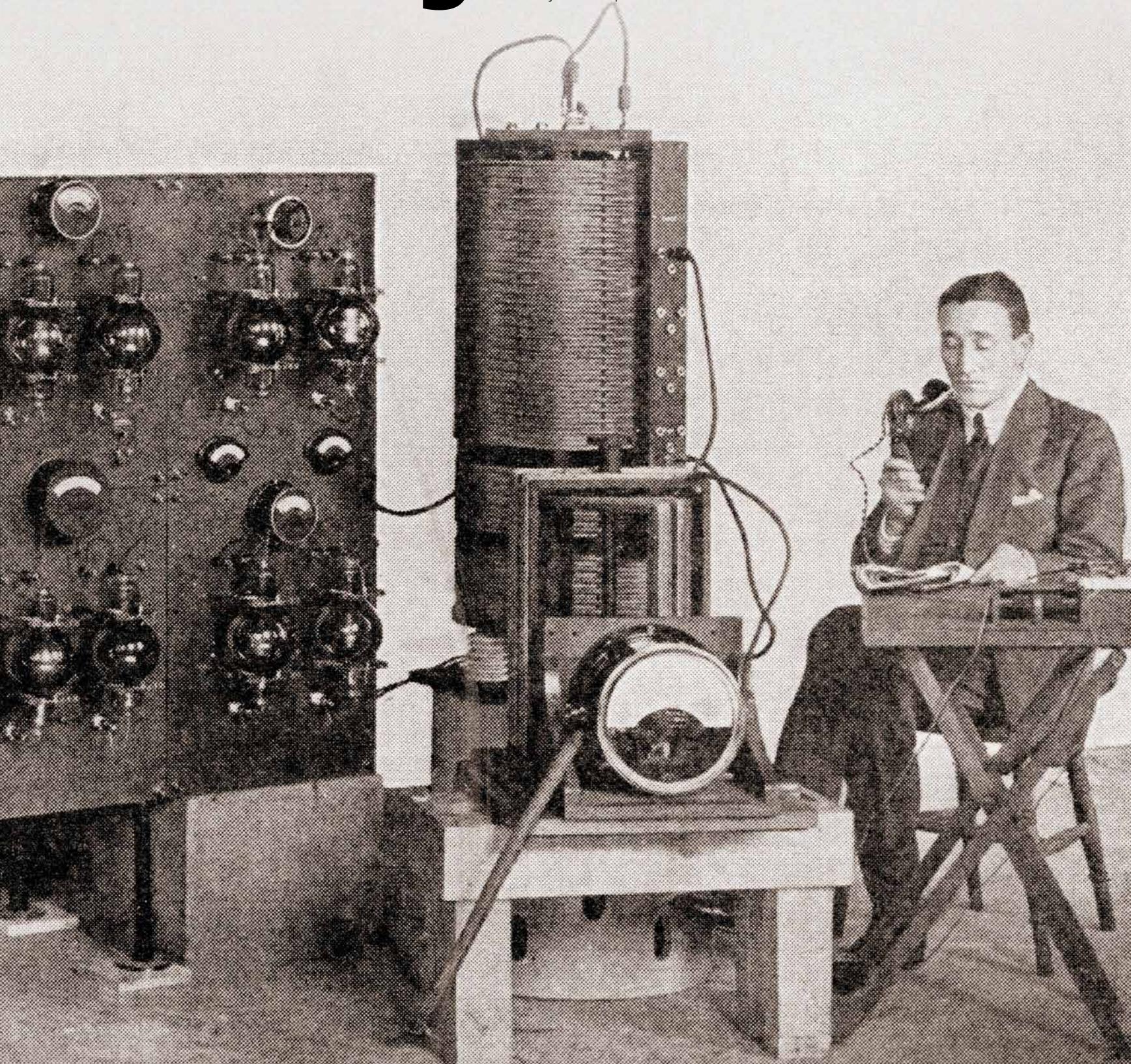


# the Journalist

WWW.NUJ.ORG.UK | FEBRUARY-MARCH 2020



## 'Good evening from a hut near Chelmsford'

Modest beginnings for British broadcasting

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**T**he media is changing so fast that few jobs stay the same and unfortunately journalists cannot always rely on the work they know best continuing throughout their careers. Diversifying is a way of protecting yourself against a changing landscape and we have two features on that subject.

Neil Merrick speaks to journalists who made positive starts after being made redundant or leaving local newspapers by setting up their own local news websites. And Ruth Addicott finds out what it takes to succeed in media training, a pursuit which can be a lucrative and useful sideline.

As news and journalism rapidly reshapes, it's also interesting to look back at much earlier innovations in the media. Jonathan Sale traces the very early beginnings of radio which began in a small hut near Chelmsford.

Meanwhile there has been a key victory in the NUJ's long-running campaign on equal pay at the BBC with the ruling by an employment tribunal that Samira Ahmed should receive pay parity with Jeremy Vine. Nicola Slawson looks at the background to the case which will have implications for many other journalists.

I hope you find something of interest in this edition of The Journalist.

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# BBC plans major cuts to news coverage and to axe 450 jobs

**THE NUJ** has warned of an 'existential threat' to the BBC after the corporation said it planned to cut 450 jobs in its news operation. It will also cover fewer stories in a drive to save £80 million by 2022.

The award-winning Victoria Derbyshire (pictured) programme is being closed and Newsnight, Radio 5 Live and the World Service's English-language output face substantial cuts.

More journalists will be pooled in centralised news teams rather than working for specific programmes and there will be more emphasis on online output. At Newsnight, 12 jobs will go, its in-depth films will be halved and spending on investigative journalism reduced.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "These damaging cuts are part of an existential threat to the BBC, and a direct consequence of the last disastrous, secret licence fee deal the BBC agreed with the government. This is before the impact of taking over responsibility for the over-75s licences kicks in.

"Against this backdrop, the BBC's very existence is being threatened, with public service broadcasting under unprecedented threat. If the government goes ahead and

PATRICK NAIRNE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



decriminalises non-payment of the licence fee, we know the impact will be further losses for the BBC of around £200 million a year."

Fran Unsworth, BBC head of news, told staff: "Producing fewer stories means we have to be a smaller organisation." She said the BBC was under attack from changing media habits, accusations of bias and threats to its funding.

"Never in my career have I felt this organisation is quite under the threat that it is currently. Many believe that how we are funded is no longer appropriate when consumers seem to prefer to pay for just what they use."

She said decriminalisation of non-payment of the licence fee could trigger further cuts.

**Raymond Snoddy, page 19**



**Never have I felt the BBC is quite under the threat that it is now. Many believe how we are funded is no longer appropriate when consumers seem to prefer to pay for just what they use**

*Fran Unsworth  
Head of News, BBC*

## inbrief...

### BBC BOSS GOES TO NATIONAL GALLERY

Tony Hall, director general of the BBC, is to leave in the summer after seven years in the role. He will become chair of the National Gallery. Sir David Clementi, BBC chairman, is searching for the next leader. The corporation faces a mid-term review in 2022 and the renewal of its charter in 2027.

### TUCKER TAKES REINS AT SUNDAY TIMES

The Sunday Times has appointed Emma Tucker as its first female editor in more than a century. She is deputy editor of the Times and replaces Martin Ivens, who is stepping down after seven years. Ivens has joined the board of Times Newspapers and will contribute as a commentator and broadcaster.

### GUARDIAN BANS OIL AND GAS ADVERTS

Guardian Media Group has banned all advertising from oil and gas companies across all its titles and platforms. It said the decision may make its short-term financial future 'a tiny bit tougher' but it hopes that the ban will attract some other brands to advertise.

### PRE-TAX PROFITS FALL AT DC THOMSON

Pre-tax profits at Scottish publisher DC Thomson fell by three-quarters last year from £86.4 million to £21.1 million. The group, which publishes the Press and Journal, reported advertising revenues were down by 5.6 per cent to £37.1 million for the year ending 31 March 2019.

### BUZZFEED FOUNDER GOES TO NY TIMES

Ben Smith, the founding editor-in-chief of BuzzFeed News, has left the website eight years after helping to launch its US newsroom. He has joined the New York Times as a media columnist and said he was "eager for a spell of writing and reporting and thinking".

JESS HURD



## Equal pay victory for Samira Ahmed

**NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN** the NUJ and the BBC over equal pay are continuing following the landmark employment tribunal win by the broadcaster Samira Ahmed.

Ahmed, who presents viewer feedback programme Newswatch, claimed she was owed almost £700,000 in back pay because of the difference between her £440-an-episode rate and the £3,000 an episode Jeremy Vine received for presenting Points of View.

The employment tribunal said the BBC failed to provide convincing evidence that the pay gap was for reasons other than sex discrimination.

Ahmed said: "No woman wants to have to take action against their own employer. I love working for the BBC. I'm glad it's been resolved.

"I'd like to thank my union the NUJ [and] all the women and men who've supported me and the issue of equal pay."

**The battle for pay parity, page 7**

## No institute but tax breaks for news

**THE GOVERNMENT** has ruled out creating an Institute for Public Interest News to help save the news industry. In its response to the recommendations from Cairncross review into the future of high-quality journalism, it said such a body could be seen

as government interference in a free press.

However, it said it was willing to consider extending some tax breaks, which could include removing the VAT charged on online news subscriptions to fall into line with printed newspapers.

The government agreed to a £1,500 discount on business rates for office space occupied by local newspapers in England, and it said it would make a £2 million grant to the Nesta charity to encourage innovation in the news industry.

# Competition watchdog looks into major magazine takeover

**ONE OF** the biggest takeovers in the British magazine publishing industry is being investigated by the Competition and Markets Authority, the competition watchdog.

In October, Bath-based publisher Future, whose many titles include Cycling News, Period Homes and PCGamer, said it planned to buy TI Media, which publishes Ideal Home, TV Times and Homes & Gardens among other titles, for £140 million.

The deal would add lifestyle, women's titles, new sports, home, technology and entertainment titles to Future's portfolio.

Future, which publishes T3 and Total Film among its 140-strong range of titles, said the takeover would give



it access to a much larger female readership.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched its merger inquiry in January, saying it was looking at whether the deal "may be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition".

The watchdog has until March 16 to decide whether

to begin a phase two investigation.

If it goes ahead with a second phase, it will gather more evidence to decide whether there is an "anti-competitive outcome" to the takeover.

If it decided there were anti-competitive issues, the CMA would then decide whether any action should

be taken to "mitigate or prevent the substantial lessening of competition".

Alternatively, the watchdog could clear the takeover in March if it decides there were no serious competition concerns.

Future said in October that it planned to complete the deal in the spring.

The takeover marks the latest stage in Future's expansion.

In 2018, it bought What Hi-Fi?, FourFourTwo, Practical Caravan and Practical Motorhome from Haymarket.

It also bought B2B publisher Newbay. That deal gave Future 49 B2B brands in the television, video, entertainment, technology and music sectors mostly in the US, as well as Music Week, Toy News and Bike Biz in the UK.



**The Competition and Markets Authority was looking at whether the deal 'may be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition'**

## Call for MPs to look into No 10 bans

**SIR KEIR STARMER**, who is running for leadership of the Labour Party, has asked for the Cabinet to examine No 10's decision to give briefings to only selected journalists.

