

the Journalist

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The fight for local news grows more crucial by the day as the BBC in England presses ahead with cuts to services and newspapers devalue the role of local journalists, with skeleton staff, little or no community presence and poor pay and conditions.

The NUJ has been confronting such destruction with a strike at National World, the regional publisher, and a ballot for industrial action across the BBC.

And it's not only the important local news, such as council and court reporting, that is suffering, it is those original, off-diary stories that tell a picture of local life. Our great cover feature by freelance radio reporter Stephanie Power shows how radio packages that shine a light on the sometimes quirky, sometimes prescient, and usually entertaining slices of life are becoming almost extinct because of BBC radio consolidation.

We also have the inside story of Byline Times' pursuit of Dan Wootton, a feature on a pilot scheme to open up family court reporting and universities joining with media organisations to provide better education for tomorrow's journalists.

And Raymond Snoddy looks at the legacy of Rupert Murdoch as the media mogul steps back from executive leadership of his media interests.

I hope you enjoy the latest edition of The Journalist.

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Totto Renna

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Access all the latest NUJ news and views by scanning the QR code here or by visiting www.nuj.org.uk



NUJ urges new National World talks as it buys more papers

THE NUJ has urged regional publisher National World to return to pay talks amid prolonged industrial action by members.

In an open letter to staff on behalf of the group chapel, Laura Davison, NUJ national organiser, said journalists were showing just how determined they are to fight for a decent pay increase for all editorial staff following the imposition of a 4.5 per cent offer after months of negotiations collapsed.

The letter said the pay offer, a real terms pay cut, will mean that a newly-qualified senior reporter on some weekly titles will get as little as £22,753 per year while an equivalent role on the flagship Yorkshire Post will carry a £26,855 salary. It pointed out that the minimum senior reporter rate at Reach had risen to £31,200.

As the company refused talks, it paid £11 million for a series of newspapers in the West Midlands and Staffordshire - the Express & Star and the Shropshire Star. It is also understood that it is keen to begin talks over a potential £600m bid for the Daily Telegraph.

While National World wants to expand elsewhere, it recently implemented compulsory and voluntary redundancies of more than 50 of its approximately 700 journalists.

So far NUJ members have taken three days of strike action, on 18, 22 and 25 September and have worked to rule since 19



KEVIN COOPER

September meaning journalists only undertake contracted duties and hours. Journalists at titles across the UK and Ireland including at The Scotsman, The Yorkshire Post, Belfast's News Letter and Sheffield Star have participated in the first company-wide walkout.

You can show your support for members at National World and sign a petition to chairman David Montgomery at www.nuj.org.uk/nationalworldstrike

inbrief...

BBC LOCAL RADIO IS 'LESS LOCAL'

The BBC's policy of greater sharing of programming across the local radio network "risks undermining the sense of localness", says the cross-party Culture, Media and Sport Committee. Together with the Digital First policy, which is shifting local news from linear radio to online, it is diminishing the BBC service, the committee says.

CALL FOR TOUGHER SPYWARE RULES

Eighty organisations including the NUJ have urged members of the European Parliament to recognise the dangers of spyware against journalists and call for its prohibition under the European Media Freedom Act. The move comes ahead of a vote by MEPs on the draft act.

MISLEADING CLAIM OVER GROOMING

The Mail on Sunday published a clarification on a 'misleading' claim about grooming gangs made by the Home Secretary Suella Braverman. However, the press regulator IPSO said that the newspaper had not breached the Editors' Code of Practice.

BBC-wide ballot over compulsory job cuts

THE UNION has voted to move to a formal ballot of all members at the BBC for industrial action in opposition to any compulsory redundancies at the corporation. There are currently NUJ members facing the prospect

of compulsory redundancy in the World Service, the News Channel, and across England at BBC Local. The NUJ believes with redeployment and flexibility these can be averted. Feedback from members across the BBC point to

morale being at an all-time low, and reps from across England gave stark insights into the impact of the chaotic roll-out of the restructure in their own newsrooms. Staff have to put up with inadequate technology, long delays, critical roles

remaining unfilled and plans that will cut local radio content by almost half. The NUJ continues to believe a resolution to the BBC Local dispute is possible – with genuine and meaningful engagement with the BBC's decision makers.

BBC 'King of the Package' abdicated

IN AN exclusive interview for The Journalist, BBC veteran Mark Mardell has revealed the main reason why he left the corporation after 30 years.

He said managers were failing to devote resources to 'packages' – local interviews and reportage which illuminate big national stories. Until November 2020, Mardell was the presenter of The World This Weekend and known by his editor as the 'king of the package'. He used to put together a 12 or 15-minute radio essay every week, delving into one of the key political stories. He tells The Journalist: "I haven't really talked about this before, but one of the reasons I left the BBC – the main reason – was that they wanted to cut back my hours for making The World This Weekend. I didn't want to lose the salary, but also I didn't want to lose the production time for packages. I was told that they didn't want them any more."



Murdoch steps down at News Corp

Rupert Murdoch will step down as chairman of News Corporation and Fox Corporation in November. The 92-year-old will become chairman emeritus of each company and continue to provide input. His son Lachlan will chair the publishing company News Corp and continue as executive chair and chief executive of Fox. Murdoch's decision came out of the blue and his contribution to the media in the UK was greeted with approbation by some but condemnation by the labour movement which has never forgiven him for the Wapping dispute. **Raymond Snoddy, page 9**

Unions share concerns in AI focus group

SEVERAL NUJ delegates took part in an artificial intelligence (AI) focus group with other unions to share their concerns about its impact on jobs, copyright infringement, lack of oversight, accountability and other issues affecting the creative industries, *Jenny Sims writes*.

Held in Cardiff and organised by Wales TUC in partnership with King’s College London and the Connected By Data campaign, it was the first in a series of AI workshops to help the TUC gather evidence to challenge planned laws governing the use of AI which it fears will weaken worker protection in the creative industries.

