

theJournalist

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Dr Who's sidekick

and other journalists on TV

Contents



It's the time of the year to look back and forward. And this year certainly has thrown up many challenges.

In the Middle East, the renewed warfare between Israel and Hamas has shocked the world. Closer to home, the long war in Ukraine grinds on.

In our industry, a swathe of job cuts have hit the BBC, Reach, National World, and other publishers. They have further reduced the already slim staffing levels, undermining the quality of reporting locally and nationally. Some journalists' jobs have been sacrificed so that Reach can employ social media influencers to raise the publisher's profile on TikTok and Instagram.

As if that wasn't worrying enough, AI has continued to prove a big concern for journalism. Fake photos of events, including the Gaza conflict, have been created and passed off as real. AI written content has grown and even when it is labelled as AI generated in a publication that is hardly reassuring.

But journalism plays a crucial role in society and the world, and it is important we tackle the many challenges that are thrown our way.

As 2023 draws to a close, we will be hoping for peace and prosperity.

Wishing you all the best for the New Year.

Christie

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Stephen Lipton/Alamy

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Reach urged to act over cash crisis

inbrief...

THE UNION has warned media group Reach, which publishes The Mirror, Daily Star and many regional titles, that it needs to rethink its business strategy after the company's latest cutback involved the loss of 450 jobs – 320 of them editorial roles.

The warning came as consultations with management were underway over what was the third tranche of mass redundancies this year. It forms the single worst reduction in journalists' jobs in the UK for decades. Amid considerable anger among NUJ members, the chapel has reserved the right to ballot for industrial action, declaring that "all options are open".

A letter from the NUJ called on non-executive directors and shareholders to take action following a drop in the share price of more than 20 per cent since the current chief executive Jim Mullen (pictured) took over in August 2019. The Reach chapel had already passed a motion of no-confidence in Mr Mullen.

"Raiding the reserves to pay for dividends is not sustainable, nor is it a substitute for building solid revenue and clear operating profits," said the letter. "The current strategy lacks coherence and is at risk of taking for granted the loyalty of readers faced with diminished journalistic content.

"Journalists across Reach believe it is a dangerous assumption that remaining readers of the group's newspaper titles will be prepared to pay increasingly premium prices when quality risks being compromised as print teams are hollowed out by cuts.

"Disturbingly, the latest redundancies involve the wholesale dismantling of coverage of women's football and other club

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specific content, rugby, and cricket. In the Republic of Ireland this is of particular concern where the reporting of women's sport and the hugely popular Gaelic Games are under dire threat. The cuts also extend to ending the specialist arts and entertainment coverage for England. The dash to digital has proved illusionary and does not provide the single answer to Reach's problems."

The company was forced to deny that Mr Mullen intended to replace journalists with 'influencers'. Speaking to The Telegraph, the chief executive said he would avoid calling them influencers, but Reach had, "brought in people who have a following and what we do is put them through our formal training to make sure they can write things in the right way, make sure they know how to edit copy, make sure they don't get into trouble."

THE YOUNG MISS OUT ON RIGHTS

A TUC report has revealed that 72 per cent of employees aged 16 to 24 miss out on key employment rights. Young people, especially women and BME workers, are also far more likely to be on zero-hours contracts. Workers aged 16 to 24 also face a higher unemployment rate than older workers. The TUC commends Labour's New Deal for Working People which would be "life changing".

DUBLIN PROTEST BACKED BY NUJ

Members of the NUJ attended a solidarity rally in Dublin days after city centre riots erupted following a knife attack on children. The union vigil showed support for workers who had been attacked and with migrants who had been abused by far-right activists.

SOLIDARITY TO FEMALE VICTIMS

The NUJ marked International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25 with a message of solidarity to all women who experience violence. The union said all forms of abuse and violence are violations of women's human rights and an obstacle to achieving equality.

Gaza reporters need urgent help

THE INTERNATIONAL Federation of Journalists (IFJ) estimates that at least 67 journalists have been killed in the Israeli-Hamas war centred in Gaza. Pamela Moriniere of the IFJ said it was now 'extremely hard' to

be a journalist in the West Bank and Gaza. "In the past we have taken cases of targeting and killing of Palestinian journalists to the International Criminal Court and we will do it again."

The IFJ has told the Israeli

government it must take explicit measures to journalists' lives in line with international law."

The NUJ is urging members to donate to the IFJ's safety fund which is providing

aid kits, battery packs and other equipment. Many branches have donated. Anna Wagstaff, secretary of Oxford branch, stressed the need for solidarity.

<https://donorbox.org/donation-to-the-ifj-safety-fund>

Reporting Gaza, Page 8

Big news media must pay up

THE LONDON freelance branch has launched an inquiry into a significant increase in the unauthorised use of photographs and videos by big news media.

Newspapers and broadcasters have been exploiting a "fair dealing" loophole in the 1988 copyright act that allegedly allows them to grab news content without payment. However the branch points out that the law specifically excludes photographers and

photographers must be credited on the pictures. NUJ freelance and digital national organiser David Ayrton is seeking legal advice on the issue. The branch called on the NUJ's leadership to take union-wide action to defend members affected.

The NUJ's MPs' group in parliament is to be asked to consider if the law needs to be strengthened and to-coordinate with the union's photographer bodies.



Inquiry ordered into Telegraph bid

Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer has ordered the regulator Ofcom to investigate the United Arab Emirates-funded bid to buy the Telegraph. The media watchdog will evaluate concerns that such a sale could undermine "the need for accurate presentation of news and free expression of opinion." Ms Frazer issued the Public Interest Intervention Notice over the proposed takeover by the RedBird IMI consortium. The Competition and Markets Authority will also look into jurisdictional and competition matters in the industry.

Raymond Snoddy, Page 9

'Fundamental' work of local democracy reporters recognised

NATHAN SANDHU (BBC)



AROUND 150 local democracy reporters (LDRs) gathered at the BBC's Dock House in Media City, Salford in November, for their annual conference and awards ceremony, *Anttoni James Numminen writes*.

The conference celebrated the work of LDRs who have this year written more than 57,000 stories for use in over 1,100 different news titles.

Speaking to *The Journalist*, Jamie Shapiro, the LDR for Southampton, said: "Doing a job that is so fundamental and so at the heart of society and democracy, being an LDR can be hard because sometimes you're a bit isolated, especially working from home. So this conference is an opportunity to share and connect with people who do what you do."

As well as a host of panels and seminars, the headline speaker, BBC political correspondent Alex Forsyth, talked about her career in the local and regional press before moving to cover national politics.

BBC Breakfast presenter Charlie Stayt hosted the Local democracy reporting service awards, presenting trophies and certificates in six categories.

He said: "It was a pleasure to present well deserved awards to a cohort of journalists who continue to make a difference, holding local authorities to account across the United Kingdom."

"My congratulations go to the winners and highly commended across all six categories, in particular to Adam Postans and Kirsty Paterson (both pictured right) for scooping the 2023 local democracy reporter of the year title."

The LDR service funds 165 posts in the UK. The reporters cover stories focused on local authorities for commercial publishers.

The BBC-funded scheme, which is approaching its sixth anniversary, was established because commercial news providers were experiencing growing financial problems so had fewer resources to cover local democracy.

Other speakers at the two-day conference included Dr Jonathan Carr-West, chief executive of the local government information unit, and BBC trainer Nikki Tapper.

A report published by the digital, culture, media and sport select committee earlier this year said that the scheme has "had a positive impact on local journalism by enabling important local news stories to get coverage where otherwise they might not".

It also noted the need for the scheme to be not only protected but also expanded across platforms and providers.

A BBC spokesperson told *The Journalist*: "For the future, the priority is to ensure content delivered by the service remains relevant to partners of the scheme and their audiences, and that it continues to deliver its core commitments to the highest possible standard."



Being an LDR can be hard because sometimes you're a bit isolated. So this conference is an opportunity to connect with people who do what you do

Jamie Shapiro
Local democracy reporter for Southampton

Branch support reporters after far-right threats

THE NUJ'S south-west England branch has expressed support for colleagues in Dorset who are facing online abuse and physical threats after exposing supporters of the far right.

Jason and Deb Cridland, who run online news site Dorset Eye, called the police after being threatened by people who turned up at their home in Weymouth. The abuse they reported also included

online trolling and relentless phone calls.

The couple have also been threatened with legal action after publishing an online investigation in August, entitled *Fear, Grievance and Hate*:

How a Community Became Radicalised.

Branch chair James Garrett said: "We stand alongside Dorset Eye's journalists and will fight, without wavering, for the freedom to report on matters of public interest."

He added: "We call on Dorset Police to take seriously the threats to the Eye's journalists and take action against those who are seeking to shut down their attempts to investigate racial hatred."



Journalist Laureate awarded

VETERAN Fleet Street editor Bill Hagerty won a prestigious award for his lifetime of work both as a journalist and as an energetic ambassador for journalism.

At the London press club ball in October, Hagerty was named Journalist Laureate 2023 – an

award honouring excellence in journalism.

London press club ball co-chairs Robert Jobson and Ray Massey said: "Bill Hagerty truly is a man of The People – a newspaper he edited – and a worthy Journalist Laureate for 2023."

"The award reflects not only his versatility and longevity but also the tireless work he has done to promote journalism, journalists and freedom of the press, as well as his charitable work with the Journalists' Charity for which we are tonight helping raise much needed funds."

Hagerty has been chairman and a trustee of the charity.

BBC cuts threaten top TV news programmes

CUTS AT Newsnight and Panorama will be a major blow to investigative news, the NUJ fears.

Plans for BBC news and current affairs are set to result in the loss of 127 posts.

The union believes that changes to the flagship news programmes, which regularly set the news agenda, will diminish their investigatory and interrogative approach.

Proposals for Newsnight are most stark, with the team being slashed from 57 to 23, the programme length cut from 45 minutes to half an hour and the format being turned into a discussion without bespoke filmmaking.

Other moves include relocating News at One to Salford, extending BBC



Breakfast to 9.30 and News at One by 15 minutes and creating 147 roles focused on digital delivery.

The NUJ is concerned that the extensions to Breakfast and News at One will not compensate for the cuts to news programmes.

Paul Siegert, NUJ broadcasting organiser, commented: "While we welcome investment in

digital, we have grave concerns that the axe is falling disproportionately on investigatory news output.

"Flagship programmes such as Newsnight and Panorama have a long history of setting the news agenda with in-depth investigations and exclusive stories.

"The proposals would, on the face of it, diminish a part of the BBC's output that has

already been negatively impacted by previous rounds of cuts."

In addition, the NUJ has vowed to continue its fight for truly local BBC radio output, after winning key concessions on the issue in a long-running battle with management.

Seventy per cent of members voted to end the dispute, which had involved strikes and other industrial action, and accepted a deal brokered by conciliation service Acas.

The agreement covered job security, income protection and workload, as well as new concessions on recorded news bulletins.

Siegert said: "We've gained significant safeguards on jobs and income protection for NUJ members, along with new concessions on radio news bulletins and shared programming. Their courage and determination have saved jobs and programmes."

inbrief...

VICTORY FOR NUJ AT BBC RADIO FOYLE

North West Today on BBC Radio Foyle/BBC Sounds will be extended by 30 minutes each weekday from early 2024 following a campaign led by the NUJ. The campaign, Save BBC Northern Ireland, had lobbied against cuts to jobs and programmes, and union members took strike action in May.

DYSON CASE UPHOLDS RIGHT TO COMMENT

Vacuum cleaner tycoon Sir James Dyson has lost his £1 million libel case against the publisher of the Daily Mirror. The high court said the comment piece by Brian Reade in 2022 did not cause 'serious harm'. The publisher said the judgment upheld "the right of columnists to share honestly held opinions".