His move follows a walkout by journalists in the lobby – political correspondents who attend government briefings – after some were excluded from a briefing.

TV political editors Laura Kuenssberg, Robert Peston and Beth Rigby as well as reporters from the Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, Sun, FT

and Guardian joined the walkout from a briefing on the prime minister's speech on a UK-EU trade deal.

Among those excluded were journalists from the Press Association, and the Mirror and i newspapers, as well as Huffpost UK and Politics Home.

No 10 has also caused concern by moving briefings from the House of Commons to Downing Street.

**Chris Proctor, page 22**



JESS HURD

## Journalists' death toll falls to its lowest for 20 years

**THE INTERNATIONAL** Federation of Journalists recorded 49 killings of journalists and media professionals last year. This is a significant drop

from the 95 deaths posted in 2018.

The death toll is the lowest since 2000, when 37 journalists and media staff were killed, but the causes of

the loss of life during 2019 remain largely the same.

Mexico tops the list of dangerous countries with 10 killings of journalists.

Targeted attacks claimed

the lives of five journalists in Afghanistan and four in Pakistan. Crossfire incidents and bomb attacks killed five journalists in Syria, three in Somalia and two in Yemen.

Haiti, Nigeria, the Philippines and Northern Ireland each saw the death of one journalist in violence from civil and political unrest.

# Compulsory cuts threat withdrawn after ballot

**THE THREAT** of compulsory redundancies at Newsquest's Scottish titles, including The Herald, The Herald on Sunday, the Glasgow Times, The National and The Sunday National, has been lifted following a large vote for industrial action.

Some 86.7 per cent of those voting in an NUJ ballot supported action over the plan to make compulsory redundancies if Newsquest could not save £500,000 by any other means.

Although eight members of staff left voluntarily, the company told the union that it would not seek further job cuts. Six new posts will be filled from external applications.

A well-attended NUJ chapel meeting voted unanimously to withdraw the threat of industrial action.

The union had also raised the issue of bullying, and it said that the company had dealt with this promptly.

John Toner, NUJ national organiser for Scotland, said: "Our members are heartened that their employer has listened and that no member of staff will be forced to leave. We are

also appreciative of the speed by which the bullying issue was resolved and of the company's assurance that bullying will not be tolerated. The relief among our members was palpable.

"Management has agreed to meet the union's reps regularly, and to have routine staff meetings to deal with the problems expressed through our recent stress survey. Any management restructure will throw up issues for our members, and we look forward to working more closely with Newsquest management to create an acceptable working environment."

The NUJ had conducted a stress survey during the weeks before the company's original announcement about potential compulsory redundancies. This found: 83 per cent of respondents believed the quality of their title had declined over the past year; 78 per cent said their workloads had increased in the past year; 57 per cent said they were put under pressure to produce work faster than they were comfortable with and just nine per cent said they had confidence in the organisation's management.



**Our members are heartened that their employer has listened and that no member of staff will be forced to leave**

**John Toner**  
*NUJ national organiser for Scotland*

## inbrief...

### TELEGRAPH PULLS OUT OF ABC AUDIT

The Telegraph Media Group has quit the ABC newspaper circulation audit, saying it is no longer a key metric for its subscriber strategy. The last figures showed the Daily Telegraph had an average circulation of 317,817 in December while the Sunday Telegraph had 248,288. Both had declined 12 per cent since December 2018.

### GUARDIAN CLOSURES CITIES SECTION

The Guardian has closed its Cities section after grant money funding it from the Rockefeller Foundation for more than six years came to an end. The section focused on urban environments and climate change and won the Features Journalism prize at Press Gazette's British Journalism Awards last year.

### NEWSQUEST OWNER GIVES OUT £140,000

Newsquest has donated more than £140,000 to 40 UK community groups, including news-related charities, through the charitable arm of its US owner. The Gannett Foundation gave £10,000 each to the Journalists' Charity and the National Council for the Training of Journalists' Diversity Fund.

### IAIN GRANT WINS BARRON TROPHY

Iain Grant, a reporter who has covered the north of Scotland as a freelance and previously editor of the Caithness Courier and John O'Groat Journal, received this year's Barron Trophy, which recognises lifetime achievement in journalism in the Highlands and Islands.

### NEW WEEKLY PAPER FOR SOUTH DEVON

Archant is to launch a weekly paper and website in South Devon after a suggestion from local news veterans that there was a demand from residents. The Torbay Weekly will be based in Torquay and is expected to have six dedicated editorial and commercial staff.

## Second bursary in honour of Lyra McKee

**THE CENTRE** for Investigative Journalism is offering a second Lyra McKee training bursary for people who want to attend its Investigative Journalism Conference on

25-27 June but cannot afford to do so.

The bursary is in honour of the murdered journalist and NUJ member, who showed huge determination to

become an investigative journalist despite personal disability and having to care for her disabled mother plus the added difficulty of trying to enter journalism from a

working class background. The bursary was launched last year and enabled 11 people to attend the conference.

<https://tcij.org>.

## Top dog or dogsbody at work?

**IS YOUR** job good or bad? Take part in a quiz compiled by Cardiff University and you will be able to see how your position compares to similar jobs and against the average job in Britain. The quiz does not require any identifiable information so the answers you give cannot be traced back to you. By completing the quiz, the anonymous data you provide will be collected and may be used in reports for the NUJ and GMB.

It should take only five minutes and you can exit the process at any point.

<https://tellmehowgoodismyjob.com/>



# Broadcasting watchdog declines to probe radio bans

**THE NUJ** is disappointed that the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) has decided not to investigate Communicorp's interference in the editorial independence of its radio stations. The decision was confirmed to Séamus Dooley, NUJ Irish secretary, by Michael O'Keeffe, the authority's chief executive. The NUJ had pressed for an investigation after Communicorp banned Newstalk, Today FM, 98FM, Spin 1038 and Spin South West from featuring journalists from The Irish Times and digital outlet the Currency. The ban on Currency journalists was later rescinded.

Dooley said: "It beggars belief that the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland would allow Communicorp off the hook after a clear admission the company banned certain journalists from being interviewed on stations owned by Communicorp. "The announcement by Communicorp that the ban had been lifted appears to have been accepted by the BAI as a welcome concession rather than what it was – an admission of interference by commercial management in who should appear on news programmes."

# RTÉ appeals over retirement ruling

**IRISH BROADCASTER** RTÉ is appealing against the Workplace Relations Commission's determination in favour of an NUJ member who had challenged enforced retirement on the grounds of age. Anne Roper, a producer director, was awarded €100,000 in compensation after RTÉ was found guilty of discrimination, contrary to section 79 of the Employment Equality Act. The NUJ had sought, through internal procedures, to have her employment extended by 18 months but the broadcaster insisted that she should retire at 65, even though her contract was silent on the issue of a retirement date. She subsequently took a case to the commission. Séamus Dooley, NUJ Irish secretary, said the comprehensive determination identified the need for clear criteria in relation to longer working and transparency around retirement: "The appeal adds stress to the individual and will delay the implementation of a consistent, coherent and transparent retirement policy in RTÉ predicated on the fairness."

## Roy hangs up council hat

**ROY JONES**, a founding member of the NUJ's 60+ council, has decided to stand down from the group after 10 years' service. Roy, a union veteran who lives in North Wales and is chair of the

North Wales NUJ branch, said he now had to consider safety in travelling to meetings. Before retirement, when working for the Morning Star, he was part of the once-powerful industrial

correspondents' group, touring seaside conference venues to cover unions and labour issues. He joined the NUJ in 1982 when he started at the Star. Before becoming a journalist, he worked in the oil industry and in construction.

Middle East publication is looking to recruit news reporters and copy editors who are fluent in English and preferably with knowledge of Middle East and North African issues.

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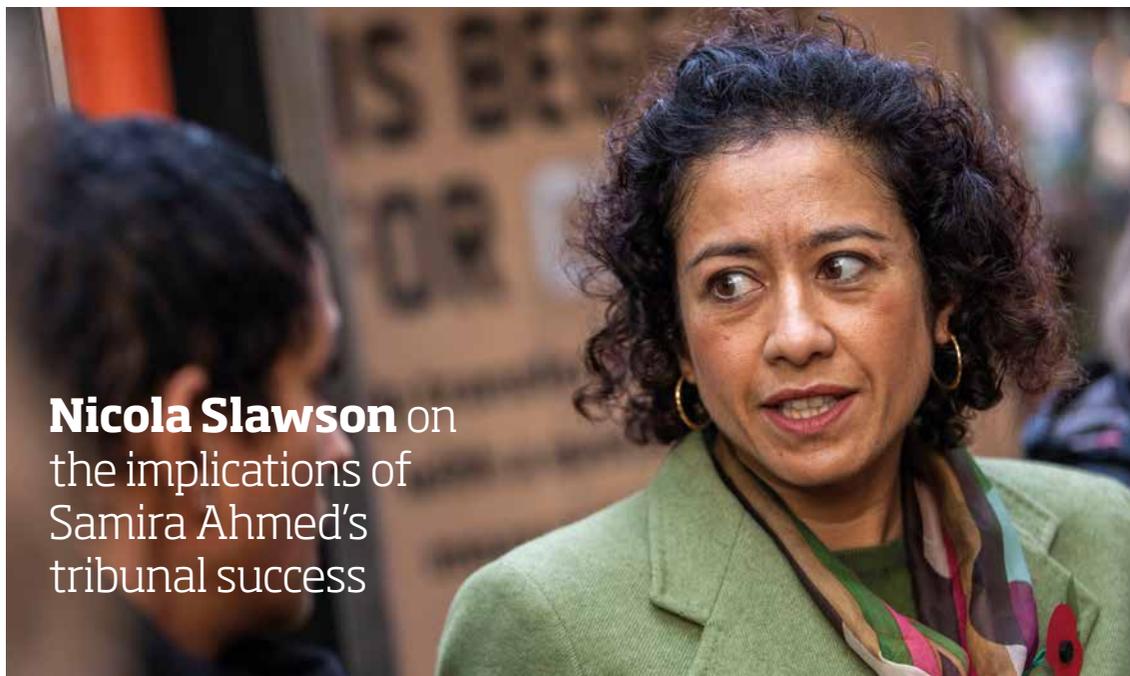
  
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[www.mediamasters.fm](http://www.mediamasters.fm)




JESS HURD



**Nicola Slawson** on the implications of Samira Ahmed's tribunal success

# The battle for pay parity

**S**amira Ahmed's employment tribunal success over equal pay at the BBC has been hailed by the NUJ as a 'resounding victory'.

The presenter took her employer to the tribunal after learning that her colleague Jeremy Vine was being paid £3,000 per episode for BBC 1's *Points of View*. In contrast, Ahmed was paid £440 for *Newsnight*, which is shown on the BBC News Channel and BBC Breakfast and is a similar format.

Ahmed told the tribunal, which concluded in November, that she "could not understand how pay for me, a woman, could be so much lower than Jeremy Vine, a man, for presenting very similar programmes and doing very similar work".

In her judgment, Judge Grewal said it was clear from the evidence that Ahmed and Vine did work that was "the same or, if not the same, very similar", and that any differences were 'minor'.

At the time Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "It was an incredibly brave decision on Samira's

part to take forward this case. No one wants to battle their employer in a public tribunal hearing, but the BBC's failure to meaningfully negotiate made legal proceedings inevitable."