Other unions represented in the Focus Group included BECTU, Equity, the Writers’ Guild of Great Britain and Cult Cymru.

Issues discussed included: AI using people’s work without permission or payment; copyright infringement; people losing work and income as AI is used to generate content; the increased spread of misinformation through AI-generated content; and AI being used to recruit and select new staff.

A range of real-life examples to illustrate these issues included actors’ voices and likenesses being used without consent, and people signing up for work sessions where they were unwittingly training AI systems to replace them.

Research, policy positions and campaign actions and plans were shared and links to reports given. For example, the Writers’ Guild has recently produced a report, which has common ground with other unions’ policies (<https://writersguild.org.uk/ai>). Its recommendations include:

- AI developers should use writers’ work only if they have been given express permission to do so
- Where content has been generated by AI and not a human being, this needs to be clearly labelled
- The government should not allow any copyright exceptions to allow text and data mining for commercial purposes
- There should also be clear, accessible and affordable routes for writers to challenge the practices of AI developers and bring claims regarding the use of their work.

Equity, as part of its Stop Stealing the Show campaign, which says the law is not keeping pace with rapid changes that AI has brought to the entertainment industry, has issued a toolkit for members to protect their rights.

The NUJ has produced an AI briefing (<https://tinyurl.com/22afthts>) and is developing further advice.

AI could erode trust in media - pages 6-7



People were signing up for work sessions where they were unwittingly training AI systems to replace them



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Government takes action against gagging law

THE NUJ has welcomed a government-backed initiative on strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPS) – legal action often brought by the rich and powerful against journalists to impede reporting.

A new task force has been set up by the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists to consider non-legislative approaches to tackle the use of the abusive lawsuits.

The committee is made up of representatives from the government, journalism, policing, prosecution services and civil society to make sure journalists are able to operate free from threats and violence.

Séamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary,



said it marked a significant step in tackling the scourge of litigation aimed at crushing freedom of expression and the work of journalists.

“The NUJ has been to the fore in highlighting the impact of SLAPPs at a national level and internationally through our role in the European Federation of Journalists and the International Federation of Journalists,” he said.

“We welcome our inclusion on the government’s SLAPPS taskforce and will strive to secure an end to the abuse of legal processes to silence our members.

The UK Anti-SLAPP Coalition, of which the NUJ is a member, said that effective measures to protect against SLAPPs required more than legislation. These would include stronger regulation as well as wider cultural change.

Examples of SLAPPs include defamation lawsuits brought by Roman Abramovich against Catherine Belton over her book *Putin’s People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West* – legal action that was condemned by the NUJ.

Another lawsuit was brought in October 2021 by Kazakh mining company Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation (ENRC) against journalist Tom Burgis, his publisher Harper Collins and employer the Financial Times.

ENRC stated claims in Burgis’ book *Kleptopia: How Dirty Money is Conquering the World*, were highly damaging.

A high court judge ruled in favour of Burgis, dismissing the case brought by ENRC against the journalist and Harper Collins.

ENRC eventually dropped its lawsuit against the Financial Times.

inbrief...

BRAND HEADLINE ‘DISGUSTING’

Sunday Times media editor Rosamund Urwin, who led the investigation into allegations of sexual assaults by Russell Brand, has criticised other newspapers for sensationalism in follow-ups. Urwin said reporting of alleged sexual offences had to be ‘incredibly carefully and delicately done’. She said a headline in one unnamed paper was ‘frankly disgusting’.

MORE JOURNALISTS BANNED BY RUSSIA

Russia has banned dozens more British journalists from entering the country, the foreign ministry said. Senior British journalists working for the BBC, The Guardian and The Daily Telegraph were among the latest group. The editors-in-chief of the Independent, The Guardian, The Times, The Daily Telegraph and the Daily Mail had already been banned.

REVENUE GROWS AT NEWSQUEST

Regional news publisher Newsquest Media Group reported a growth in revenues last year, staying in profit despite being hit by higher energy and newsprint costs. Revenues rose by six per cent to £150.6 million in the year to 31 December 2022, but pre-tax profits were down 38 per cent.

War photos bought by university

PHOTOGRAPHS and film depicting life in refugee camps and the devastating impact of war have been purchased by Durham University to go on public display. *One Day Changes* is

a series of 24 photographs and a film shot by Ako Ismail from the Kurdistan region of Iraq and Shaho Omar from Kirkuk, Iraq. Both are NUJ members supported by the Sunderland branch.

They previously worked as photojournalists reporting on the impact of conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

Their evocative black-and-white images show the devastation brought by war

– but there are also messages of hope.

Omar said: “We focus on the children because they are a symbol of hope. We show the love in the refugee camp and the signs of affection that you would never normally see in public.”

Irish life members honoured

EIGHT NUJ members were honoured for their life membership at a ceremony in Galway City in September, hosted by the NUJ West of Ireland branch.

At the event, members from Galway and Mayo celebrated the commitment of those who have belonged to the union for 40 years or more.

President of Ireland Michael D Higgins paid tribute to them “as guardians of our democracy at its grassroots”.

Those honoured were Bernie Ní Fhlatharta, Francis Farragher, John McIntyre, Joe O’Shaughnessy, Tom Gilmore, Ray Ryan, Máirtín Davy Ó Coisdealbha and Frank Dolan.

Ní Fhlatharta, a journalist with the Connacht Tribune for 34 years and one of the early stars of Irish-language television, was presented with NUJ Gold Badge for extraordinary services to the union.



Let’s get real with the royals

Former head of Sky News John Ryley has described journalists as ‘supine’, ‘incurious’ and ‘compliant’ when reporting the royal family. Delivering the RTS/Media Society Steve Hewlett lecture, he urged journalists to start reporting on the royals with the same rigour used for all other stories. Ryley, who stepped down from Sky News in May after 17 years in charge, also: called for an end to the ‘obsession’ with Westminster gossip; warned that advertisers boycotting GB News were a threat to democracy; and said minority political parties should be dropped from televised general election leader debates.