CALL FOR ACTION ON DISABILITY PAY GAP

The NUJ's disability members' council has called for action to end the disability pay gap following the latest analysis on the issue from the TUC. The analysis shows that non-disabled workers earn 14.6 per cent more than disabled ones. The gap means that disabled workers receive £3,460 less each year.

Protect rights, Page 10

National World refuses talks

NATIONAL WORLD was still refusing to negotiate over pay with the NUJ as The Journalist went to press despite the intervention of conciliation service Acas.

The NUJ's group chapel at the company voted to suspend five days' strike action following the refusal, but

members were working to rule while consultations continued over the next steps in the dispute.

National organiser Laura Davison attacked National World for ignoring the plight of low-paid staff when it clearly had the resources to address this.

The company reported £9.3 million in operating profits last year with £10 million in cash balances. It recently paid £11 million for the Midland News Association and Press Computer Systems.

Members took part in three days of strikes in September and began a work to rule in protest over pay rates.

Travel writing rates fall

AROUND 60 per cent of travel journalists earn less than £19,999 a year, according to a survey by Substack publication Talking Travel Writing.

Just one in 10 of the 266 respondents consistently earn over 30p per word, even though 62 per cent had been travel journalists for over five years. Nearly two in five (39 per cent) believed rates had fallen over the past five years. Nine out of 10 were freelance, and one in five had or intended to take on a part-time job.

Just over half were worried about the impact of AI on travel writing. A similar proportion were apprehensive about the impact of climate change on their career but a quarter were not.

The writers said they wanted to unionise to push for wholesale changes in pay rates.



Byline Times hits the news stands

Crowdfunded news outlet Byline Times released its first retail print edition at the end of October - the first such launch since 2016. Moving from a subscriber-only Berliner format paper to an A4 magazine-style publication, it is now available across the UK in an initial print run of 10,000. Editor Hardeep Matharu said: "For too long, Britain has lacked a real independent and investigative newspaper, excavating issues that the established press can't or won't delve into." The paper is being sold through independent newsagents and branches of WH Smith and Waitrose. Talks with other stockists are in progress.

National broadcaster must have sustainable funding, says motion

Reports by
Deaglán de
Bréadún



A crisis that was about disgusting profligacy at the top has turned into, 'RTÉ needs to be smaller and we need to privatise areas'

**Emma O'Kelly
Chair, Dublin
broadcasting branch**

THE IRISH government needs to establish a sustainable funding model for public service broadcasting, according to a motion passed unanimously at the biennial delegate conference of the Irish NUJ in Dublin on November 11.

The motion, from the Irish executive council, expressed grave concerns over the "existential crisis" at Irish national broadcaster RTÉ, which arose after revelations of hidden payments to TV and radio presenter Ryan Tubridy.

"The fact that secret, undisclosed payments were negotiated by RTÉ with a third-party agency in a parallel process shattered the faith of trade unions and members in the industrial relations process and has undermined the relationship between RTÉ, the RTÉ Trade



KARLIS D / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Union Group and constituent unions," the motion said.

It called on the government "to urgently put in place a sustainable funding model which grants stability to public service broadcasting", adding that "the crisis in RTÉ should not be used to undermine the position of NUJ members or our collective agreements".

Proposing the motion, Irish secretary Séamus Dooley

said: "I want the message to go out very clear – our loyalty as a union is to protect our members in RTÉ and, by protecting them, protect the values of public service broadcasting in Ireland."

Seconding the motion, Dublin broadcasting branch chair Emma O'Kelly described what happened in RTÉ as "a very sudden and unbelievable crisis". She praised union

colleagues who had "stepped up to the plate". She said: "Nobody could talk about RTÉ – even our worst enemies – without prefacing their comments with, 'Of course, the staff in RTÉ are amazing'.

"But, even despite our best efforts over the summer, my worst fear has come to pass: suddenly a crisis that was about absolutely disgusting profligacy at the top has turned into, 'RTÉ needs to be smaller and we need to privatise areas'. It's being used as a stick to implement the worst kind of reforms for public service broadcasting here."

Shortly after the conference, Irish taoiseach Leo Varadkar announced interim funding for RTÉ up until the end of 2024. This is understood to include €16 million in interim funding along with €40 million next year.

'News has a value - and so do we'

NEWS has a value and so do journalists and photographers, the cathaoirleach (chair) of the NUJ's Irish executive council Siobhán Holliman told the conference.

"The past two years have been extremely difficult for the media in Ireland. Media independence and plurality have been further strained as resources are cut,

newsrooms merged or closed, and headlines shared," she said.

"This union, like the industry, struggles with resources and in getting members to engage. It's hard to find the good news when we look at the problems in Irish media and in how those we aim to serve often view us.

"The outlook might be bleak but giving up can't be an option.

Please engage with your union, your branches, your chapels, and your colleagues.

"We are real journalists and photographers, telling the stories of real people -- we keep doing it in spite of the obstacles, but we don't and won't do it for free.

"News has a value and so do we."



MAXWELL PHOTOGRAPHY

Call to defend transgender and diverse rights

THE NEED to defend the rights of transgender, non-binary and other diverse people was supported in a unanimously approved motion.

Saluting the NUJ's "proud history" in championing minority rights, the motion added that LGBTQI people, "having relatively recently become the unwilling subjects of extensive public debate, currently face unprecedented levels of prejudice".

While expressing the hope that none of this was driven by NUJ members, the motion added that "we cannot ignore the role that mainstream media have played in legitimising this so-called 'debate'" and instructed the Irish executive to work with the equality and ethics council on the issue.

Simon Devilly, of the Dublin press and PR branch, expressed his full support for what he

described as "a very, very important motion". He added: "A lot of the people who are involved in the kind of attacks we're seeing on journalists and on other workers are the same people who are pushing a far-right agenda in all sorts of ways.

"It seems to me that we're getting into an increasing battle between diversity and hatred."

Outrage at death toll of journalists in Gaza

HORROR and outrage at the number of journalists killed in the Israel-Gaza War were expressed in a late-notice motion which was passed unanimously.

Figures cited in the motion for the number of journalists who had lost their lives by that stage of the conflict varied between 39 and 41, most of them Palestinians.

The delegates also expressed their "horror at the overall death toll in this conflict... and the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, caused by the Israeli

MAXWELL PHOTOGRAPHY



bombardment and besieging of the territory".

The motion continued that the conference: "also condemns the attack

launched by Hamas in Israel on October 7th, during which a reported 1,400 Israelis were killed and approximately 240 civilians were taken hostage."

At the end of the conference, delegates adjourned to nearby Parnell Square to hold a candlelight vigil for murdered journalists at the gates of the Garden of Remembrance.

Many of those attending held placards with names from the list of 128 journalists who had been killed around the world since the beginning of 2022 .

Speaking at the Garden of Remembrance, Irish secretary Séamus Dooley said: "We gather at the close of this

conference in dignity, but let that dignity not be misunderstood as an absence of anger – and we have rights to be angry."

NUJ member of honour and former RTÉ producer Mary Curtin read Seamus Heaney's poem From the Republic of Conscience.

Names of the victims and their country were then read out by a series of NUJ members and a total of 128 carnations laid in memory of those killed.

Uilleann piper Noel Pockock played a lament for the dead.

Media in time of turmoil

THE IRISH media industry is going through "a period of great turbulence", the NUJ's Irish secretary Séamus Dooley told members at the conference.

Moving the report of the Irish executive council, he said: "We are an industry in crisis. No one in this room requires me to outline the scale of the

challenges facing our members across all sectors.

"In print, in broadcasting, in digital media, in every industrial sector, our members experience first hand the impact of technological change, a lack of investment in editorial resources, corporate greed and, all too often, incompetent

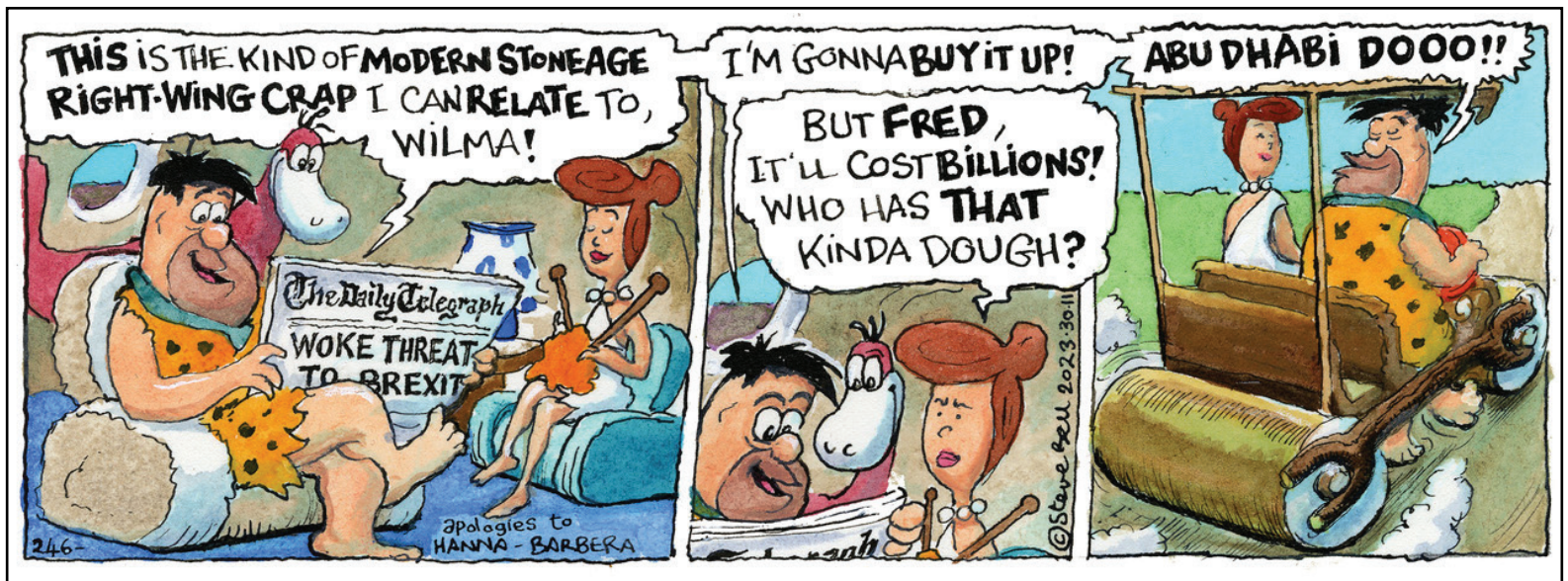
management and failure to adhere to best practice in corporate governance."

Criticising the decision by Sinn Féin politician Chris Andrews TD to issue legal proceedings against The Irish Times and one of its journalists, NUJ member Harry McGee, Dooley said: "I would encourage public figures to use the alternative dispute resolution mechanism of the

Press Ombudsman rather than the heavy hand of the libel laws, not least at a time when there is a political consensus that our libel laws are not fit for purpose."

Concluding with a tribute to Jim Eadie, who died last December at the age of 93, he described the former NUJ Irish secretary as "tireless, fearless and a source of guidance and inspiration".

Steve Bell





ZUMA PRESS INC / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Reporting Gaza

Mariam Elsayeh Ibrahim looks at staying safe and well in war zones

The world's attention is on Gaza, but coverage of the conflict is severely constrained because of the huge danger to journalists from the bombardment by Israel in a relatively small, enclosed space. Israel has warned it cannot guarantee journalists' safety. As *The Journalist* went to press, the death toll of reporters from the conflict is believed to be 67.