Carrie Gracie, who became the face of the equal pay struggle at the BBC after quitting her role as China editor, said she hoped Ahmed's victory "gives courage to women everywhere to stand up for the value of their work".

While negotiations around the consequences are ongoing and the BBC has remained tight-lipped about whether it will appeal against the ruling, it's clear the case could have far-reaching implications for the broadcaster.

If the BBC does not appeal, it could be left with a huge bill for Ahmed's back pay as well as the cost of potentially large settlements over similar claims by other female staff bringing equal pay cases.

A spokeswoman for the NUJ confirmed that about 20 similar cases were in the tribunal system, and as many as 70 cases were unresolved at the time of publication.

A founding member of BBC Women,

a campaign group made up of hundreds of reporters and producers at the corporation, who asked not to be named, said that as soon as Ahmed's hearing ended, the group noticed a change in approach by the BBC.

"Within a few days, various managers and HR managers were approaching women with outstanding claims and asking 'what would it take in monetary terms to make this go away?'" she said.

Despite this, the BBC Women founder, who has attended numerous hearings and appeals and fought and won her own equal pay case, criticised the BBC's decision to continue paying for employment consultants Croner to assist with the deluge of complaints made since it published its gender pay report in 2018.

She said: "It is unforgivable that the BBC is spending licence fee money – which it doesn't have enough of – on independent experts who have absolutely been given a job of finding against women."

Many women have been repeatedly told they do not have a case, only to get to a tribunal and be told they do. "All that money, all that time, all that obfuscation takes place to gaslight women and makes us think we don't have a claim," she said.

The BBC should carry out an honest reappraisal of the pay process, she said: "I'm hoping the next director-general not only accepts that there are cultural issues that need addressing but will actually do something about it."

A BBC spokesperson said it was "committed to equality and equal pay". The spokesperson added: "Where we've found equal pay cases in the past, we've put them right. However, for us, this case was never about one person, but the way different types of programmes across the media industry attract different levels of pay"

The broadcaster added that it was considering the judgment and would have to decide whether to appeal soon as appeals must be lodged within 42 days.

Caroline Underhill of Thompsons Solicitors, who represented Ahmed, as instructed by the NUJ, said the ruling was "a warning shot to the BBC that complacency around pay inequity is unacceptable, and will not go unchallenged."

"The ball is now in the BBC's court: they need to heed the lessons from this judgment and engage in meaningful negotiations with the NUJ to ensure genuine pay transparency, and pay equality, for all employees," she said.

**“All that money, all that time, all that obfuscation takes place to gaslight women and makes us think we don't have a claim”**

# Alarm over radio loan

Henry Bonsu claims safeguards were ignored when he guaranteed a loan to a broadcaster. **David Hencke** reports

**A** journalist is taking his fight against one of the country's largest banks to the High Court over a debt he incurred when the media company where he was a director, Colourful Radio, went into liquidation in 2014.

Henry Bonsu, a 52-year-old broadcaster, has been caught up in a legal battle with HSBC for six years over a £30,000 loan secured by a signed personal guarantee in 2009. He is now facing a £78,000 bill from HSBC for their legal costs and interest on the loan after losing a county court case in December.

Following an adverse judgment from the county court judge, he has filed papers seeking permission to appeal the case at the High Court and is running a crowdfunding appeal, which has attracted support from many prominent TV and print journalists as well as Lord Digby Jones, a former trade minister and director general of the Confederation of British Industry.

The case highlights the treatment of small businesses by the big banks and some of the events surrounding the case seem Kafkaesque. He believes he has "been stitched up".

Superficially, the case is simple. Bonsu signed a bank document and gave his personal guarantee for a loan to support Colourful Radio. Colourful Radio went bust and the bank demanded its money back from him because he had signed the guarantee. Colourful Radio is now back in business debt free.

But, as the court case revealed, the situation was more complex. In their evidence, Bonsu's lawyers claimed that matters were not straightforward. They

said the founder of Colourful Radio, Kofi Kusitor, had placed undue influence on him to get the loan and an agreement with him absolved him from paying it back. The bank also declined to produce as witnesses four bank officials who were handling the loan who could be scrutinised to see if the bank had followed proper procedures in granting it. This included the crucial point as to whether the bank had insisted, as it should, that he got independent advice before signing the guarantee.

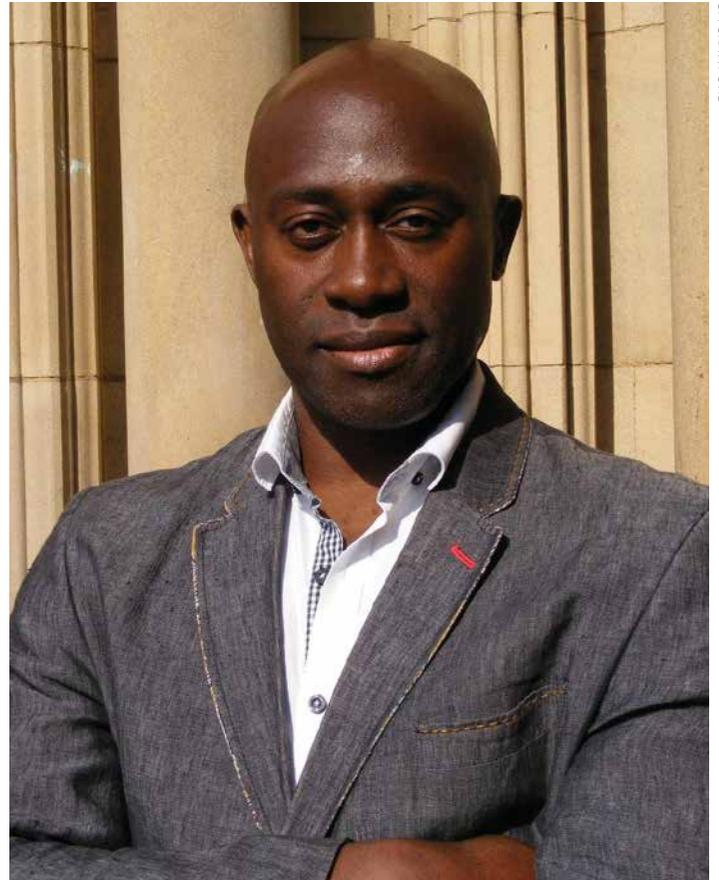
Kusitor could also have been called as witness as he signed a similar loan with a guarantee at the same time.

The bank's lawyers challenged the claim that Bonsu had been put under undue influence by Kusitor or that they had any agreement not to pursue Kusitor for an earlier loan taken out for £30,000 when Henry Bonsu was not working for it. However, they did not say that Kusitor had got a further loan with a personal guarantee in 2009 at the same time as Bonsu signed his. Evidence by one bank witness to the trial said Bonsu was accompanied by another man she did not know and she did not see him sign a loan guarantee document.

However, while Kusitor vehemently denied putting any influence on Bonsu to get a loan in a public Facebook post, he says he did get a loan at the same time as Bonsu.

The bank also said Bonsu had got a solicitor to witness his personal guarantee and this amounted to getting independent legal advice.

The judge found for the bank, ordered Bonsu to pay the money plus interest and costs and refused an appeal.



BA CRAWFORD

Lord Jones, who has given him £2,000 towards his crowdfunding, said: "The bank have behaved unconscionably over this. Nowadays, such a procedure would not happen. The bank officials who handled this should have been at court and asked questions about exactly what happened." It is understood that efforts to get the bank to change its mind went to the top but that it decided to leave it to its lawyers to get the money.

HSBC did not comment on Lord Jones' criticism.

A spokesman from the bank said: "The judge did not accept Mr Bonsu's criticisms of HSBC and the evidence he gave at trial. In his view, the guarantee was valid and Mr Bonsu was fully aware of the effect, scope, contents and potential consequences of signing the guarantee so ordered him to repay the debt he owed in addition to interest and costs. Mr Bonsu asked the judge on the day for permission to appeal the judgment but this was refused as having no prospect of success. We await the outcome of any further application Mr Bonsu makes to ask for permission to appeal the findings."

**“The bank officials who handled this should have been at court and asked questions about exactly what happened”**

<https://uk.gofundme.com/f/henry-bonsu-defence-fund>

# Control freaks and Corbyn's catastrophe



Trying to set the news agenda cost Labour dear, says **Francis Beckett**

**L**abour has gone down to stunning defeats before, but never one like that in December 2019. There had always been formidable opponents before. This time, Labour faced a prime minister despised for his untruthfulness, laziness and contempt for democracy, and detested by the most senior members of his own party.

How could Labour lose? In my part of north London, they think Jeremy Corbyn is an anti-Semite (he isn't). In other places, they think he's a dangerous revolutionary (he isn't that either). Voters were more frightened of him than of Johnson. Remainers were more horrified by Corbyn than by Brexit. His failure to communicate was epic.

Facing a fiercely hostile media, Corbyn refused to engage with those who could have been won over – journalists, those who feared him and those who were not certain – and with the two big issues of Brexit and anti-Semitism.

Corbyn's PR people, led by communications chief Seumas Milne (a former op ed editor and labour editor at the Guardian who Corbyn privately called 'the great Milne'), imagined they could write the news agenda. They did not wish to talk about Brexit and anti-Semitism, so Corbyn sounded cross and grudging every time he was forced to do so.

Corbyn knew he was the problem. Several months ago, he desperately wanted to resign, but his advisers talked him out of it. There's a story that they refused to let his sons into his room until he agreed not to resign.

Milne is a theoretician in the Marxist sense, and thinks politicians can write

the political agenda. Practical politicians know, as Harold Macmillan put, that what decides the agenda is 'events, dear boy, events'.

In June 2018, Corbyn and his staff met the Board of Deputies of British Jews. It could have started a dialogue. But Corbyn said almost nothing at the meeting. Milne did the talking, and became animated on the subject of Israel, accusing it of ethnic cleansing.

The Board of Deputies went away with the sense that Corbyn was not interested in the issue. That grew as Corbyn seemed to give ground inch by inch, reluctantly and with bad grace.

I was one of several writers who failed to get any sense out of Corbyn's office on this issue. Former Tribune editor Mark Seddon and I were commissioned to write a book about the new Labour leader. My repeated phone calls and emails on anti-Semitism produced only a cross phone call from Seumas to Seddon, berating us for including the issue in the book at all.

Mark and I wanted to paint a sympathetic though not uncritical picture of Corbyn, but we didn't even get the normal help any journalist expects of any press office. They seldom returned our calls or answered our emails. Other sympathetic writers tell a similar story. I think we were considered not quite reliable. Corbyn was allowed to engage only with true believers.

In June 2018, Corbyn was in Brighton to address the Fire Brigades Union annual conference. The FBU arranged that he would also record an interview with one of their officials.

The questions were agreed with Corbyn's office in advance, and the union told journalists covering the conference they could listen in. But

one of his minders – a senior adviser – bustled into the room and rudely evicted the journalists, saying this was a 'private interview'.

I was there, and managed to get Corbyn alone for a moment. He was surprised that he had been told nothing about an interview request from two left-wing writers he knew fairly well. "Of course I'll talk to you and Mark," he said.

