

the Journalist

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What the Dickens?

When the author became an editor

Contents

Main feature

12 **The Nitpick Papers**

When Charles Dickens was an editor

News

03 **Journalists face rise in violence**

Threats from paramilitaries and far-right

04 **Black women need digital media**

Claudia Jones memorial lecture

05 **NUJ staff on four-day week**

Change made to save union money

06 **Fairer deal for freelancers**

Union launches major campaign

Features

10 **Bridging the digital divide**

The fight for online inclusion

12 **Survival on a small stage**

Grants help hyperlocals keep going

14 **Access all areas?**

Virtual working's impact on the disabled

Regulars

24 **Obituaries**

26 **And finally...**

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It's not long now until we welcome the new year and we will all be hoping that it brings much better fortune than this year.

It's been a tumultuous period for everyone. Many people have lost their jobs and lots of those in work have had to adjust to homeworking and virtual meetings. For some it's enabled more work/life balance – count the number of puppies in your park – but for others, especially those with young children it has made work more stressful.

Virtual meetings have opened up more possibilities for many and if you're a disabled journalist then you might have more access than usual. But you also might face struggles with some of the technology. Natasha Hirst, herself a disabled journalist, looks at these issues.

The pandemic has also increased the gap between the digital haves and have nots. Jenny Sims looks at ways of bridging the digital divide and tackling the democratic deficit that has been caused by the decline in well-resourced local journalism.

The coronavirus has this year wreaked havoc in many parts of the media industry as advertising has shrunk drastically. But some local publications have been thrown lifelines with grants from the Public Interest News Foundation. Ruth Addicott reports on the help for hyperlocals.

And as it's Christmas, our media anniversary feature provides our cover with a taste of seasonal Dickens.

Wishing everyone a happier and more prosperous New Year.

Christie

Christine Buckley

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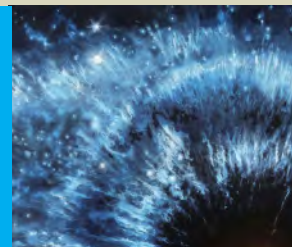
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Ray Snoddy
Page 19

Arts
Page 20

Tech
Page 21



Journalists facing increased violence and intimidation

JOURNALISTS are suffering increased abuse and harassment and are facing physical and verbal attacks. NUJ members told a union safety survey that they have been punched, threatened with knives, forcibly detained, kicked and spat at. They are also being threatened with death and rape online.

The results of the survey come as journalists in Northern Ireland face continued threats from loyalist groups and as other UK reporters are targeted by far-right groups. Last month a journalist working for the Belfast Telegraph and Sunday Life was told by the police that he is at risk of attack from loyalist paramilitaries.

Also in November, the far-right activist James



Goddard (pictured above) appeared at Wimbledon Magistrates' Court after being prosecuted for threatening behaviour towards The Independent's home affairs correspondent Lizzie Dearden. He was ordered to pay £780 in fines and costs and was given an indefinite restraining order preventing him from

contacting the journalist.

The NUJ survey found that:

- 98 per cent of respondents agreed those in public office should maintain high levels of public discourse and shouldn't dismiss journalism as fake news nor restrict media access
- 97 per cent agreed that disinformation and fake news undermines trust in journalism and increases hostility towards journalists
- 96 per cent said that abuse and harassment risks silencing journalists and censoring debate
- 94 per cent agreed the current polarisation of debate and public discourse in the UK has impacted adversely on the safety of journalists

Police accused, Page 7



NUJ members say they have been punched, threatened with knives, forcibly detained, kicked and spat at

inbrief...

JOURNALISTS GET TRAVEL EXEMPTION

Journalists have been exempted from the requirement to quarantine when returning from overseas. Other travellers have to self-isolate for 14 days if the country they are arriving from is not on the approved travel corridors. Business travellers and elite sports people have also been exempted.

DEMONSTRATION FOR JULIAN ASSANGE

NUJ members and other supporters will demonstrate outside the Old Bailey on January 4 when the ruling is due on whether the Wikileaks founder Julian Assange should be extradited to the US. His lawyer Jen Robinson told an online meeting of 100 union activists that Assange would probably take his own life if he is extradited.

BOOST IN STAFF AT MYLONDON WEBSITE

Reach is boosting staff on its My London website by half after reaching a monthly audience of almost five million. My London was launched last year with the merger of the Croydon Advertiser and Get West London websites and their extension into north, east and south London. Reach will add 24 new roles across My London and the sport website Football London.

No Stone Unturned pair win settlement

NUJ members Trevor Birney and Barry McCaffrey have agreed a final settlement after suffering arrest, home raids and property seizure by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The settlement comes after a two-year battle by the journalists arising from

their investigative and award-winning film No Stone Unturned. The documentary exposes the story of the 1994 Loughinisland murders.

No figure has been disclosed but it has been reported that the police have paid £875,000 in damages.

The pair were arrested in August 2018 and their homes and offices were raided. In May 2019 Belfast appeal court judges quashed the warrants for their arrest. In July 2020, the PSNI chief constable Simon Byrne apologised to the journalists.

Local democracy recognition win

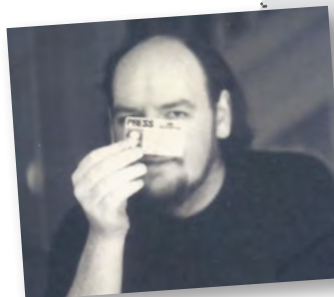
LOCAL democracy reporters working for Newsquest have won union recognition after a long campaign.

Now that recognition has been granted by the Central Arbitration Committee the company and the union will draw up a new recognition agreement.

The deal covers 40 journalists and union organisers believe it will help in seeking recognition at other publishers.

The success comes as the BBC, which funds local democracy reporters across the country, said that it was extending the scheme for a further three years. It is also increasing the number of reporters by 15 to 165.

The union has cautiously welcomed the extension but is seeking further clarity on various aspects of the scheme including the terms of new contracts and the impact on those already employed.



Ian Bell award open for entries

The NUJ is inviting writers aged 30 or under who live, work or study in Scotland to enter its Ian Bell award which commemorates the radical journalist who died five years ago.

Entrants may submit up to two pieces, each between 1,500 and 2,000 words which have not been published elsewhere.

Email entries with your name, date of birth and place of work/study to nickml@nuj.org.uk by midnight January 10.

Entrants don't have to be NUJ members. The winner will be announced in February.

Black women need to create their own digital media, says academic

SOCIAL media and digital communication give black women a voice, but they need to create their own platforms, says Francesca Sobande, course director of the BA media, journalism and culture programme at Cardiff University.

Giving the 2020 Claudia Jones memorial lecture online, Sobande paid tribute to the woman who gave her name to the lecture, pointing out that Jones was part of a long tradition of a black press which stretched from the West Indian Gazette, which she founded and edited in 1958, to new media company gal-dem (<https://gal-dem.com/>)

Jones was a Communist political activist, feminist and journalist, who was active in the fight against racism and imperialism and promoted Afro-Asian unity in the 1950s and 1960s. She died aged just 49 in 1964.

The lecture is organised every year by the NUJ's black members' council, as part of Black History Month, in honour of pioneer Jones.

Jones was born in Trinidad in 1924 and later moved to New York where she encountered poverty and discrimination. In 1936, she joined the Young Communist League, subsequently joining the staff of the party's Daily Worker newspaper. She was arrested in 1955 and served a year in prison then, as a



British passport holder, was deported to the UK where she was given asylum.

Sobande said today's digital world, including Facebook, Twitter and blogs, had provided black women with new opportunities to pursue activism and combat racism on their own terms and escape marginalisation from the mainstream media, which continued to peddle stereotypical 'hypersexualised' images of them.

Social media and digital platforms allowed black women to give a voice to grassroots movements, she added. And hashtags, such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, were being used as a way to globally mobilise campaigns against police brutality, the exploitation of women and other forms of oppression.

Digital spaces were not, however, always safe for women, who often found themselves open to abuse and censorship. There were also continuing barriers to them getting jobs in the mainstream media, she said. Therefore black women needed to design, create and own their own media platforms.

Sobande is author of *The Digital Lives of Black Women in Britain* and co-editor, with Professor Akwugo Emejulu, of *To Exist is To Resist: Black Feminism in Europe*.



Today's digital world had provided black women with new opportunities to pursue activism and combat racism on their own terms

**Francesca Sobande
Journalism course
director, Cardiff
University**

Corporation not guilty over unlawful pay

AN INVESTIGATION by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has found the BBC was not guilty of unlawful discrimination over pay.

However, the commission set out a number of

recommendations, including carrying out equal pay audits every five years.

The EHRC said in its report – *Investigation into Unlawful Pay Discrimination at the BBC* – that while it did not find evidence of systemic pay

discrimination by the BBC, it acknowledged there were individual cases.

It said the complaints it looked at in detail "highlighted some poor pay practices and recommended that the BBC

should adopt more rigorous and transparent pay systems to remove any unfairness and potential pay discrimination".

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "There will be many NUJ

members who read this report and feel it doesn't address their lived experiences.

"The fact that so many individual settlements, including Samira Ahmed's NUJ-backed tribunal win, have taken place underlines the clear problems that have existed."

Action threatened as BBC cuts jobs

NUJ representatives at the BBC are discussing the possibility of industrial action with union members over the threat of compulsory redundancies at the corporation.

BBC England is cutting 450 jobs and although many of those have been achieved through voluntary redundancies, several dozen people are looking for redeployment.

It is the union's policy to take industrial action if any member is made compulsorily redundant. The mothers and fathers of chapels also discussed the BBC-wide pay freeze and the offer of an extra day's annual leave for all staff.

The union's national executive council, which met in November, has given contingency authority for industrial action.



BBC

NUJ employees move to a four-day working week

NUJ full-time staff have moved to a four-day week on slightly reduced pay. This is to help the union maintain staffing levels and to shore up its finances in case membership falls due to redundancies in the industry. It would also help meet any higher payments in the light of a revaluation of the staff pension deficit.

Staff represented by three unions – the NUJ, the GMB and the Republic of Ireland’s Siptu – voted to accept the working hours trial. This began in November and will run until October 2021, which is the start of the union’s new financial year. As part of the arrangement, all staff will continue working from home as they have done throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said that the fall in salary from moving from a five-day to a four-day week was a net five per cent after an additional payment for working from home was factored in.

The union continues to operate on a five-day week for members to access help



and advice and cover will be in place if a staff member has a day off. All staff chose their days off.

The plan is to return to five-day working in the union’s Headland House headquarters and its regional offices after the trial period.

Meanwhile, Headland House remains open to its tenants.

A four-day week is recommended by the TUC to maintain jobs during the pandemic.

Michelle said: “At a very challenged time financially, our priority was to agree a budget that protected current staffing levels and provided flexibility in the coming financial year.”

x-ref Viewpoint page 9



Our priority was to agree a budget that protected current staffing levels and provided flexibility in the coming financial year

**Michelle Stanistreet
NUJ general secretary**

inbrief...

SUZANNE MOORE QUILTS GUARDIAN

Columnist Suzanne Moore has left the Guardian after more than 10 years, several months after more than 300 staff at the newspaper complained about her comments on transgender issues. Moore, who won the Orwell Foundation’s Journalism Prize last year, said that she and her children had faced death and rape threats.

