph as it is taken, even before it leaves the camera. This code then tracks and traces every change and alteration on its travels through computer software, and then on to agencies, archives, websites and social media. At any point, anyone can check for the digital signature which if present will reveal its origins, history, authenticity, authorship and ownership.

That, in a nutshell, is the scheme launched in 2019 by the Content Authenticity Initiative (CAI), founded by Adobe and joined initially by the New York Times and then Twitter.

This led in 2021 to the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA) run by Adobe, Arm, the BBC, Intel, Microsoft and Truepic. It is described as a 'mutually governed consortium created to accelerate the pursuit of pragmatic, adoptable standards for digital provenance, serving creators, editors, publishers, media platforms, and consumers'.

As the aim is for universal adoption by the worlds of publishing and digital photography, the digital code upon which it depends is open source and available to all.

Here's an introduction – an interview with Andy Parsons, senior director of CAI at Adobe: <http://bit.ly/3lRZM1r>.

Parsons says he "cannot guarantee the veracity of the thing that is depicted, but we can guarantee the details are on how it was made, where it was made, who made it [and] what equipment was used".



This fake 'photograph' won first prize in the DigiDirect photography competition (<https://tinyurl.com/4za3b6px>)



Fake 'photograph' generated by AI text-to-image generator Midjourney used for Turkey/Syria earthquake appeal. Close inspection reveals an almost hidden sixth finger on the firefighter's hand

**Fake photographic news is the one AI problem with a clear, practical solution. The NUJ should give this scheme its full support**

This technology works. Nikon and Leica are already inserting the code into some of their latest cameras. Within a few years, it could be available in all, for not only professionals but also amateurs. So, why hasn't it been adopted by Apple and iPhones?

Fake photographic news is the one AI problem with a clear, practical solution now. However, universal acceptance and critical mass are the necessary preconditions for this scheme to work, and, in my view, the NUJ should give it its full support.

So we can once more trust our own eyes, and seeing will still be believing.





### What made you become a journalist?

We had a fortnightly newspaper at Manchester Grammar School, and it was such a thrill to see my words in print. That led to editing the student paper at Oxford. Until I was 32, I saw journalism as a stepping stone into politics. Suddenly, I was offered the prospect of a Labour seat but then realised overnight that journalism was much more interesting and fun. After that, I felt liberated and no longer worried that my journalism might impede my political career.

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

When I left university, I briefly set up a tiny publishing business, and I always wonder how far I might have got as a businessman.

### When did you join the NUJ and why?

Within days of joining ITN as a graduate trainee in 1980, because I've always believed workers have more clout when they organise together. I've subsequently been very grateful to the union for helping me through a couple of stupid scrapes.

### Are many of your friends in the union?

Sadly, I fear not.

### What's been your best moment in your career?

That's very difficult to answer. In some ways, I'm happier now as a

freelance than I've ever been – still very busy, writing the odd book and occasional article, doing broadcast punditry, and running my Twitter feed – @tomorrowsMPs – about parliamentary selections. The latter is unpaid, but fascinating, addictive and fun.

### What advice would you give someone starting out in journalism?

Specialise. Keep in touch with people who are clearly going places. Put huge efforts into collecting people's contact details. Never assume there's nothing more to say about any story.

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

A turkey slaughterhouse.

### And the best?

ITN, 1980-90. The company had an amazing 'can do' spirit in those days – anything was possible even

if your deadline was only a few minutes away. We worked hard but also played hard in an era when there seemed to be no shortage of money. Also, unlike the BBC (I discovered later), there was no social division between journalists, technical teams and other staff. We all mucked in together, and you still see that togetherness at ITN staff reunions.

### Who is your biggest hero?

Robert Caro, legendary biographer of Robert Moses and Lyndon Johnson.

### And villain?

Vladimir Putin.

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

Jesus Christ, Elizabeth I, William Shakespeare, Thomas Jefferson, Mahatma Gandhi, and Pamela Harriman.

# NUJ & me

**Michael Crick** is a broadcaster and author. He has covered politics for Channel 4 and the BBC

### What was your earliest political thought?

I remember my mother saying to me, around 1966, when I was about eight: "Harold Wilson – I had such high hopes in that man." It's the story of politics really – the Left disappointed by successive leaders, not just in Britain but everywhere.

### What takes up your spare time?

Following Manchester United. I've been going to about two-thirds of all United games in England, home and away, for 53 years now. It's not cheap but not as costly as some addictions. And now I'm also starting to enjoy the very different pleasures of non-league football.

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

That local papers and other local media can be revived.

### And fears?

That AI will drive many journalists out of work.

### How would you like to be remembered?

For helping younger colleagues.