Unfortunately, the minder caught him at it, and brusquely hustled him away to stand somewhere else for the cameras (although no cameras were present), while another of his entourage told me grimly: "Jeremy often says he'll do something. That doesn't mean it will happen." It didn't.

Having given Johnson an election at the most favourable time for Johnson, Corbyn's strategists ran an election campaign with no focus, no clear message and no flexibility, and kept all the party's most effective broadcasters away from broadcasting to make room for Corbyn loyalists.

Their legacy is five years when Johnson can do whatever he likes, and a Brexit that a clear majority of the voters do not want. More people voted for remain parties than leave parties, yet Labour managed to turn this into a victory for Johnson's peculiarly uncaring version of Brexit.

Perhaps they wanted victory within the Labour Party, not victory for the Labour Party. Whatever the truth, Corbyn's advisers have – like Milne's hero Arthur Scargill – done dreadful harm to the cause they serve.

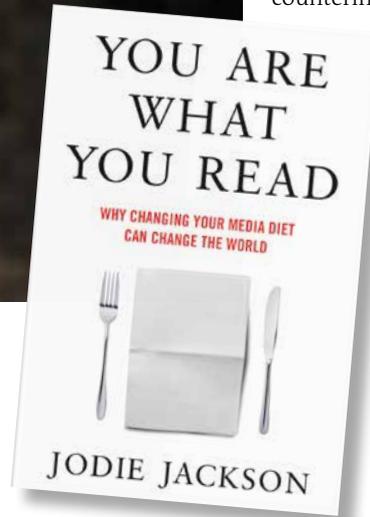
• **Jeremy Corbyn and the Strange Rebirth of Labour England** by Francis Beckett and Mark Seddon is published by Routledge

**“**  
The press office seldom replied. Other sympathetic writers tell a similar story. Corbyn was allowed to engage only with true believers  
**”**



People are avoiding the news. Showing it's not all bad will bring them back, says **Veronique Mistiaen**

more noble principles of journalism.” She isn’t advocating that journalists merely produce feel-good news or add a silver lining; problems should still be reported, but it should be recognised that these aren’t the end of the story. “It’s about asking what’s next – including a longer time frame on an issue, so we are able to see beyond the initial impact of a tragedy or disaster,” she says. “By reporting on solutions, we may also be able to learn about how other communities have addressed problems.” For journalists trained that ‘if it bleeds, it leads’, this might seem counterintuitive. Jackson is often asked:



“How can we report solutions if we want to keep people informed about what’s going on?” “This is one of my favourite and most frustrating questions because it assumes problems and solutions are mutually exclusive, or that by learning about solutions you become ignorant to problems,” she says. “But solutions don’t exist in the absence of problems. They are a part of the narrative – a necessary informational addition that enables us to

fully understand the issue.” Jackson also believes that including solutions can boost accountability and provide a foundation from which people can demand change.

In recent years, many outlets – have adopted elements of ‘constructive’ journalism. They include the Guardian, the Economist, the BBC, De Correspondent in the Netherlands, Reporters d’Espoirs in France, DR News in Denmark and the Solutions Journalism Network in the US.

With her book, Jackson aims to bridge the gap between industry and consumers. “Almost every industry that has had a huge and sustained shift towards a more positive purpose has required an informed consumer. If we change the way we consume the news, industry will change the way it produces it,” she says.

She hopes that her book will speak to journalists too. “Hopefully, it will challenge the long-held perception that solutions are inconsequential, trivial puff pieces and create a credible case for greater reporting on solutions. Reporting on solutions does not undermine their role as journalists – it enhances it.”

# Taking the negative out of the news

**N**early one in three people say they actively avoid the news, mostly because it lowers their mood. But it’s also because they feel powerless to change what is happening, according to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism’s 2019 digital news report, based on data from 38 countries and six continents.

Author and campaigner Jodie Jackson (pictured) is not surprised. “I got to the point where I couldn’t bear to hear another news story because I found it so depressing. Constantly hearing about problems made me feel helpless and hopeless about the state of the world,” says Jackson, who holds a master’s degree in applied positive psychology and is a partner at the Constructive Journalism Project.

Rather than switching off, she started looking for stories that gave her hope

– those that reported on solutions.

“I experienced a really powerful change when I changed my media diet. I then wanted to understand this on a collective level; I went back to university and researched the impact of the negativity bias in the news on our mental health and the health of our society, as well as what happens when we include stories of solutions,” she says.

She condensed her 10 years of research into *You Are What You Read – Why Changing Your Media Diet Can Change the World*, a book to help readers understand the impact of the news on them and give them the tools to create a healthier media diet, looking for solutions, positive change and progress rather than just problems.

She concludes the news environment needs better moral guidance: “Perhaps it is the commercial environment and immediate feedback on consumer engagement that have compromised the

“**Perhaps the commercial environment has compromised the more noble principles of journalism**”

Caruana Galizia's murder overshadows Malta's media, says **Ross Davies**

# In search of the truth

**I**n an interview shortly before she was killed, Daphne Caruana Galizia spoke of a climate of fear deterring Malta's

journalists from reporting the truth.

The country's foremost investigative journalist, Caruana Galizia was never one to shy away from a story. For this, she endured unprecedented levels of intimidation – not least arson attacks and the slaying of a family pet – before the car bombing that killed her outside her home on October 16, 2017.

Ripples of scandal have since reached the top of Maltese politics, culminating in the resignation of Prime Minister Joseph Muscat after government officials were implicated in the murder. Malta has also slid to 77th place in the Press Freedom Index – with Bulgaria and Hungary the only two EU members faring worse.

Caroline Muscat is the editor of The Shift News, an online platform that has run investigations into organised crime and money laundering on the island since its launch in November 2017.

Last year, The Shift exposed a network of closed Facebook groups, whose members included senior state officials, which supported making threats to journalists. The network had more than 60,000 members – around 14 per cent of Malta's population.

Muscat was close to Caruana Galizia and, like her, receives almost daily abuse.

"I get the witch analogies a lot," she says. "Recently, a picture of Daphne was posted on one of these groups next to my photo. The text alongside it read: 'One witch has disappeared, and then another appears'. Someone commented below: 'This one deserves a few more bombs.'"

Manuel Delia, who became a full-time political blogger after Caruana Galizia's death, is also no stranger to harassment. We meet in Valetta, we do

so in an empty private members' club off the main thoroughfare; Delia is barred from the café across the street.

"I get called a traitor a lot," he says. "When I speak about justice for Daphne, I am accused of betraying my country. While we are not thrown in prison, what we do get to be is completely discredited. Destroy a journalist's credibility and you don't need to incarcerate us."

With the majority of Malta's media controlled by political parties, high-level corruption often goes unreported. Even outlets that claim to be investigative rely financially on the state.

"The complete lack of regulation around government advertising is a massive problem," says Tim Diacono, political editor of investigative news site Lovin' Malta. "Ratio-wise, the government's advertising budget here is more than in any other European country, and that goes right across

“**Many journalists who once showed real promise in exposing the truth have sold out for the sake of survival**”

social media, TV and newspapers. It means we can't get our message across."

Muscat says "only a handful of true investigative journalists" now exist. Georg Mallia, who teaches media at the University of Malta, has noticed that, since Caruana Galizia was killed, "many journalists who once showed real promise in exposing the truth have sold out for the sake of survival."

Then there are strategic libel suits (SLAPPs). By the time of her death, Caruana Galizia was facing 42 of these, mainly brought by politicians and businesses. The Shift and Lovin' Malta have been the targets of similar lawsuits.

Costing little to plaintiffs, but requiring time and money to defend, SLAPPs are widely used to intimidate journalists into self-censorship. Most media outlets threatened with SLAPPs give in and remove stories.

David Casa MEP, of the opposition Nationalist Party, is pushing for an EU anti-SLAPP directive. "The use of SLAPPs to silence journalists is an affront to Maltese media freedom," he says.

A public inquiry looking into who ordered the assassination of Caruana Galizia. It is desperately hoped this will see people held to account and provide answers for her family.

The pursuit of press freedom continues. "This is about democracy," says Muscat. "If we don't defend it – who will?"



HEMIS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

**Jonathan Sale** on how broadcasting grew from a humble hut near Chelmsford

# Radio Shack

**B**roadcasting in Britain started at 7pm on February 14 1922. To put it another way, from a small hut in Writtle near Chelmsford, the Marconi Company had established a short-lived experimental radio station which, without being part of the BBC, put out our first regular broadcasts (on Tuesdays only). Its faint whisper on a long-wave signal led to the mighty roar of the big broadcasting events to come: the abdication speech of Edward VIII; Winston Churchill declaring we would fight them on the beaches; the Queen's rainy coronation on black-and-white TV; David Attenborough and David Dimbleby in living colour; Boris Johnson not being interviewed by Andrew Neil.

There had been earlier transmissions over this new-fangled medium. These were initially in Morse code, and included those giving weather forecasts for Wisconsin (presumably on the lines of warnings of 'outbreaks of dashes followed by scattered dots').

Guglielmo Marconi of Bologna, one of the early wireless inventors, had offered his services to the Italian government, which clearly decided that these mysterious gizmos would never catch on. Fortunately, he had an enthusiastic reception in Britain, where he moved in 1896 to set up his own manufacturing company.

Captain Peter Pendleton Eckersley (known as PP – many radio pioneers were identified by their initials) was one of the leading boffins at Marconi's before becoming the first chief engineer of the BBC. At his co-ed boarding school, Eckersley had built his own radio transmitter and receiver, which was used to send cricket scores from the more distant pitches and also to lure girls into the chicken hut where he kept his technical gear.

After his war service, which involved communications by primitive radios in

primitive aeroplanes, he began working in "a long, low hut for long, low people" – ie at Marconi's in Writtle.

There had been a time when the few thousand geeks or 'hams' licensed to tickle their hissing 'cat's whisker' sets could truthfully grumble that "there's nothing on the radio" because there wasn't. In order to fill this gap in the market, the long, low people began to put out long-wave signals: actual programmes or, to put it no more highly, words and music. In the last week of February 1920 '2MT Writtle' put out two half-hours of snippets read from newspapers, records from a wind-up gramophone and live performances provided (free) by Marconi staff members. Don't laugh: there are local radio stations now offering less.

This daily format, delivered by technicians

originally hired for their skills in twiddling the knobs rather than tickling the ivories, could be kept up until only the end of the first week of March. Broadcasts then become more sporadic but they certainly involved fees – 25p to an amateur soprano from a local factory and a whacking £1,000 (paid by the proprietor of the Daily Mail) for Dame Nellie Melba, one of the few operatic singers after whom an ice cream dessert is named, to traipse all the way to Essex to warble Home, Sweet Home.

Unfortunately, there were complaints – not from listeners, it should be said. Unharmonious officials declared that the signals were interfering with communications to aircraft and shipping and, in November, the plug was pulled. It was not plugged back in until two years later. In the meantime, listeners in Britain had to make do with a Sunday afternoon concert from Holland with occasional interruptions by air traffic control from Croydon airport.

Finally, harmony was restored and, in mid-February 1922, 2MT Writtle prepared to hit the airwaves again, now with a new transmitter. There being no Radio Times until September 1923, the wireless societies were sent a note of the time and date.