Unions to fight back over law on service levels during strike

Reports by
Kath Grant

“
These laws haven’t
been designed to
resolve conflict at
work - they’ve been
designed to escalate it

Paul Nowak
TUC general secretary

TRADE union leaders are launching a wide-ranging campaign against controversial legislation on minimum public service levels during industrial action.

The TUC said the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act passed earlier this year placed ‘severe and unacceptable restrictions’ on workers’ rights to take industrial action.

Proposing a composite motion on the law, NASUWT general secretary Dr Patrick Roach said the public was being denied services because of underinvestment – not because of workers taking lawful industrial action.

He added: “Our legal action against attempts to use agency workers to break strike action resulted in a high court declaration that the government’s actions were unlawful.”



JESS HURD

The law was, he said “a pernicious and vindictive piece of legislation and we will resist it by any means available to us”.

Seconding the motion, RMT leader Mick Lynch called for a strategy of non-compliance and non-cooperation – including industrial action – to make the new minimum service level laws unworkable.

“That’s what we have to do,” he urged. “We are a fighting workers’ movement and we are going to lead that fightback.”

Fire Brigades Union leader Matt Wrack said the law would deny some workers their right to strike. The motion was a ‘message of defiance’, signalling that “this government’s nasty and authoritarian agenda will be

vigorously opposed by the trade union movement”, he said.

Under the legislation, public sector employers have to issue a work notice in advance of taking industrial action, specifying which staff are necessary to provide a minimum level of service.

Unions that do not comply could face legal action and the named staff could be sacked.

The TUC has made a formal complaint to United Nations watchdog the International Labour Organisation, and legal options are being explored.

TUC general secretary Paul Nowak (pictured, centre) said: “These laws haven’t been designed to resolve conflict at work – they’ve been designed to escalate it. They’re unworkable, undemocratic and almost certainly in breach of international law.”

JESS HURD

Key workers priced out of housing

THE UK’S shortage of affordable housing is causing a crisis in the recruitment and retention of key workers, union leaders have said.

A motion condemned the failure of successive governments to provide safe, affordable housing, particularly for low-paid key workers.

NASUWT president Rosemary Carabine said that 71 per cent

of teachers under 30 were questioning whether they would remain in the profession long term because of housing costs.

“The lack of affordable housing deters potential candidates from even considering applying to teach or work in some areas,” she said.

Jane Jones, president of shopworkers’ union Usdaw,

added: “Soaring rents are forcing key workers, such as shop workers and delivery drivers, out of communities.

“We urgently need to move away from the broken status quo, where people are having to hand over a massive chunk of their wages each month to pay off their landlord’s mortgage.”



ANDREW WIARD



Call for free school meals for all

THERE are more food banks in the UK than branches of McDonald’s, Ian Murray of the Fire Brigades’ Union told congress. In a debate on ending child poverty, he said it was a national disgrace that children were going to bed hungry and parents who were once choosing between heating and eating could no longer afford to do either.

While the cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated child poverty, large numbers of children remain ineligible for free school meals. The British Dietetic Association said universal free school meals would improve children’s health and ability to learn and congress agreed unanimously to campaign for the policy.

AI could erode trust in media

NUJ delegate Steve Bird (pictured), chair of the Financial Times group chapel, described artificial intelligence technology as “a tidal wave coming towards us”.

The introduction of AI into workplaces is far outstripping control, he said, and even AI pioneers are concerned about its rapid and unchecked development.

He was speaking on a composite motion about how AI allows systems to generate text and images.

He said it could breach copyright and threaten jobs and freelance work. It undermined original content, resulting a further decline of public trust in the media. “How will we know what is real and what is fake?” Bird asked.

If the introduction of these technologies continued



JESS HURD

without consultation and agreement, it would have a negative impact on pay, conditions and workers’ rights.

Unite delegate Tommy Murphy said that the debate was not about holding back the tide of progress. “It’s about the terms on which it is introduced and who benefits.”

In call centres, AI voice analytics were being used to monitor calls and to judge the

pitch and tone of a worker’s voice “at every point of every call, to give a ‘sentiment’ rating,” he said.

“This level of surveillance is unheard of and is happening from workers’ own laptops and in their own homes.”

To delegates’ amusement, he said his speech had been written using AI on ChatGPT.

“If AI can automate Congress delegates, then truly nobody is safe!” he added.



This level of surveillance is unheard of and is happening from workers’ own laptops

Tommy Murphy
Unite delegate

inbrief...

GROWTH AND MORE DIVERSITY NEEDED

New TUC general secretary Paul Nowak said union membership must grow and become more diverse. “Despite the media coverage and the new activists, our membership is not growing. Many young workers support our campaigns, but they don’t join our unions. Reps need to reflect today’s workers – starting today, the TUC will train 500 new black activists every year.”

TRAIN TICKET OFFICE CLOSURES OPPOSED

NUJ delegates supported an emergency motion backing the RMT’s campaign against train ticket office closures. Describing the closure of ticket offices as ‘ableism in practice’, NUJ president Natasha Hirst said: “We live in a world that is designed to exclude us. When one group comes under attack, all our rights are at risk.”

FBU LEADER IS NEW TUC PRESIDENT

TUC president Maria Exall, an officer in the Greater London branch of the Communication Workers’ Union, chaired this year’s TUC Congress. She said priorities for the last year had included campaigning for workers’ rights and equality for all. The new president is Matt Wrack, leader of the Fire Brigades’ Union.

BBC wilfully weakened by frozen licence fee

FREEZING the BBC licence fee for a decade was “a deliberate and strategic undermining of public service broadcasting”, NUJ assistant general secretary Seamus Dooley said.

Seconding a composite motion on the future of the BBC, he said he was proud

of NUJ members who had taken strike action over cuts in BBC local radio.