The motor car craze fuelled a new class of journalist, says **Jonathan Sale**

# HIT THE ROAD, HACKS

**T**he 1890s saw the dawn of motoring – and the early morning of British motoring journalism.

“It has been arranged that this, the first column of notes devoted to the auto-car that has ever appeared in any English newspaper, shall be published in the Daily Mail every Wednesday.” This was the discreet announcement on September 13, 1899 on a page totally lacking, as was the usual practice, in illustrations or, indeed, anything that could be regarded as layout, just columns marching up and down in a sober sort of way. “All communications should be addressed to ‘The Man at the Wheel’, Daily Mail London E.C.”

There have been 12 Men at the Wheel since then, not the least being Sir Malcolm Campbell, holder of the land speed record. The present and longest lasting scribe in the hot seat is the award-winning Ray Massey. He gets a come-hither layout and flattering mugshot, not to mention hard-to-beat headlines such as ‘How world’s fastest driver crashed at 100 mph – with me as passenger’ being just one example.

Back in 1899, the pioneering piece, titled ‘The Coming Craze – Hints to Intending Motists [sic]’, confined itself to a reassuring language that was, like the potential motorists or motists, careful not to frighten the horses.

Speaking of which, a car might seem expensive at £200 but “once purchased, the charge for upkeep of one of these carriages is nothing like that of a horse, and no coachman is required”.

Ideally, a toff had both. Take Lord Shrewsbury, who “uses his motor carriage for long journeys and to drive him to and from polo matches but still sticks to his [horse-drawn] phaeton for short drives.” Likewise equine-loving Lord Iveagh had not got rid of a single nag, “though he has many motor-cars”.

Furthermore, continued The Man in the Victorian Driving Seat: “Motor-cars are invaluable for station work where a carriage has to go back several times a day fetching passengers and luggage... For shooting parties, they are excellent.”

As Hamlet nearly said: “To mote or not to mote is” the discussion in many households just now.” On the plus side, less technically minded readers were reminded that, unlike a horse, “a motor car cannot shy, run away, kick, bolt or rear”.

A possible downside was spelled out under the crosshead of ‘Cheap cars’: “Let me warn against the small, cheap German motor carriages” that

retailers were pressing upon customers because manufacturers offered unfairly generous profits. The point is proved by the following paragraph about a doctor who set off from London over a hilly route in his new German jalopy that turned out to lack any vital gizmo to prevent the vehicle from running backwards downhill and, as in this instance, tipping over sideways.

Over a century later, Massey was to point the finger at a modern example of lethal manufacturing: ‘How your hi-tech car dashboard can kill you.’ ‘How safe are your tyres?’ asks another piece. Quizzed about his job, he replies,

## Red flags and road hogs and red flags

**THE FIRST** motorist believed to have set foot, or wheel, on one of our roads was the Hon (it helped to be well heeled) Evelyn Ellis (pictured). In 1895, he steered his Panhard et Levassor from Micheldever in Hampshire to his home in Datchet, Berkshire. “We passed 133 horses,” wrote his passenger in the Saturday Review. “They took it very well.”

The second car on the road was probably the 2hp Benz Velo belonging to coffee importer Henry Hewetson, who

was threatened by police with the Locomotives on Highways (‘Red Flag’) Act of 1865.

He then, one suspects, became the first driver to break the speed limit. He had hired a couple of lads to accompany him; one rode ahead on a bicycle to give warning of any coppers ahead, at which point the other would leap from the passenger seat to amble in front of the vehicle at not more than the regulation 4mph while cheekily waving a pencil to which

was attached a two-inch-square piece of red linen.

The first road hog to be named and shamed in the local press after being nicked for speeding was Walter Arnold, who, roaring in his 15hp Benz-Velo through Paddock Wood, Kent, at all of 8mph,

passed the house of the local constable, who abandoned his dinner and chased him for an exhausting five miles on his bike. Arnold was charged with four motoring offences.

Oddly enough, this did not put him off from going into the motor trade – with Hewetson.



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"It's more Jeremy Paxman than Jeremy Clarkson. My background is as a news journalist, not a petrolhead."

For the 'automobilist', it is a case of plus ça change gear, plus c'est la même chose. "The appalling state of our potholed roads," he says, "unfair persecution of drivers by the police and politicians, and the future of electric cars amid concern over their range and a shortage of charging points. These were also the very issues being vigorously debated at the height of the Victorian era more than a century ago in these pages."

One way in which the concerns of the 1899 columnist did differ from those of today's is the assertion that "It is not the province of the 'Daily Mail' to give advice to the purchasers of motor carriages," which one would have thought should come pretty high on the need-to-know list for readers.

Instead, if you must faff around with that sort of fiddly detail, "Good advice can be obtained by writing to the editors of the excellent publication, the 'Autocar'." However, the paper "will not hesitate to expose by name the carriages that are causing these accidents" (ie running backwards and falling over).