Willingly putting yourself in harm's way might seem perplexing, but for those dedicated to covering conflicts, war reporting is a calling. However, such commitment comes at a price, and war reporters are at the highest risk of various mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, feelings of guilt for surviving and even addiction to the adrenaline rush.

Wael Dahdouh, head of the Al Jazeera office in Gaza, is a Palestinian, born and raised in Gaza. Tragically, he lost his family while covering the Hamas/Israel conflict, witnessing the loss through his camera as Israeli bombs fell. He immediately went live to report on the tragedy. For Dahdouh and his team, who have endured years of siege, the decision to be war reporters is not always a matter of free will but a commitment they hold dearly.

A reporter who only wanted her initials used (CM) from Catalonia, Spain, who has covered numerous conflicts, says that it is not survivor's guilt that drives her to report from these zones but a sense of obligation as a journalist. She believes she must bear witness to the situation in Gaza now, even though it plunges her into depression.

Safety measures vary between war zones, she says: "Gaza is unlike Ukraine, which has open borders, an underground metro system and sirens for safety; there were shelters everywhere in Ukraine and the lack of these is extremely surprising as Gaza should have more experience in war."

Clive Baldwin, senior legal adviser at Human Rights Watch, tells *The Journalist*: "In a conflict, there is still a duty never to target civilians or civilian buildings. This includes journalists and journalism-related buildings.

"Any media outlets used for military purposes or where military personnel are present may be targeted, but the authorities must justify this. Closing down media outlets and preventing them from operating violates human rights law and media freedom." He is referring the threats to shut down the Al Jazeera office in Palestine.



He adds: "Parties to a conflict have a duty to ensure journalists' safety and warn them of any potential danger. However, they cannot close down media outlets or expel journalists simply because they are concerned about their safety."

International law protects journalists, obliging occupiers to safeguard their lives and equipment. Yet these responsibilities are often breached, as seen when internet and other communication links are severed. The Committee to Protect Journalists warns that a news blackout can have serious consequences, including the spread of misinformation.

In wartime, significant stories can go untold and the truth remains concealed, which in itself is a crime against transparency and accountability.

Mariam Elsayeh Ibrahim is a member of the NUJ's ethics council

War work advice

Sascha Klamp, an award-winning journalist, has some advice for journalists working in conflict zones:

Fixers: Work with trusted local fixers who have insurance covering injuries and kidnappings.

Location sharing: Use apps such as WhatsApp to share your

real-time location with contacts, including family members and editors.

Extraction plan: Establish protocols with your fixer for leaving dangerous situations, giving them decision-making power.

Low profile: Dress discreetly, vary routines and avoid drawing unnecessary attention.

First aid: Carry a first aid kit and learn basic emergency medical care.

Ethical reporting: Ensure your reporting is ethical and remember that stories might endanger local helpers.

Kidnapping insurance: Consider having insurance coverage for this.

Emergency planning: Prepare exit plans for leaving the country, including alternative travel options and visas.

Trauma: Acknowledge the personal nature of trauma and plan discussions with peers or professionals; looking after your mental health after major events such as war is vital.

Prioritise safety: No story is worth risking your life. If you're not prepared, it's best to decline the assignment until you can take proper precautions.

Telegraph sale sparks press freedom fears



Middle East influence could muzzle reporting, says **Raymond Snoddy**

A long time ago, there used to be a dog doesn't eat dog rule in what used to be Fleet Street. Newspapers didn't attack each other in public.

Proprietors could have as many mistresses as they desired and not a word would appear in rival publications – mainly because of fear of retaliation.

Those 'gentlemanly' days have long gone and competing news organisations are taking a huge interest in the future ownership of the Daily Telegraph. Lloyds Bank found itself owning the paper because the Barclay family were unable to reach an agreement on repaying a £1.2 billion debt.

As the Barclay family launched an audacious bid to buy back The Daily Telegraph and The Spectator magazine by paying off the debt with the help of Middle Eastern interests, cue a deluge of hostile coverage in the pages of rivals.

The Times and the Daily Mail have been in the vanguard in attacking the possibility that the consortium RedBird IMI, whose majority shareholder is United Arab Emirates vice-president Sheikh Mansour, should get control of an 168-year-old British institution.

The Daily Mail noted that the UAE came 145th out of 180 in the global Press Freedom Index while The Times dubbed Sultan Ahmed al-Jaber, chairman of International Media Investors (IMI) the UAE's 'censor-in-chief'.

Lord Charles Moore, former editor of The Daily Telegraph, fulminated that such a venerable British institution should not be 'nationalised' – especially by a foreign power that does not cherish press freedoms.

The row quickly became political as culture secretary Lucy Frazer said she was minded to launch a regulatory

investigation if the Barclay consortium took over the Telegraph via the back door of the already-announced auction process. To add to the general mayhem, the Foreign Office was accused of trying to block Frazer for fear of upsetting the UAE.

The growing fervour resulted in a strange Times page lead reporting that prime minister Rishi Sunak was to meet the chairman funding the bid, Sultan Al Jaber. Curiously, the paper reported it was unlikely that Sunak could avoid meeting Sultan Al Jaber, who is Cop28 president. But, if they did meet, the Telegraph bid would not be discussed, it was emphasised.

The spotlight on the UAE's unacceptable record on press freedom is to be welcomed as is the scepticism about whether IMI would be a passive partner. Would a RedBird IMI-owned Daily Telegraph really be able to expose any corruption in the Middle East or criticise human rights in the UAE or under its leaders?

As for the proposed committee to protect the paper's editorial independence, such mechanisms are largely for the birds.

There is, however, more than a whiff of self-interest in the attacks on the Barclay consortium. It is difficult to see any coverage of the fact that Daily Mail owner Viscount Rothermere would be very interested in buying the Telegraph, alone or as part of a consortium. You can also be sure that Rupert Murdoch will be keeping a vulture's eye on the proceedings and, at the very least, would like to get his hands on The Spectator.

Things took a dramatic turn as it looked as if the Barclay family had managed to do a deal with Lloyds and get their hands on ownership of the Daily Telegraph again – if only for now.

Frazer did the business and issued a public interest intervention notice, which means the debt-for-equity transaction and its implications for press freedom will be examined by both the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and communications regulator Ofcom.

They have to report back to the culture secretary by January 26. Crucially, the CMA has the power to overturn any deal and order disposals.

What ought to happen should clearly be in the interests of press freedom and diversity of media ownership in this country. The RedBird-IMI consortium should be told NO whatever the chosen mechanism.

The American Murdoch and the non-dom Viscount Rothermere should be ushered away on media concentration grounds. Equally, it would be good if right-wing billionaires could be discouraged.

A rich, clean skin with good intent might work, but newspaper experience would help greatly. David Montgomery, who is interested, is a Marmite figure to many, but there is no doubting his enthusiasm for newspapers.

Another intriguing possibility is Sir William Lewis, former editor of the Daily Telegraph and former chief executive of Dow Jones, who has been putting together a consortium to bid for his old paper. Then it was announced that Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon and the world's third richest person, had hired Sir William to be chief executive of the Washington Post. This is enough to set the mind whirring of anyone with a trace of imagination and optimism.

And such an outcome would be better than control going to Middle Eastern interests with a fragile hold on concepts of press freedom.

As for the proposed committee to protect the paper's editorial independence, such mechanisms are largely for the birds



Help protect rights and tackle perception

Natasha Hirst discusses how disabled people are treated and portrayed and what action we can take

This year has been a hostile one for disabled people. From widely derided and now thankfully abandoned plans to close train station ticket offices to proposals to restrict access to disability benefits, disabled people's human rights are being attacked.

The UK government did not attend a scrutiny session with the UN committee on the rights of disabled people and more evidence has emerged from the Covid inquiry pointing to ministers' disregard of disabled people's lives. Yet it has largely been left to disabled people and their under-resourced organisations to try to hold governments and public bodies to account.

As Disability History Month draws to a close, it's time to reflect on actions we can all take.

Ann Galpin, chair of the NUJ's disabled members' council, says: "As an elected member of the TUC's national disabled workers' committee since 2010, I often have to explain our NUJ code of conduct to colleagues who express dismay at misrepresentation of disability in the media. We would urge all NUJ members to look beyond the negative rhetoric at the whys. We need to look at why

disabled people are disproportionately affected by poverty, pay gaps and under-employment. Understanding the social model of disability will help journalists to identify the systemic inequalities that create such exclusion. We are all responsible for improving reporting on disability."

Disabled or not, most of us have spent our lives absorbing messages that devalue and dehumanise disabled people. Paternalistic tropes that position disabled people as objects of pity who need care have increasingly shifted towards narratives that portray us as scroungers and a burden on society. Media coverage that stresses trauma or inspiration serves to sensationalise our experiences rather than shine a spotlight on the causes of the inequality we live with. We are rarely seen as just people.

With a narrative that disability is inherently bad, it's all too easy to be unaware of inaccurate assumptions we carry, and this internalised ableism creeps into reporting. Those in power rely on this to push out policies and rhetoric designed to scapegoat and marginalise disabled people. Nearly one in five of the population is disabled – it's hardly a niche issue.



It's all too easy to be unaware of inaccurate assumptions we carry, and this internalised ableism creeps into reporting



This is where NUJ members can make a difference. When we scrutinise and challenge policymakers and give a voice to disabled people, we can expose injustices. If we fail, we risk reinforcing inequality and discrimination and that has real consequences.

Hundreds of people, NUJ members included, have taken the fight to IPSO regarding recent discriminatory and inaccurate reporting. However, the editors' code acknowledges only discrimination directed at an individual; the NUJ's lobbying of IPSO to allow complaints to be raised about discrimination against groups continues to be resisted. That is no surprise given IPSO's board consists of those whose coverage is being complained about.

Another crucial element of reporting is to improve the accessibility of information for disabled audiences. Johny Cassidy has worked with the BBC and the Reuters Institute on accessible data visualisation. He says: "There's been a huge increase in the use of maps, charts and infographics to translate and illustrate complicated data sets for many audiences. The lack of consideration being given to how blind people can access that visual data means that millions are missing out.

"It's vital, as trade unionists, that we don't add to this information divide. If we're going to champion accessibility across the media, we need to start at home and learn how to ensure everything we do is accessible to all."

Although the NUJ is calling for more opportunities for disabled people to enter and progress their careers in journalism, this isn't enough. Non-disabled journalists, editors and content creators can play their part in improving accessibility and reporting ethically on disability issues.

The disabled members' council is working with Disability Wales to develop resources and training. Tips on the NUJ website explain how to identify and frame disability-related stories, find appropriate contributors and get the language right.

Disabled members should also look out in NUJ communications for 'Meet the DMC' meetings to find out about our work on representation and more.

Natasha Hirst is the NUJ president and disabled members' rep on the national executive council

Kate Holman on the inspiring story of Lailuma Sadid

Prize for exiled Afghan journalist

Whipped, threatened with death and forced to flee her country – exiled Afghan journalist Lailuma Sadid won recognition for her courage in September when she received the prestigious International Henri la Fontaine Peace Prize in Belgium.

Over the past year, the Brussels NUJ branch has been supporting the work of Sadid and other journalists in exile.

The Henri la Fontaine award is dedicated to ‘women who resist’.

Sadid was a political reporter in Afghanistan from 2002 and 2007, covering the conflicts between the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

As the first woman journalist to attend a press conference of President Hamid Karzai without a headscarf, in 2003, she was the victim of numerous death threats.

“For me, it was a way of supporting democracy and claiming women’s right to choose to wear a veil or not,” she explains.

Born in 1980, Sadid studied journalism at Kabul University. “It was fascinating to be able to meet and interview people such as ministers and judges. But I also wanted to give a voice to ordinary people and those who represent them.”

During the first period of Taliban rule before 9/11, when girls and women were barred from schools and public life, she organised secret education classes in her home. But after a few months her activities were discovered. Sadid was whipped twice by the authorities.