PROFITS FALL AT MAIL PUBLISHER

DMGT, publisher of the Mail, Metro and the i, reported revenue down 10 per cent to £1.2 billion and pre-tax profits down 36 per cent to £72 million for the year to September. The biggest fall in revenue was at the Metro, where circulation was a quarter of what it was at the start of the first lockdown.

JUMP IN NEWSPAPER HOME DELIVERIES

Newspaper and magazine delivery service NewsTeam has seen its customer base jump 72 per cent from 24,400 direct customers in March to about 42,000. The massive increase in demand for home deliveries coincided with the start of the coronavirus lockdown when the most vulnerable had to self-isolate for 12 weeks.

Delegate meeting in the spring

THE UNION’S postponed biennial delegate conference is scheduled to be held virtually in the spring. No date has yet been set.

The policy-setting meeting, which involves more than

200 delegates from branches in the UK, the Republic of Ireland and continental Europe, had been scheduled for last April in Southport but had to be postponed because of the coronavirus

restrictions. The conference venue later went out of business.

The NUJ is planning to hold a week of virtual events rather than just cover core business. It is intended that

branches and chapels can highlight their work and that more members can take part. There will be training and skills sessions.

The union saved £150,000 by not holding the meeting but lost its £22,000 deposit when the venue went under.

The Journalist to remain digital to save money

THE JOURNALIST will continue to be available in a digital format only to save money on printing and postage.

The magazine, which goes to all members and has been the only print publication covering the media industry in the UK, was changed from being sent to members’ homes or email-only last spring. Originally, the switch was supposed to last for three editions but that has been extended for the rest of the period covered by the current annual budget, which began in October, although it is possible the decision could be reviewed later next year. The union saves about £100,000 a year by using only a digital platform.



Future to buy Go Compare

Magazine publisher Future is buying the owner of price comparison site Go Compare for £594 million. This comes as Future tripled its pre-tax profits for the second year in a row, helped by a series of acquisitions. In the past couple of years, it has bought video content production agency Barcroft Studios, magazine publisher TI Media and digital entertainment brand CinemaBlend. Future reported pre-tax profits in the year to the end of September of £52 million compared with last year’s total of £12.7 million and £4.4 million in 2018.

Union fighting for a fairer deal for the forgotten freelances

THE UNION has launched a campaign - Fair Deal 4 Freelances - to fight for a better deal for self-employed journalists. The move follows the difficult situation many freelances found themselves in with the coronavirus income support schemes. Many freelance journalists - particularly those ones paid on a PAYE basis but without any guaranteed work - found that they fell between the cracks of the job support scheme and the self-employment income support scheme. The NUJ's new campaign includes a charter of freelance rights which sets out the benefits the self-employed should enjoy. It calls for the right to organise in a trade union, to have a written contract with fair terms and conditions, prompt payment and equal treatment at work in terms of health and safety. Freelances should get holiday pay, parental leave and allowances and a retirement pension. They should have the right to resist companies forcing them on to PAYE, to incorporate as a limited company, or work under umbrella companies. During the pandemic, the NUJ, TUC and other unions have lobbied Chancellor Rishi Sunak for a more equitable support system. Pamela Moreton, the NUJ's freelance national organiser, said: "For too long the self-employed have been second-class citizens in the world of work. We're only asking for a fair deal."



The campaign is calling for backing from employers, employers' organisations, politicians and individuals.

The campaign also follows a report by the spending watchdog the National Audit Office (NAO) which found that 23 per cent of those potentially eligible for coronavirus aid schemes missed out.

The NAO said that the Treasury and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) could have done more to prevent many freelance workers falling between the cracks in the government's schemes to support workers during the pandemic.

It said that as many as 2.9 million people were not eligible, either because of ministerial decisions about where to focus support or because HMRC did not have data needed to guard against the risk of fraud.

The NAO said the Treasury and HMRC should consider how to ensure that reliable information, covering as many people as possible, could be used to determine eligibility so fewer people are excluded from similar schemes in future.

The report also noted that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was open to fraud, with some employers making staff work during furloughs or not passing on payments in full. HMRC now intends to publish the names of employers claiming the new Job Support Scheme and to notify employees through their personal tax accounts when an employer has claimed.



For too long the self-employed have been second-class citizens in the world of work. We're only asking for a fair deal

Pamela Morton
NUJ freelance organiser

Call to report ethnicity pay gap

THE NUJ has joined the TUC in calling for mandatory publication of company ethnicity pay gap figures. The calls follow figures being issued by the Office for National Statistics that showed Bangladeshi (£10.58 per hour) and Pakistani

(£10.55 per hour) ethnic groups had some of the widest pay gaps, earning 15.3 per cent and 15.5 per cent less respectively than white British workers (£12.49 per hour).
Natasha Morris, NUJ senior legal and equalities

officer, said: "The UK media is 94 per cent white and in TV only eight per cent of senior roles are held by BME people. "Companies must be forced to acknowledge their own record on payment of BME workers and freelances

and made to put in train plans to eliminate the ethnicity pay gap."

Frances O'Grady, TUC general secretary, said:



"BME men and women are over-represented in undervalued, low-paid and casual jobs, with fewer rights and no sick pay. "Ministers must take bold action to confront inequality and racism in the labour market. "The first step is to introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting."

Telegraph subbing back in house

THE TELEGRAPH will bring its print subbing back in house after nearly four years of having subcontracted the work to PA. The group said the move was part of its subscription-first strategy and that it could

best serve subscribers by centralising production. The change is due to take place



early in the new year and will create jobs. Production of most pages of the Telegraph's daily and Sunday titles moved to PA in mid-2017 and only a small team remained in the paper's London newsroom. The company reported 524,412 subscriptions in print and digital in September.

Reporter complains to the Police Ombudsman

AN AWARD-winning Northern Ireland journalist has lodged an official complaint to the Police Ombudsman after experiencing a “year of inaction” by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) over a threat of rape to her baby.

NUJ member Patricia Devlin, a crime reporter for the Sunday World, received death threats and other threats of violence, and said that the police failed to investigate a threat to rape her baby made in October last year via a message to her personal Facebook account.

The message was signed with the name of a neo-Nazi terror group, Combat 18, which in the past has had links to loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland.

The NUJ and Amnesty International are supporting Ms Devlin’s complaint and have called for threats to journalists to be taken seriously.



Ms Devlin, said: “Because of my job as a journalist, exposing criminals and paramilitaries, I have been on the receiving end of threats of violence and death threats for years. In Northern Ireland, that now seems to go with the territory.”

“But, when I received a threat to rape my newborn baby, also identifying my grandmother and the location of where the sender believed she lived, I had enough. I reported the threat to the PSNI and was able to name the person I suspect was behind the threat.

“The police have had this individual’s name all this time yet, a year on, no one has been brought in for questioning, never mind arrested. Meanwhile, the police have given me a constantly changing and contradictory story as to why they have not acted.

The PSNI has said it encourages anyone with concerns to contact the Police Ombudsman.



The police have given me a constantly changing and contradictory story as to why they have not acted

Patricia Devlin
Crime reporter, Sunday World

inbrief...

NEWSQUEST PROFITS PLUNGE BY 88%

Regional publisher Newsquest saw its pre-tax profit fall by 88 per cent to £13.4 million last year, according to its Companies House filing. The group’s turnover fell by five per cent to £187.7 million and operating profit fell from £78.2 million to £9.7 million.

FUTURE TO RECRUIT 150 EMPLOYEES

Future plans to hire more than 150 people by early next year with most of the jobs in editorial. The publisher is aiming to expand despite the effects of coronavirus. The majority of the roles will be in specialist editorial in titles covering technology, games and entertainment, music, home and gardens, sports, TV and film, real life, women’s lifestyle and B2B.

CITY AM EDITOR QUILTS FOR NEW ROLE

Christian May, the editor of City AM, has left the paper and journalism. He edited the free business daily for five years but left in November before taking up a role next year. His new job has yet to be announced. May told UK Press Gazette that it was not in the news industry. Deputy editor Andy Silvester has become acting editor.

Don't scrap Union Learning Fund, says TUC

EMPLOYERS and the TUC have joined forces to fight a government plan to close the £12m Union Learning Fund.

The TUC was ‘stunned’ to hear of the plan from the

Department of Education as there had been no prior discussion or consultation on the fund’s future.

It argued that the fund was achieving its targets, was supported by employers

and provided a net gain to the Exchequer.

The TUC’s campaign has been backed by unions including the NUJ and the Federation of Entertainment Unions. It has also been

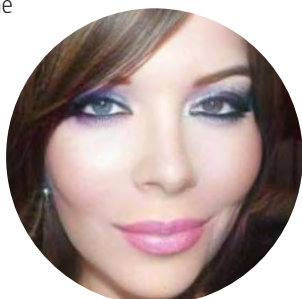
supported by employers including Tesco, Heathrow Airport, Tata Steel and Arla Foods, as well as training organisations and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

RSA fellowship for freelance

NUJ member Lynsey Ford has been honoured with a fellowship from the Royal Society of Arts for ‘contributions to social progress and development’.

A member of the London freelance branch since 2018, she has written for, among others, the British Film Institute, The Museums Journal and The Culture Trip. Highlights of her career include assisting the Mary Seacole Statue Trust with their fundraising campaign for a £500,000 statue on the grounds of St Thomas’ Hospital, and writing about the plight of the Cinema Museum in Kennington in consultation with Charlie Chaplin’s estate.

She said: “I’m delighted to receive this great honour. I hope to share my passion, tenacity, knowledge and skills to bring about social change for the greater good.”



Depp to appeal libel judgment

Johnny Depp plans to appeal against a high court libel judgment that found against him and vindicated a Sun article calling the Hollywood actor a ‘wife beater’. Depp said he resigned from Harry Potter author JK Rowling’s Fantastic Beasts movies because of the judgment. He sued Sun publisher News Group Newspapers and its executive editor Dan Wootton over a 2018 article that referred to ‘overwhelming evidence’ that he had been violent towards his then wife Amber Heard.

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

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A year that tested and showed our strength



NUJ can be proud of its crisis response, says **Michelle Stanistreet**

As we near the end of a year that has thrown unimagined challenges at all of us, I'm proud that the one constant throughout these crazy times has been the NUJ's unrivalled support for its members and robust voice for journalism.

From the moment the pandemic took hold and 'lockdown' became common parlance, the NUJ has battled hard for its members – gaining critical agreement for recognised key worker status for newsgatherers and ensuring the National Police Chiefs Council issued clear instructions to police officers not to interfere with reporters and photographers doing their job.

The likely economic impact on an already beleaguered media industry was clear. As was the vital role of journalists and journalism at a time of unprecedented need, with high-quality, reliable news and information depended upon more than ever. What started as a press statement became the NUJ news recovery plan, From Health Crisis to Good News, and our most important union-wide campaign.

It has propelled lobbying work across the nations and regions since it was published in April, with brilliant support from NUJ branches and activists calling for investment in jobs, tax credits, media literacy initiatives and overdue action to make the tech giants pay their way.

Great work by officials and reps throughout the industry, fighting to save jobs and ensure meaningful negotiations over changes and cuts, shows how fragile the industry is and the clear need for government action.