In 1896, three years before the motoring column proper had the key turned in its ignition, the very first issue of the paper had featured a report on the International Horse Drawn and Horseless Carriage and Roads Locomotion exhibition at Crystal Palace. This featured the original 'steam tricycle' made in 1881, which was so terrifying that it had led to the temporary banning from public roads of all 'automatically propelled road carriages'. There was also a stately procession of four 'auto-motor' four-wheeled vehicles that "seemed to be thoroughly under the control of their drivers" or, to put it another way, didn't blow up.



**Top:** Mail columnist Malcolm Campbell (right), land speed record holder, with fellow competitors Frank Lockhart (centre) and Ray Keeth; steam vehicle, 1897  
**Above:** Today's Mail Motoring Editor Ray Massey

Autocar, Britain's first motoring weekly, had hit the streets in November 1895 and is still hitting them. Its first issue would not win any prizes for ease of comprehension these days, as the prose of its opening article was purple to the point of impenetrability: "The enthusiastic, if at times erratic, wheelman" – I think he means the cyclist – "has in his own vile body, and at first for his own amusement only, proved to a steady-going and conservative nation the immense advantages of and economic gain obtained by the application of self-contained power as a means for the propulsion of rolling bodies upon ordinary roads..." (The sentence continues for a further half-column.)

Among understandable bits is a prediction that horses would never be driven from our roads – who would say neigh to that?

An October issue found another wrong tree or arbre to bark up, opposing as it did any adoption in England of the 'petty' French scheme of enforcing number plates on cars: "The fact that an autocar has to carry a numbered plaque like a common cab prowling for hire would be quite enough to prevent many people from using such vehicles." Sadly, this campaign failed on both counts. Britain did adopt number plaques and no one seems to have stopped driving their voitures as a consequence.

Autocar was in something of a niche market, as its staff might well have outnumbered the cars on the road, of which there were probably fewer than a dozen. Yet, by the end of the century, the number of motorist-friendly mags had reached double figures and, by the start of the Second World War, it was approaching three figures, giving employment to a new class of hacks: motoring journalists.

Incredibly, there were two attempts at daily newspapers for motorists. Daily Motoring Illustrated was launched in November 1905 but succeeded in providing pictures to its petrol-headed readers for a mere eight issues. To be fair, this was seven issues more than a car-crash of a publication, the one-off Daily Auto, managed.

Also launched in 1908 was The Non-Motorist, which, since most of us are walkers, ought to have been a runaway success. Sadly, it never caught on. Must have been too pedestrian.



# by Mark Fisher arts

## Books >

### **Different Times: a History of British Comedy**

David Stubbs  
Out now, Faber

The music, film, TV and football journalist turns his attention to British comedy, its relationship with society and the attendant debates about cancel culture.

<https://tinyurl.com/26deggtc>

### **The Explorer and the Journalist**

Richard Evans  
Out now

The History Press

Philip Gibbs, once a Fleet Street

legend, risked his reputation by casting doubt on the claim by explorer Frederick Cook to have reached the Arctic in 1909. The journalist was publicly derided but triumphed when proved right.

<https://tinyurl.com/2keq8yfm>

### **Journalism in Retrospection**

Nisar Ali Shah

Out now

Hansib Publications

The long-time NUJ member spent 35 years working on London magazines and newspapers. He brings together 101 of his articles. They include reviews, obituaries and opinion pieces

on everything from torture in Iraq to drone bombings by the west.

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

### **Last Dance at the Discotheque for Deviants**

Paul David Gould

Out now

Unbound

The author, a journalist at the FT, takes us to the underground gay scene of post-Soviet Moscow in a thriller about a young man who comes out only to be betrayed by those closest to him.

<https://tinyurl.com/2phkff4z>



## Exhibitions >

### **Philip Guston**

Tate Modern, London

October 5-February 25

The trauma of 20th-century politics

makes itself felt in the paintings and drawings of an artist born in Montreal to a family of Jewish immigrants. His concerns included fascism, antisemitism and the Ku Klux Klan.

<https://tinyurl.com/2gqwg97>

## Festivals >

### **Bloomsbury Festival**

London

October 13-22

The multi-arts festival includes two free performances of Dancing, Trouble-Making, Taboo!: 19th-Century Rule Breakers (2pm and 4pm, October 22), written by journalist Julia Pascal for her Pascal Theatre Company, with students from London Contemporary Dance Theatre. Staged in the Royal National Hotel, it shines a light on the pioneering names of Sophia Jex-Blake, Eliza Orme and Helen Cox.

<https://tinyurl.com/2a3pdsha>



### **Bolton International Film Festival**

October 5-9 (online 11-22)

This includes short films, talks and masterclasses, covering documentary, animation, women in film, dance, music and fashion.