“Later, we moved to a small village in the north that wasn’t under Taliban control. I worked in the only elementary school for girls. Despite resistance from both the community and the families, I worked to establish a secondary school. Between 2004 and

2020, the Bibi Ayesha Siddiqa School was able to graduate more than 2,000 girls. It was a real victory.”

Over the last 44 years since the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, 35 members of Sadid’s family have been killed, including her father. In fear for her and her daughters’ lives, Sadid finally fled the country.

“Freedom of expression, of the press and of social networks does not exist in Afghanistan. This free flow of information, so important to guaranteeing democracy, is severely repressed, and any offender is immediately condemned to prison or worse,” she explains.

Last year, she came to a Brussels NUJ meeting to talk about En-GAJE (Ensemble-Groupe d’Aide aux Journalistes Exilés), which was set up in 2018 with the backing of the International Federation of Journalists, the European Federation of Journalists and Belgian journalists’ unions.

It works to assist journalists forced to leave their home countries because of war or persecution. The branch has donated €500 to support En-GAJE and NUJ members help to edit the organisation’s newsletter, Latitudes.

Sadid recalls that she has been fighting for women’s rights, equality, justice, democracy and freedom of speech and thought for 24 years.

“When you don’t cover your head like I do, they call you an infidel, a courtesan, and threaten to kill you. Some of my colleagues even refused to go out to cover stories with me if I didn’t wear a veil or were against me appearing on television.

“While some may find support within their families, getting community support remains a major challenge. In a country like Afghanistan, securing one’s rights often requires great personal sacrifice.

“Afghanistan is currently one of the most dangerous countries in the world for women, where most are deprived of their freedom and their most fundamental rights.

“Opportunities for schooling are non-existent, domestic violence is widespread and cultural and religious barriers are rooted like a cancer in society.”

Sadid dedicated her award to all the girls and women in Afghanistan now forced to study clandestinely. She is giving financial support to three education classes in three different Afghan provinces and an online school that she watches from time to time.

“I believe that education is the best weapon to defend freedom. And educated women can change society, because the Taliban are afraid of educated women,” she declares.

“I’m aware that my work is just a drop in the ocean of challenges facing women in Afghanistan. But I hope that, through my efforts, I will have been able to positively influence the life of at least one young girl, transforming her into a strong, independent woman.

“This prize is a great responsibility. It gives me the energy to continue my struggle not only for girls in Afghanistan, but also for the rights of all women around the world.”

Some of my colleagues refused to go out to cover stories with me if I didn’t wear a veil or were against me appearing on television



DEBORAH EPHREM

Birmingham

Ruth Addicott finds out what it's like working in Britain's second city

It's Britain's second city, arguably the birthplace of the industrial revolution and has the oldest press club in the world. Home of heavy metal, HP Sauce, Bird's Custard and Typhoo Tea. It's known for its canals, Cadbury, the Balti

Triangle and Peaky Blinders – and dominates headlines, if not for HS2, for Birmingham City Council declaring itself bankrupt.

“If you ever needed something to show why local and regional journalism is so important, the collapse of the biggest local authority in Europe is it,” says Chris Morley, former industrial correspondent at the Birmingham Mail until 2007 when he left to become NUJ president.

“When I was chapel rep, we had a chapel of 160 in Birmingham and there were over 200 journalists – now the numbers are below 50,” he says.

As well as senior organiser for the north and Midlands, Morley is NUJ national coordinator for Reach, which owns the Birmingham Mail, the Birmingham Post and the Sunday Mercury along with digital platform Birmingham Live. Recently, the titles moved into 3 Brindleyplace, a new office in the city centre.

Staff have seen massive cuts in recent years and Morley says ongoing uncertainty around digital remains a huge issue. Journalists took part in strike action to win a better pay deal last year.

Paul Cole, who retired as editor of the Birmingham Mail three years ago, recalls that when he first arrived at the then Evening Mail in the late 1970s the ‘cavernous’ Colmore Circus newsroom housed more than 200 journalists, turning out as many as 12 live on-day editions serving the city and districts.

“You were told to keep your passport with you because, if there was a major news break anywhere in the world, the Evening Mail would send a reporter – or enlist the services of one of the dozens of correspondents run from the foreign editor’s office lined with clocks showing different time zones,” he says.

Circulation was in excess of 250,000 copies daily and he covered stories including the death of Princess Diana, the sinking of HMS Coventry in the Falklands War and 9/11.

When Cole left in 2020, he says there were only six print-first writers at the Mail. The print-first unit has since been disbanded with the focus on digital.

The city has various news websites and magazines including BirminghamWorld (part of the National World group, which has just acquired Midland News Association), The Birmingham Press, I Am Birmingham, Fused, Birmingham Living, Style Birmingham, Midlands Business Insider and Birmingham Business magazine.

News agency Caters has an office with around 30 employees. There is free monthly newspaper Asian World News and, further afield, the Express & Star in Wolverhampton and other local papers such as the Bromsgrove Advertiser and Dudley News.

Birmingham may boast more canals than Venice but, for viewers of a certain demographic, it will forever be known for Pebble Mill. The iconic Pebble Mill studios in Edgbaston were the BBC’s main base in the Midlands from 1971 to 2004, producing programmes such as Top Gear, The Clothes Show, Juliet Bravo, Howard’s Way and Rentaghost, along with lunchtime chat show Pebble Mill At One, live from the ‘foyer’.

When production moved to Bristol and Salford Quays, the Pebble Mill complex was demolished and, in 2005, BBC Midlands Today and The Archers moved to the Mailbox building in the city.

Staff are on the move again and are due to relocate to a new, purpose-built broadcast centre at the former Typhoo factory site in Digbeth in 2026, which will produce BBC

SIMON HADLEY

Opportunities in tough times

A way into TV

ITV News Central journalist, Lewis Warner, says production journalist roles often come up at ITV in Birmingham and says, for anyone keen to get into

broadcasting, "it's the best way to get to know TV".

Hard times

The Birmingham and Coventry NUJ branch is one of the biggest in the UK with

500-600 members. Branch chair Tony Adams says: "We've seen print media decimated over the last few years with job cuts everywhere. A lot of my senior colleagues are in their 60s and almost on the

back burner and there seems to be nothing around. There needs to be more support and a bigger network of things they can tap into."

Press Club

Birmingham Press Club, established in 1865, is the oldest in the world and has

around 150-200 members. It runs events plus the regional media Awards and a young journalists' network. Recent celebrity lunches have included Suzan Holder, author, journalist and wife of Slade lead singer Noddy, and war correspondent Lynne O'Donnell.

Midlands Today, BBC Radio WM, The Archers, BBC Radio One's Newsbeat and the Asian Network. The move is expected to help further regenerate Digbeth's creative quarter, attracting young talent and additional investment to the Midlands.

In addition, Peaky Blinders creator Steven Knight is behind a multi-million pound TV and film studio in Digbeth, which is expected to create over 700 jobs and add £30m to the local economy. The success of Peaky Blinders led to a 26 per cent rise in domestic visitors and 19 per cent increase in international tourists.

Along with music studios and a training academy for people wanting to work in film, Digbeth Loc Studios will be a key location for Knight's new BBC drama This Town and the forthcoming Peaky Blinders film, as well as the new base for BBC food entertainment programme MasterChef.

ITV Central is based at Gas Street and employs around 80 staff across the Midlands, including journalists, technicians, camera operators, planners and producers. Sky has a team of reporters across the region and other TV stations include Birmingham TV, BritAsia TV (the UK's only TV platform for British Asians) and the Sikh Channel.

Lewis Warner, a journalist at ITV News Central, says there are some great opportunities in broadcasting but competition is tough. He has covered all kinds of stories, including Birmingham City Council declaring bankruptcy.

"Every week something happens here that is the top of the national news," he says. "In my mind, it's the best news patch because you get those big stories you'd get in London and you don't have the hassle. For me, my office is my car. I've got a chair in the boot in case I end up having to sit at a police cordon all day, I've got wellies in case I end up on a farm, I've got a suit in case I end up going to court – you've got to be prepared for everything."

"We have some extraordinary news happening in the Midlands. If you don't want to go to London, this is where you want to be."

Lewis Warner,
journalist, **ITV News Central**

"The Mail, with its sister Sports Argus, Birmingham Post and Sunday Mercury titles, was the beating heart of the city."

Paul Cole,
former editor,
Birmingham Mail

"It's a great city, it always has been, but times are changing and there is not enough work to go around unfortunately."

Tony Adams,
broadcaster and
chair of **Birmingham and Coventry NUJ branch**

The city is also great for sports journalists with events such as the Athletics World Championships, the Ryder Cup, the Gymnastics World Cup and, more recently, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, which drew more than five million people and 1.5 billion viewers worldwide.

Commercial radio broadcasters Global and Bauer have a base and independent stations include Brum Radio, Unity FM (the UK's largest Muslim community radio station), Raaj FM (Birmingham's biggest Punjabi community radio station), Switch Radio, Newstyle Radio (which describes itself as the 'first & only legal Black Radio Station in Birmingham serving the community'), Big City Radio, Asian station Radio XL and Free Radio Birmingham.

Resident Brummie Tony Adams began his career with the BBC at Pebble Mill and has worked in broadcasting for over 35 years. He chairs the Birmingham and Coventry NUJ branch and the Black Members' Council. He states the city still has some way to go in addressing diversity in newsrooms.

"To be brutally honest, I've seen more regression than progression over the last decade," he says. "We need people on merit – it shouldn't just be a ticking box based on skin colour."

"I was speaking to someone in ITV Sport the other day and I said, 'How many black sports commentators do we have?' and he was struggling. That's just one example. We're not getting enough people in the right areas. It's not an issue if the jobs aren't there – they are, people aren't coming through."

Birmingham has carved the careers of many top broadcasters and, while it has its challenges, Adams believes it has huge potential and is a great 'stepping stone' for journalists.

"We've got a wealth of knowledge and skillsets from people who have been around the industry and that is something we can tap into and lean on each other's solidarity and support, which is priceless."



Translate into action



Andrew Draper wants interpreters to get organised

Are you a translator? Do you think you'd benefit from union support? I'm proposing a network for translators in the NUJ where they can exchange ideas and concerns. In the longer term, I envisage greater recruitment of translators into the union.

I have worked for about 30 years in the translation industry and, until last year, ran a business with my wife offering translation and journalism services. Now I am a full-time journalist again although still doing some translation.

What I've become aware of over the years is that translators need protection at work as much as journalists do. And, as they work in communications, the NUJ is ideally placed to welcome them and help them organise. The NUJ's Freelance Directory shows the union already has many translator members.

This issue has been discussed by the Wales executive council, which agreed the union should look to recruiting translators, and not just in Wales.

Problems and representation

Issues faced by translators, many of whom are freelance, include low pay, late payment, having little clout in dealing with big agencies and feeling un(der)valued and powerless.

There is often talk on online forums of how rotten things are and how they are not improving.

Translators and interpreters are often organised in excellent professional bodies such as the Institute of Translation and Interpreting or the Chartered Institute of Linguists. In Wales, we have

Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru. They offer training and qualifications, promote professional standards and have codes of conduct. You don't really hear, though, of formal discussions about tackling poor pay rates or working conditions.

Taking on trouble

During the pandemic, one of our biggest customers – a large European language service provider (LSP, a term given to translation companies that offer other services such as interpreting, editing or cultural consulting) – demanded a 10 per cent pay cut for six months. At the end of the six months, word arrived that they wanted to extend it another six months.

I wasn't happy and decided to consult with the team of four translators I had hired for the ongoing translation of technical manuals into Nordic languages. I said I wanted to resist but there was a risk we would all be dropped. At least one translator depended on this work as his main income.