NUJ staff and officials rose to the challenge of closing our offices in Dublin, Glasgow, Manchester and London's Headland House, moving to working from home. We decided early on not to furlough any staff, prioritising retaining our resources to maximise support and services.

Like everyone else, team meetings and staff catch-ups by Teams or Zoom have given us all a snapshot of colleagues' domestic life. For me, working from the kitchen table means video meetings and negotiations being frequently interrupted by voluble chickens in the back garden, the dog going crazy at (another) passing skateboarder, cats bedding down on the keyboard, a three-year-old daughter keen to wave hello to the person on the screen, or a hungry 17-year-old crashing about making yet another cheese toastie. Never have an air-conditioned office and adult colleagues and conversation seemed more attractive...

Deepening restrictions in Ireland and the UK affected planning for the new budget year, which kicked in on October 1. Agreeing a budget against a backdrop of enormous uncertainties and straitened finances was difficult.

While our organising work and recruitment in workplaces that are facing cuts (for example Reach and the BBC) has brought in new members and income, we have had to renegotiate rental terms with our tenants and not been able to hire space out for events. A postponed delegate meeting meant no decision to increase subs after a six-year freeze. More redundancies in the industry look likely, and our own surveys point to many members contemplating leaving the industry altogether.

To balance that, remote working has meant a significant drop in spending on meetings and travel; sending The Journalist digitally has saved printing and postage costs; and we've agreed to defer significant increases to the union's pension deficit contribution until the second quarter of 2021.

In that context, we also proposed a package of changes to our staff, including working four days a week, until the end of September 2021. The aim was to create some flexibility in the staffing budget – the union's largest area of spend – at the same time as improving work-life balance while we work remotely.

The NUJ continues to operate on a five-day basis, with the usual emergency arrangements for out of office hours. Following constructive engagement with all three staff unions, a package of changes was agreed, effective from November 1 until next October, when staff revert to office-based working on a five-day pattern.

Our London office remains open to tenants and, once events can take place safely, the lower ground space will be back up and running. We were also able to offer contracts to two colleagues who were working temporarily with the union when lockdown hit and, assuming finances allow, our hope is to increase staffing in the coming year.

Our collective priority, industrially and internally, is ensuring that whatever the coming months bring, the NUJ remains fighting fit, supporting our members and defending journalists and journalism.

Michelle Stanistreet is the NUJ general secretary

“ We decided early on not to furlough any staff, prioritising retaining our resources to maximise support and services ”

Bridging the digital divide

Jenny Sims looks at the democratic deficit and the need for online inclusion for all

Fears were expressed that if Donald Trump won the 2020 US presidential election and gained a second term in office, it would be 'the end of democracy' in that country, with harmful knock-on effects around the world.

He lost, but democracy is still not safe in either the US – or the UK. US media coverage exposed many flaws in the voting system and the need for reform. And widespread misinformation and disinformation, particularly through social media and the internet, also showed the need for media literacy among voters.

The NUJ has long campaigned on media literacy and warned governments about the danger of a democratic deficit arising from the changing and shrinking media landscape, with poor media plurality, widespread closure of local newspapers and the increasing moves to online risking a

politically uninformed public, ill-equipped to vote knowledgeably in elections.

In 2019, The Cairncross Review: a Sustainable Future for Journalism, considered the different ways the press was adapting to the digital environment and, as part of its evidence, the NUJ called for media literacy to be taught in schools. In September 2019, members of the NUJ 60+ council appointed to the National Pensioners Convention's (NPC) new digital working party were influential in getting that same proposal included in its submission to the House of Lords' inquiry into democracy and digital technologies.

For education to play a part in helping to create a healthy, active, digitally-literate society, the NPC said: "Media/data literacy should be part of the national curriculum. From primary school to university, continuing professional education and adult education/lifelong learning courses should enable children and adults to learn new digital skills, to receive advice and guidance on 'staying safe' online, and to discern, distinguish and guard against false news."

Covid-19 had hit hard by the time the select committee's report, Digital Technology and the Resurrection of Trust, was published in June this year with its 45 recommendations for government action.

Lord Puttnam, committee chair, said in his foreword it was being delivered "in the middle of an unprecedented health and consequential economic crisis".

But the report focused on a different form of crisis, he added. This was "one with roots that extend far deeper, and are likely to last far longer than Covid-19. This is a virus that affects all of us in the UK – a pandemic of 'misinformation' and 'disinformation'."

"If allowed to flourish, these counterfeit truths will result in the collapse of public trust and, without trust, democracy as we know it will simply decline into irrelevance."

Lord Puttnam went on to warn: "In the digital world, our belief in what we see, hear and read is being distorted to the point we no longer know who or what to trust. The prospects of building a harmonious and sustainable society on that basis are, to all intents and purposes, nonexistent."

The report addressed concerns including "the urgent case for reform of electoral law and our overwhelming need to

Training aimed at older journalists

THE NUJ has 6,730 members aged over 60 years, who include working, unemployed and retired journalists.

Many new training opportunities have arisen during lockdown (see Learn While in Lockdown, The Journalist August-September, page 8, The Journalist's archive on the NUJ's website) but none have specifically focused

on upskilling older journalists, who may have the greatest need.

The Federation of Entertainment Unions (FEU) was offering an online workshop in December to 'Unleash the potential of your technology', which included computers, phones and smartphones.

Sadly, the FEU's

training project is under threat because the government has announced it is pulling the plug on the English Union Learning Fund from April 2021.

The NUJ has joined a

campaign to get the government to reverse its decision, and members are being asked to support it by signing the petition at [https://www.megaphone.org.uk/](https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/uk-gov-dont-cut-union-learning)



THE FEDERATION of
ENTERTAINMENT UNIONS

petitions/uk-gov-dont-cut-union-learning.

NUJ Training Wales is planning a similar event to the FEU's on February 1 with older journalists in mind, having recently included such a proposal in a successful bid for a slice of additional funding offered by the Welsh government.

Details have not been yet been finalised, but it is likely to focus on helping journalists to

use technological tools and apps more efficiently and effectively, online safety and methods of verifying news stories.

Rachel Howells, NUJ Training Wales project manager, says: "Covid has highlighted the benefits and opportunities online training has brought to some journalists, but we have been very mindful that we don't want anyone to be left behind."

become a digitally literate society”. Ofcom research shows that 11 per cent of the UK population (1.9 million households) still do not have access to the internet at home. Research by the Good Things Foundation says 11.7 million people lack the essential skills needed to use the internet, and that the barriers to engagement with digital technologies for older people include the lack of confidence and skills, cost and fear of harm.

The NUJ, as an affiliate of the NPC (which has more than one million members), has been working for nearly two years through its 60+ council delegates to launch a campaign to enable more older people to get online.

Success was finally achieved this November when the NPC executive committee gave the green light to its digital working party’s report and recommendations for a campaign to be launched on February 1, Dignity Action Day.

Part of the Connections for All campaign will involve informing people where they can get help and training to use digital devices from various organisations and local authorities, some of which also offer free tablet lending schemes and even provide free devices to older people.

It will also strive to ensure those who cannot or do not wish to be online will always have alternative provision of services and information.

Covid-19 has shone a spotlight on the impact of forced isolation on older and vulnerable people in care homes or living alone, and the difference being able to use Facebook or other social media platforms has had on improving their lives.

A report in November from the Carnegie Trust, Learning from Lockdown, says: “Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the scale of digital exclusion in the UK has been exposed and exacerbated beyond previous understanding.”

It will have taken the NUJ 23 months from the day its three delegates to the NPC’s biennial delegate conference in March 2019 got a motion for a campaign approved to the day it will actually be launched – February 1 2021.

The motion, proposed by the NUJ 60+ council, called for a digital working party to be set up to research the digital inclusion policies of the four nations, look for the gaps between policy and practice, then produce a report and recommendations for a campaign to address them. This may involve forming partnerships with other organisations with similar aims, such as the Good Things Foundation.

Helen Milner OBE, its chief executive, said: “Digital inclusion is no longer a nice to have but a need to have. People urgently need access, devices, connectivity, digital skills and support.”

In addition, the Centre for Ageing Better’s recent briefing, How has Covid-19 Changed the Landscape of Digital Inclusion?, notes that Covid-19 has spurred many more people to get online or to use the internet in new ways compared to before the outbreak. For example, 75 per cent of 50-70 year-olds say they are making video calls more often during lockdown and 31 per cent are emailing more than they did before the pandemic struck.

“The pandemic has further exposed and deepened the divide between the digital haves and have nots. Many activities, information and services have moved exclusively online without offering offline alternatives or with offline alternatives being limited or restricted. This has placed those without digital access at even greater risk of missing out than before the outbreak.”

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In the digital world, our belief in what we see, hear and read is being distorted to the point we no longer know who or what to trust

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It goes on to say: “There is a wealth of resources available for anyone providing digital training or support, but those new to providing support are often unaware of what is available.”

It concludes by calling on the government to “create a resource bank that signposts to all the available resources from one central place”. This is something the Connections for All campaign will be supporting.

The House of Lords committee report said that to protect free and open debate, online “platforms should be obliged to publish their content its decisions making clear what their actual rules of online debate are. Alongside establishing rules in the online world, we must also empower citizens, young and old, to take part as critical users of information.”

They also said: “We need to create a programme of lifelong education that will equip people with the skills they need to be active citizens. People need to be taught from a very young age about the ways in which platforms shape their online experience.”

It seems the NUJ and NPC’s submissions were listened to.



Survival on a small stage

Cash grants, support from readers and new ways of working are keeping small news outlets going, says **Ruth Addicott**

Trying to ask a question to the first minister of Wales via Zoom with the tumble dryer going in the background was the least of Alan Evan's worries when the pandemic struck.

As editor of hyperlocal Llanelli Online, he was wondering how they would survive. "We were going from month to month at times," he says.

Llanelli Online was unable to pay all staff from the end of March. The launch of a business directory had to be cancelled and attracting advertising was harder than ever.

"We have always struggled with capital costs and sometimes when your main Mac breaks down you are left wondering where you will get the funds to replace it," he says.

Llanelli Online was fortunate to be one of 20 beneficiaries to receive a £60,000 Covid emergency fund grant in June from the Public Interest News Foundation (PINF). The £3,000 payment, designed to support small, independent news providers through the crisis, paid for new equipment and gave them a chance to refocus and plan new revenue streams.

Beneficiaries ranged from the Star & Crescent in Portsmouth to Shetland News Online and Gal-dem, a print and digital publication sharing perspectives from women and non-binary people of colour. The list also included Emito, an online service for the UK's Polish community, 5 Pillars, which covers British Muslim news and The Ferret, an award-winning investigative journalism platform in Scotland. The PINF received 89 applications in total and is fundraising to support more.

On the Isle of Wight, online news service OnTheWight was also struggling. Editor Sally Perry says: "We watched the 14-plus years of hard work and dedication we've put into building the publication have the potential of falling apart.

"Pretty much overnight, we had the prospect of the loss of thousands of pounds of expected income for the following months. Even areas we'd diversified into, such as job ads, collapsed."

"To keep overheads low, we – like many independent local news organisations – operate virtual offices, meaning we didn't qualify for the £10k-£25k grant from the UK

government which is tied to paying business rates." Neither did they qualify for the furlough scheme or other support.

The workload, meanwhile, was multiplying, especially when the government announced it would trial the Test and Trace app on the island.