<https://tinyurl.com/2zah5a8u>

### **Dublin Theatre Festival**

September 28-October 15

This event routinely fields international companies alongside the cream of Irish work from the main stage to the site specific. For the next generation of talent, turn up earlier in September for the Dublin Fringe Festival.

<https://tinyurl.com/2d4wt9c7>

## Films >

### **Bobi Wine: the People's President**

In cinemas, September 1

Documentary by Moses Bwayo and Christopher Sharp about Ugandan actor and musician Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, aka Bobi Wine, who ran for the presidency in 2021, offering an alternative to the country's illiberal regime.

<https://tinyurl.com/2b3ulzj4>

## In depth >

# Taboo, loss and recovery

Allan Radcliffe's debut novel is not about journalism - but the Edinburgh author says working as a journalist helped him get it written.

"Journalism and creative art are two different forms but there is a lot of overlap," says the feature writer and critic for The Times.

"You still need to apply rigour and a keen editorial sense. You need to be ruthlessly edit.

"If you've had any kind of career in journalism, it does eventually strip you of your ego.

"You have to get used to working with editors and not being too precious about everything you do. I can imagine some people resenting that whereas I was really open to it."

Written in characteristically crisp and clear language, The Old Haunts is about a man coming to terms with the sudden loss of his parents.

As he escapes to rural Scotland with his new boyfriend, he finds himself processing unresolved feelings.



"It's about a slow estrangement with these wonderful parents," says Radcliffe, whose own mother died suddenly after he had completed a first draft.

"You bring your own insights and experience, but that's alongside pulling in things you have heard or researched and things you made up," he notes.

It is a novel about relationships, love and recovery, but the author also writes with political intent.

"Anyone in their 40s will have been coming of age at the time of section 28," says Radcliffe, whose short stories have been published in anthologies and broadcast on BBC Radio 4.

"It's almost unimaginable now but, for me, there was no open discussion about sexuality and same-sex relationships at all."

He considers the personal effects of this law: "Section 28 was responsible for a lot of pain and damage. Because you couldn't come out before you'd left home, you effectively had to become a liar to your parents."

He adds: "You were so starved of any representation, when you saw something like My Beautiful Laundrette late at night on Channel 4, it was a huge revelation. I get emotional thinking about it. Hopefully, people coming out today feel less lonely."

**The Old Haunts, Allan Radcliffe, Fairlight Books, October 14**

<https://tinyurl.com/2753cpf7>



## The Old Oak In cinemas September 29

What is expected to be the final movie by Ken Loach is set in a former mining village where the arrival of Syrian refugees gives the option of racial tension or class solidarity.  
<https://tinyurl.com/22k6dpua>



## Music > The Newtown Neurotics 100 Club, London September 5

The political punks reunite to play alongside a screening of Kick Out! – The Newtown Neurotics Story, a documentary featuring journalist Garry Bushell and journalist-turned-DJ Steve

Lamacq. Expect anti-Thatcher toe-tappers such as Kick Out the Tories.  
<https://tinyurl.com/2yee8ocy>

## Theatre > Boys from the Blackstuff Royal Court, Liverpool September 15-October 28

Alan Bleasdale's peerless study of Thatcher-era poverty in Liverpool is adapted for the stage by political drama specialist James Graham, whose comedy Quiz, about Charles Ingram (the Coughing Major), is touring the UK.  
<https://tinyurl.com/29v24yp2>

## Group Portrait in a Summer Landscape Pitlochry Festival Theatre and Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh August 25-October 14

In Peter Arnott's play, set during the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, a political heavyweight and his former students come to terms with forces that shaped the country.  
<https://tinyurl.com/23387aml>

## Spotlight >

# Politics in a crisis

As an investigations correspondent for the Guardian, Harry Davies has worked on stories such as the 2022 Uber files and the Cambridge Analytica data scandal.

He has also found time to double as a dramatist and, perhaps unsurprisingly, his latest play is set in the world of politics.

Staged in Chichester, The Inquiry is about a secretary of state for justice whose career is threatened by the publication of a report into a health disaster.

"It's a political thriller about a public health

crisis," says director Joanna Bowman. "It's Ibsen meets Annie Baker meets House of Cards."

The Inquiry is about a clash of politics, justice and ambition. Coming close on the heels of partygate and as the UK Covid-19



inquiry gets into gear, it could hardly be more topical.

Bowman, who is based in Glasgow, is attracted to work that feels "politically necessary". "For me, theatre isn't about sitting in the audience thinking, 'Do I need to change the way I am?'" she says.

"It's about reminding ourselves that the best ways of living are communal and communitarian.

"Theatre is one of the few places where we come together and imagine together."