They put their trust in me to resist. I told the project manager I was dealing with (himself a sympathetic freelance) we weren't prepared to accept more cuts and rates should be restored. After about five minutes, he backed down and said they could make an exception. I didn't expect this major multinational to roll over so readily.

We won because we organised. I had made it clear to the translators that my fight was their fight.

I've heard so many stories about how people are treated differently because someone could get away with it. The unnamed company named above boasted in one annual report I studied it

had a very big pool of translators to choose from, meaning if you complained there would be someone else to replace you.

The trouble for them was our language combinations (German into the Nordic languages) and subject areas were very niche. (Leveraging your USP is another story.)

An English LSP called Capita TI got into trouble some years ago. It won a big court interpreting contract from the UK's Ministry of Justice but at very low rates. They were so low that the company tried to enforce pay cuts and interpreters threatened to boycott it.

A comment from a LinkedIn discussion at the time was: "The complaints continue about the same LSPs yet said LSPs continue to thrive and dominate the market. Despite what the qualified linguists and LSPs that genuinely care for the industry try to do, nothing changes."

Where to start

Initially, I propose an informal forum for discussion of issues and actions to improve pay and conditions. It may be no more than a WhatsApp group to start with but, as numbers grow, we can look at holding meetings and workshops. We will need the NUJ to give us its backing and help to develop formal structures.

I refuse to accept that nothing can change. It won't if people don't push back. The translation industry is full of talented professionals and fabulous companies (usually smaller ones) trying their best to treat people fairly. It is also packed with those who rip you off and pocket the profit.

I've heard so many stories about how people are treated differently because someone could get away with it

If you're a translator and in the NUJ, drop me a line and tell me what you think: andrew@andrewdraper.co.uk

The mysterious secrecy around a mission to Mars

Brian Harvey queries the silence over a cancelled space project

When we talk about the ‘secrets of Mars’, we think of whether there is life hidden there. Think again: the real secrets are locked up – here on Earth.

In a bizarre judgement in September, the Information Commissioner in Ireland ruled that the decision to cancel a find-Martian-life mission must stay secret forever.

The reasons put forward by the government’s commissioner represent a significant contraction of the boundaries of the Irish Freedom of Information Act, 2014. The precedent will likely affect journalists attempting to probe decisions concerning foreign (or interplanetary) affairs generally.

The issue at hand is ExoMars, a joint European Space Agency (ESA)/Russia quest to find life on Mars, a project dating back to 2011. The rover was made in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, and named after famous British scientist Rosalind Franklin. It was within weeks of being shipped to Russia in spring 2022, in good time for launch on September 20 2022 and landing on June 10 2023. It should be drilling Mars right now.

Within hours of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Thursday February 24 2022, ESA – involving Britain, Ireland and 20 other states – convened its heads of national delegations. The lights of government departments must have burned late into the night that weekend. By Monday morning, February 28, the project was cancelled. It must have been a bitter blow to the scientists and engineers in Stevenage and elsewhere.

People are entitled to their own views as to whether the project should

have been cancelled but journalists were interested to ask questions such as: who or which country proposed the cancellation? Who were the protagonists – in favour, against or neutral? What were the arguments for and against? The potential scientific losses and gains? The costs of continuing or not?

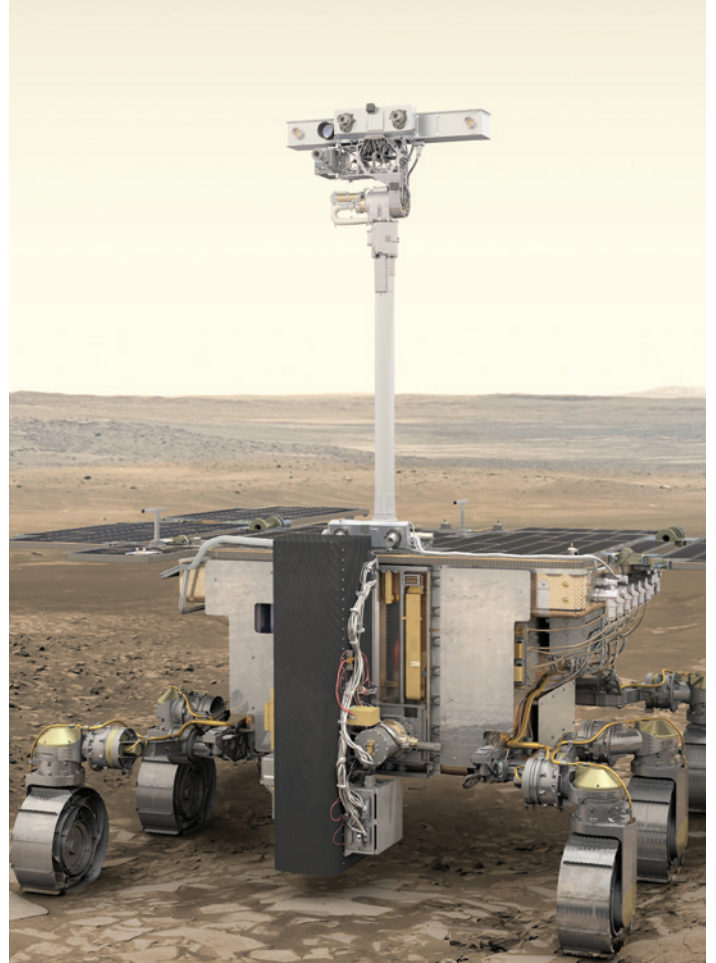
Why the hurry to cancel an 11-year old project over a weekend? Russia had invaded Ukraine and a top worry of European governments was a Mars mission. What was going on?

The ESA, a notoriously secretive organisation, refused to say and would not reply to enquiries from this writer. A freedom of information request was entered in November 2022 with the Irish Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, which handles Ireland’s relationship with the ESA. After the first refusal and a further refusal following an internal review, in September this year the government’s information commissioner upheld the refusal to release documents.

It was not an entirely wasted exercise because the refusal revealed that 20 documents had circulated during the decision-making process between ESA and Ireland. Other government departments (e.g. Foreign Affairs) became involved, confirming the intensity of the process.

Moreover, it emerged that the ESA had considered cancelling the project at a hitherto unknown, ultra-confidential meeting in December 2021, months before the invasion. This raised the question as to what ESA knew then that we did not.

The real problem, though, was the



commissioner’s refusal to provide any documentation, not even redacted. The Freedom of Information Act requires a range of factors to be considered in detail before approval or rejection, such as ‘public interest’ and ‘adverse effect’ (of release). How they should be considered is elaborated at length in guidance notes. However, the commissioner did not even entertain their discussion, relying instead on the section of the act dealing with foreign relations (33), which prohibits the release of documentation communicated ‘in confidence’ by an international organisation, the presumption being that all such communications are confidential unless stated otherwise. This had never been absolute, for journalists have often been able to obtain documentation from the Department of Foreign Affairs concerning its international activity.

The most serious aspect of the judgement was that all Irish domestic departmental documents concerning the decision were also ruled to be secret, with the same immunity as ESA-domain documents. ESA secrecy was now ruled to apply to documents on this decision within and between national Irish government departments, including those that ESA had never seen and of which it was most likely unaware.

This new cordon sanitaire sets a dangerous precedent for any journalist investigating anything dealing with international affairs, however indirectly. It looks as if life on Mars will remain a secret.

Russia had invaded Ukraine and a top worry of European governments was a Mars mission. What was going on?

Sometimes an 'exclusive' should be **inclusive**

Collaboration between media outlets is increasing. **Neil Merrick** reports

On a Saturday night in mid-September, millions of Channel 4 viewers sat down to watch a Dispatches exposé of allegations against Russell Brand.

The story would dominate the headlines for days, with current affairs programmes spending hours discussing the alleged offences, which Brand quickly denied.

But, even though Dispatches journalists had been working on the story for about a year, it was not their exclusive. Hours earlier, the story had also been broken by The Times and The Sunday Times. Social media then did its worst.

In truth, the story was not an exclusive for any of the titles involved. They had been working together since 2022 to substantiate testimonies made by the women against Brand.

It is one of the best examples of collaborative journalism, showing investigations sometimes depend on cross-media teamwork, not cut-throat competition.

For Paul Morgan-Bentley, head of investigations at The Times, pooling resources was an obvious step. "We did what was best for the story," he says. "It didn't make sense to work in competition with one another."

The first journalist to look into the long-standing rumours against Brand was Rosamund Urwin, media editor at The Sunday Times, in 2019. Reporters at The Times only discovered that Urwin was working on the story three years later, when they began contacting the same sources.

Around the same time, it emerged that Channel 4's Dispatches team were making similar checks. One problem was that, over the years, some sources became tired of speaking to reporters without any story appearing.

In pooling resources, journalists focused on the sources they knew best, avoiding duplication. "It can be detrimental to what you're trying to achieve if somebody new starts getting in touch with the same source," says Morgan-Bentley.

Dispatches had been looking into the rumours about Brand for about three years, without making much progress. Joining forces with two nationals gave its reporters more chance of success, says Alistair Jackson, its investigations editor.

He agrees that it was important not to overburden women who, in testifying against Brand, needed to give extremely sensitive accounts.

The women, nonetheless, were reassured to find experienced journalists from different titles operating as a team. "They took account of the fact that a major national broadcaster and two national newspapers were working on the same investigation," says Jackson.

By the end of last year, fortnightly meetings involving journalists from all three titles became the norm. Essentially, they became a single reporting team, trusting one another not to break the story first.

"It was important to have good lines of communication, plus trust and honesty, right from the start," Jackson adds.

Dispatches is no stranger to joint investigations, working with The Sunday Times in 2016 to expose failings in adult social care at two London boroughs. Jackson was involved in a joint investigation into supergrasses by Panorama and the Bureau for Investigative Journalism as far back as 2012.

With stories increasingly complex and time consuming, collaborative journalism is becoming more common nationally and on a global scale.

Last year, The Guardian shared its Uber Files story, recounting tales of secret lobbying of major politicians, with international media.

Following the story, Paul Lewis, its head of investigations, told Press Gazette: "There are occasions – and I think this is one of them – where there are significant upsides to a collaborative approach."

Finance stories seem particularly suited to teamwork. In 2021, BBC and Guardian reporters joined media from around the world for the Pandora Papers investigation, uncovering an array of tax avoidance and dodgy financial reporting.

This was co-ordinated by the US-based International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which champions public interest reporting and encourages joint efforts to tackle misinformation across national borders.

Gerard Ryle, director of the ICIJ, says collaboration works best where journalists are not in direct competition. Ideally, a print title and a broadcaster would be involved. "You can't have The Times and The Guardian working on an investigation because there's a temptation to jump the deadline before everyone is ready to publish," he says.

Like most journalists, Ryle grew up being wary of other



We did what was best for the story. It didn't make sense to work in competition with one another



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journalists, even from the same newsroom. "You want to keep a scoop to yourself," he notes. But the ICIJ's work proves co-operation delivers results. "If you steer a collaboration, you can all have a scoop at the same time."

For an effective joint investigation, there should be a platform where reporters can share findings. Strict delegation is vital. "There has to be an expectation from the beginning of the project that everyone knows what to do," he adds.

Collaborative journalism also benefits local media. Both the Bureau for Investigative Journalism and news website Tortoise sometimes work with local or regional titles to gain a better picture of what is happening across the UK.

Two years ago, The Bristol Cable joined a Bureau investigation into private tenants being evicted after an eviction ban, introduced due to Covid, ended. "It's a good way to amplify the story," explains Cable editor Matty Edwards. "Everybody publishes at the same time." More recently, the Cable teamed up with Tortoise to look into the death of a woman who fell from a tower block in Bristol.