Perry says: "The need to deliver reporting and headlines that were not sensationalist or click-bait was even more important and we went to great lengths to check and double check ourselves before publishing. Seeing the government provide large-scale financial support to the corporate regionals but ignore independent media was confusing."

A week into lockdown, they decided to ask their readers for support.

"The strength of response was mind-blowing," says Perry. "Not only thousands of pounds in donations, but the heartfelt comments. It was a massive boost."

One donor said: "The work you do has completely changed

Community news success needs change of attitude

ALAN EVANS, editor of Llanelli Online, believes it will be hard for small news providers to survive unless attitudes change and hyperlocals are given a share of advertising from the NHS, local authorities and allowed to bid for public notices payments.

"It is so nonsensical to pay for a public notice in a newspaper that has no connection with the community, does not invest in the community and does not publish its weekly sales figures," he says.

"It comes to something when we are first at the scene of major incidents and these huge companies don't have the decency to pay us for coverage or photos, preferring to ask social media users for them for free or opt for generic Getty images."

The Public Interest News Foundation is calling for government support and is in talks with charitable trusts, foundations and big tech companies.

Its executive director, Jonathan Heawood, believes there are also potential funders outside the UK,

like in the US, where non-profit journalism is more developed.

"I think small publishers that are set in their ways and have a specific idea of how to do journalism, sell advertising and so on are going to struggle.

"The ones that seem to be doing well are the ones that are hungry for new ideas and willing to experiment.

"The virtue of being small is that you can be nimble. You can try things and, if they don't work out, you can try something else two weeks later, which is harder for big corporates to do.

"I think people who are taking those risks will be the ones who will get through this."



Alan Evans, editor of
Llanelli Online



Jonathan Heawood,
executive director of PINF

the landscape of this little place. You are a huge asset... Efficient regular local broadcasting of quality verified information could quite literally be a matter of life and death right now."

The PINF grant helped replace some lost income and pay for two full-time journalists.

At the other end of the country, Shetland News provides in-depth coverage for the islands' 23000-strong population. It saw ad revenue drop to zero virtually overnight.

Managing editor Hans J Marter says: "We didn't qualify for any of the Scottish Government help available, and had a massive fight on our hands through the ICNN [Independent Community News Network] to get some crumbs of the Scottish Government public health promotion."

Lobbying for a share of government advertising for small news publishers "proved to be a waste of time", he says.

"The situation was serious... I never had the feeling that we would not be able to survive though."

Readership went up and they took on an extra freelance journalist. Thanks to grants from Google (\$5,000), PINF (£3,000) and other support, Marter believes they "should now be in a position to weather the storm".

The Isle of Thanet News in Kent saw page views increase from around 600,000 a day to just less than one million. But while the website continued, the print edition was suspended from March to September apart from a one-off Covid edition.

The grant enabled them to restart the print edition and paid for a new laptop. Kathy Bailes, former editor and journalist at Kent Regional Newspapers, who runs the site, was already working seven days a week. She says: "It wasn't so much extra hours, as packing extra work into that time."

Jonathan Heawood, executive director of PINF, who is on secondment from press regulator Impress where he is chief executive, says the pandemic's impact has been frightening. A survey in March showed 75 per cent of independent UK news providers were at risk of closure. Some have been forced to shut and he is concerned there could be more. However there have also been signs of recovery with some accelerating



We are confident we will reach a position where the business can operate without any support as we have grown reader revenue every single month since we launched



plans to develop reader revenue and moving into podcasting.

Alongside the grant, the PINF ran six workshops over the summer including on podcasting, reader revenue, advertising, fundraising and community engagement. Zoom made these accessible and kept travel costs down.

Heawood says there is a need to share expertise with small news providers in the US, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

"There is a growing independent media sector all over the world, but the problem is with very small organisations you can get a little bit isolated," he says. "We want to try and strengthen those connections so people can learn and support each other."


Now Then magazine covers arts, culture and politics in Sheffield with a focus on citizen journalism. Those working on it found the workshops invaluable and used the grant to fast-track the launch of their new website. They hope to start producing a printed magazine again in 2021.

The Ferret also found the training beneficial and invested in staff and software, having seen the need for fact-checking increase. Director Alastair Tibbitt says: "The Ferret is not yet sustainable from reader revenue alone – but we are confident that we will eventually reach a position where the business can operate without any grant support as we have grown reader revenue every single month since we launched."

With so many other small news providers in need of help, what made these beneficiaries stand out? Along with a track record in journalism that was of benefit to the community and a commitment to reporting through lockdown, they had to demonstrate a clear, compelling vision for the future.

"We are almost the last man/woman standing in independent news in the area if you discount the homogenised large groups, which still have a stranglehold on advertisers," says Evans.

"I think we presented the reality of life for a small-town outfit, which provides a lifeline of news to so many who are looking for a trusted source of news in such uncertain times with almost everyone attempting to be a commentator on social media."



Remote working can boost accessibility but can make work harder for disabled journalists, says **Natasha Hirst**, who is deaf and has ADHD

Disabled journalists are skilled at creating strategies for mitigating barriers in their working and home lives. These range from navigating inaccessible transport systems and workplaces to building communications and productivity resources and educating colleagues on working inclusively, all of which drain energy and head space that people would prefer to plough into work. These barriers reduce opportunities and place disabled journalists at a disadvantage.

The first Covid-19 lockdown forced a huge surge in working from home and a need to find new ways of using technology to communicate and work. For some disabled journalists, such as myself, widespread remote working coupled with assistive technology has provided a more accessible environment and opened up opportunities to engage with meetings and training courses, and attend talks and networking events. It's been a game-changer for me, but my experience isn't necessarily echoed by others.

"People think that online meetings are an equaliser, but they're not," says Eleanor Lisney, a freelance content creator and writer. "On the face of it, it looks easier – I don't have to travel or plan complex journeys. People recognise that I can't attend an event if public transport is inaccessible but it's hard to explain the impact of chronic fatigue to non-disabled people who just don't understand." Lisney has personal assistants who work regular hours and assist with tasks such as making notes and transcribing meetings: "I can't just change their hours because someone wants me at an early meeting, but I want to be seen as a professional, so I end up in back-to-back meetings that exhaust me."

As 2021 nears, many journalists are still working from home and people are expected to be available for online meetings throughout the day. 'Zoom fatigue' is a familiar phenomenon but this is compounded for those with sensory impairments or who are neurodivergent. Accessibility features of common online meeting platforms often fall short and may not be compatible with screen-reading software, missing opportunities to improve the user experience for all.

Ann Galpin chairs the NUJ disabled members' council and co-chairs the TUC disabled workers' committee. She shares her experience of inclusive online working: "Supportive facilitation is vital. In virtual meetings, ensure that people connecting by phone are asked if they wish to comment first, then any visually impaired members. Greater use of speech to text reporting makes meetings accessible to deaf/deafened, autistic and neurodiverse people, and people with learning difficulties. The facility to follow a transcription has been transformative

for my own cognitive processing and learning experiences.”

Julia Jacobie, chair of the Association of Verbatim Speech-to-Text Reporters, says: “Once people got the hang of online meetings, the requests for speech to text captioning online just exploded. It seems that clients want to make their events as inclusive as possible but also more people who need it are asking for this support.”

Lisney points out that inclusion is a not new concept: “Running an in-person event, you’d ask about access needs. It’s the same online. Allocate someone to organise access and offer tech support. Look at whether you need to book a British Sign Language interpreter.”

Chat functions allow participants to contribute and a designated meeting facilitator can read out comments so nobody is excluded. Chat can also be used to summarise key points. However, be aware that the chat box can interfere with screen-reading software. Additionally, screenreaders and those dialling in are excluded from chat and participatory features such as the raise hand button to speak or emojis.

Visuals, screensharing and PowerPoint slides also pose access issues. Providing slides in advance where requested and reading out or describing visual content improves accessibility. Galpin adds you should “ask invitees to let you know their access needs in advance. Breaks every hour or 90 minutes are an adjustment that can benefit all. What works for disabled people actually benefits everybody.”

Freelances and increasingly employees are expected to have a multitude of skills to work and promote themselves. Networking events, industry-specific talks and skills training are crucial for journalists adapting their work to survive the pandemic. There’s no shortage of events to sign up for, including courses run by the Federation of Entertainment Unions, NUJ Training Wales and NUJ Training Scotland.

April Ryan, journalism graduate and intern with Journo Resources, found online courses more accessible and has embraced events that provide her with opportunities to build journalistic experience. “Travel was a barrier for me before – I found it exhausting and expensive,” she says. “I miss face-to-face interactions but I’ve been able to improve my confidence, build networks and create opportunities for myself online. I can be more assertive about offering my skills and engaging in conversations via the chat box.”

However, few bespoke training opportunities exist for journalists who have specific skills and access requirements, such as freelance journalist Dawn Sanders, who could not secure an Access to Work grant (see box). “The further training I need is like gold dust,” she says. “I do feel like I have multiple barriers to negotiate to keep my skills sharp.”

Sanders believes “there should be funding for journalists with additional needs to be able to pay for the bespoke training that is involved”. For her, this requires an understanding of “how a person with a visual impairment uses a screen reader and how to navigate with the commands, not the mouse, so the training has to be specialised and from the right person”.

Galpin points out that the “speed at which training is delivered can be a barrier for cognitive processing but, equally, I’ve been able to join in some high-stakes meetings that I wouldn’t have had capacity to attend before, such as a global conference on disabled people under Covid. I could contribute meaningfully and find that what I said resonated, giving me unexpected and positive reinforcement. These informal professional development opportunities would

State support

KNOWN by the disability movement as the Department for Work and Pensions’ best-kept secret, the Access to Work scheme provides funding and expertise to support disabled people at work.

Individuals can access assistive technologies and software, personal assistant support, funding for travel and advice on reasonable adjustments to working practices that enable them to fulfil their role.

Many employers and disabled people are not aware of the support they could secure through the scheme. Both freelancers and staff can

apply for an Access to Work assessment via the Gov.uk site. But it’s not plain sailing.

Ann Galpin says an irregular work history can be a barrier: “Disabled freelancers and those without employer support may struggle to provide evidence of eligibility.”

Eleanor Lisney says she found it difficult to persuade Access to Work it needed to support self-employed people: “You don’t get paid for everything you do, but you are still working.”

Yet the scheme can be transformative. “My Smartpen has been amazing,” says Lynn Degele, who has ADHD and dyspraxia. “It

records audio, minutes and notes and collates them into a digital notebook that organises the files.”

Access to Work: <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

TUC guidance: <https://tinyurl.com/yytj3rkl>

EHRC guidance on reasonable adjustments:

<https://tinyurl.com/y2k8rwlw>

Speech to Text Reporters:

<https://avsttr.org.uk/>

BSL Interpreters: <https://asli.org.uk> (Note: ask BSL users who their preferred interpreter is – there are regional dialects of BSL)

ACAS neurodiversity advice: <https://archive.acas.org.uk/neurodiversity>

NUJ Disabled Members

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/rights/disabled-members/>



Breaks every hour or 90 minutes are an adjustment that can benefit all. What works for disabled people actually benefits everybody



have been inaccessible pre-Covid.” Chair of NUJ Oxford Branch Lynn Degele found working remotely brought benefits of streamlining communications with the use of online collaboration tools: “There is more knowledge sharing online than in the office, keeping people more in the loop. Instant messaging is used much more – it cuts out formalities and is to the point. I can respond or choose to delay if I need to stay focused. It makes it much easier.”