BBC workers are public servants and the government’s attacks on the broadcaster were similar to those on health, education and welfare.

Dooley said the NUJ had asked the

BBC to undertake an urgent equality impact assessment of the damage to staff who were at risk of redundancy.

Naomi Pohl, of the Musicians’ Union, said the BBC was synonymous with music, but singers and orchestras had been subjected to widespread cuts.

Welfare system is harsh



JESS HURD

NUJ president Natasha Hirst spoke in support of a composite motion urging an end to punitive measures being used against people claiming benefits.

A lifelong disability activist, Hirst said the NUJ had done a

lot of work around the way the press reported on social security and, in particular, about disabled people who were often subjected to “inhumane and hateful rhetoric”.

The government’s policies were pushing disabled people into poverty. “They know that their policies are cutting away our access to independent living and cutting away our human rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People,” she added.



JESS HURD

Labour to boost workers’ rights, says Rayner

Labour’s deputy leader Angela Rayner promised “the biggest upgrade of workers’ rights in a generation” when she spoke at the TUC congress, where she received a standing ovation. She said Labour would strengthen protection for all workers by banning zero-hours contracts, ending fire and rehire, and removing qualifying periods for basic rights. “Labour’s New Deal for Working People will transform ordinary working people’s lives,” she said.

Probes into Dan Wootton are about more than him

Josiah Mortimer on reporting an uncomfortable issue



2012 GETTY IMAGES

When freelancers Dan Evans and Tom Latchem approached Byline Times with startling allegations about the now suspended GB News presenter Dan Wootton (pictured right) around six months ago, the paper's executive editor, Peter Jukes, was struck by how the story had remained obscured from public knowledge for so long.

Because at the heart of investigative journalism lies the idea that there is 'something somebody, somewhere, doesn't want you to know'.

For more than three years, Evans and Latchem had been examining allegations that The Sun's former celebrity columnist had been using online pseudonyms – including 'Martin Branning' and 'Maria Joseph' – to manipulate numerous men, including sex workers, celebrities and colleagues. Wootton has denied any illegal behaviour in response to the allegations.

Both Evans and Latchem had previously worked with Wootton at the News of the World. Evans came to prominence in 2013 during the phone-hacking trial. His honest testimony – and rare admission of phone hacking – played a pivotal role in the conviction of his ex-editor, Andy Coulson.

Both sifted through the whispers of potential deceit and revenge pornography linked to a high-profile media individual. They earned the trust of a considerable number of Wootton's former associates and amassed a large collection of emails and messages. The story was fraught with potential hazards.

They pressed on, and brought the story to Jukes' attention. All three

recognised the story's challenges but also its importance if it were verifiable.

Fast-forward a few months, and the media was aflame about Good Morning Britain host Phillip Schofield then BBC anchor Huw Edwards. More individuals came forward with allegations about Wootton.

By June, the two journalists had compiled a comprehensive report on Wootton and shared a 28-page dossier of their findings with the police. As they were gearing up to release their inaugural #MediaToo article and sought comment from GB News, Wootton and his prior employers, there was an immediate backlash.

Yet amid the torrent of legal threats, representatives for Wootton did not refute his ties to the pseudonyms used of engaging his alleged victims, although he has always insisted that he has not behaved unlawfully.

On 17 July, the story went live. Two days after publication, Wootton defended himself on his GB News show. But he also lashed out at our newspaper, condemning a so-called 'smear campaign' by 'dark forces'. Several alleged victims have since gone on the record to defend Byline Times' reporting.

Then it got nasty. Two days after their investigation went live, Evans noticed an attempt to infiltrate his online drive. Latchem found what appeared to be blood smeared on his car's window. The next day, they received an ominous email declaring

'blood will flow' in our newsroom.

Jukes received an anonymous phone call with a menacing message: "You'll regret this, Peter." All these incidents were reported to the police. (There is no suggestion Wootton was behind them.)

Investigative journalists are no strangers to legal threats. Jukes has encountered threats of physical harm and hacking attempts while reporting on Russian meddling in politics. Experiencing both at the same time, though, was unsettling.

The story caught the public eye and messages of support have flooded in from readers, viewers and previously targeted celebrities alike. Wootton has been suspended by GB News following controversy over a conversation with fellow presenter Laurence Fox who has also been suspended.

What has bewildered the team most was the media's collective muteness over the scandal. Why was it covered by just a handful of outlets? Was it legal worries? The media's habitual neglect of other outlets' exclusives? Or fear of a backlash?

While journalists have privately lauded our #MediaToo investigation, many refused to follow it up (the Guardian being a notable exception).

There is more to come, and on other issues. We're committed to uncovering toxic cultures. The more help we get, the better for journalism as a whole.

Josiah Mortimer is chief reporter for Byline Times

What has bewildered the team most was the media's collective muteness over the scandal

Murdoch's massive legacy will live on



Are his achievements outweighed by damage? asks **Raymond Snoddy**

Not many people get to read their own obituary. There are famous examples of premature publication,

from George Soros and Mark Twain to Alfred Nobel – who was able to note ruefully that a French newspaper had pronounced ‘the angel of death is dead’.

The case of Rupert Murdoch is slightly different. Standing down as co-chairman of both Fox Corporation and News Corp to become ‘chairman emeritus’ provoked a tidal wave of business and media ‘obituaries’.

The Murdoch move came as a big surprise. Former Sunday Times editor Andrew Neil was among those who remembered Murdoch had always predicted he would have to be carried out in a box rather than turn into an emeritus anything.

The reviews of his life were, as you would expect, a mixed bag. They ranged from those, many online, saying the world would have been a better place if he had never lived and that Murdoch and his media businesses were responsible for Trump in the US and Brexit in the UK.

There was the risibly self-serving statement beyond parody from the man himself, still, at the age of 92, fighting back against those dreadful elites ‘peddling political narratives rather than pursuing the truth’.