A collaborative approach benefits all parties, adds Edwards, as the Cable raises its profile and national media draw upon the knowledge and expertise of local reporters.

For the Brand investigation, the involvement of Times and Dispatches journalists made it easier to corroborate what sources were saying, but also slowed things down. Print journalists had to appreciate what was needed for TV documentaries, says The Times' Morgan-Bentley.

Actors speaking on behalf of alleged victims cannot look or sound too similar to those making the claims, as it is assumed victims wish to remain anonymous. "You can't just focus on what you need for print," he says. "People should be happy to be in the documentary as well."

On the day of the Dispatches broadcast, all three titles went live on social media at the same time. The full story first appeared on The Times website that afternoon and in the print

edition of The Sunday Times the next day. One advantage for The Times was, having been part of the investigation for more than a year, it had follow-ups lined up for the next few days. At the same time, Dispatches recorded its largest ever audience.

For Morgan-Bentley, it was his first experience of collaboration. Even The Times and The Sunday Times tend to operate at arm's length. "I will be less against the idea in future," he says.

At Dispatches Jackson, meanwhile, notices a change in philosophy, with journalists more likely to work with other media, especially as budgets shrink. He says: "We all have a desire to break a story that changes the world, but that's more difficult if you don't have an open mind over collaboration."

Hyperlocal news on national stage

SINCE early August, 22 local and hyperlocal publications in Scotland have been sharing stories on a website with the aim of strengthening community-based media.

The Scottish Beacon flags up news in urban and rural areas, enabling it to reach an audience stretching from Shetland to Dumfries and Galloway.

Stories typically cover community empowerment, social equality, local democracy and the environment. Common themes include health and cash-starved schools.

Julian Calvert, editor of Lochside Press, says stories run by the Beacon have local angles but a wider appeal.

With a membership scheme under way and advertising and sponsorship planned, publications stand to gain financially. "It drives traffic and helps raise our profile," he says.

Calvert, a journalism lecturer, produces Lochside Press with his wife, a freelance. It also runs stories

by a local democracy reporter. The Beacon, he adds, helps journalists share ideas and address isolation from working alone or in small teams: "Having a peer group to talk to can be a big help."

Plans include collaborative investigations between different titles and joint training run by Rhiannon Davies, founder of the Beacon project and editor of community magazine Greater Govanhill. "I truly believe the future of journalism is collaborative," she says.

The survival of some titles may depend on joint working, so journalists will have to set aside their more competitive instincts. Calvert adds: "You always hope to scoop somebody else but we need to make sure the industry is financially stable."



Press gang on th

Journalists have not always been well served by their fictional representation on the small screen, suggests **Paul Fisher Cockburn**

When the BBC's television service restarted after the second world war, most of its drama was based on past and current live theatre and presented as such. It wasn't until 1953 that one of the BBC's then two staff writers, talented Manx-born author Nigel Kneale, was given an unexpected opportunity to write what he wanted. The Quatermass Experiment is now best remembered for being the ancestor cell of television science fiction, but its influence was wide and it provided an early example of a journalist in a television drama.

Newspaper reporter James Fullalove is by no means a deeply layered character; in terms of the plot, he's at best a supporting player, an annoyance to the leads thanks to his somewhat cynical curiosity, inconvenient questioning and inopportune door-stepping. Fullalove – a somewhat ironic choice of surname, but then Kneale's portrayals of journalists were seldom positive – was played by Welsh character actor Paul Whitsun-Jones. Whitsun-Jones, a familiar face for much of the 1960s and 1970s, made a career of playing authority figures – sometimes comically pompous, other times as threatening as the ugliest Hogarth sketch. Fullalove was arguably far more memorable than he should have been, and the character appeared in Kneale's Quatermass and the Pit (1958-59), albeit played by the more matinee-idol styled Brian Worth.

Over the next 70 years, British TV drama depicted journalists in a variety of lights from intrepid, uncompromising truth-seekers – champions of justice and accountability – to conflicted, flawed individuals navigating the complex world of news media as well as the duplicitous depths of the political, judicial and business worlds in which they sometimes operated.

One of the earliest TV dramas to focus on journalism – in particular, the newsroom – was Deadline Midnight, which aired across much of the ITV network from 1960 to 1961. It focused on a London-based newspaper reporter, highlighting the relentless pursuit of stories, often at the expense of personal lives and ethical considerations. While the series celebrated journalists' dedication, it also suggested the challenges in maintaining a moral compass in the cut-throat world of front-page scoops.

There's one curiosity about Deadline Midnight: actress Armine Sandford, who in real life had, back in 1957, become the first ever female television newsreader (at BBC West),

played journalist Jane Smith. A decade later, another fictional journalist called Sarah Jane Smith would become the new travelling companion of Jon Pertwee's (and later Tom Baker's) Doctor Who. Coincidence? (Almost certainly.)

The most tense and engaging dramas are often located in confined spaces, and the traditional newspaper newsroom certainly fits the bill, regardless of the people involved. Press Gang (1989-93) may have focused on the activities of a group of teenagers from a comprehensive who worked on a children's newspaper, but its writer – future Doctor Who and Sherlock showrunner Steven Moffat – ensured its focus was as much on the characters' relationships as the subjects. The Junior Gazette's coverage ranged from solvent misuse to child abuse to firearms control. The series worked around the limited time its main characters could realistically remain at school, with later episodes showing the paper run independently as a fully commercial concern, with all the stresses that brought.

As even Press Gang showed, journalists are ideal characters

Tardis and tabloids

IN ITS 60 years and numerous cross-media incarnations, science fiction favourite Doctor Who has featured journalists and journalism only occasionally – but they have certainly had their moments.

In The War Machines (1966), real-world BBC newscaster Kenneth Kendall provided verisimilitude to robotic mini-tanks trundling amok in London by warning viewers to stay indoors and await further instructions.

However, if Kendall was considered the epitome of a trusted journalist, Jon Rollason's reporter Harold Chorley, in The Web of Fear (1968), was demonised for his "reputation for distorting the truth. You take reality

and you make it into a comic strip." Avoided by most other characters, he was dismissed as 'a sensationalist, though how anyone could have further sensationalised' robot Yeti stomping around the London Underground was never explained.

In The Time Warrior (1973-74), a journalist stepped aboard the Tardis. Elisabeth Sladen was never keen on her companion Sarah

Jane Smith's job description of journalist, seeing it as meaning someone more independent and questioning of the Doctor than her predecessors.

Smith remained a journalist in her spin-off show, The Sarah Jane Adventures (2007-11) and it would be a brave grown-up who dared tell younger viewers that writing about aliens couldn't be a realistic basis for a journalistic career.

The power of the news was satirised in The Long Game (2005), in which the Doctor discovered alien forces had been using Earth's main news provider to manipulate the human race. The Doctor's solution, apart from blowing up the monster, was to remind the journalists of their principle role: 'to ask questions'.



the box

to hook any drama on because, like police detectives, they're expected to mix with all kinds of people in all levels of society. Certainly, by the late 1990s, the focus of much British TV journalistic drama had turned towards the investigation of complex mysteries, political conspiracies and dark secrets.

One such example of this was Paul Abbott's *State of Play* (2003), which followed a national newspaper's investigation into the murder of a young drug dealer and how it connected with the apparently accidental death of a political researcher. While the heart of the drama was the complicated relationship between the lead journalist (played by John Simm) and his old friend (played by David Morrissey) – the latter now an 'on the up' MP and the researcher's former employer – the six-episode series showcased the determination and bravery of a team of journalists (regular cast members included Kelly Macdonald and Bill Nighy) and highlighted ethical questions around pursuing stories that could undermine the government and society.

There is, of course, potential dramatic gold in the tension between any journalist's professional obligations and their personal values. However, as Mike Bartlett's *Press* (2018) proved, it's not a guarantee of fantastic television. The series, which focused on the lives of reporters at two rival British papers, was heavily criticised – at least by journalists – for being '20 years out of date' and 'less realistic than *Star Trek*'.

At best, such portrayals show journalists as human beings, rather than infallible heroes. Whether it encourages viewers to think about journalistic issues – sensationalism, privacy, scandalous stories and balancing the pursuit of truth with commercial realities – is a different matter.

Some British TV dramas have positioned journalism as a catalyst for social and political change. *The Thick of It* (2005-12) isn't solely about journalism but, in its portrayal of the struggles between politicians, party spin doctors, advisers, civil servants and the media, it certainly emphasised the role of journalists – as both ally and foe of the political establishment – in shaping public opinion and influencing political decisions.

What distinguished *The Hour* (2011-12) from other recent journalism-related dramas was its nature as a period piece; it was set in the early days of the BBC's current affairs department in 1956, so touched as much on the mechanics of early television reporting as on personal conflicts and aspirations – plus the political pressure coming from the UK government around their coverage of the Suez Crisis. While the series came with a certain *Mad Men* vibe, it was significant in underscoring



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The Thick of It

the often under-valued and unrecognised role of the small number of women in journalism from its earliest days. More contemporary dramas – even *Press* – have occasionally reflected on some of the challenges female journalists still face.

That said, even positive portrayals of journalists as truth-seekers and defenders of democracy don't appear to have contributed much to the public perception of journalism as a career, with journalists ranking just above politicians in surveys of trusted professions. Perhaps it's the company they keep?

by **Mark Fisher**

arts

Books >

A Dirty, Filthy Book

Michael Meyer

February 8

WH Allen

With the subtitle 'Sex, Scandal, and One Woman's Fight in the Victorian Trial of the Century', Meyer's book tells the story of Annie Besant who, in 1877, went on trial for the publication of a birth-control pamphlet – and defended herself in court.

<https://tinyurl.com/ym4vj9qc>

King: the Life of Martin Luther King

Jonathan Eig

December 21

Simon and Schuster

The former senior special reporter for the Wall Street Journal takes recently declassified FBI files into account in his biography of the civil rights activist. He looks at the private man as well as the politics of racial and economic justice.

<https://tinyurl.com/yuldfte>

Exhibitions

Trish Morrissey: Autofictions

Photo Museum Ireland, Dublin

Until February 10

Overlooked stories of women come to the fore in this 20-year round-up of the Irish artist's photography and film

that blurs the line between fact and fiction. Much of it is being seen for the first time in Ireland.

<https://tinyurl.com/yvofzqy8>

Outi Pieski



Tate St Ives

February 10-May 6

The Sámi artist mounts her first large-scale UK exhibition. Using traditional craft techniques, she asks questions about ancestral return, indigenous rights and our relationship with nature.

<https://tinyurl.com/ytq3sfbf>

Festivals

Celtic Connections

Glasgow

January 18–February 4

The definition of Celtic music is wide

enough to allow everything from electronica to indie, with Scottish folk favourites Aly Bain, Phil Cunningham and Donald Shaw joining US singer-songwriter Carlene Carter, bluegrass musician Lindsay Lou and Gaelic singer Kim Carnie.

www.celticconnections.com

Films

One Life

In cinemas

January 5

Anthony Hopkins stars as the elderly Sir Nicholas Winton looking back on his role in the rescue of 669 children from the Nazis in the run-up to the Second World War. Johnny Flynn plays his younger self in James Hawes's movie.

<https://tinyurl.com/yrl8v8ws>



Scala!!!

In cinemas

January 5

Documentary tribute to London's Scala cinema, famed for its off-beat programme that seemed to be a statement of defiance in the Thatcher years. Stewart Lee, Cathi Unsworth and John Waters are among the talking heads in the film by Jane Giles and Ali Catterall.

www.scalaclubcinema.com

The End We Start From

In cinemas

January 19

Adaptation of Megan Hunter's novel about a London submerged in water after an environmental crisis, starring Jodie Comer as a young mother trying to get back home. Mahalia Belo directs.