A script was prepared, consisting largely of the repetition of 'Here is a gramophone record entitled...' The first platter (as they didn't say) was then followed by a three-minute silence into which any official announcements would be dropped. "At 6.50pm, there was a loud explosion from the transmitter," wrote Eckersley's son Myles in Prospero's Wireless in his biography of

## The rat's whiskers

**TO EDUCATE**, inform and entertain the British public, but with NO news gathering, advertising or controversial content to be originated by the company" is the summary of the aims of the British Broadcasting Company, whose radio service began in 1922.

BBC television was switched on in 1936 but screens went blank in 1939, with a long intermission until 1946.

With only one channel, there was no choice of viewing

until the start of ITV in 1955.

This began, not with a real programme but an outside broadcast of the dinner in the Guildhall to commemorate the channel's launch; it is no wonder that 20 million listeners chose instead to switch on BBC radio for the dramatic death by

fire of Grace Archer in The Archers, cunningly scheduled for the same evening.

Much more radio competition for the BBC arrived in 1964 – this time on the high seas from Radio Caroline and other pirates.

BBC2 also started up that year, adding colour in 1967, which was the year Radio 1 started broadcasting (presenters included many of the pirates whose ships had been sunk by hostile legislation) and BBC Radio Leicester



became the first local radio station. The year 1973 saw, or rather heard, the first commercial radio stations, LBC and Capital.

Channel 4 followed in 1982. Channel 5 started up in 1997, in premises originally occupied by TV-am.

The TV-am breakfast time show brought wake-up calls to the nation only from 1983 to 1992 and is fondly remembered for its puppet Roland Rat and also for Anna Ford throwing a glass of wine over the executive she blamed for sacking her, Jonathan Aitken.

Looking  
back to:  
1922



HUTTON DEUTSCH

**M**ARCONI'S ability to supply the radio-communication and navigational needs of the aircraft and airports of the present and to anticipate those of the future, is based upon experience which dates back to the first air-to-ground wireless signals of 1906 and the first design for an airport direction-finding station in 1920.



JEFF MORGAN 14 / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

his father. "One of the condensers blew up." It was replaced but, thanks to a misreading of the label, with the wrong condenser.

This in turn was soon replaced but, in a few weeks' time, another explosion followed, this time from the bigwigs 'upstairs' (if that's the apposite word for a workplace based in a hut). The anger was sparked off by the fact that, compared with the sober engineers who doubled as presenters in his team, Peter Eckersley was very much a live wire – perhaps too highly charged. On Tuesday afternoons, a piano would be trundled into the hut, on loan from the pub; the multitasking presenter could be heard announcing the next item, then his footsteps as he ran to the piano, then his opening chords and, finally, his voice.

Most of the records they were provided with were rejected as being too highbrow, according to a colleague, the highly initialled RTB Wynn, a quarter of a century later. He added: "Programme planning was done at the Cock and Bell up the road about half an hour beforehand." Today, that might sound like standard practice for some stations but it would have rung alarm bells in 1922, especially if the bosses had known that Eckersley's tippie of choice when gargling before the show was not water but gin.

One fateful March evening, he left the pub as

usual on his motorbike and roared up the lane to take over from an increasingly horrified duty engineer.

For Myles Eckersley, this could well have been "the moment when the human face of British broadcasting was inaugurated". His father was, in the words of his son, "part amateur comedian and actor, and part chattering professional technician... songs, rhymes, pub stories, anything; but no records, no official pauses. It was an approach quite unlike anything that had gone before." There was, of course, not much

"before" that broadcast and it now looked as if Eckersley would not be enjoying much "after" in the business.

The bigwigs were furious at this anarchic, outrageous display – but, again, not the listeners. Enthusiastic letters and cards poured in from all over the country, begging for more of the same. The postmaster general – the official ultimately responsible for radio – held his peace, realising that these hordes of wireless folk should not be dismissed; they all had votes. And, adds Eckersley junior: "It was now plain that the government had to establish some sort of British national broadcasting service... here were some signs that Writtle might be a forerunner."

It was indeed. The British Broadcasting Company (as it was first known) was set up soon afterwards and Eckersley became its first chief engineer. 2MT Writtle's regular scheduled broadcasting lasted for less than a year.

No recordings survive but the actual hut, after being used as a cricket pavilion, was shifted to Sanford Hill Museum in Chelmsford as a place of pilgrimage for radio enthusiasts. Further details can be found at Radio Emma Toc ([www.emmatoc.com](http://www.emmatoc.com)). Yes, that's a website, a concept that no one could have dreamed of back in the early 1920s – not even the great PP Eckersley.

# Earning from

## Ruth Addicott explains how to make media training successful and lucrative

**W**hile freelance rates are falling on print publications, there is one area that continues to thrive. As Prince Andrew demonstrated on Newsnight late last year, some people need media training – and it is in demand. Whether it's crisis management or securing coverage, journalists know what it takes to get in the spotlight and are increasingly drafted in to help out.

While some might argue that media training can stand in the way of a good story, for many freelancers it is an interesting sideline and a means to support their income from journalism.

So how does it work? How do you get into it? And how well does it pay?

Journalist and broadcaster Karen Kay started media training after she was approached by a PR and asked if she could help prepare a client for a media launch. A former Sky News correspondent with a background in tabloids and broadsheets, she held mock interviews and sessions on how to handle challenging questions and was soon receiving numerous requests to run workshops.

She has worked with brands such as Laura Mercier, Sony Mobile, Odeon, Crowne Plaza, Adidas, Duracell and Twinings and structured each session around the clients' needs whether it was TV or radio studio based, or in their office.

"Most media training businesses focus on crisis comms and the corporate sector, which I also do, but I've created a niche working with consumer brands to support their spokespeople," she says. "I help brand ambassadors, including chefs, make-up artists and hair stylists who do practical demonstrations, with appearances on TV shopping channels and magazine shows, as well as news interviews."

Like many freelancers, Kay was working from home, largely in isolation and found the sessions fulfilling as they were interactive and her experience was valued.

Journalist and broadcaster Andy Jones writes for nationals and glossies and has fronted programmes such as BBC's Inside Out and Channel 4's Dispatches. He has been media training for 10 years and offers a multimedia package from radio and podcasts to press release writing. He's worked with companies such as O2 and Virgin Money.

"To be a media trainer, you've got to be a Swiss army knife – have the tools to be able to do a bit of everything," he says. "You've got to be able to stand in front of people who are at the top of their game and pass on knowledge and skills in a way that gets them on side and shows them you know what you're doing."

"You could be training a room full of professional footballers who'd rather be out on the pitch or the singer of a new guitar band who thinks interviews are stupid. You could be training one of the finest surgeons in the world who has been elected to speak on behalf of an NHS body. The company that hired you might think you're brilliant – but the person you're speaking to might see you as a threat. It can be a real act of diplomacy."

Jones says you have to think on your feet, especially if there is a technical hitch or the office has no media screen. He was once booked to train three people and turned up to find 15.

Dr Janine David is a GP who specialises in sexual health and did media training with Glenn Kinsey when she increased her TV and radio work.

"I felt I needed it to build confidence as a presenter," she says. "There was lots of information regarding how to speak confidently in front of camera, and even practical tips such as what to wear. It certainly improved my skills at presenting, I now feel much calmer and in control when I speak in public."

Manchester-based freelance Helen Nugent provides coaching alongside lecturing, copywriting and editing website Northern Soul. With a business journalism background and 10 years on The Times, Nugent has created a niche helping

## Top tips

### Fixing a fee

Factor in how much work is involved. "It's vital to value your journalism experience and expertise," says Karen Kay ([shootthemessenger.tv](http://shootthemessenger.tv)). "Being booked for half a day isn't actually half a day's work – you need to invest substantial time preparing, so quote fees accordingly."

### Prepare

Create a professional website, boost your LinkedIn profile and get reliable equipment and insurance. Create a product that is useful, sellable and engaging.

### Skills

Assess your skills and research your markets. For

example, freelance journalist and podcaster Suchandrika Chakrabarti ([suchandrika.com](http://suchandrika.com)) covers social media strategy, search engine optimisation, writing for the web, mobile journalism and interviewing, but says the biggest demand is for podcasting.

### Know - or no

If you haven't got the skills, say no. Andy Jones ([andyjones.co.uk](http://andyjones.co.uk)) says: "People want different things. If you've worked 20 years on a national and they want to set up a YouTube channel, have you got the skillset to do that? You're only as good as your last job."

### Don't pander

"I am totally honest about clients' strengths or weaknesses and have even

advised some to avoid facing the media," says Simon Read ([linkedin.com/in/simonread](http://linkedin.com/in/simonread)). "People pay for your expertise – not to pander to them. Base your training on your experience. I tell people how journalists will react, not how to pitch."

### Be professional

"You need to be a confident businessperson, with clear terms and conditions and agreed contracts," says Kay. "Discretion is imperative – and professional ethics. I never blur the lines between working as a media trainer and as a journalist. I'm sometimes exposed to sensitive information so I have to draw a line and treat every client as if I have signed an NDA (non disclosure agreement) – which I often do."

# learning

financial PRs and companies get into the business pages of nationals and trade/B2B magazines.

She advises on interview technique as well as basics such as when to call journalists during the day, which she says benefits journalists as well as PRs.

"I used expertise in areas that I'd written about for years and understood," she says. "Be aware that you have a lot of valuable information and don't undercharge for it."

Deciding what to charge is a challenge. Rates can vary from £250 an hour to £1,000 a day. Agencies such as HarveyLeach, founded by journalists Andrew Harvey and Graham Leach charge around £3,900 a day for press and broadcast media training with two tutors and one camera operator.

Rates depend on the client, content and length of session, and it can take months before an agreement is reached.

"Most of my agonising is what am I going to put in my session and what am I going to charge," says Jones.

"Sometimes you walk into a company and you're being paid a few hundred quid then you look around and think, 'bloody hell, they spend more than that on croissants'.

"It's difficult to price. Often the client doesn't know what they want themselves. I've been paid £1,500 for a day's work and that's a good rate, but that's not what you get every day. I do it case by case. I can do an hour for £250, but I wouldn't charge a day rate of £2,500."

Simon Read was personal finance editor at The Independent and started media training after being made redundant in 2016. Read coaches senior executives in banking, investment and insurance, providing one-to-one training and crisis communications courses.

"I tell people what journalists need so that they can be as helpful as possible," he says. "I teach them to be truthful rather than trying to be evasive. Fees vary, but I would advise anyone thinking of offering the service to start at £1,000 a day."

Although rates in Manchester are not as high as those in London, Nugent finds it a lucrative sideline.

"Of all the jobs I do, media training is the best paid because it's corporate," she says.

Disillusioned with the fees in print journalism, Kay has shifted her focus to



**To be a media trainer, you've got to be a Swiss army knife - have the tools to be able to do a bit of everything**



pursue more training opportunities. Two years ago, she branded her business Shoot the Messenger and developed a strong web presence.

"I see huge potential," she says. "I've done a lot of research on rates and work with a trusted network of specialist journalists, news anchors, crews and studios to deliver sessions. I'd certainly say I can earn the equivalent or more than the sort of salary I would expect if I had risen through the ranks in a newspaper, magazine or TV and reached executive level after almost three decades. I see this as a new, rewarding chapter in my working life."

While media training can be well paid, it carries a lot of responsibility, especially when it involves crisis management.