It sounds more than a little like an elite media owner.

In the main, the tone was like a respectful obituary, with many, including former editors, reluctant to speak ill of ‘the dead’, heaping praise on his love of newspapers and business acumen.

After all, he did turn a small inheritance of the Sunday Mail and the

News in Adelaide into a multi-billion global media empire.

To the Sun’s columnist Trevor Kavanagh, Murdoch was a gambler who could see round corners.

The words of two very different politicians, chancellor of the exchequer Jeremy Hunt and former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, sum up the Murdoch dilemma well.

To Corbyn, Murdoch has presided over a news empire that ‘poisoned global democracy’. Hunt concluded that Murdoch had been a formidable operator and, love him or loath him, had a ‘defining influence’ on all our lives over the past half century.

A number of crucial questions remain, and will remain for the foreseeable future.

Has he really gone or will he still be pulling the strings in a less public way?

Is the fictional Succession a reliable guide to what happens next – even though there is the crucial difference that Murdoch isn’t dead yet?

Will corporate successor Lachlan Murdoch emerge as his own man or was he always happy to go along with some mendacious policies of the past?

How will Murdoch’s legacy be judged, either now or when the real obituaries appear, and is a break-up of the empire inevitable?

Succession is great fun but a poor guide to reality. Lachlan was always the heir after James Murdoch excluded himself in disgust at the misinformation spouted by Fox News on climate change. Elisabeth has always wanted to do her own thing in independent television.

It is naïve to think that Murdoch is going away, other than in the corporate sense, anytime soon. As he said himself, he will be involved every day in the ‘contest of ideas’ and reaching out to

executives with thoughts and advice. You can be sure Lachlan will be getting the daily call and any abrupt change of direction would be a surprise.

But there has to be a real question mark over the newspaper part of the empire, never loved by investors, once he is no longer calling the shots.

A break-up is unlikely while Rupert is alive or actively involved. It was always Rupert who was the more attached and that attachment may not outlive him.

The Murdoch legacy is complex. On the positive side, there is the long and expensive support for The Times, although losses were heaped on the paper to recycle some of the profits of The Sun for tax advantage. The creation of Sky was and remains a triumph even though Murdoch no longer owns it.

However, these real achievements are far outweighed by the damage he has caused, not least by his role in helping to enable Brexit.

Even more serious and much more damning is the maintenance by Fox News of the great lie that Trump was cheated out of a second election victory.

Murdoch knew this was untrue but allowed the baseless claims to continue for fear of losing his right-wing audience and, with it, advertising revenue. It was the ultimate act of cynicism.

Murdoch has done incalculable harm to his adopted country that is still continuing, and he should never be forgiven for it.

Finally, what does the title chairman emeritus mean? We have Murdoch’s own words for that.

The late Frank Giles was given the title of editor emeritus of the Sunday Times on his departure. When Rupert Murdoch was questioned about it, he replied: “E is for exit and meritus is that he [expletive deleted] deserved it.”

“There is a real question mark over the newspaper part of the empire, never loved by investors, once he is no longer calling the shots”

Wrexham

Ruth Addicott goes to a newly-designated city with an A-list football club

Watching Wrexham AFC relegated from the Football League for the first time in 87 years, football writer and lifelong supporter Dave Jones thought it was all over.

It's not now.

Fast forward to 2023 and the club's fortunes have been transformed, giving not just the club but the whole town a new lease of life.

After surviving relegation, administration and multiple ownership, the club was taken over in 2021 by Hollywood duo Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney. Then, in April 2023, Wrexham won their first league title in 45 years.

The docu-series on the club's story, *Welcome to Wrexham*, has been shown all over the world and local reporters have been at the heart of it.

Jones, who has followed the club since he was a boy, began reporting on matches in 1987 when Wrexham was in Division Four of the Football League.

"It's still hard to believe," he says. "In years gone by, the best quality of pre-season opposition the club could have hoped for was a Football League Championship team or a Premier League giant's reserve or youth side. Suddenly, they are in the US, facing the likes of Chelsea and Manchester United."

Founded in 1864, Wrexham is the oldest football club in Wales and the third oldest in the world.

The town gained city status in 2022 as part of the Queen's platinum jubilee celebrations and is the largest city in north Wales, with a population of over 135,000.

The local newspaper is *The Leader*, which covers Wrexham and Flintshire.

It was previously known as *The Wrexham Evening Leader*, but switched from being an evening to a morning paper in 2009. It was acquired by Newsquest from NWN Media in 2017, along with 12 other north Wales titles, including the *North Wales Chronicle* in Bangor. The move led to cuts and redundancies across the region.

Nick Harrison, sports editor of the *Leader*, was born and bred in Wrexham and watched his first match aged five – a 2-1 win at home to Brighton in 1975. He joined *The Leader* in the late 1980s and covered Wrexham for broadsheet weekly *Wrexham Leader* – known locally as the *Big Leader*. He says the arrival of Reynolds and McElhenney has invigorated the town.

"We've had promotions, relegations, cup final wins and much turmoil to cover over the years," he says. "Richard Williams, our Wrexham reporter, has missed just a handful of games during the 15 years in non-league, and he got the first interview with Rob and Ryan in *The Turf* pub.

"Pull-outs celebrating promotion and the return to the Football League have been produced while our hits online have increased with the Wrexham FC feel-good factor playing its part."

Wrexham is also covered by *The Daily Post* (owned by Reach and based in Colwyn Bay), its digital news channel *North Wales Live* and the *North Wales Weekly News*. Further afield are the *North Wales Pioneer*, a weekly newspaper covering Colwyn Bay, Llandudno and nearby areas as well as the *Rhyl*, *Prestatyn* and *Abergele Journal*.