**The Inquiry,  
Chichester Festival  
Theatre, October  
13-November 4**  
<https://tinyurl.com/23z76q6g>

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**James Garrett** charts a new course for members in the south west

# Dawn of the super-branch

**D**uring my 43 years in the NUJ, I have been a member of five branches. Three of them – East Suffolk, Herefordshire and Geneva – disappeared long ago. As employment levels in local newspapers and commercial local radio dwindled, it became harder to organise union activity on a local basis.

Bristol branch, my home for the past 37 years, disappeared in May, along with those covering Cornwall, Dorset, Devon, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire and the Channel Islands.

They have been replaced by a super-branch, embracing almost 1,200 members based across the south west.

The NUJ's national executive council (NEC) has agreed to trial this merger for 12 months in a bid to revitalise union activity across England's largest administrative region.

Tim Lezard, NEC rep for the area for 20 years, says: "The new branch has the potential to bring the region's journalistic community together, empowering members all across the south west."

Lezard, who stepped down at this year's delegate meeting (DM), added: "Paving the way for members in previously moribund branches to meet with more experienced activists broadens the political and professional discourse and strengthens the NUJ's voice."

In 2020, the Bristol branch did me the honour of putting me up for life membership. After the nomination was approved, my colleagues insisted, in light of my observation that Bristol was the only one of my branches to survive, that I do nothing to threaten its existence.

So it is with some trepidation that I have embarked on trying to make the new south-west England branch work. Yes, it's a gamble but it's one I'm convinced is worth trying.

When I was elected chair of the Bristol branch in 2022, more than 30 years after relinquishing the position on becoming an editor at ITV, I found we were being assigned almost all new applicants for membership from the south west, wherever they lived.

New recruits to the Bristol branch came from Gloucester and Truro – cities some 200 miles apart. They were no less welcome than

members living in and around Bristol, but the branch recognised that supporting them would not be straightforward.

Lezard and Paul Breeden, his successor as NEC regional rep after this year's DM, polled members on how they would like to be organised. The turnout, it should be acknowledged, was far from overwhelming but those who replied expressed a clear interest in belonging to a larger unit.

The merger began with an inaugural meeting on May 15. The second, on June 13, was fairly buzzing with colleagues discussing what they wanted out of the new organisation.

Matthew Hill, father of chapel at Bristol-based BBC West, said: "It's a very promising prospect. It will enable more joined-up decision-making and opportunities to share ideas."

He added: "It will also better serve our current dispute over the cuts to local radio – with the ability to support

weaker BBC chapels in recruitment and campaigns."

Hill's comments were timely; much of the meeting was spent reflecting on the 48-hour strike in the previous week by BBC local radio staff over their managers' plans to slash output and make 139 people redundant.

Branch members were thanked for joining BBC colleagues on their picket lines, while the latter could personally thank journalists from other media for reporting on their stoppage.

These included Priyanka Raval, whose application to join the NUJ was approved at the meeting a week after she had reported on the strike for The Bristol Cable, an investigative online news service.

Priyanka said: "I joined the NUJ because reporting on industrial action while not being part of the union myself felt inexcusable."

"I'm passionate about platforming a diverse range of voices and making journalism more accessible. I hope the NUJ will provide the network and support to fight for greater representation in the media."

Key to the success of the new

branch will be representatives of the region's constituent counties. Fiona O'Cleirigh, a freelance who formerly chaired London Freelance Branch and sat on the NEC, will represent colleagues in Cornwall.

Richard Shrubbs, a broadcast journalism graduate from Falmouth University and specialist in social and healthcare journalism from Portland, is the rep for Dorset. Others are being recruited.

Plans are afoot for social events around the region, bringing together members from different sectors and workplaces. They will include one in Gloucester for Lezard, who at DM was awarded the NUJ's gold badge, to reflect decades of work as an activist at chapel, branch, regional and national level.

If you would like to become a rep or have ideas about how to make the branch effective across such a large region, I'd love to hear from you. Please contact [james.g.garrett@btinternet.com](mailto:james.g.garrett@btinternet.com).



**New recruits came from cities some 200 miles apart. The branch recognised that supporting them would not be straightforward**







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## Is it about diversity and youth or virtue signalling?

While largely agreeing with Cristina Lago's general point about ensuring the NUJ's structures and terminology are fit for purpose in the 21st century, I can't help but think her stated surprise "at the strong opposition from some members" about replacing the 'mother/father of chapel' title betrays a prevalent lack of empathy when it comes to comprehending how other people may have alternative points of view (Celebrating our in-person meeting, June/July 2023).

"Surely introducing a more inclusive term in the union's dictionary would be widely supported by DM?" she asks. To which I would respond: "Why would it?" Many people clearly have what, at least to them, are legitimate reasons for keeping the mother/father terms – and an understandable opposition, regardless of position, to brutally ending a century's tradition based on a mere 10-minute discussion involving a fraction of the union's total membership.