Access to informal networking and relationship building has been cut. Lisney highlights the loss of opportunities to go to the pub or cafe after an event to “socialise and talk to people you may not meet otherwise”. She feels this limits the ability to build the trust required for disabled people to share their support needs. “The pandemic has had an emotional impact for everybody but more so for disabled people. Working remotely is a very isolating experience – the support isn’t there online.”

John Pring, editor of the Disability News Service, is concerned about the lack of political party conferences and “extra delays in the freedom of information system. The last eight months have been a real challenge as a disabled journalist, particularly when there has never been a time when disabled people have more of a need to hold politicians to account for their decisions.”

The working environment is likely to remain in flux for a considerable time and each shift brings new accessibility challenges. For journalists who are at high risk if they contract Covid-19, working from home may remain necessary. For anybody who has ever been the sole person dialling into a meeting, the idea of ‘hybrid’ meetings of in-person and remote attendees will not be pleasant.

The solution is not just in improvements to technology – cultural change is needed to bring in a new era of inclusive working practises that do not leave disabled colleagues isolated and forgotten. Degele says she has “become creative with solutions, spotting opportunities that wouldn’t have occurred in the office.” It’s an approach we can all learn from.

THE NITPICK PAPERS

Charles Dickens had a short-lived spell as a newspaper editor. **Jonathan Sale** looks back

Celebrity editor walks out after only 17 issues of new paper shock horror! It would not have been the first time that anyone let out a yelp of 'What the Dickens!' – the exclamation had been used for centuries as a less blasphemous version of 'What the Devil!'

Yet those three devilish words have never been more apposite before or since that moment when Charles Dickens stomped out of the national daily he had founded and edited.

This short chapter in Dickens's life story had begun so well. In July 1845 the genius who called himself 'the Inimitable' was already the author of novels which still live on: *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *A Christmas Carol*, with more where they came from. However, he craved financial security, fretting about the future health of both himself and his book sales. "With hindsight, this seems absurd," Claire Tomalin points out in her highly praised *Charles Dickens: a Life*.

In an improbable but non-fictional twist of fate, the great author's apparent problems were solved by Joseph Paxton, (opposite, far right) the Duke of Devonshire's gardener at Chatsworth, who had made some money on the side by investing in railways. This spare cash led him to suggest to Bradbury and Evans, who published his annual *Horticultural Register*, that they all three should go into the newspaper business. The publishers were persuaded; they knew just the man to be editor, their star author – Charles Dickens – and offered him the editorship.

Dickens had already thought of starting a newspaper to challenge *The Times* and welcomed the idea of a regular salary, particularly when he managed to persuade them to double their original offer and ended up with £2,000 a year – about a quarter of a

Paper launches can be a bumpy ride

IT IS much easier to walk out of a newspaper than to launch one; in 1987, John Pilger (pictured) resigned as editor-in-chief of the *News on Sunday* before it had produced any of its few issues.

Most of the national newbies have been the offspring of existing papers, such as *The Sunday Telegraph* and *Mail on Sunday*. *Metro* too came from the *Mail* stable. *The Daily Star* was born in the *Express* group in 1978, with

Daily Star Sunday following in 2002. Murdoch's *Sun* evolved in 1969 from a very different paper with the same name owned by the *Mirror* group which had shone briefly after rebranding itself from the proudly left *Daily Herald* launched in 1912.

Eddie Shah, owner of the *Messenger* group of local papers, started the technologically advanced *Today* (and *Sunday Today*) in 1986, which soon became yesterday's

million today. He hired his friends and relations – printers' devils, you could say – his future biographer John Forster as a leader writer, his father-in-law George Hogarth as music critic and his uncle John Barrow as *Our Man in India*. The most incredible hiring was of his own father; the model for Mr Micawber, late of a debtors' prison, a financial and family failure, John Dickens became overnight a respected mixture of managing editor and news editor.

With the January 21 1846 launch date rapidly approaching, Dickens Junior was also tied up with his usual Christmas minibook, not to mention one of his elaborate amateur theatrical productions. And his family Twelfth Night party.

Yet *The Daily News* did hit the streets as promised. "For Madras, calling at the Cape of Good Hope, to sail 3rd February," were the first words under the title, because front pages in those days generally consisted of small ads, in this case for shipping, insurance and the Direct Northern Railway.

Inside, Dickens nailed his radical colours to the masthead: "Liberal Politics and thorough Independence," he promised. "The Principles advocated by *The Daily News* will be Principles of Progress and Improvement; of Education, Civil and Religious Liberty, and Equal Legislation; Principles, such as... the advancing spirit of the times requires."

These were indeed stirring times in which to start a newspaper: next day, prime minister Robert Peel declared his opposition to the Corn Laws, which were gradually starving the country.

but, says founder Andreas Whittam Smith "The *Independent* on Sunday was my big mistake."

This had an ill-fated launch in 1990, a few months after that of *The Sunday Correspondent*, a similar middle-of-the-road broadsheet.

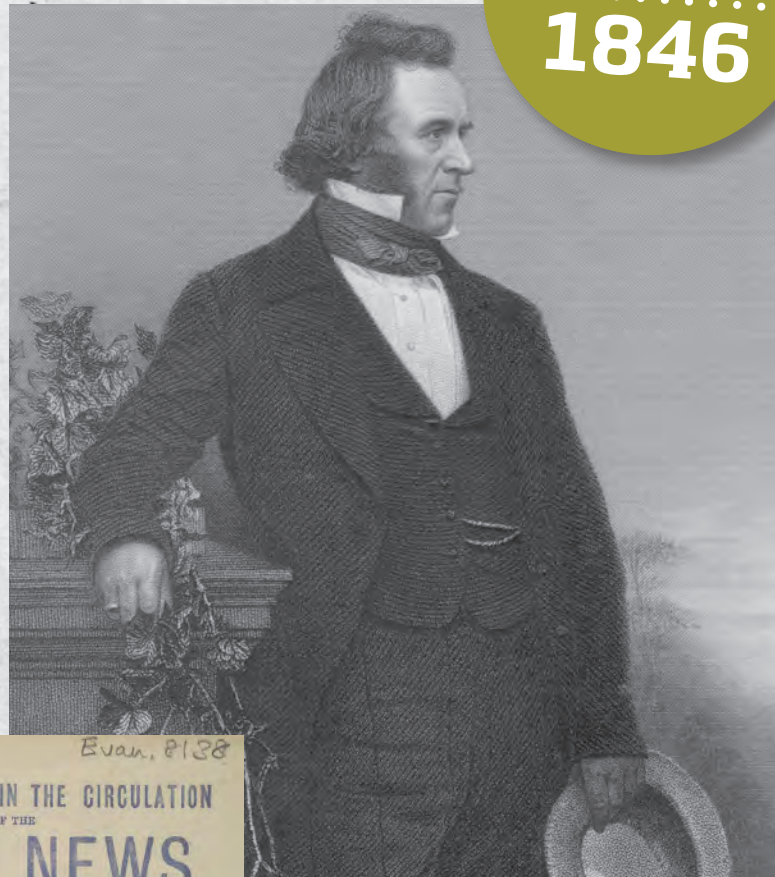
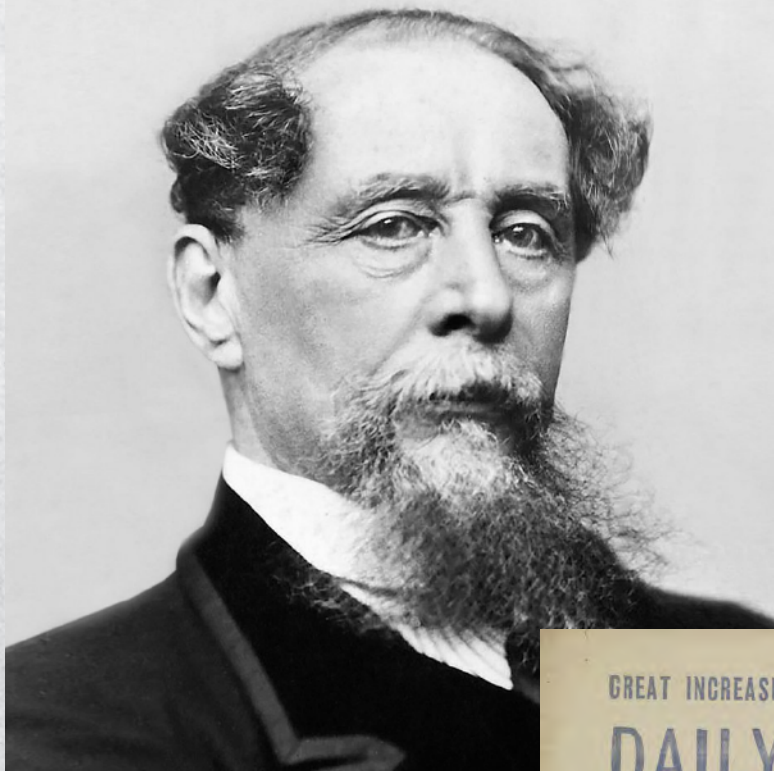
"A suicide pact," is how Peter Cole, the *Correspondent's* launch editor, describes the competitive dilemma of the two quality papers.

He was fired: "One of the backers made it a condition of the last tranche of money. I never wanted to throw in the towel."



JAMES GIFFORD-MEAD/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Looking
back to:
1846



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Dickens, however, was not long for the newspaper world. He was a vigorous editor – but only when he got round to editing.

John Forster, who had from the first advised Dickens not to take the job, rapidly came to the conclusion that The Daily News was a bad experience for its editor who would not take advice or accept criticism. "Dickens was so intensely fixed on his own opinion and in his admiration of his own works," he said.

Dickens did not put it like that but he revealed to Forster that he was planning to resign and return to his previous day job of writing novels. He then had the nerve to inform poor Bradbury and Evans that, given the amount of railway shareholders who had backed the launch, it looked as if the paper was in the grip of Victorian Fat Controllers. (This may have been a good point but it had not prevented him from accepting the job in the first place.) And another thing – the management had been interfering in the hiring of a sub.

He then took a two-day break and handed in his resignation. Declaring that he was absolutely worn out, he persuaded Forster to take over as editor.

On the face of it, those 17 issues were a tiny detour on his literary highway; AN Wilson's recent study, *The Mystery of Charles Dickens*, contains only two brief references to The Daily News. Yet it was his journalism which enabled him to escape from his impecunious background and move in circles where people earned money from the words they produced.

After working as a humble legal clerk, he learnt the dark art of the shorthand which gave him a leg-up to legal reporting and, in time, the parliamentary gallery. His treatment of politicians in his novels feels like revenge for all those speeches he had to endure before rattling back to London by carriage to deliver his copy before The Times reporter filed. The paper he left behind was selling only 4,000 copies a day, one-sixth of the circulation of The Times, and Dickens declared it was not long for this world. In fact, its circulation at one point reached 150,000.