<https://tinyurl.com/ywpmgcr1>

Music

Pulp

Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh

December 31

Edinburgh's Hogmanay celebrates its 30th anniversary in the company of Jarvis Cocker et al bringing in the new year as headliners of the Concert in

In depth >

Horse play

How different things were when *Drop the Dead Donkey* first went on air.

The Channel 4 sitcom ran for eight years from 1990 – an era long before iPhones, Instagram and Twitter (let alone X). Even the whizziest newsroom relied on landlines and fax machines.

As a send-up of TV news, the sitcom was of its era – not least because the scripts would incorporate topical events to give a flavour of a real news operation.

Journalists of any era, however, would recognise the tensions at play. Set in the offices of the fictional Globelink News, the series by Andy Hamilton and Guy Jenkin imagined the struggles between the reporters trying to do an

honourable job and their owner, Sir Roysten Merchant, whose business interests rarely aligned with candid journalism.

The show ran for six seasons and was one of the most acclaimed sitcoms of the decade.

Now, in a very different media environment, it is back. Members of the original ensemble, including Stephen Tompkinson, Neil Pearson and Susannah Doyle, are

taking to the stage in *Drop the Dead Donkey: the Reawakening*.

In a joint statement, writers Hamilton and Jenkin said they were relishing seeing how the 1990s characters would fare in a digital newsroom: "It's going to be hugely enjoyable to watch those seven funny, flawed characters from Globelink News being plunged into the cut-throat world of modern 24-hour news, gathering and trying to navigate their way through the daily chaos of social media, fake

news and interim prime ministers."

Directed by Lindsay Posner, who cut his teeth at London's Royal Court Theatre, it also stars Robert Duncan, Ingrid Lacey, Jeff Rawle and Victoria Wicks from the original team.

It remains to be seen how much the show will keep abreast of news events on its six-month tour.

Nonetheless, as Hamilton and Jenkin went out of their way to keep the sitcom up to date, leaving holes in the script to be filled in at the last minute, it would be consistent of them to do the same in a world of rolling news.

Drop the Dead Donkey: the Reawakening

Touring

January 30–June 22

<https://dropdead-donkey.co.uk/>



the Gardens. Elsewhere, 40,000 revellers will be on the streets.
www.edinburghshogmanay.com/

Theatre Hammam

Abbey Theatre, Dublin
December 20–January 6

The brilliant ANU Productions recreates the destroyed buildings of O'Connell Street and the final moments of the battle of Dublin as it marks the centenary of the Irish civil war. Louise Lowe writes and directs.
<https://tinyurl.com/yp5jl5lr>



Pandemonium Soho Theatre, London Until January 6

Armando Iannucci offers a seasonal alternative – although no less of a

pantomime – as he recalls the attempts by Johnson, Truss and Sunak to deal with the pandemic. Patrick Marber directs.
<https://tinyurl.com/ysc9bcor>

This Might Not Be It Bush Theatre, London January 30–March 2

Sophia Chetin-Leuner's play paints a picture of an NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service office at breaking point. Staff bend the rules just to keep things going, professional boundaries are crossed and trust is shattered.
<https://tinyurl.com/yqxf3e6>

Animal Farm On tour February 1–April 13

George Orwell's parable about totalitarianism opens at Bolton's Octagon Theatre before touring to Derby and Hull. Adapted by Ian Wooldridge, it reminds us that some animals are more equal than others as one tyranny is replaced with another.
<https://tinyurl.com/yqo4jmgc>

Spotlight >

Man of the match

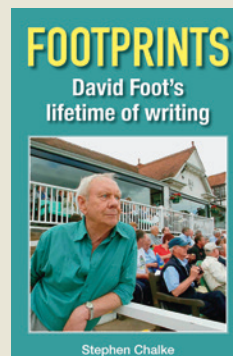
NUJ member David Foot was a journalist for over 65 years, which makes it all the more fitting that the best of his writing has been posthumously anthologised.

Wittily called *Footprints*, the book draws on a lifetime's output by the West Country writer, whose interests ranged from cricket, football and boxing to theatre, local history and murder.

The 384-page collection was put together by Stephen Clarke, an award-winning cricket writer, who published Foot's

last four books. Clarke had access to Foot's papers, thanks to the writer's family, including his son Mark, who wrote the preface.

With 70 illustrations, the book traces Foot's life from rural Somerset, where he grew up without



electricity or running water, to national newspaper contributor. He was a cricket writer for *The Guardian*, a drama critic for the *Bristol Evening World* and a columnist for the *Western Daily Press*.

His range extended from articles about cricketer Viv Richards to rugby player Carwyn James, actor Peter O'Toole, prime minister Harold Macmillan and poet Siegfried Sassoon. He wrote a biography of batsman Harold Gimblett as well as *Country Life*, a memoir of his early reporting career.

Footprints
David Foot
Charlcombe Books
<https://tinyurl.com/ynbyglb8>

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As the politics and meanings of words shift, **Wynford Hicks** has some advice

Towards politically correct speech...

The term ‘political correctness’ is often used by linguistic conservatives to rubbish attempts by radicals to sanitise language.

But it didn’t start out that way. It was originally an ironic expression used by the American new left in the 1960s and 1970s as in: “We could stop at McDonald’s if you’re hungry but it wouldn’t be politically correct.” This example is quoted by academic linguist Deborah Cameron in her book *Verbal Hygiene*; she emphasises that the expression was understood by insiders as a joke at their own expense.

Another term that has shifted in meaning is gender, which for most English speakers has lost its association with grammar and become a polite synonym for sex.

As Cameron says: “You hear people inquiring about the gender of animals.” But she emphasises that for feminists, “gender was a technical term which took its meaning from a contrast with sex”. The distinction was between the biological (sex) and the social (gender), which was related to the feminist claim that many traditional differences between men and women were social rather than biological in origin.

Now it has become an important aspect of the discussion/debate/conflict over transgenderism: a transgender (trans) person is defined as someone whose self-chosen gender identity or expression does not correspond with their birth sex.

Feminism is responsible for numerous attempts to sanitise the

language, such as avoiding male pronouns in stories where both sexes/genders are involved. This can lead to clumsy sentences such as ‘If somebody calls, ask him or her to wait’. But, as distinguished lexicographer Robert Burchfield has pointed out: “Over the centuries, writers of standing have used they, their and them with reference to a singular pronoun or noun.”

Some people have rejected the commonsense solution of using they, preferring the he or she formula or, even worse, insisting on writing ‘she’ regardless of the context.

Writer Lionel Shriver once lambasted James Rickards, who did precisely this in what she called his ‘otherwise excellent’ book *Currency Wars*. She noted the she pronoun was used constantly in a context where not a single person was female. As she put it, “the writer’s grammatical brown-nosing backfires. It serves only to highlight the fact that, despite... trendy style guidelines, his professional world is overwhelmingly male.”

They’ is also a convenient and appropriate pronoun for people who are transgender and, as a word already in everyday use, it is preferable to made-up words that can only stop the reader mid-sentence with a jerk. So, unless it’s your intention to disconcert, the best advice is to stick with they whenever he or she is problematic.

But, in the reflexive form, should they become themselves or herself?



One issue that keeps cropping up in newsrooms is consistency: if Black then why not White?

In the plural (as in the feminist anthem sung by Aretha Franklin and Annie Lennox, *Sisters Are Doin’ It For Themselves*), the traditional form is obviously preferable. But in the singular use of they (as in the case of the transgender demonstrator at Kathleen Stock’s talk on gender identity in the Oxford Union), themself helps to make the meaning clear.

Should black now be Black, as is widespread in the US in the wake of the 2020 killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police and the Black Lives Matter protest movement? In Britain, liberal publications such as *The Guardian* and the *London Review of Books* have followed suit but not, as yet, most of the mainstream media.

One issue that keeps cropping up in newsrooms is consistency: if Black then why not White? Most American media outlets have decided for Black and against White but two exceptions are the National Association of Black Journalists (‘Whenever a color is used to appropriately describe race, then it should be capitalized, such as Black community, Brown community, White community’) and the *Chicago Manual of Style*: ‘We now prefer to write Black with a capital B when it refers to racial and ethnic identity... as a matter of editorial consistency, White and similar terms may also be capitalized.’

These are edited extracts from the fifth (30th anniversary) edition of *English for Journalists* by Wynford Hicks, published by Routledge, 2023





Your Say...

inviting letters, comments, tweets



Please keep comments to 350 words maximum

Email to: journalist@nuj.org.uk
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 Tweet to: @mschrisbuckley

£50 prize letter

DENIS CARRIER



Kill fee: getting away with murder on pay

As a freelance journalist, I was looking forward to watching *Obituary*, a new dark comedy from RTÉ, and enjoying seeing the life of a freelance on screen.

The story follows Elvira Clancy, a struggling writer who compiles the obituary column for a local newspaper. She decides to supplement her income after her editor jokes that she should “start killing people” when she complains about being paid just €200 per item.

Unfortunately, I was unable to suspend disbelief, not at this outrageous premise but at the idea that a freelance writer would receive as much as €200 for an obituary. As my colleagues can tell you, in real life a freelance gets paid a fraction of that. Many would have to die at the journalist’s hands to pay the average mortgage.

There is a serious point here. Beneath the comedy, the series does demonstrate the effects of continuing hollowing out of local and national newsrooms. In the US, some regions are now known as ‘news deserts’, because of the lack of reliable local reporting.

There have been some pieces of good news, such as the promised local democracy and local court reporting grants proposed by Coimisiún na Meán but, while the Coimisiún part funded *Obituary*, the promised local reporting funds seem to be mired in administrative red tape.

Gerard Cunningham
Kildare

Beware surveys that snaffle data and tell tales

We were urged by Imke Henkel in the last edition to take part in a survey she is running (*Professional snapshot*, October/November).

As a specialist in things digital, she must know that you should never, ever, respond to ‘surveys of customer satisfaction’ and other online surveys.

If you do, you will immediately be tagged by the algorithms as a fool giving away information for free and, every time you open your computer, you will be invited to take part in another survey.

This happens whether you tick the no-cookies box or not.

There is another reason why you should never express yourself in surveys.

Back in the day of industrial tribunals (remember them?), I covered a case where a clerk dared suggest, in a totally anonymous workplace survey then in management fashion, that the line managers were little Hitlers.

In one case, the survey, on paper, was collected in a big box, carted to human resources and the line manager called in five minutes later.

She came storming down in less than a minute, hauled a miscreant from his

chair to the semi-private office and told him if he was not happy at work he could leave and, if he did not, she would fire him, making sure he did not get a reference.

He left the company and later won an unfair dismissal claim, with the judge saying there was no point in having surveys unless they were acted on.

Brian McCulloch
Barbezieux, France

Scrapping old terms does not erase history

As an NUJ lifer, I’d just like to say that I am intensely relaxed about what the

union’s workplace reps choose to call themselves.

The circumstances may be very different, but some of the reaction to the NUJ’s dropping of the mother/father of chapel title reminds me of when my old school changed its name to remove reference to a slave trader. Many ex-pupils felt their history had been erased – but it hadn’t.

The old history is still there; it’s just that now we’re making new history to add to it. As Joe Strummer said, the future is unwritten.

Tony Harcup
Leeds



Dan Stanton

It's April 6 1990 and young reporter Dan Stanton delivers an almighty scoop to the Birmingham Evening Mail – the first ever newspaper interview with the six men who claimed they were innocent of the terrible bombing that killed 21 people in the city in 1974.

It was a brave newspaper man in that city who wanted to bring those voices to its citizens – still seething over the horror. Typically, Dan credited his editor with the courage to run it.

A year later, the six men were released.