To be honest, I am still surprised that the motion was allowed onto the floor at all; what were the national executive council thinking?

For many of us, use of language is our bread-'n'-butter. We – above anyone else – should be aware of words' meanings and the consequences arising from their usage. Yet, viewed from more than 500km north of the TUC's Congress House, this motion (and the result of the vote) struck me as being less about welcoming a more diverse and youthful membership (including current members) and more about virtue signalling.

This is not least because, if you're going to get rid of the binary mother/father titles then, logically why hang on to the equally archaic use of a religious-based term like chapel? I mean, it's not as if any of our employed members still meet in their nearest church... or do they?

**Paul Fisher Cockburn**  
Welfare and equality officer  
NUJ Edinburgh freelance branch

of the work. This disadvantages freelances and small companies.

We need your help to gather recent examples of public sector photography and videography commissions and contracts that include copyright grabs, onerous and unfair indemnity or liability clauses, as well as overly complicated and bureaucratic tendering processes. We will use such evidence to lobby for fairer contracts and tendering systems so freelances are better able to secure work.

It's time to end unfair rates, copyright grabs and dumping liability on freelances.

Please send examples to: digital@nuj.org.uk with the email header 'Freelance campaign'.

**Natasha Hirst**  
NUJ president

## Respectful 'crap' name may up my chance of winning...

It wasn't clear who awarded the Golden Bollock award (illustrated well by Kipper Williams, page 13, June/July). But I was surprised a more gender-neutral term wasn't used to recognise the author of a particularly egregious story. I suggest the Steaming Crap award as a more modern, respectful name. As someone who occasionally makes mistakes, maybe this will give me a better chance of winning this insalubrious trophy.

**Siobhan Wall**  
Netherlands

## ... but women won the Golden Bollock too

The Golden Bollock was awarded to a poor, unsuspecting victim entirely on the whim of the previous year's winner. Industrial correspondents gathered at a dinner for an amusing and sometimes fair review of the year's top industrial stories.

All those chosen had an element that could be construed as bollock worthy so reporters had a nervous wait til the declaration. It was great fun and only one recipient threatened legal action.

It may have seemed a somewhat sexist title but it was in fact an inclusive award and women won too. I was one!

**Christine Buckley**  
Editor

## What archaic, baffling term is next for the chop?

So, 116 years of history and tradition is being consigned to the dustbin because today's young journalists consider the terms "father/mother of the chapel" to be "gendered, archaic, inaccessible and part of the language of an exclusive club from a bygone age".

Well, to be honest, I did always think of the NUJ as something of an 'exclusive club' and still carry my press card with pride.

Last year, your correspondent George Morris claimed that the titles 'baffled' new union members and argued they needed "something more easily understood".

In response, I suggested that if these young hacks were so easily confused, they should perhaps consider a less challenging career than journalism.

Unfortunately, it looks as if they didn't take my advice.

Perhaps we should now also get rid of the word 'chapel' lest our new

colleagues mistakenly pile into the local Methodist church next time they're summoned to a union meeting.

**Mal Tattersall**  
Life member

## Tell us about bad public sector picture practice

The NUJ photographers' council is increasingly concerned about public sector procurement processes and contracts that take rights from creators, often without paying fairly for the value

BRIAN LOUGHEED



## Jackie McKeown

Belfast branch NUJ member Jackie McKeown went to great lengths to get stories – including taking a job in a brothel as a maid and travelling to Egypt with a mother aiming to get back her three children.

The Northern Irish journalist died suddenly on July 7 at her home in Newry aged 56. Her colleagues described her reporting work as ‘fearless and tenacious’, saying she was ‘wonderful’ with people.

Jackie was born in Banbridge, Co Down, in 1967; her family fled the violence in Northern Ireland and moved to England in 1972, settling in Croydon, south London.

She studied journalism in her early 20s in the mid 1980s, starting as an NCTJ trainee on titles at the Croydon Advertiser, including the Caterham News, where a former colleague told of her passion to ‘expose truth’.

She later worked at newspapers including the London Evening Standard and the Sunday Mirror.

Her sister Tara told how for one story she was dispatched to go undercover as a maid in a brothel.

For the Sunday Mirror, she travelled to Egypt with an English mother aiming to get back her three children. Her ex-husband had abducted them in England and taken them to Cairo.

After several years of London reporting, Jackie moved to Northern Ireland in the early 1990s. In her early days, she lived in Banbridge, commuting to Newry to work on the Newry Democrat, before settling in Newry.

A former colleague at the Newry Democrat described how Jackie deployed her London experience.

“We thought we were great doing our little features. She just came along and she blew us into smithereens,” said Mary Kennedy. “She was a genius – a trailblazer.”