"Very often, companies don't realise they need media training until they've had a Prince Andrew moment," says Jones. "It's high pressure. You could sink a company or lose someone their job if you're not very good. It's not just standing there talking about how to be a journalist - you've got to lead from the front, entertain and engage people and give them the skills that you promised. If you're good at it, it can be lucrative - but it's a difficult art."



# Growth on the home turf

**Neil Merrick** talks to people who make local news matter

**W**ithin 24 hours of being made redundant last May, Sally Churchward came up with a way she could carry on working as a journalist in Southampton.

Churchward had been a feature writer at the Daily Echo for 18 years and edited its lifestyle supplement. Having seen many colleagues lose their jobs, it was not a huge surprise when her turn arrived.

Given 10 days before she would leave the newsroom for the final time, she decided to set up a website. Not only would the site feature community and human interest articles like those in the Echo, but it would also include material that may not necessarily appeal to traditional titles.

In Common was launched in August, with articles on everything from hedgehogs to transgender issues. Churchward had expected to put some of her small redundancy package into the venture but ultimately raised £800 through crowdfunding and has since received further donations, including £200 from a vegan co-op.

The biggest sense of loss in leaving the Echo was no longer feeling part of the community. It was gratifying to hear people saying they would miss her articles, and receiving messages on Facebook from people she did not know.

Most articles published by In Common are timeless and, for now anyway, the site is not taking adverts. Visitors can, if they wish, donate via a fundraising page. "There is no point in trying to compete with the Echo," she says.

Nationally, an estimated 300 independent news outlets (sometimes called hyperlocals) operate instead of or alongside traditional titles. While there is no guarantee of success, setting one up presents an option for journalists who lose their job or anyone concerned about lack of community news.

"Fifteen years ago, it was not an option," says Matt Abbott, project officer at the Independent Community News Network, based at Cardiff University. "It's become easier to set up a new publication."

Brighton and Hove News was launched 10 years ago by Frank Le Duc and carries a range of news, sport, culture and opinion. He dislikes the term hyperlocal, pointing out that his site serves a wide area, albeit not as large as that covered by the Brighton Argus where he was once deputy editor.

Le Duc, who has also worked for national media, respects the Argus but now sees it as a rival. Five years ago, following a redesign, his site decided to take adverts – an experience that proved more difficult than interviewing bereaved relatives at

courts or inquests. "It's much harder knocking on people's doors and asking them to advertise," he says.

Like many independents, Brighton and Hove News is hosted by Wordpress. It has a core readership of about 50,000 people who visit the site at least once a week. While relatively cheap to set up, online titles will almost certainly require further investment to ensure they look professional. Le Duc eventually paid an agency about £3,000. "We were quite demanding on the people who helped us," he says.

Nowadays, Le Duc works with a co-editor, takes arts reviews and football stories from enthusiasts who work for free, and shares a local democracy reporter with five other titles, including the Argus. "I'm never going to grow rich," he says. "It's hard to make money out of journalism or from the internet as a journalist if you want to provide community news, but it's not impossible."

Unlike many regional sites, independents such as Brighton



Keeping it local: Frank LeDuc in Brighton (photo by Julia Claxton) and Sally Churchward in Southampton (photo by Chris Balcombe)

## Thriving site built on a 'hard grind'

**WHEN TONY** Millett moved to Marlborough in 2007, the former managing editor of Channel 4 News was anticipating a quiet retirement.

But 13 years on, he and other volunteers who run Marlborough Online News are as busy as ever, sometimes working the equivalent of a 35- or 40-hour week.

Back in the 1990s, two weekly newspapers had offices in the Wiltshire town. Those days are long gone. Without the website, set up in 2011, there would be virtually no coverage of local

events, the town council and many other issues.

Residents are mostly appreciative of the news service but they can fail to realise that the site is run by volunteers.

Millett recalls an email he received complaining that an accident had not been reported.

"People assume we are there. That's one of the things that upsets me. They have no idea how much work goes into it," he says.

The team of four in charge of Marlborough Online News have a variety of journalistic experience. The site receives

20,000 unique visits per month and is mostly funded through advertising. Most people are alerted to the stories via Facebook, although some go directly to the site.

Stories about the high street are particularly popular, as is health coverage. Each year, the site makes enough to sponsor sports clubs and the town's literary festival. The only money claimed by journalists is mileage.

"It's a hard grind," says Millett, who also worked at News at Ten. "We've been trying to find extra people for a long time and failed. There aren't people in the town or area who are experienced and prepared to work for nothing."



and Hove News do not bombard readers with pop-up advertising or other distractions. The same is true of Blog Preston, set up in 2009 by Ed Walker, then a student at the University of Central Lancashire, and now co-edited by Rachel Smith and Kate Rosindale.

Smith, who previously wrote court reports for the website as a freelance, is proud of its quality and content. “You don’t have to complete a survey to read a story,” she says. A former staffer at the Lancashire Post, she continues to freelance for other publications while co-editing Blog Preston.

As well as stories about crime and missing people, the site carries council news, which is generally well read. “We’ve a lot of local contacts. Our Facebook inbox is always pinging away,” she says. “We try to keep everything local and relevant.”

In 2014, Blog Preston became a community interest company, and its surpluses are reinvested in the business. More recently, it began selling recruitment advertising along with other advertising. The website also raises money from ‘instant articles’ promoted on Facebook. These articles load onto the social media site far more quickly than they would on to the website and the articles then direct readers to the website. Relations with the Post are good, with Blog Preston supporting campaigns run by the paper. Most importantly, the website makes her feel part of the town where she was born and grew up. “I feel like it’s my community,” she says. “I say: ‘I’m Rachel from Blog Preston’ – and people know who you are.”

Llanelli Online was started three years ago with an office opposite the building where the Llanelli Star, a print paper, was once based. It has a team of five including editor Alan Evans and focuses entirely on Llanelli – readers object if it reports an accident on the M4 a few miles outside the town.

Wales News Online is run from the same office and carries news from throughout Wales. Funding comes from advertising, with a Welsh Government grant of £200,000 helping to pay for journalists. “We are churning out more content than any local newspaper,” says Evans.

However, Carmarthenshire Council does not place notices with Llanelli Online as it does not “conform to the definition of a newspaper”. A monthly print magazine closed after six editions as it did not attract enough advertising.

Around the UK, some independent news websites appear

“  
It’s hard to make money out of journalism or from the internet as a journalist if you want to provide community news, but it’s not impossible

to be flourishing more than others. It is not unusual to find sites with broken links, and contact details for journalists (including phone numbers) can be elusive.

“The sector is incredibly diverse,” says Matt Abbott, pointing out that creating a news website carries the same risk as any business start-up. Some are run by journalists who spot a news gap locally but rely on other jobs to make a living.

In some cases, a title may start online and then a print edition is launched to attract more advertising. Others start as protest magazines and expand or disappear. “It’s not just financial pressures that may mean a business fails,” he adds. “It can be personal issues such as family problems.”

Back in Southampton, Churchward is aware that, since its launch, everyone has provided articles for In Common for free. The article on hedgehogs was written by her web designer, while another volunteer is photographer Chris Moorhouse, a colleague at the Echo before he was made redundant in 2017.

Moorhouse, also a freelance, is pleased to be involved with a media outlet that values good pictures rather than using those by “reporters with iPhones”.

In the long run, Churchward would like to pay contributors. Perhaps £10 per hour in line with the living wage, although that throws up the issue of whether non-journalists should receive the same as journalists.

For now, she is pleased that her site is helping to cement community cohesion in Southampton. “I didn’t want to lose that sense of community,” she says. “I always valued being able to give people a voice.”

by **Tim Lezard**

# arts

**Film >**

**Richard Jewell**

*On general release*

The role of the US media comes under scrutiny in this film about security guard Richard Jewell, who was vilified by journalists who falsely reported he was a terrorist. Directed by Clint Eastwood and based on true events, the film shows how Jewell found an explosive device at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, saving thousands of lives but, within days, became the FBI's number one suspect.

[www.warnerbros.co.uk/movies/richard-jewell](http://www.warnerbros.co.uk/movies/richard-jewell)

**Mr Jones**

*On general release*

If you thought fake news was a modern concept, this film about journalist Gareth Jones will make you think again. The ambitious Welshman travelled to the Soviet Union in 1933 and stumbled upon the Holodomor – the manmade famine that killed millions in Ukraine. Blanket coverage of the Communist Party's denial and



rubbing of Jones's work led to his expulsion from the country and possibly early death in China.

[www.facebook.com/MrJonesFilm/](https://www.facebook.com/MrJonesFilm/)

**Music >**

**Phil 'Swill' Odgers**

*Uke Town*

This limited edition double album from the Men They Couldn't Hang guitarist features 18 tracks, all written or played on a ukulele.

<https://tinyurl.com/vh2w4z6>



**Brutus**

*On tour*

Belgium-based Brutus merge different ideas and musical tastes: post-rock construction, metal dynamics with hardcore energy and prog rock, all laced with pure pop melodies. But don't let that put you off. Catch their unique sound this spring.

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

**Comedy >**

**Alexei Sayle**

*On tour*

The Young Ones star embarks on his

first stand-up tour in seven years, promising: "This tour won't be another arsehole talking about his girlfriend or the funny things his kids do or the funny things cats do or how he doesn't understand the internet or bleeding Brexit... This is ALEXEI F\*CKING SAYLE you'll be seeing." With PR like that...

[www.alexeisayle.me/appearances/](http://www.alexeisayle.me/appearances/)



**Grace Campbell**

*On tour*

Comedian Grace Campbell is a woman in her own right. She's also the daughter of Tony Blair's spin doctor Alastair, which explains the title of her show Why I'm Never Going Into Politics. Expect vagina jokes, mental health within Parliament, anecdotes of hanging out with Putin's kids plus trying (and failing) to bring the Labour Party back together.

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

**Jonathan Pie**

*On tour*

If no news is good news, then good news is fake news. And so exasperated reporter Jonathan Pie returns to the road once more to berate the people in power.

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

**Books >**

**Down in the Valley**

*Laurie Lee*

*Penguin Classics*

In this tribute to the Gloucestershire landscape that shaped him, Laurie Lee, the author of Cider With Rosie,

revisits his favourite pub, The Woolpack, winter skating, the church throughout the seasons and playing jazz records in the privy on a wind-up gramophone.

<https://tinyurl.com/wscovey>

**Outspoken**

*Deborah Coughlin*

*Ebury Publishing*

History didn't listen to women, but that never stopped them from speaking out. With contributions from Boudicca to Michelle Obama, via Joan of Arc, Virginia Woolf, Oprah Winfrey and Greta Thunberg, this is a celebration of outstanding and outspoken women everywhere.

<https://tinyurl.com/wfzd2jb>

**Theatre >**

**Kunene and the King**

*Ambassadors Theatre, London*

*Until March 28*

In John Kani's stunning reflection on 25 years since the fall of apartheid, ailing actor Jack Morris (played by Anthony Sher) is joined by live-in nurse Lunga Kunene (played by Kani). These very different characters are brought together by a passion for Shakespeare.

<https://kuneneandtheking.co.uk>



**King John**

*Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon*

*Until March 21*

Rosie Sheehy stars as King John in this rarely performed Shakespeare play. Set in the 1960s, this take on a nation in Europe-induced turmoil includes a massive food fight, a handbag-wielding cardinal and Charlotte Randle's heartbroken Constance.