That story was Dan's introduction to the complexity of Ireland – and the tangled relationship between the two islands.

Not much later in London, Dan fell into company with Eithne, a young Irish barrister, and found the courage to invite her out on a date.

But the date didn't happen. He had to cancel. He rang and apologised that he'd got a tip that a story had broken in Oxford, and he had to go.

The date was just postponed. And, in May 1997, Dan and Eithne were married in Rathmullan, County Donegal.

By 2005, they were living in Belfast. Dan had joined the Irish News as news editor before moving to the BBC where he would work until the end.

Colleagues at the BBC knew Dan as a committed truth teller, someone who, when sent out to do a report, always came back with every aspect covered. The BBC, its founding values, and principles, mattered to Dan.

He will always be remembered for his joyous presence in the newsroom, his huge smile, his infectious laughter, and for his commitment to our job.

Many will remember Dan at the picket line, and in meetings, campaigning to save jobs, to maintain services and to honour obligations to the public.

Talking in recent days about Dan, people were searching for a distilled description.

Someone said: "There was a lovely innocence about him," while another spoke of his "beautiful wide-eyed way of looking at the world." One person said something that everyone will agree on: Dan Stanton was the very opposite of the cynic. He was a believer.

He wasn't a boastful man – but he was full of pride about his daughter Alice. You couldn't stop him speaking about her and all the love she brought into his life. It was his greatness sadness to know that he was leaving her.

And Dan loved life. When he was diagnosed three years ago, he knew how things would ultimately conclude. Although he knew he was living on borrowed time, that wasn't going to stop him fighting nor was it going to stop him making the most of whatever time he had left.

He walked the Black Mountain, he holidayed in the sun, he sank more than a few pints with his mates and he even managed to get Covid when led astray at an 80th birthday party.

I always joked that he was everyone's favourite Englishman, which he knew was much more than a backhanded compliment – Dan was one of us.

Darragh Macintyre



Rónán Mac Aodha Bhuí

Rónán gathered a devoted following as a highly original broadcaster in the Irish language. He brought energy and infectious enthusiasm to his programme Rónán Beo@3 (Ronán Live @3). This was broadcast on Irish-language station Raidió na Gaeltachta.

He had felt 'a bit of madness' was needed for the programme, which encouraged new bands and performers.

He worked so hard at his craft as to seem to broadcast effortlessly. That was also due to his being an excellent journalist.

From an early stage, he had developed the ability to find a story, then pin it down. He was a skilled interviewer, able to tackle sensitive subjects.

His career began during a time of broadcasting censorship in Ireland. He found creative ways to circumvent this.

While he had worked in television, his heart lay in radio. As a broadcaster, he always sought to serve his local community. He had an interest in people and the world around him as well as a commitment to justice.

He had a particular commitment to Irish culture. For many years, he organised the monthly Cabaret Cracked in a bar in Gweedore. This assembled musicians of all sorts, comedians and assorted performers.

Rónán's anarchic and irreverent sense of humour enabled this. He could throw the liveliest party in a drab hotel lobby in the middle of the day. A comedian once went to Donegal to meet him and reported how, at 3am in a Gweedore bar, Rónán swore him into the 'Surreal IRA'.

A sign of his popularity was that a crowdfunding appeal raised over €175,000 (£152,000) to fund his medical treatment. Musicians in several parts of Ireland as well as New York performed gigs to raise funds. Unfortunately, a cure was not possible.

Rónán was born in Cork City in May 1970, the youngest of nine children to Fionntán Mac Aodha Bhui and his wife Eibhlín (nee Ní Dhrisceoil). His father was an architect. His mother had worked for the Irish postal service but was forced to leave on marriage. His parents had met through their enthusiasm for the Irish language. Both also always opposed injustice and strongly stood up for their beliefs. His father took early retirement to do development work in Africa. His mother was a famed baker and cook, and Rónán picked up those skills.

When Rónán was a baby, the family moved to Gweedore in the north-west corner of Ireland. At 17, he moved to Dublin to study journalism. He combined study with work for a couple of pirate radio stations.

His studies over, he began working for RTÉ television. He was one of a group aiming to make Irish-language TV for young people that was as entertaining as the English-language programmes being broadcast. He also spent time working in commercial radio and wrote columns for daily and weekly newspapers.

After a year travelling in his mid-20s, he returned to Gweedore and joined Raidió na Gaeltachta. Over the years, his ability was recognised. He received the Celtic Media Award as Radio Broadcaster of the year as well as three awards for Irish language broadcaster of the year.

He gave of himself, particularly to help campaigners for Irish language rights in Northern Ireland.

He is survived by his wife Bernie, daughter Fionnuala, three sisters and four brothers. He was predeceased by his sister Edel.

Anton McCabe



Patrick Joseph Kelly

Patrick Kelly, who has died of cancer aged 68, was a lifelong, active member of the NUJ, a press officer, journalist and author who wrote for many publications, including *The Guardian*, the *Evening Standard* and *The Irish Times*. He also co-founded and co-edited *Arts Industry*, a monthly magazine for those working in the cultural industries.

Born in Belfast, Patrick was one of six children of Laurence, an office manager for a trade publisher, and Kathleen (nee Carey), a waitress. After graduating in history and politics at Warwick University, he joined the *Hillingdon Mirror*, an NUJ stronghold, where he was active

in the union in local and national disputes. He was a committed supporter of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. Journalist Lesley Cramp, who worked with him at the *Hillingdon Mirror*, recalls: "Patrick had an extraordinary gift for enduring friendship, collecting good friends wherever he worked or lived. He knew an astonishing number of people who are missing him today."

In 1982, he joined the Greater London Council (GLC) as a press officer, writing articles on behalf of Ken Livingstone. He worked alongside John McDonnell, later shadow chancellor of the exchequer, who said: "There was never a time when he didn't show his kindness and gentle caring nature and, of course, his sense of humour."

"Extraordinarily, we always agreed on everything and parted with a joke and a smile. Above all else – and this might seem unimportant but in politics it is crucial and very rare – he was someone who I always absolutely trusted not just for his support but, more importantly, for his judgement and for his humanity." Kelly left the GLC before its abolition to join the press office of the new Association of London Authorities.

In 1987, he went to live in Barcelona working as a stringer for *The Guardian* and other newspapers, returning to London in 1991 and

moving in with Julia Unwin, a social policy consultant, and freelancing for *The Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Independent*, *The Irish Times*, *The Times*, *Evening Standard* and *The New Statesman*. He set up in-house publications for Tower Hamlets and Camden councils in London.

Around that time, Patrick became involved in local politics. He was elected to Southwark Council in 1998 and chaired the education committee.

He and Julia married in 2006 and, the next year, when she became chief executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, they moved with their daughters, Annie and Rachel, to York. There, Patrick chaired York Labour Party for a time and supported York City football club. He continued to co-edit *Arts Industry* and freelanced for other publications.

In 2014, he undertook a creative writing MA at Limerick University in Ireland then wrote a novel, *A Hard Place*, set in the Belfast of his youth. He was diagnosed with cancer in 2019 and became gravely ill late last year, a few days after the book was published.

He is survived by Julia, Annie and Rachel.

Simon Tait

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Labour Research Department



and finally...

Slipped up? Here's an easy way to backtrack



Don't apologise – use this handy verbal delete key, says **Chris Proctor**

Why not wander up to your editor and tell her, “I can't help but think you're a desperately tedious narcissist who's not worth a carrot”? She may deny it, offer evidence to the contrary – or just sack you.

Think you're in trouble? Not a bit of it! All you need to say is, “Oh, in that case, I 'misspoke.” Doubtless, the editor will reply, “Oh, in that case, let's forget it. Can I fetch you a coffee?”

That's how it works.

'Misspoke' has become the verbal equivalent of a keyboard's delete button. It obliterates all the hogwash that previously came out of your mouth. Consigns it to cosmic space.

Boris Johnson, of course, was a master of misspeak to the extent it was difficult to establish when he was talking properly – or mis-misspeaking as he'd call it.

At PMQs, he once accused Labour of voting against an NHS pay deal. Jonathan Ashworth complained to the speaker. Boris said he'd misspoken, and the matter was put to bed without discussion. Later, he put out a text saying he'd misspoken about the rules governing people meeting socially indoors during the pandemic. To be fair, he's never been clear about them.

Hilary Clinton tried to clarify misspeaking after a visit to Bosnia when she declared she had arrived in the county in a hail of bullets. It then emerged that she'd hopped smiling off a plane to be greeted by an angelic local reading a poem in rural tranquillity. Clinton explained: “I say a lot of things – millions of words a day – so if I misspoke it was just a misstatement.” Well, that's OK, then.

In fact, clarifications of misspeaking make the whole thing more muddled.

Take the Labour party press office's attempt to swat aside a filmed and widely downloaded interview in which the leader had said something he regretted about the Middle East. Had Sir Keir misspoken? A spokesperson cleared it up: “It was one of those things where there were overlapping questions and answers based on what had been being said before.”

Right. I should have realised.

Yet I am still uncomfortable that Diane Abbott got away with a 'misspoke' when she declared that 10,000 additional police officers would cost £300,000. Afterward she revised this figure to £80m before Jeremy Corbyn raised the stakes to £300m. Did she not, in fact, get it wrong? Is that what misspeaking actually means?

The word entered our lexicon in that creeping fashion that phrases do. It's been around since Shakespeare's time, but not quite in the disinfecting way it is now. It used to mean clumsy talking. Now it has become a tactic to change your mind, concede a lie you've repeated or admit to a blunder without apologising.

It would have been invaluable at school.

“Six sixes?”

“42.”

“Wrong. Stand in the corner.”

“Nope. It was merely a case of misspeaking.”

“Sorry for the confusion. Gold star.”

Just adding 'mis' in front of a word really doesn't mean it's fine. If I arrive home explaining I am in this condition because I mis-drank a shedload of stout, the atmosphere does not improve. So why is it OK for politicians?

It hardly needs saying that Trump does misspeak better than most. Quizzed about foreign interference in US elections, he said: “I don't see any reason why it would be Russia.” The following day, he conceded that he had actually meant: “I don't see any reason why it wouldn't be Russia.” But then he managed to get grumpy about it. “I thought that I made myself very clear,” he said, as if it were our fault. It's as if we should anticipate and correct things he says, rather than listen. To be honest, that is probably a better strategy.

Technology is the problem. Until fairly recently, you could simply claim you hadn't said something you regretted the next morning. Now, everywhere you go, someone's filming you. Damned evidence. All you can do is invent a device for un-saying something: the solution is 'misspeaking'.

Anyone can stumble over words when writing. Spellcheck can be an unreliable friend. So sometimes I see misspeaking as a typo that comes out of the mouth, like when Cliff Richards spoke about AI and called it artificial insemination. No problem. That's just his vocal cords keying in IUI instead of AI.

In some areas, misspeaking becomes a form of insider code. In business, when a board declares it has complete confidence in its CEO, the City scribblers start writing the 'boss gone' story. When a football manager is given a vote of confidence, sports reporters know the taxi's on its way. We all know “no comment” means “I've got something to hide”. But this is OK. This is message signalling, not misspeaking.

But it takes on a different flavour when it's used to mean “I screwed up and don't want to admit it”, “I've changed my mind” or “The cat ate my brief.”

“Until fairly recently, you could simply claim you hadn't said something. Now, everywhere you go, someone's filming you”

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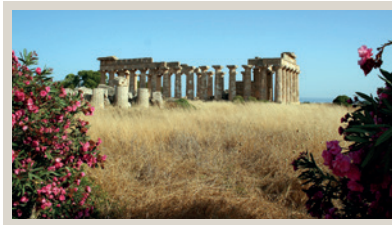
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