Jackie also reported for media including the Sunday Life, The Examiner in Crossmaglen and with Lisburn newspaper The Ulster Star – for which she was named as IPR Provincial Journalist of the Year.

In 1995, she began work with the UTV Kelly show as a TV researcher.

Later, Jackie reported on the 1998 Omagh bombing. She was news editor at the News Letter in Belfast and editor of the Newry Democrat from 2007 for two years.

Under her watch, the Newry Democrat was named as the top weekly newspaper of the year in Northern Ireland at the Chartered Institute for Public Relations Press and Broadcast Awards in 2009.

Jackie moved into subediting and worked for titles including the Irish Independent, Irish Daily Mail, Irish Mirror and the Irish Daily Star.

Throughout her career, Jackie was a committed NUJ member. “Basically, you weren’t a real journalist if you weren’t in it,” Tara said. “That’s what she used to say.”

Jackie is survived by her daughter Ciara, her mother Rosa van Wijk (her late father was Alan McKeown) and her sister Tara McKeown.

**Jeff Farrell**

JAY MCGAGHARAN



## Rosetta Donnelly

Rosetta Donnelly, who died in her 63rd year after a long illness, was a member of Derry North West Ireland branch and former deputy editor of the weekly Ulster Herald in Omagh. She spent her entire career of almost a quarter of a century with the Ulster Herald.

As deputy editor, she was known for encouraging colleagues. Any criticism was always constructive. She was part of the team that oversaw major changes in the paper, including the switch to tabloid format after more than a century as a broadsheet.

She took particular pride in positive personal stories. That was part of a deep concern for readers. She was sensitive to the impact of her work on the community.

Inevitably, she had to work on many hard stories. Her journalistic career began with a baptism of fire. She had to cover the public inquiry into a proposed gold mine just outside Omagh which, at the time, was the longest public inquiry in Northern Ireland.

By far the most difficult story for her, as it was for other local journalists, was the Omagh bombing of August 1998. This killed 29 people in the worst atrocity of Northern Ireland’s Troubles. That afternoon, she had been in town shopping with her two daughters. They narrowly missed the explosion. She then had to throw herself into reporting the events. In covering these, she forged particularly close links with some of the victims.

Rosetta was born Rosetta Farry in November 1960, ninth of 10 children to Patrick and Sarah-Ellen Farry (née Campbell). They lived on a farm a couple of miles outside the Co Tyrone village of Trillick.

Rosetta did not intend to be a journalist. After school, she spent time as an au pair in Spain. She attended Belfast’s College of Business Studies and qualified as bilingual secretary, gaining the ability to write shorthand in English, Spanish, French and German. For some years, she worked in administration, then as a lifeguard, at the district council.

In the late 1980s, she saw an advertisement for a post as a journalist with the Ulster Herald. Initially, she was interested but reluctant to apply. Friends and family encouraged her, and she was appointed. Rapidly, she fell in love with journalism. In her late 30s, she returned to education, graduating with an MA in journalism.

Huntington’s disease cruelly forced her to retire in 2012. She became a driving force behind the local Huntington’s support group. Forced retirement allowed her long trips to Australia, where her daughters lived for some years.

She is remembered for loving life, family, music and her social life. She is survived by daughters Megan and Danielle, sons-in-law, four grandchildren and four brothers and three sisters.

**Anton McCabe**



# Me, myself and I, and a few porky pies



STEVE BELL

**Chris Proctor** steps aside temporarily for a new columnist

**H**ello, everybody! Boris here. So, what's my new column going to be about? Well it's not going to bang on about that old writey-writey stuff and story-gathering malarkey. Oh no. It's going to be about – ME. The person I am, the Man Inside the Iron Mask, the mask behind the face, the pip in the plum: ME! My favourite subject!

I should say – and I do mean this, well, you know, as much as I mean anything – that it really is a privilege to be writing in this journal [INSERT MAG TITLE]. It's very top drawer and great fun, very informative, one of my favourites.

I know loony lefties have been blathering on about the fee I'm being paid, which is rich coming from them. Aren't they supposed to look after 'the most vulnerable people in society'? Yet they moan at me trousering a modest stipend – £20K a throw, hardly enough to keep Sir Jacob in top hats – when they know full well that I'm unemployed and have an unspecified number of children to feed, a good few alimony claimants, several houses to support and masses of school fees to find. I'm practically a caricature claimant.

The handy thing about having ME as the focus means I don't get typecast. That's what happens with lots of columnists, not that I read anyone else: why opt for second best?

You see, most columnists get stuck in a rut. They're the cheeky chappy who's rude at PMQs, or the young radical exploding with rage to order, or the poor sod rabbiting on about trees and birds and that sort of bunkum. They're stuck in permanently locked

straitjackets. Straitjackets wouldn't suit me – zip wires are more my style.