[www.rsc.org.uk/king-john](http://www.rsc.org.uk/king-john)

**Poetry >**

**Yr Arwr**

The greatest honour for any Welsh poet is to win the chair at the National Eisteddfod; in 1917, no one collected the prize. Winner Ellis Humphrey Evans, known as Hedd Wyn, had died in the Battle of Passchendaele six weeks earlier. Read the original manuscript of the winning poem at the National Library of Wales.

<https://tinyurl.com/v4r9lzx>

**Spotlight >**

**Music reporting on the record**

**"Elvis Presley cost me my job" is a headline better suited to The Sport, but it appears in Graham Sharpe's book Vinyl Countdown.**

The NUJ life member, who you might know as a spokesperson for William Hill, explains how he went

to tribunal after a slanging match with his Harrow Weekly Post editor over a review copy of an Elvis LP.

"The editor tells me you called her a \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\*," the MD told him. "You should apologise to her immediately."

"If you think that, you're

a bigger \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*\* than she is."

"I think you should leave immediately."

There are other tales of his time as a cub reporter, including his passing-up of the first ever interview with the young Elton John and an astonishingly

frank admission from The Sweet frontman Brian Connolly.

Graham owns more than 3,000 LPs, and this amusing, entertaining and warm tome is a semi-autobiographical love letter to records, record collecting/collectors, and secondhand record shops.

[www.oldcastlebooks.co.uk/vinyl-countdown](http://www.oldcastlebooks.co.uk/vinyl-countdown)

# We need to act now to save the BBC



The corporation is in ministers' sights, says **Raymond Snoddy**

**T**he trouble with the BBC is that when the time comes for difficult decisions to be taken, it is never entirely straightforward.

When BBC Three was turned into BBC III and taken off the air as a broadcast channel – one of the first in the world to go online only – it was dressed up as a way to find absent younger viewers.

It was that in part, but the channel lost enormous visibility as a result and the main motivation for the move was to cut costs.

It would have been better if the BBC had come clean about that.

When outgoing BBC director general Lord Tony Hall negotiated the current royal charter, he declared it a great deal overall.

It was not. The best that could be said of it was that it might just have been the best deal possible in difficult political circumstances.

It contained the time bomb that is about to go off this year – the BBC's accepting, under duress, responsibility for free licences for the over 75s.

Wisely, the BBC exercised its right not to continue free licences for all over 75s, which would have cost £750 million a year rising to £1 billion by the end of the decade.

Instead the corporation agreed to fund free licences for those over 75 on pension support at a cost of around £250 million a year.

And it is that bill and the need to make other savings that lie at the heart of the reason why 450 jobs are going to be lost at BBC news and current affairs, including the closure of the Victoria Derbyshire programme on television.

At least £80 million has to be saved by 2022 and that, inevitably, will mean 450 jobs will be lost.

Once again, it is being partly dressed up as an act of modernisation, a move towards reaching younger viewers, many of whom have deserted traditional broadcast news for online and mobile, for YouTube and Instagram.

Yes but. While there has always been room for reducing duplication at the BBC, are fewer journalists, programmes and stories really the answer to a significant problem?

Better by far to acknowledge the primary truth – cost cutting – and direct the blame at those responsible: a bullying Conservative government and, to a lesser extent, BBC top management and members of the then BBC Trust who probably acquiesced too much.

The loss of so many good people at BBC news is painful and, alas, things are almost certainly going to get worse – perhaps much worse.

Over the years, governments of all political persuasions have fallen out with the BBC, particularly during general election campaigns.

But, until now, there has been nothing like the oafish behaviour of Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his extraordinary chief adviser Dominic Cummings, a long-term opponent of the BBC and its licence fee.

The list of attacks on broadcasters is frightening – from the ban on ministers appearing on the Today programme to threats that Channel 4's licence could be reviewed after the channel used a block of ice to replace the missing Johnson at the leaders' climate change debate.

Then there were the allegations of bias against the BBC for its Brexit and general election coverage and aggressive reaction to Andrew Neil when he fought back against Johnson's failure to turn up for his election interview.

These things could pass but the evidence of underlying malice is more substantial and dangerous.

Johnson said the BBC should 'cough up' the money for the free licences without any apparent knowledge or interest in the implications. He then added, completely inaccurately, that the BBC had agreed to pay.

Johnson wants to look at the decriminalisation of the licence fee, something that looks reasonable but would actually be deeply damaging.

A previous Conservative government appointed David Perry QC in 2015 to investigate and he found the current system was, overall, in the public interest. Decriminalisation would increase evasion and the BBC estimates the bill would be 200 million a year.

It is the threat to the licence fee, which is now under formal consultation, that is most alarming.

Could Johnson use his large majority to try to overturn a royal charter agreement protecting the licence fee until 2027 and bring in a subscription system?

Would he dare to use the mid-term review in 2022 – the BBC's anniversary year – to go for a crowd-pleasing licence fee cut?

Be warned: there has never been a Conservative government like this one, and the fight to save the BBC from its clutches should start now.

**“**  
**The list of attacks on broadcasters is frightening - from the ban on ministers appearing on the Today programme to threats to Channel 4's licence**  
**”**



# Your Say...

inviting letters, comments, tweets



Please keep comments to 200 words maximum

Email to: [journalist@nuj.org.uk](mailto:journalist@nuj.org.uk)  
Post to: The Journalist, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB  
Tweet to: @mschrisbuckley

£30 prize letter



## Journalist article on NUJ charity got great results

On behalf of the beneficiaries and trustees of NUJ Extra, may I thank Ruth Addicott for the excellent explanation of the work of NUJ Extra. The payment that changed my life, October/November 2019). As a direct result of the article appearing: three members volunteered as welfare officers; one member set up a Gift-Aided monthly donation; four members enquired about the charity helping them; one branch set up a monthly donation; and two branches made one-off donations.

None of these members knew about NUJ Extra before your article.

A lack of space meant you listed only one online fundraising method. The full list is: Easyfundraising, TheGivingMachine, GoRaise, Give as you Live and Amazon Smile, as well as setting up a fundraiser on Facebook.

Despite the payments per purchase often being in pence, these methods contribute £100s each quarter. Many are automatic once online shoppers sign up, without any extra user input. I urge online shoppers to enrol with one or more of these and select NUJ Extra as their chosen charity.

You can also donate via payroll giving, Gift Aid, using our online Caf Bank donate page, setting up sponsorship pages through the likes of JustGiving or Virgin Money Giving and in wills.

Thanks for all The Journalist's support.

**Chris Wheal**  
Chair, NUJ Extra

back in No 10 with an increased majority, workers' rights facing more restriction, longer prison sentences and, most likely, empty promises on ending austerity.

As trade unionists, we could do with just a little bit of mere anarchy to show the government of this country who should really be in charge – the people.

**Donnacha Delong**  
London

### Catch up with 400 years of regal history

I was disappointed to see a reference to our present monarch as the 'Queen of England' in the Journalist (Why did the media not ask the Irish question?, December 2019).

England has not had its own queen since 1603 (more than four centuries ago – surely long enough for anyone to have caught up), yet such references are common even in good newspapers and magazines.

To paraphrase a Guardian letter-writer on a day a few years ago when I was doing a shift on the letters desk – and you wonder why a lot of Scots want independence.

**Sheila Miller**  
London

### Serious words on Europe are needed, not jokes

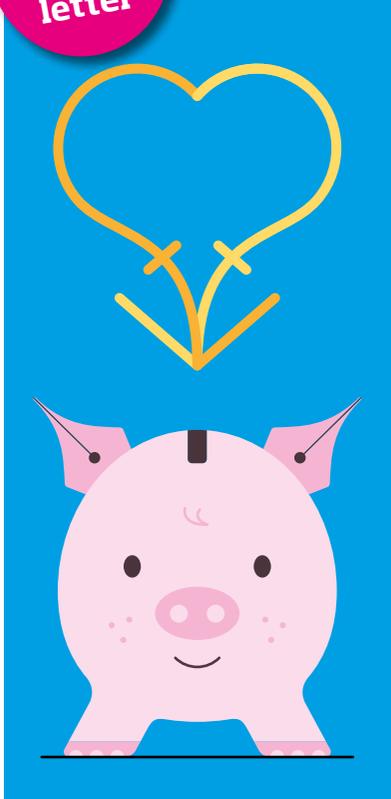
Nick Inman's letter is greatly appreciated (Journalism fails public duties over Brexit, Letters, December 2019).

This time last year, some of us were bemoaning the lack of a Ladybird book on the EU: not a clever, flippant joke book but a coherent, well-researched 52-page guide to what it is, how it works and the pros and cons of membership.

But here we are a year later and it's still needed – for most journalists, never mind the general public. (And not to mention members of parliament.)

**Susi Arnott**  
London

DENIS CARRIER



### The East End News opened doors to many

It's a pity there was no room in Phil Chamberlain's piece about the alternative press (Paste-up politics, December 2019) for the weekly East End News, which was also represented at the Bristol event.

Founded after a series of industrial disputes by members of London East NUJ Branch, including Aidan White, Kate Holman, Phil Mellows and myself, it broke new ground as a workers' and readers' cooperative backed by the union and the tenants' movement.

At the time, it was also a beacon for diversity when journalism was even whiter than it is today. NUJ stalwarts such as Beulah Ainley, George Alagiah, Arjum Wajid and photographers Chi Chan and David McCalla began their careers on the paper. Ian Cobain, Zeld

Curtis and Sally Hibbin, who went on to produce films with Ken Loach, were among our contributors. Val McCalla, who edited our Black Voices page, would eventually turn it into The Voice newspaper. Viv Walt went on to become an award-winning foreign correspondent with Time magazine, and Len Brown became a TV producer.

And as well as featuring women sports reporters – another rarity in the early 1980s – we had Gladys, Cath Jackson's scathing cartoon character tearing a strip off politicians and the prevalent racism and sexism of the day, alongside work by many graphic artists who honed their skills with us.

Sadly, we lacked the business acumen to keep it going, but it was fun while it lasted and we learned a lot.

**Mike Jempson**  
Bristol

### Anarchy in the UK? If only that were the case

Séamus Dooley asked in the last issue if Brexit presents a vision of anarchy in the UK (Why did the media not ask the Irish question?, December 2019).

Anarchy is a situation where government and social hierarchies cease to exist and power rests with the people.

WB Yeats knew this well, as he was acquainted with anarchists including William Morris, Oscar Wilde and Jack White. It might even have been a dig, similar to his reminiscences of the rebel sisters Eva and Constance Gore-Booth:

Two girls in silk kimonos, both Beautiful, one a gazelle.

Alas, what we have not got in the UK is anarchy. We have the opposite – another Bullingdon Club member

**Why didn't you vote?**

I was delighted to read that Christine Buckley had been reappointed as editor of The Journalist. I think she has done an excellent job.

But an 11.2 percent turnout? Pretty disgraceful, folks.

**Graeme Giles**  
Life Member, Perth

**Employers need to understand migraines**

Migraines can have significant effects on people's working lives.

Many journalists do shift work and have stressful roles, working to tight deadlines, both of which are common triggers for migraine. That is why it is crucial that the lack of awareness and understanding of migraine in workplaces is urgently tackled in the media industry.