Alex Whilding has lived in Wrexham all her life and has worked for *The Daily Post* and *North Wales Live*. She is now digital news reporter for *OK! Magazine*, which is keen on Hollywood stories, and says Reynolds and his wife American actor Blake Lively are going to play a key part in her content in the coming months. She works from home in Wrexham and travels to London for occasional team days. "Ryan and Rob have turned the city into a place where everyone wants to be," she says. BBC Cymru Wales has an office and studios in the Creative Industries building at Wrexham Glyndwr

2023 VISIONHAUS



Shine a light on local heroes

Spotlight on sport

In addition to hyperlocals such as wrexham.com, a love of football has inspired launches such as quarterly football fanzine Fearless in Devotion and sports site

Grassroots North Wales, founded by award-winning football writer Dave Jones. "The chief target is to write about things no one else does. I enjoy putting local heroes in the spotlight."

Staffing struggles

Director of Radar PR Martin Williams says businesses in Wrexham can find it hard to attract talent, having to compete with cities such as Manchester and Liverpool.

"There has been a 'brain drain' of young graduates disappearing over the border in search of new opportunities and employment," he says.

Travel trouble

Transport is a big issue for some journalists. Alex

Whilding, digital news reporter at OK! Magazine, says trains to major cities such as London and Cardiff are irregular and often expensive. Martin Williams agrees with this, adding: "The rail and road network infrastructure has lacked investment for some time."

University, along with other offices in Bangor and Aberystwyth. (The university runs various media courses including photography and film as well as creative media production.)

The BBC Cymru Wales studios opened in 2011 and are used by staff from various BBC Wales departments, including radio, sport and news, reporting on stories in north Wales and the north-west of England in both Welsh and English.

The two radio studios are used for live and pre-recorded content for shows including Eleri Siôn and Wynne Evans on BBC Radio Wales and Lisa Gwilym on BBC Radio Cymru. The facilities are also used by network productions, including for Radio 4.

Welsh language channel S4C also has strong links with Wrexham and the local area and recently broadcast the documentary series Wrecsam... Clwb Ni!, which followed the fortunes of the football club, its fans and the community.

The channel has four journalists based in north Wales working on its digital news service, including one specifically covering north-east Wales.

ITV Cymru Wales does not have a base in Wrexham (the nearest office is Colwyn Bay), but has reporters in the area, including on-screen journalist Joanne Gallacher. She works from home in a village three miles away and has covered court cases, the cost of living crisis, political rows, floods and health stories around Wrexham Maelor Hospital.

"Wrexham is a perfect base for journalists as the road network makes stories on the north Wales coast accessible and, for bigger court stories in Liverpool or Manchester, you're just an hour away," she says.

Commercial radio broadcaster Global, which includes Capital and Heart, has a small newsroom, but there are concerns it could be affected by plans to centralise radio news. The

"Rob McElhenney and Ryan Reynolds have sprinkled stardust in Wrexham. Everything they touch turns to gold."

Nick Harrison,
sports editor,
The Leader

"It may now be a city, but for many it will remain a passionate, blue collar, hard-working hive of working class heritage. The people are honest, and there is a feeling of togetherness in the main."

Martin Williams,
director of Radar PR

"Wrexham is a fantastic place to be a journalist at the moment."

Alex Whilding,
digital reporter, OK!
Magazine

restructuring is believed to involve 11 newsrooms nationwide, including Wrexham, some of which are expected to close with 30-40 local journalists at potential risk of redundancy.

Elsewhere, community radio stations Calon FM and Premier Radio are run largely by volunteers. Whether because of cuts or other reasons, journalists in Wrexham have been inspiring some to start their own ventures.

Dave Jones quit his 30-year newspaper in 2018 to launch Grassroots North Wales (www.nwspport.co.uk), a website covering local sport. "I'd had my fill of working for newspapers and subsequent websites that pushed print further into the background," he says. "My job was becoming more repetitive and less allowing for creativity. My health was suffering and I decided to do something I should have done years earlier – plough my own furrow."

Although it can be hard going, he is making a living: "More important than any financial consideration is that I am happy. I've developed endless good relationships with the people who matter – the clubs, the management, the players, the fans."

Another is Martin Williams, ex business editor of the Daily Post, who launched Radar PR in 2018. He says opportunities have 'dwindled' in recent years with the closure of several titles, but he says the city has a lot to offer with beautiful countryside and coastline on the doorstep.

"From a professional perspective, the region is a hive of activity, crammed with industry, history, humour, culture and more – Wrexham especially," he says.

"North Wales is unique in that it has some of the UK's biggest companies, punches above its weight on several stages (music, sport etc) and is now home to one of the world's most famous football clubs – thanks to a certain Hollywood pairing – but it's also retained its traditions, the language and rural identity. There is much to love."



Family courts open further

Journalists are gaining freedom to report on family cases and interview people affected, says **Louise Tickle**

At the end of January, a new dawn for open justice peeped over the horizon in three parts of the country – Cardiff, Carlisle and Leeds. From that date, for the first time, if a journalist holding an official press card went to the family court (mainly for child protection and local authority hearings and subject to anonymity rules), they could report on cases as they unfold without the need for onerous and expensive applications to a judge.

From May 15, that was extended to private law family cases involving disputes between separating couples in conflict over children. At the time of writing, six months into the pilot, news reports and features have been published by the BBC, the Daily Mail, the Telegraph, WalesOnline, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ) and the Yorkshire Post.

Under the new rules, family members whose cases are heard in the three cities are also now permitted to speak to journalists without being held in contempt of court, and reporters are entitled to quote them. In addition, the media is entitled to see and publish the contents of a number of court documents. All this is on the strict condition that the family involved is anonymised, and a transparency order issued by the judge in each case is followed to the letter.

The reporting freedoms could revolutionise public understanding of what goes on in courts, which have so far operated with little independent scrutiny of their processes or decision-making. This is crucial, because the powers exerted by the state in family courts are draconian, intrusive and life-changing for hundreds of thousands of parents and children every year.

These pilot schemes were planned to last for a year before any decision is taken about keeping or extending them. The reporting experiment was agreed two years ago by Sir Andrew McFarlane, the most senior family judge in the country.