Dickens was a fierce social reformer and the The Daily News remained a radical one for years. George Bernard Shaw and HG Wells were contributors. In 1901, it was bought by Quaker George Cadbury and campaigned for pensioners and against the Boer War. Merged with the Daily Chronicle in 1930, it remained a radical paper until it was taken over in 1960 by the Daily Mail and its DNA disappeared in the bloodstream of the Daily Dacre.

The best story his paper never covered was about the most famous Victorian writer in the world, the young actress Ellen Ternan and the lovenest in Peckham.

All of this was kept secret for the sake of Dickens' reputation and, to conceal the detours necessary to visit her in South London, he had to have at his fingertips the details of the journey he would have made if he had taken the train directly to the family home in Essex.

Claire Tomalin, whose *The Invisible Woman* described the liaison of Ternan and the author, came across the rumour that Dickens had not died, as announced, in his own house but in Peckham. If true, this would mean that Ellen would have had to bundle the body into a horse-drawn cab and whip it away it to Essex, where his death could be safely announced.

Think what Dickens could have made of this melodramatic material, in a novel or The Daily News. Sadly, the Inimitable was not in a position to write it.

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Reasons for hope and pride amid the tumult



Raymond Snoddy anticipates a better future after a testing year

It has been a year like no other for journalists and journalism for reasons almost too obvious to mention.

Many journalists have lost their jobs and the already stretched finances of media groups have been further hit by the Covid-induced recession.

Commercial broadcasters, for example, suffered a 40 per cent drop in advertising revenue and, with daily deaths still high, there is little reason to be jolly for now.

There is, however, reason for journalists to be proud about what they have achieved this year and the high quality of the remote newspapers and news programmes they have produced.

It has come at a high personal cost. An international survey by journalist John Crowley, carried out with the help of journalist and statistician Andrew Garthwaite, found that more than three-quarters of journalists had suffered some form of stress from working in lockdown. Only 38 per cent viewed remote working as a positive experience. To add to the irony, Crowley was one of those who lost his job.

At least most listeners and viewers have learned once again to value the importance of verified facts and trustworthy news, and audiences have trended upwards, even though there is not always an equal willingness to pay.

Even if the Covid-19 vaccines do their stuff and a sort of normality returns after Easter or at least by the summer, that will not be the end of the economic blues for the media sector.

The Office of Budget Responsibility has warned that, without a deal, the hit from Brexit to the UK economy could

be even worse than the impact of Covid-19. A deal of any sort would still cut GDP by four per cent – something that could suppress advertising budgets for the foreseeable future.

There are, however, some reasons to be cheerful, if not actually jolly.

The most extreme threats to the BBC as it approaches its centenary year seem to have gone with the departure of BBC-hating Dominic Cummings and his cronies.

BBC director-general Tim Davie believes that the spectre of decriminalisation of the licence fee, which could have posed an existential threat to BBC finances, has been lifted at least for now.

Newspapers that have concentrated on building a subscription base, from the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal to the Financial Times, have prospered in the time of Covid.

At the FT, which had an international staff of journalists to track ‘the biggest story’ around the world, subscriptions rose by seven per cent year-on-year to 1.1 million, 950,000 of them digital.

There will always be those who will believe that Donald Trump won a landslide victory in October but the clear-cut victory of president-elect Joe Biden might just represent the high water mark for populism and populist politicians around the world.

The motives of Rupert Murdoch, who dumped Trump overnight from all his media outlets – including Fox News, which did so much to create the Trump phenomenon in the first place – are of course entirely cynical.

Murdoch is only interested in winners who might be useful to him, not losers such as Trump. One hopepipe of irrationality will

have been partiality turned off, even though the true believers are already migrating to ever more extreme right-wing outlets.

There is a sense, which may be irrationally optimistic, that the battle against fake news and conspiracy theories from climate change scepticism to anti-vaxxing can be sidelined if not actually defeated. Journalists will be at the heart of that battle to reclaim sane public discourse.

Very late in the day – but they did at last get there – there were kick-backs on American TV network news, when blatant lies met live rebuttals.

Even Twitter started to post warnings over the factual inaccuracies of Donald J Trump. There is even the pleasing prospect that Trump, when he loses his head of state Twitter ‘protection’, might be booted off the social media site for repeated violations of its codes.

There is also hopeful talk of public service broadcasters like the BBC getting together with leading international newspapers to promote fact-checking and intensify the battle against false news.

There will still be an urgent need for innovation in both broadcasting and newspapers.

For newspapers, the challenge will be to get newsrooms operating again although there will continue to be more remote working than in the pre-Covid world.

Broadcasters will have to intensify their online offerings to compete with the streamers and reflect changing viewing habits.

But at least, as we head for our three-family Christmas reservations, there really are reasons to be cheerful if not jolly,

“**Newspapers that have concentrated on building a subscription base have prospered in the time of Covid**”

by **Tim Lezard**

arts

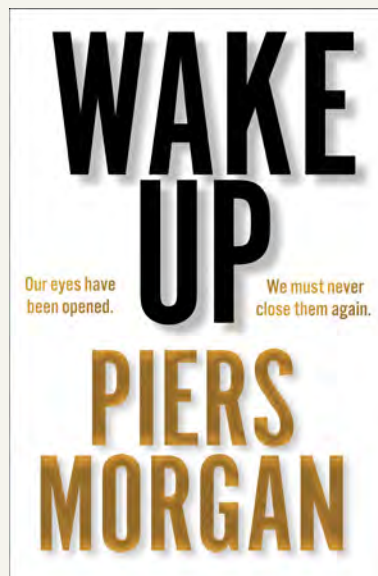
Xmas books special >

Wake up by Piers Morgan

"He's an inflammatory, deliberately provocative character," writes Piers Morgan about Donald Trump. He could, of course, be writing about himself.

The former Daily Mirror editor's transformation from scourge of the left-wing 'woke brigade' to right-wing hate figure has been fascinating to watch on GMTV and Twitter during the Covid-19 pandemic.

What begins as a rant about society's "inexorable descent into the abysmal PC-crazed abyss" mellows as



he discovers "there's far greater pleasure in helping Captain Tom Moore raise millions or shining a light on migrant workers in the NHS than there is in waging war over vegan sausage rolls".

And crucially: "There's also a far greater purpose in holding government ministers to account for their life-and-death decisions than there is in constantly sniping at the likes of Meghan Markle."

I suspect this tenacity and this placing on record of ministers' ineptitude in tackling Covid-19, will be the true legacy of Wake Up – an angry, occasionally irrational and, yes, provocative, book – rather than his misplaced ire at millennial snowflakes.

<https://tinyurl.com/y5oux9l4>

Comrade Sak by Marc Wadsworth

The chair of the NUJ's black members' council has updated his 1998 biography of Shapurji Saklatvala, an important study of African, Caribbean and Asian working class history in the 1920s and 30s.

Comrade Sak charts Saklatvala's journey from privileged Parsi beginnings to revolutionary communist, ending up as Labour MP for Battersea North.

<https://www.peepaltreepress.com/books/comrade-sak>

Between the Covers. The world according to Jilly Cooper

It's easy to forget my fellow Gloucestershire branch member was a journalist (Middlesex Independent, Sunday Times, Mail on Sunday) before becoming an author of raunchy novels. Fifty years on, she's published a collection of her favourite columns in the style that made her so successful, showcasing her trademark wit, irreverence and caustically sharp observations.

<https://tinyurl.com/y6ymomxt>

Unconsidered Trifles by Mike Amos

The Queen Mother, Juventus FC, Hollywood and Prince Harry all feature in this charming memoir from an award-winning Northern Echo reporter who spent more than half a century at the paper. It's how journalism used to be.

<https://mikeamosblog.wordpress.com/autobiography/>

Too Hot for Comfort by Andrew Bibby

Finance reporter-turned-crime writer Andrew Bibby completes his Cumbrian Fells trilogy. Once again starring Nick Potterton, a successful London journalist now struggling as a local freelance, this entertaining and atmospheric mystery also addresses social issues such as social media trolling (maybe Piers Morgan might enjoy it?) and the economic plight of local newspapers.

<https://gritstonecoop.co.uk/books/too-hot-for-comfort/>

Sylvia Pankhurst by Rachel Holmes

Following the author's biography of Eleanor Marx comes the life story of a woman – political rebel, human rights



champion, radical feminist and, lest we forget, newspaper editor. Holmes is unafraid to touch on the rupture between Pankhurst's mother Emmeline and sister Christabel and her affair with the married Keir Hardie. Sylvia's granddaughter Helen describes the book as "extraordinary".

<https://tinyurl.com/y9gmklwo>

Assignment Moscow – Reporting on Russia from Lenin to Putin by James Rodgers

The former BBC reporter reveals how journalists' experiences reporting from Russia for the past 100 years mirrors its changing attitude to the West.

<https://tinyurl.com/y4ehvp49/>

Tough times for performing arts

At the time of writing, the UK was on the verge of a second lockdown.

According to Bectu at least, 442 creative industry workers have been made redundant as a result of the pandemic. Actors and musicians have also lost their livelihoods. Please support the arts if you can – solidarity.

Spotlight >

Migrant blame game called out

"I view stories as both the weapon and the battleground on which power is won or lost," Potent Whisper tells Arts.

The musician has just released his first audiobook, Lucid Lovers, a profoundly

powerful and moving modern-day Shakespearian tragedy.

Part poetry, part prose and part Brexit rap, it attempts to reshape the asylum-seeker blame game.

"There aren't many stories the state seems more invested in than the idea that migrants and asylum seekers are the source of this country's ill socioeconomic health," he says.

"This story is told so consistently and persuasively that the average Brit will point fingers at the vulnerable family



seeking simple safety on our shores whilst this government continues the relentless transferral of public wealth into private hands, which is of course the true source of our suffering."

Lucid Lovers is available for free stream/download at www.lucidlovers.co.uk



TechDownload

Nicholas Fearn on technology for journalists

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Journalists have to write clean, consistent copy and now software can support this. Intelligent Editing is claimed to flag up unexplained abbreviations, spot typos and check house style is adhered to. It can be customised to house styles and works with British, American and Australian English.

<https://intelligentediting.com>

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If you are conscious about online privacy, you should download a virtual private network. This will ensure third parties cannot see what you do online. ExpressVPN offers access to 3,000 servers, AES-256 encryption, a kill switch, a no-logs policy and unlimited bandwidth. You can use it only with five devices. At the time of writing, the cheapest plan was £6.69 per month.

www.expressvpn.com

AUTOMATIC WAY TO CHASE INVOICES

Freelancers know the pain of chasing up unpaid invoices, but now there's software to speed up this process. Using automated credit control software Itsettled, you can automatically follow up invoices and receive overdue payments. It provides emails, letters and call scripts to make controlling your finances quicker and easier. The basic subscription costs £4 per invoice and includes five invoices per month.

www.itsettled.co.uk

NOTEBOOK IN A PHONE

Notebooks have always been a journalist's best friend, but in the 21st century, they appear upstaged by productivity powerhouse smartphones like the Samsung Galaxy Note.

The latest version of this handset, which is called the Note20, offers a 6.7-inch 2400 x 1080 display, an octa-core processor, 8GB of RAM, a triple rear camera system, 8K video recording, a 4300mAh battery, 256GB of storage and a USB C port, and can run Microsoft Office. It is dust and water resistant

What sets the Note20 apart from other handsets on the market is the S Pen, which can be used for



handwriting notes, annotating documents, drawing, and navigating around your phone.