While employers cannot always prevent a member of staff having a migraine, they can make a significant difference to how it affects their work.

They should take it seriously as a complex neurological condition and make reasonable adjustments once they become aware that they have an employee whose migraine is affecting their day-to-day activities.

The Migraine Trust has produced Help at Work, which provides information about how to manage migraine in the workplace. It can be downloaded from [migrainetrust.org/asking-for-support](http://migrainetrust.org/asking-for-support).

Our advocacy service can be reached via our website ([migrainetrust.org](http://migrainetrust.org)) or by calling 020 3951 0150.

We urge anyone who struggles at work because of migraine to contact us.

**Helen Balami**  
The Migraine Trust

**Media should recognise the value of video games**

All too often, I see misreporting around competitive video games (aka esports) in mainstream publications or broadcasts.

Esports is one of the fastest-growing and exciting activities of the past decade and is now a \$1 billion industry. However, I still see journalists and newsreaders covering this space with archaic views on video games as a waste of time, or something that is done by people with no life. This could not be further from the truth.

Actually, esports have a range of intrinsic benefits. These run from developing teamwork, leadership and communication skills to boosted reaction times and even increased attendance levels in schools that have esports clubs.

I implore anyone reading this who is planning to cover esports to do their research and put any preconceived ideas to one side.

Reach out to the gaming community – they want mainstream coverage to be fair, accurate and interesting.

The gaming revolution is coming. Are you sure that you and your publication are ready for it?

**Dominic Sacco**  
Esports News UK

**twitter feed**

Tweet us your feedback: [@mschrisbuckley](https://twitter.com/mschrisbuckley)



**The Southern Star** (@SouthernStarIRL) 09:44 AM · Dec 20, 2019  
Lovely letter about us in the current edition of the [@NUOfficial's](https://twitter.com/NUOfficial) #Journalist magazine, which circulates in both the UK and Ireland. We couldn't have said it better ourselves! 'West Cork's social media for 130 years!'! [@local\\_ireland](https://twitter.com/local_ireland) #journalismmatters pic.twitter.com/a5Tml7RXkQ

**Denis MacShane** @DenisMacShane 1:13 PM · Dec 19, 2019  
Congratulations [@mschrisbuckley](https://twitter.com/mschrisbuckley) on handsome re-election as editor of The Journalist – a key paper linking all British Isles jounos together

**And now for something completely different...**

We're academics (Nottingham Trent University and City University) looking for journalists to join in a new project to tell their 'stories' live on stage.

The idea is to present and explain stories to an audience who will be asked not to pass them on before they're published. Similar events have taken off in a few countries, inspired by the US Pop-Up Magazine.

We're hoping to put on a couple of News on Stage shows (which could each include five or six journalists) this spring in London and at a summer festival in Sussex.

You'd be coached and supported to make a 10-15 minute exclusive spoken version of your story, which could be

enhanced by audio-visuals or other theatrical devices as appropriate.

For some this will be an opportunity to hone their story-telling skills, develop their stage presence and public speaking and to do a bit of networking, but for others it will just be fun!

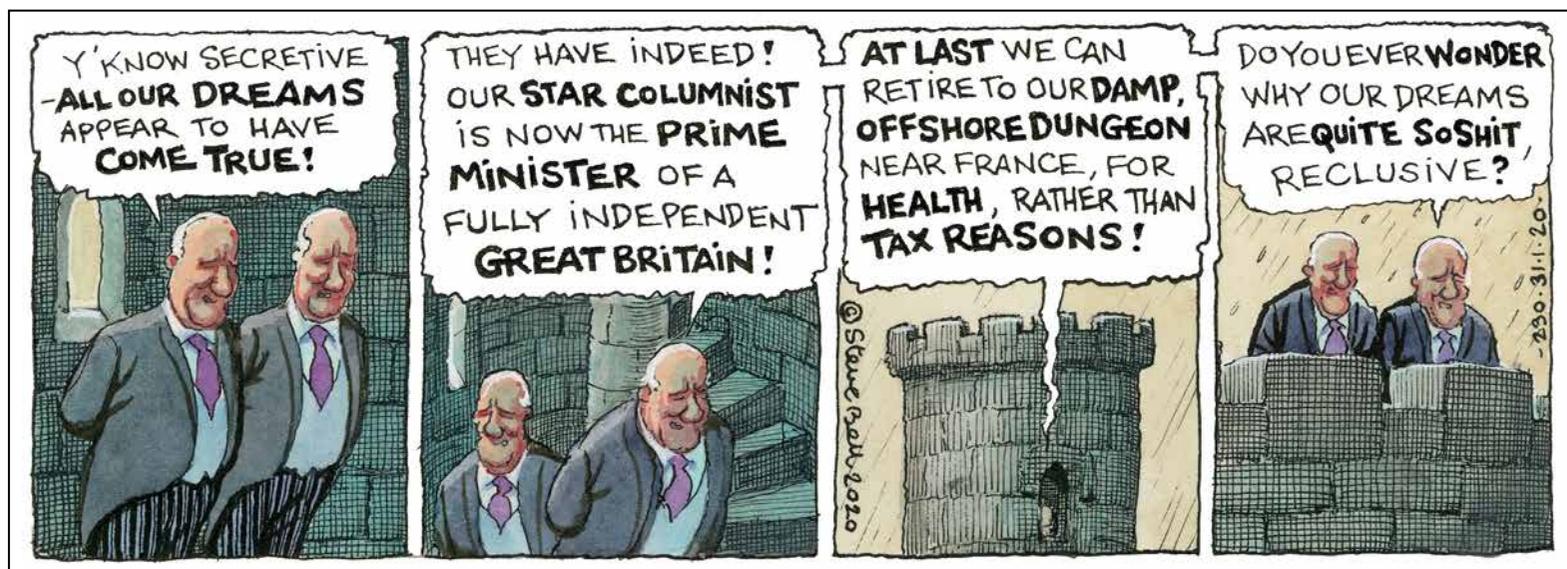
It's also a chance to be involved in and shape this ground-breaking 'live journalism' format, which we are studying as part of our academic work to find ways of winning back audience trust and credibility in journalism.

If you're interested please email [catherine.adams@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:catherine.adams@ntu.ac.uk) or [glenda.cooper@city.ac.uk](mailto:glenda.cooper@city.ac.uk).

Thank you!  
**Catherine Adams**  
and **Dr Glenda Cooper**  
Nottingham, London

**STEVE BELL**

**THE OWNERS**



and finally...

# Politicians must be spiky or spiked



Calm in the Commons makes poor news, says **Chris Proctor**

**N**otebook-bearers from the nationals file into the Churchill dining room at the end of the corridor as you leave the Strangers' Bar in the Commons. It's lunchtime and everyone's in search of a bite; some are after food as well. The occasion is one of the regular lunches organised by the Parliamentary Press Gallery. It always features a talk by some Westminster personage.

"Who's the speaker?" I ask.

"The speaker."

"Yes, who's the speaker?."

"Yes, he's the speaker."

It seems the speaker's the speaker. Lindsay Hoyle by name. I've often thought it's an unusual moniker for a lad who went to school in Bolton. Maybe I'm more sensitive about these things than most. I remember the sweaty-palmed nights before a new school term started in Liverpool, knowing the next day I'd have to own up to 35 junior hooligans that my middle name is 'Heffernan'.

The speaker had different problems, he tells us. His election as MP for Chorley in 1997 coincided with the arrival of a number of women MPs the press decided to dub 'Blair's babes'. This soubriquet is a terrible embarrassment to our profession but it was particularly galling for Lindsay, who discovered himself numbered among the group. They had assumed 'Lindsay' to be a girl's name. So did Emily's List and various Labour women groups, who contacted him to ask if he'd care to affiliate.

His half-hour address was disappointingly decent. He said he wanted to be fair and impartial while

hoping he could be chums with everyone. To general irritation, he appeared to be a thoroughly decent bloke. Rumbblings of discontent were more evident than sounds of scribbling. I mean, no one minds politicians being seemly in the privacy of their own homes but they have some sort of duty to the media. 'Nice bloke wants to be pleasant' isn't going to make anyone popular with the news desk.

Someone asked about breastfeeding in the Chamber and hopes rose for at least the suggestion of bigotry or prudishness. No, Lindsay said, he didn't mind. He didn't think it should be mandatory but, apart from that, was relaxed about the issue. 'Relaxed' is not how the lobby likes to see its politicians. It prefers them aggressive, assertive or plain mad. It likes them newsworthy. Hoyle was not helping.

By some process undiscerned by observers, the lobby decided to operate the 'extract quote' manoeuvre. A cherubic figure put up his hand nicely.

(Readers will understand that the term 'cherubic' when applied to parliamentary reporters deviates widely from its use in an ecclesiastical context. In Westminster, it is best defined as 'non-demonic').

Waxing innocence and integrity, the seraph enquired: 'Will you be taking measures against bullying, Mr Speaker?'

The room was filled with the sound of clicking biros and opening notepads, or at least the rapid production of pencils and smoothing of paper napkins. A pin dropping on the five-ply carpet would not have passed unheard. The speaker was being herded into the pen.

The one answer he cannot come up with is: 'No.' Quite frankly, no one in their right mind – and I exclude the US president here – is going to stand up in front of a swarm of scribblers and say: 'No, I'm not bothered about bullying.'

He looks quite surprised that anyone could ask him this. "Look," he says, peering down at us from his trim and gangling height, sincerity seeping from every sinew. "I want everyone in this village to feel safe and happy at their work." Under his stewardship, bullying would not be tolerated. "The bullying culture is over," he said.

All hell let loose.

"So, you are admitting that bullying has been rampant?"

"What I was saying..."

"If you're saying you're going to stamp it out..."

"I think I said..."

"... it's got to exist or you wouldn't want to take measures against it."

By coincidence, David Leakey, the former Black Rod who the previous day had submitted damning allegations about Hoyle's predecessor John Bercow, happened to be at the lunch and, surprisingly, was to be found standing at the doorway, available for comment.

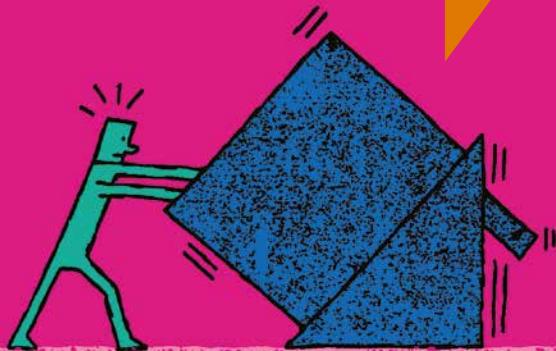
No one bothers with dessert (there wasn't one) and scribes jostle to be first on line with the story: that "Lindsay Hoyle declares end to Bercow era as he vows to stamp out bullying in Parliament" (Express), or "New Commons speaker has declared Parliament's bullying culture over, in a veiled swipe at his predecessor" (Independent).

Smiles are exchanged all round. 'Very useful lunch,' it is agreed.

"Who are we having for dinner?"

**No one minds politicians being seemly in the privacy of their own homes but they have some sort of duty to the media**

# Moved house or changed your email address?



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**REASONS  
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## **Ending the Gender Pay Gap**

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

**Are you keeping good company?**

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**[nuj.org.uk/join](http://nuj.org.uk/join)**

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