After conducting a review of transparency and public confidence in the family justice system, he decided that

greater openness was both justified and required.

The move has come in the wake of repeated calls for greater scrutiny of the family courts from parents, children with experience of the care system, journalists and open justice campaigners. Others, however, have warned of the dangers; the stumbling block to reporting has always been a concern that vulnerable children would be harmed if their identities were even inadvertently made known.

However, after years of intense debate, Sir Andrew launched the pilot by saying that, “openness and confidentiality are not irreconcilable, and each is achievable”.

The public interest in reporting is clear. Family judges can – and regularly do – make orders to extinguish the legal relationship between a parent and, for instance, their newborn baby in cases where the state removes a child because of safeguarding concerns.

Courts can sanction the removal of children from their families and place them in the care of the local council and they can decide when, where and even whether a mother or

How to decode a family court case number

Case category

A: hearings that reporters are not entitled to attend
B: hearings that reporters are entitled to attend but are not within the pilot
C: reporting pilot case

3: alleged sexual harm
4: alleged emotional harm
5: alleged domestic abuse
6: alleged female genital mutilation
7: alleged trafficking
8: deprivation of liberty/secure accommodation
9: contact issues/prolonged period of no contact

10: factitious or induced illness
11: schooling
12: medical treatment
13: relocation (in jurisdiction)
14: relocation (out of jurisdiction)

Case issues/allegations

1: alleged neglect
2: alleged physical harm

Feedback can be emailed to: pilots@thetig.org.uk

father sees or has any contact at all with their child for the duration of their childhood.

To date it has been 'almost impossible' for the media to hold the system to account, says Emily Wilson, the head of home news at ITN and, until recently, editor of Bureau Local at TBIJ, which has invested heavily in reporting on family court stories despite the risks.

Wilson particularly welcomes the relaxation of the ban on parties speaking to journalists, saying that it frees up the media to find stories and investigate without the fear of a contempt charge hanging over them. "How can you do your job if you can't even speak to people?" she asks. "It's a basic part of journalism."

From an editor's perspective, Wilson points out, it has always 'felt scary' to commission stories on family justice issues, "because not only are you responsible for your own reporter and publication but there's also a huge responsibility to the contributors. Even legal advisers for publications will often say 'this is not worth the risk, and it's too risky for you as an organisation.'"

Court reporter Hannah Summers who has investigated family court cases for The Observer and recently spent four days at a domestic abuse 'fact-finding' hearing in Carlisle family court for TBIJ's Family Justice project. The pilot is a chance to challenge – and hopefully change – a culture that she says veers between suspicion of the media to outright hostility.

"Usually the hostility comes from barristers, most often when they either believe or choose to infer that the other party has invited the journalist to come to court," Summers observes. "I've never been in a situation where a judge has encouraged that, but they've maybe allowed a barrister to put their question and invited me to respond. I think judges need to be more assertive and forceful when that happens."

A central feature of the pilot that Summers welcomes is that local authorities can now expect to be named. "I'm pleased that the principle of anonymity for family members does not exist to serve local authorities and agencies," she says. "That's really important because there's been a recent trend to redact the names of the authorities and experts from judgments, presumably to protect that authority's or expert's reputation."

Will the measures put in place to protect children and their families' identities be sufficient? Angela Frazer-Wicks, a mother whose two young children were removed and adopted, and who is now chair of trustees for the charity Family Rights Group, helped to design the reporting pilot and says she hopes they will be. "It's so important that families understand journalists are there to scrutinise the process, not there to scrutinise their family. The ability to report is there as a protective measure for them and their family. I hope they see it like that, and I hope it actually happens that way."

Most of the families who find themselves in a family court will be highly distressed and vulnerable, Frazer-Wicks points out. So, what would she say to editors and sub-editors who are subsequently responsible for the way their stories are

presented and headlined in the press? She says: "I would say put yourself in that family's position. "This can't be about sensationalism. It has to be about good-quality reporting on the family justice system. Remember, these are human beings and, for them, the court process is likely to be the most terrifying thing they've ever been through. It's got to be about more than 'click this link' – the huge worries I've heard from families are about the less ethical ways in how this could be done. We have to raise awareness of the issues, not shine a spotlight on a family that's already struggling."

Might family members hold back on a highly sensitive yet crucial piece of evidence if they know a journalist might report it, even anonymously?

Family barrister Lucy Reed KC, who founded legal education charity The Transparency Project, does not think so. "There is limited evidence that this is a feature of other forms of open justice, and the court will be able to tailor the parameters and timing of reporting – or restrict attendance during very sensitive evidence – to meet the specific needs of the case," she says

BBC social affairs reporter Sanchia Berg has navigated the legal restrictions to report on family courts since journalists were first allowed inside in 2009. With producer Katie Inman, she undertook several weeks of reporting from Leeds family court when the pilot started. In preparation, she travelled to meet judges and court staff in the pilot areas. While she says she encountered "tremendous good will" she foresees stumbling blocks in the pilot's design that journalists will have to work out as they go along; her criticisms of an opaque listings system that says virtually nothing about a case have informed a new coding system on CourtServe that allows journalists to understand the central issues in a case (see panel).

She acknowledges "it is rarely feasible to follow a case for months if not years". Even if a reporter can only attend a final hearing, she says, they will "hear crucial evidence and see witnesses cross examined" So, with the help of a case summary, it is still possible to report this critical stage.

What would a successful pilot look like?

"Success to me would be a range of different cases reported, including the family perspective wherever possible – care cases, deprivation of liberty, emergency hearings," says Berg. "It would be coverage in national and local press. Probably not a huge number of stories, but a few told in some detail for the first time. And successful reporting would, of course, have families and children anonymised safely, so that the courts and the families themselves can see it can be done."