The Note20 comes in three colours called mystic bronze, mystic grey and mystic green.

If you'd like a bigger phone, you can opt for the Note20 Ultra, which has a 6.9-inch screen and higher specifications. There is also offering a 5G model.

The Note20 starts at £849, while the 5G variant is £949 and the Note20 Ultra is £1179.

[Samsung.com/uk](https://samsung.com/uk)

> Dock lets you use multiple devices

Like most people nowadays, you probably use a variety of connected devices. From laptops to smartphones, these play an important

role in the lives of modern journalists but can easily clutter up a desk and be a nightmare to use concurrently.

To organise all of your gizmos better and improve

productivity, I'd recommend checking out the All-in-One Mini Dock from PNY.

Described as "a solution for those who need to use multiple devices

simultaneously" by the American tech firm, it is plugged into a computer via USB C and provides nine additional ports. These include USB, USB-C, HDMI, VGA, RJ45, SD and MicroSD connections.

PHONE PACKS A PUNCH

Big-picture phone for productive work

Huawei offers great smartphones for increased productivity, and the P30 Pro New Edition is one of them. It offers a 6.47-inch FullHD+ OLED display, a 40-megapixel primary camera, a 32-megapixel front camera, a Kirin 980 processor, 8GB of RAM, a 4200mAh battery, a fingerprint scanner and 256GB of onboard memory, as well as Google apps and services, despite the US trade ban. This is a stylish, highly capable Android smartphone, and is available in black and silver.

<https://tinyurl.com/yca96pn>, £699.99

STORAGE WITH SPEED

If you're looking to improve the performance of your computer and don't want to rely on cloud platforms due to privacy concerns, investing in an internal solid state drive (SSD) is a great idea. At just £19, the CS900 SSD from US technology company PNY is definitely worth considering.

This compact SSD provides storage varying between 120GB and 930GB, and has read speeds of 515-535MB/s and write speeds of 490-515MB/s per second.

As a result, users can expect increased battery life, a cooler system and improved productivity, according to PNY.

£19.63



Connect for free and help raise the profile of your charity, says **Ellen Bramley**



you can do your bit. By signing up to our newsletter as a free supporter and encouraging your colleagues and friends to do the same, you can stay up to date with industry news and services.

Fundamentally, connecting with a greater number of journalists will help us all to keep in touch, allowing us to offer you the most effective help and support as you continue your career.

Since the pandemic began, the Journalists' Charity has prevented 15 journalists and their families from losing their homes. Hundreds of others affected by the crisis have received emergency assistance as part of a rapid response aimed at minimising stress and preserving mental health.

To ensure we cater for a range of needs, we have extended our support by providing free online skills sessions on various themes relating to the industry. Additionally, we have some new grant opportunities coming up, including a support package for those who are new to journalism.

Joan, a freelance journalist who received support from us when her income dried up in July, described the long-term impact of our support. Aside from the short-term relief of bills getting paid, receiving assistance crucially means "you're not wasting your time worrying about finance, you're actually going out there and digging for more work".

Similarly, sports journalist Ross described the charity as a 'huge lifeline' when the seasons ended prematurely and work disappeared overnight. He said: "All the live matches were wiped out – and that is something I largely relied on. The support from the Journalists' Charity was absolutely invaluable at a time when I felt scared and alone."

The ability of the charity to continue its support and make a positive difference is inextricably linked to awareness levels among journalists. By spreading the word to your peers and encouraging them to sign up to our database, you can help us to support the sustainability of quality journalism – a crucial pillar to our democracy and, indeed, our fourth emergency service.

• Scan the QR code (left) to become part of the Journalists' Charity

Ellen Bramley is Industry Relations Manager for the Journalists'

Charity offers a 'huge lifeline' in a crisis

Back in April, when the UK was in the early stages of the coronavirus crisis, culture secretary Oliver Dowden dubbed the news industry 'Britain's fourth emergency service'.

He was paying homage to journalists up and down the country as they worked tirelessly to keep the nation informed at a time of great uncertainty.

In the ensuing months, the industry continued to perform an essential service for a nation in crisis, providing scrutiny and critical insight.

During a national lockdown, with curbs on most aspects of everyday life and working practices turned upside down, journalists stepped up to the challenge – helping to keep communities together, inspiring heroes and, in some cases, saving lives. The stories that ran across news outlets up

and down the country underlined the importance of journalism.

Journalists have gone above and beyond the call of duty, campaigning on behalf of readers for the provision of everything from PPE to government grant schemes, free school meals and newspaper deliveries for the elderly.

It was therefore no surprise that the World Without News report, published in October, revealed that 66 per cent of Brits appreciate and value journalism more since the pandemic began.

Journalism is still being tested. Advertising revenues are likely to plummet further, while social distancing is making it hard for readers to access print media.

News teams are likely to become even smaller and resources further stretched, adding to the pressure on staff and freelancers alike.

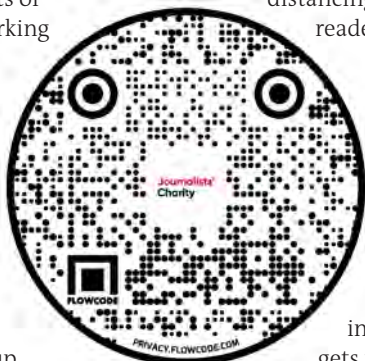
At this difficult time, it is vital that the Journalists' Charity increases its visibility and gets its message across – and



Connecting will help us all to keep in touch, allowing us to offer you the most effective help and support



Journalists' Charity



In praise of a broad church



Now that having other jobs is common, should the NUJ's membership rules change? asks **Jenny Vaughan**

The media is changing: online publications and broadcasts are expanding, while traditional forms are under ever greater pressure. How can the NUJ adapt to this?

Our rules already offer membership in a range of jobs that purists might not see as journalism (see rule 2: <https://www.nuj.org.uk/about/nuj-rules>). Maybe we should also think hard about how we organise in the plethora of small-scale, badly (and even non) paying publications that are growing up.

Our rules say that, to become a full member with the rights and responsibilities that brings, journalism must be your 'principal occupation', providing at least 50 per cent of your earned income.

For staffers that is relatively straightforward, but for freelancers – nearly a quarter of our 26,000+ members – it is less so. There's a raft of would-be or part-time journalists who are not eligible to join the NUJ. They may never be able or even want to overcome the 50 per cent barrier. But they won't give up journalism.

The union's solution is temporary membership for those 'seeking to make a career in journalism'. We have more than 350 temporary members. Temporary membership comes with limited responsibilities and support

and lasts a maximum of three years. If, at the end of that time, you have not passed the 50 per cent mark, you must leave the union.

But in the world of the gig economy, where having other jobs is likely to be the norm, does this criterion, based not on how much journalism someone does but on the proportion of their income it brings, make sense? Is it fair? Someone with the support of a wealthy partner or family can afford to qualify even if they do very little – while more productive would-be members are kept out.

It is hard for branches to know what happens to every temporary member they admit, but sometimes we find out.

Take, for example, a member of the NUJ's London Freelance Branch (LFB), whose temporary membership will soon come to an end. She had a regular column in a local paper, writing about community issues. Her work was praised, both by that community and within the NUJ. She was an enthusiastic member.

But the paper, when it pays at all, offers only 10p a word (£100 per 1,000 words). Unless our temporary member can persuade someone to give her enough work at decent rates (not an easy task these days), she must drop out of the union.

Similarly, a colleague in Manchester mourns the loss from her branch of an



Someone with a wealthy partner can join if they do very little - while more productive people are kept out



active, talented member who simply could not get past that 50 per cent mark.

Perhaps we should start looking at different criteria. After all, does the proportion of one's earnings necessarily reflect the amount of work done or even its quality? How do other unions with large freelance memberships cope?

Two come to mind, both of them fellow members of the Federation of Entertainment Unions: the Writers' Guild and Equity, the actors' union.

The Guild lets you in if you have written one or more pieces of work under contract 'for which payment has been received at union rates, or earned more than £5,000 from 'non-journalistic' writing (<https://writersguild.org.uk/join-renew/full-membership>). There is no assumption that you must have ever made or expect to make a significant amount of your living from writing.

Equity members, whose professions are renowned for employment insecurity, need only to have 'one job on an Equity contract, or evidence of earnings in excess of £500 from the industry in an area of work covered by Equity' (<https://www.equity.org.uk/about/how-to-join>).

Both unions accept that members may look elsewhere for work to survive, but that does not detract from their identity as writers or actors.

It even seems that sometimes members call on their union for support outside the area of Equity work. LFB chair Matt Salusbury describes working on a magazine, where several actors were in telesales and one needed employment advice. Salusbury says: "His Equity rep didn't ask any questions... there seemed to be an acceptance that members had day jobs other than acting and needed advice on how to stay in that regular work... if they needed that steady income stream alongside whatever irregular stuff they did as actors."

Is our profession ready to be more flexible about its entry requirements? It's hard to imagine the NUJ going as far as that Equity rep, but might it be time to think about how we, too, address the issue of recruiting and serving potential members in our increasingly precarious working world?

TIM DAWSON



Dave Rotchelle

“Remain calm,” would have been Dave’s wise counsel to anyone inclined to rend garments on hearing the terrible news of his death. He said exactly that out loud when chairing a myriad of assorted NUJ meetings and it usually worked a treat.

He and his ever-battered headgear purveyed a mild, irrefutable authority via the sort of

self-mockery that put everyone at their ease.

Partly, I think, that came from his pre-NUJ years in showbiz. In the 1970s he schlepped UK’s length and breadth as drummer with some of pub rock’s finest: The Count Bishops, The Rockets and, most almost-famously, The Pleasers – see them on Cheggers Plays Pop at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRHhrmGiHrs, plus adjacent YouTubes.

Once he’d hung up the mohair and gold lamé, he wandered into professional photography in a largely unreported period – but it did feature a summer job at Buckingham Palace. This lends some intriguing possibilities to his favourite one-liner about how you should never be a name-dropper: “The Queen herself told me that.”

Soon earning a solid living from the usual pick’n’mix of newspapers, magazines, one-off commissions and a longstanding residency at London Press Club events, he joined the NUJ and London Freelance branch in 1998 and, propelled by

some inner wellspring of goodwill, so engaged his fellow members that we elected him to everything in sight: branch chair, freelance industrial council, national executive council...

He loved chairing the branch... and the branch loved being chaired by Dave. He was such an inspiring, tone-setting exemplar of grace and decency – while keeping the best of order, naturally.

However, by the time he was elected member of honour in 2016, diabetes had cruelly robbed this drummer/photographer of clear eyesight and dexterity. Worst, the lower half of his left leg had to be amputated.

He didn’t surrender. He worked like an SAS recruit to learn how to use his prosthesis and proved such an encouraging presence to fellow amputees that the doctors asked him back several times to talk with others about how to cope.

In the end though, despite the best efforts of his sister Trish and brother-in-law John, friends and professional carers,

incapacity and pain broke his spirit. Maybe Covid isolation put the tin lid on it – convivial togetherness had been his meat and drink.

Admitted to the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead one more time in October, he died of diabetes, pneumonia and sepsis.