Columnists get desperate when they've got to say the same thing every week. You see them sniffing round Westminster desperately hunting an idea. Their columns are basically the opinion of the last person they met before getting started.

So having ME as the subject means I can pontificate about any old drivel. It's like my old job. This week I'm going to tell you about my back ointment.

I kept noticing people with straight backs do well. At the coronation for example, they had the best spots in the church. Red coats, they had. Right up the front. They were almost in the yellow chair, some of them. And what's-her-name, the current wife, says a straight back makes you look decent. Upstanding. Worth a go, I thought.

So I'm recommended this backrub called Aunty Quasi-Modo. The trouble is application. No volunteers to apply the embrocation since Nadine didn't get into the House of Lords. I stuck some onto a nail in the wall and wiggled against it, but I ended up with skin as thick as a rhino's. I've kept that.

Andy Windsor suggested a few things that made my hair stand on end so I decided to hire someone cheap to do it and snapped up an immigrant while they're still available. I mean, calm down, Sue-Ellen! We didn't mean it!

Anyway, the long and short of it, as I'm already over the 500-word, £10k point and I'm getting restless, is that I decided to do nothing about the back. I thought, look old fellow, why not rely on your own sense of decency and moral compass to reflect itself in an unbending backbone? No change so far, but it's early days.

Do you know I'm worn out? I never used to have to concentrate for so long. When it came to tedious things like the economy, pandemics and the threat of global war, I gave up. Someone always gave me a brief to read out loud. Now and again I'd shoot off something on my own and find myself on the front page. I enjoyed that, even if it did make me look like a bog-eyed bovine in a Sèvres supermarket.

(That, incidentally, is what this paper pays for. Class. None of your 'bull in a china shop' cliché. You won't find me coming out with hackneyed phrases like 'on your side', 'my job is to serve you, the people' or 'forward, together'.)

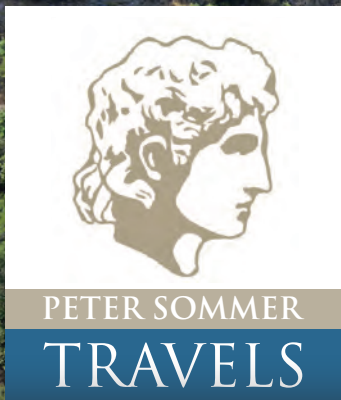
So, moving forward from my back, what about the brave souls pushing the limits of human knowledge in the Uxbridge and South Ruislip Pork Pie Eating Contest? Fearlessly, they munched their way through shedfuls of savouries, redefining human endurance. And, before the environmental zealots start swishing orange paint all over the tablecloths, let me say that no cows were injured during the making of the pies.

I felt a lump in my throat as the 215th pastry was plunged past the winning molars. It takes backbone to get into triple figures. If I'd kept up with the Aunty Quasi-Modo, I could have won. I've certainly got an appetite for a pie challenge.

When I began to milk this cash cow – that is, expand the range of human opinion for an altruistic pittance – I said that this column was 'going to be exactly what I think'. Brave and bold: you can trust me to bone up on spines and get stuck into pork pies.

See you next time!

**//**  
Most columnists get stuck in a rut. They're the cheeky chappy, the young radical exploding with rage or the poor sod rabbiting on about trees



"The experience is exceptional. The people, the sites, the friendships, the laughter, the knowledge, the food... everything beyond expectations."

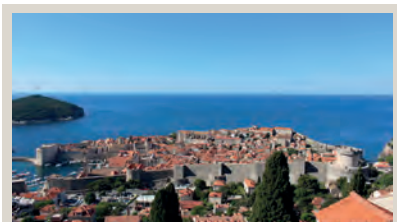
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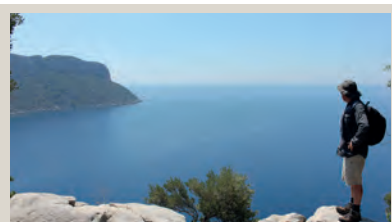
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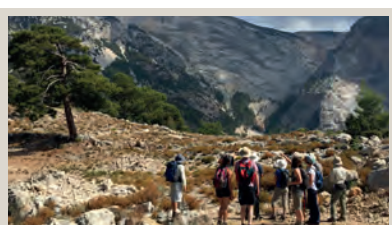
WALKING AND CRUISING THE  
CARIAN COAST



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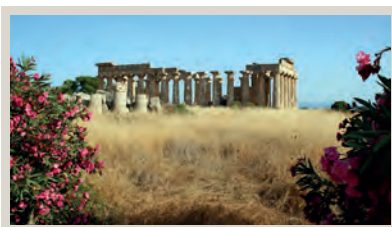
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