Dave’s friend of 40-years-plus, The Pleasers’ singer/bass player Bo Benham said: “Dave Rotchelle was one of the most straight-talking, intelligent, fair-minded, level-headed, giving, secretive, talkative and kindest individuals you could ever wish to meet.”

You can read a small avalanche of tributes from NUJers at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/2011obit.html and some photos of him from the London freelance branch archive over the years at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/2011dave.html.

Phil Sutcliffe



Mike Burrows

NUJ honorary life member Mike Burrows has died at the age of 72.

A retired sports journalist, Mike was a committed, long-serving and loyal member of the Swansea and district branch. He was a former member of the Wales executive and attended many delegate meetings.

In recent years Mike was – with NUJ colleagues – a founder

member of hyperlocal service Local News South Wales.

Its multimedia platform Port Talbot Magnet aimed to fill a local news vacuum left as major publishers reduced coverage of this significant Welsh industrial town. Mike’s legacy includes the title, a salute to Port Talbot’s proud steel making history.

NUJ colleagues paid tribute to him:

“Mike was a stalwart of the union for as far back as I can remember” – Roger Butler.

“We wouldn’t have had the Magnet without Mike – he was also one of the ‘big seven’ on the original board. He was the backbone of our NUJ branch for many years” – Rae Howells.

“Good man with a passion for rugby and committed NUJ supporter. Remember fondly his quiet wit” – Chris Peregrine.

“Mike was a good man and solid trade unionist and socialist. He was a typical Swansea man – to the point and no nonsense. Mike was always worth listening to, no

matter how blunt he was” – Ken Smith.

“Mike was an enduring pillar of strength for the NUJ – a true comrade of the old school” – Mike Witchell.

He was a humanitarian and internationalist who had solidarity and fairness stitched into his beating red heart.

Mike’s fight with illness over his final few months was as dogged as one of his many arguments in favour of branch support for workers facing repression close to home or oceans away.

His love for creative flair remained strong. Even as he neared the end, he told anecdotes such as that about a visit to Hungary to meet football great Ferenc Puskás and how he gave a fresh-faced young Welsh actor called Michael Sheen a part in a film he was producing.

A memorial celebration of Mike’s rich and creative life will be held when circumstances allow.

Mike was the beloved best friend and soul comrade of Helen. He

leaves two brothers and 13 nieces and nephews.

In his honour, his branch plans to make donations to Action on Hearing Loss and Médecins Sans Frontières.

Andy Pearson

Journalist Jan Morris was renowned for her travel books and news stories, including those written before her gender transition, says **Paul Clements**

Jan Morris 1926-2020

Jan Morris, who died on November 20 2020 aged 94, was a renowned travel writer and journalist.

As James Morris, before transition in 1972, he was a correspondent with The Times and Manchester Guardian.

Morris was best known for his old-fashioned scoop for The Times about the first conquest of Everest in 1953 when Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay made it to the summit.

With a large amount of cunning and the help of Sherpa runners, Morris used a coded message to get the news down the mountain to Kathmandu and back to London. It caused a sensation and he became a celebrated figure, known as ‘Morris of Everest’.

After this success, he was appointed Times Middle East correspondent, fell in love with the Arab world and found it a place of political intrigue, tensions and eternal squabbles.

He left the paper in 1956 because they would not allow him to publish books and joined the Manchester Guardian (1956-61). There he was part of a journalistic coterie that included Geoffrey Moorhouse, Michael Frayn and Michael Parkinson. Morris reported from all five continents, becoming known as ‘correspondent to everywhere’.

While reporting on the 1956 Suez crisis, he uncovered collusion between Britain, France and Israel. Two years later, in the spring of 1958, he went non-stop from covering the Icelandic Cod War to the civil war in Algeria.

Even when there was nothing to report, he still managed to file copy. From Reykjavik, he wrote a piece

memorably headlined by the paper: ‘No news from Iceland’. Morris said that he had cabled his story in ‘a moment of cheerful idleness’ scarcely expecting them to print it.

His work was anthologised in the Bedside Guardian in 1959, which led Alistair Cooke to write: ‘It is pretty safe to say that Harvard and the London School of Economics... will, in a few decades, make the despatches of James Morris compulsory reading for any student.’

In April 1961, he covered the Adolf Eichmann war crimes trial in Jerusalem, which was attended by more than 400 reporters from news organisations around the world. Morris linked his dispassionate reporting with the drama of the courtroom and painted a powerful portrait of the lawyers, defence counsel, translators, secretaries, policemen and ‘the gallimaufry of the press seething and grumbling and scribbling and making half-embarrassed jokes in its seats’.

Then came his description of the man on trial: ‘And there stood the bullet-proof glass box, like a big museum showcase – too big for a civet or a bird of paradise, too small for a skeletal dinosaur – which was the focus and fulcrum of it all... he slipped in silently, almost shyly, flanked by three policemen. No shudder ran around the courtroom, for hardly anybody noticed. ‘There he is,’ I heard a rather self-confident English voice somewhere behind my shoulder, rather as you sometimes hear mourners pointing out rich relatives at a funeral:



GERAINT LEWIS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

and sure enough, when I looked up at the glass receptacle, there he was. There was to his movements a queer stiffness or jerkiness of locomotion. He hardly looked at the courtroom – he had nobody to look for – but even in his small gestures I thought I recognised the symptoms: somewhere inside him, behind the new dark suit and the faint suggestions of defiance, Adolf Eichmann was trembling.”

Later, as Jan Morris, she continued to be in demand and reported on events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the handover of Hong Kong.

Morris left full-time journalism to write travel and history books. These include a renowned trilogy on the British empire, Pax Britannica (1968-1978), which she said was the artistic and cultural centrepiece of her life.

Morris was always wary of any kind of state power or oligarchy. ‘Nothing is more boring than a one-party state,’ she wrote about Lee Kuan Yew’s Singapore in the 1970s. She had a healthy dislike of authority, detesting officialdom, bureaucracy and the whole apparatus of hierarchy.

For aspiring journalists, a key book of Morris’s reportage is A Writer’s World, 1950-2000 (Faber), a portrait of the seminal moments of the second half of the 20th century.

Paul Clements edited Jan Morris: Around the World in Eighty Years, published by Seren in 2006

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He painted a portrait of ‘the gallimaufry of the press seething and grumbling and scribbling and making half-embarrassed jokes’

and finally...

Why isn't there more interest in Assange?



Chris Proctor would like to see the story on the big screen

How does this sound as a pitch for a high-budget film? A man determined to expose criminal activities by the US government finds a Deep Throat source who provides him with classified files. After various newspapers publish them, he puts another cache of genuine information online. The US security services close in. He takes refuge in a foreign embassy. The CIA hires a third party to enter the building and plant bugs to record his conversations. The man is sprung from the embassy by UK police and placed in solitary confinement. The US demands he is handed over to them and a gripping trial commences, featuring celebrities and experts across the globe.

Upon this trial hang vital issues of press freedom, international law and the fate of a man under threat of life imprisonment...

Not bad, eh? Well worth a punt?

It seems not. This scenario has been playing for real in UK courts for 18 months, featuring Julian Assange. Far from being accepted as a pitch for a blockbuster, it seldom makes a paragraph in the papers. The problem is that it is not sexy.

'Sexy' is Kim Kardashian's lockdown party island, Matthew McConaughey's thoughts about the 'chemistry' between Jennifer Aniston and Brad Pitt, or the riveting tale of a man who changed his forenames from Donald Jacob to Jacob Tiberius.

It's a great shame. Some of the dialogue I've put together for the pitch is almost Marx Brothers – like the

exchange between Assange's lawyers and the US spokespeople about likely conditions in US jails if they lay their hands on him.

"Will my client be held in solitary confinement if he is extradited to the US?"

"He will not."

"Will he be allowed out of his prison cell, which is the size of a car parking space?"

"Yes. For an hour. Every day."

"And will he be allowed to converse with other prisoners?"

"No, he will not."

"You wouldn't on reflection consider that to be solitary confinement?"

"Nope."

And if that exchange doesn't tickle you, there is still fun to be had with the gent who, acting for the CIA, popped into the Ecuadorian embassy where Assange was seeking asylum, to install a few bugs. Obviously the US government wanted to listen in when he spoke to his lawyers. Only reasonable.

The bug man, however, failed to put a bug in the bog. He explained that he didn't think Assange would brief his lawyers in the privy. This excuse was given short shrift, and he was sent back to the embassy to complete the job. The foolish fellow had not seen the need for a tap in the toilet.

For the film, I'd like to build up the character of the person paid by the US diplomatic service to listen to the tapes. An educated man with qualifications in international relations, he finds himself employed in a sound-proofed room in Grosvenor Square, carefully attentive to Assange's movements, and I use that word

advisedly. All that training to end up in a foreign country listening to an Australian on the loo.

I stress that the film's humour would not be confined to the lavatorial. At times, it would soar into Samuel Beckett-like absurdity. Did Sam ever think of having an Australian facing a UK court accused of infringing US laws for publishing articles in European newspapers?

Or having a state deciding which truths were acceptable and which not? It's like a burglar arguing that CCTV evidence was not to his liking as it could reflect badly on his image if he was seen, jemmy in hand and swag bag over his shoulder, engaged in the act of pilfering.

And what about not allowing the defendant, Mr Assange, to explain why he'd done what he did? There is precedent for this, when Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon papers that helped to get Nixon impeached.

He did exactly what Assange is accused of, but he's now feted as a champion of freedom as opposed to being banged up in Belmarsh. Ellsberg told the UK court he wasn't allowed to include any justification in his defence to the Espionage Act charges.

Maybe, like Ellsberg, Assange will emerge a hero if the UK extradites him and after he completes his US jail term. Although, as the Americans are pushing for a 175-year stretch, he's unlikely to enjoy his new celebrity.

It really is absurd that Donald Trump spent four years lying to the public as US president while Julian Assange wastes away in a UK prison for telling them the truth.

It really is absurd that Donald Trump spent four years lying to the public as US president while Julian Assange wastes away in a UK prison for telling them the truth

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A photograph of a person wearing a headscarf and a patterned jacket, carrying a large woven basket on their head. They are in a field of green tea plants, appearing to be working.

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FREELANCE RIGHTS CHARTER

FAIR DEAL FOR FREELANCES

The Covid-19 crisis has further marginalised already vulnerable freelances working across the media industry - this NUJ Freelance Rights Charter demands improved protections and benefits regardless of employment status.

Support our call for a Fair Deal for Freelances, where all freelances have the right to:

- 1** Trades union collective bargaining to improve terms and conditions for freelances side by side with staff
- 2** Fair written contracts free from the threat of disadvantage for asserting their rights
- 3** Respect for their creators' rights and unwaivable moral rights
- 4** Equalised rights with employees including; sick pay; maternity, paternity and parental leave; unemployment benefit; full access to benefits and social securities
- 5** Choice over how they freelance and are taxed, with an end to advance tax payments
- 6** Work free from pressure to operate on a PAYE basis, or to incorporate, or work through umbrella companies
- 7** Equal health and safety protections including parity of training, insurances and security provision
- 8** Fair fees and terms, and prompt payments
- 9** Dignity and respect at work, free from bullying, harassment or discrimination, with parity of access to grievance procedures
- 10** Equal professional rights, including the right to protect sources, seek information and uphold ethical standards

#FairDeal4Freelances

#FairDeal4Freelances