The Bureau of Investigative Journalism has created a microsite to support journalists wanting to report under the pilot scheme at <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/hubs/family-justice>

Universities are providing office space for local papers. **Ruth Addicott** reports on how it's going

Classroom, newsroom

For many journalists, the buzz of the newsroom is one of the best parts of the job. But, with the closure of more and more newspaper offices in recent years, many journalists have been left working from home with no office base.

In 2022, Reach announced partnerships between three of its regional titles – Lincolnshire Live, Leicestershire Live and Teesside Live – and local universities. Reporters would be allocated a 'newsroom' and a permanent base on campus and journalism students could gain experience.

Other places including Nottingham, Gloucestershire and Derby were keen to follow suit.

"The idea is that students come armed with content and stories to pitch," says Paul Wiltshire, journalism course leader and senior lecturer at the University of Gloucestershire. "They shadow reporters – some of whom are our own graduates – and make themselves useful by helping to film Facebook Lives etc."

The second-year students spend one day a week and five weeks on attachment in groups of up to three. The reporters can access wifi, move around campus and use the facilities out of term time.

Despite the recent staff cuts at Reach affecting Gloucestershire Live, Wiltshire believes there is willingness "on both sides" to keep the partnership going.

"It's pretty much a win-win for all concerned," he says. "It means we can constantly dip into a real newsroom environment."

Reporters at the Lincolnshire Echo have been given a newsroom at the University of Lincoln.

John Cafferkey, deputy head of the University of Lincoln's School of Film, Media and Journalism, says there are up to four reporters there every day and the newsroom is based alongside five student newsrooms. The students

operate separately unless they are invited in.

"I think the Lincolnshire Live team has found it really useful to have an operating base where they can hold editorial meetings and discuss content face to face," he says.

Deborah Wilson David, head of journalism and media at Nottingham Trent University (NTU), came up with the idea in 2014 after visiting the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication in Arizona, where students produce journalism for the general public, rather than just the classroom, under the supervision of experienced editors.

The school's \$71 million, six-storey media complex includes four TV studios, 17 newsrooms and is home to Arizona PBS, the biggest media outlet operated by a journalism school in the world, reaching 1.9 million households. It is one of the largest public television stations in the US, with additional bases in LA and Washington DC. But it was the benefits to both journalists and students that inspired Wilson David.

"When I brought the idea back to the UK, there seemed to be little enthusiasm among both universities and news organisations for sharing the same space," she says.

NTU has an ongoing relationship with The Nottingham Post. While there were discussions about providing a newsroom, Reach has just signed a lease on an office in the city centre.

Does working at a university bring any restrictions on reporting?

Lauren Mucciolo, executive producer at the Howard Center for Investigative Journalism at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, says the issue is "less to do with censorship and more with navigating the bureaucratic and

Janet Hughes (left) from Gloucestershire Live, on campus with second year students



Deborah Wilson David



Students working alongside professional journalists at Nottingham Trent University

"When I was a trainee, I learnt so much from the senior reporters who were in the room, it is so important that space is there"

Sophie Flowers, University of Gloucestershire



University of Gloucestershire graduate, Zasha Whiteway-Wilkinson (left), who works on Reach's Curiously project, with students and some of the Reach team. Inset: Paul Wiltshire, University of Gloucestershire Journalism course leader



"When most of the Gloucestershire Live team are in, working alongside our students, there is a buzz that is something very special"

**Paul Wiltshire,
University of Gloucestershire**



"It has given the students valuable experience of the day-to-day workings of a modern newsroom"

**Clare Fletcher,
Teesside University**



accreditation-related constraints of a university".

"It's hard to take on stories that need more than a 16-week semester to execute, funding for public records and student travel aren't easily or quickly approved and, in the case of the pandemic and lockdown, university-affiliated journalists had to follow university rules that prohibited field reporting for nearly a year, which caused significant challenges and frustration."

Back in Middlesbrough, reporters on The Gazette and Teesside Live are benefiting from 24/7 access to a new co-working space at Teesside University, part of the creation of its £5.6m enterprise zone. There are large meeting rooms, soundproof booths, a green screen, fast wifi, recording equipment and unlimited 'bean-to-cup' coffee.

Final-year journalism and sport journalism students have all spent a day with reporters on court visits and live breaking news around Teesside.

Corey Bedford, NUJ rep for the Leicester Mercury, says the opportunity to have a newsroom has provided a 'much-needed respite': "Working alongside fellow reporters in person is an invaluable and necessary part of journalism. Universities creating spaces on their campus for newspapers is a bigger commitment to local news than we have seen from media organisations as a whole in recent years."

Although it's nothing like the old newsroom, he says it's better than having no space at all. He adds: "Hopefully, this will lead to a U-turn in office closures or at least bigger collaborations where newspapers can have a more substantial presence on campuses going forward – in an attempt to reduce the high turnover of staff as well as providing a place to train the next generation of writers."

While some partnerships are working, others appear to have fallen through.

In the Midlands, the Burton Mail became the first daily paper in Britain not to have an office in the town it covers when it closed before the pandemic, forcing staff to work

Pros and cons

Uncertain space

Facilities vary and space often depends on timetables and teaching. In some places, there have been concerns over health and safety, including over a lack of proper chairs.

selling point for student recruitment.

Work alongside colleagues

"It's a huge benefit for new and trainee reporters to be around their colleagues to learn, ask questions and absorb info," says one reporter.

Newsroom experience

Students get to join the morning news conference, shadow reporters and learn the reality of pay, deadlines and day-to-day reporting. This is a

Clicks for free

Some journalists have asked if a college newsroom is "just another means of getting content for free".

from home and commute to an office in Derby. When the Derby Telegraph office closed as well, journalists faced a 15-mile trip to Nottingham. They were offered space one day a week, 8am-5pm, in the Enterprise Centre run by the University of Derby, but it hasn't worked out.

According to a source, only one or two reporters turned up because of interviews and other commitments. There was 'no interaction or partnership' with students or lecturers and the space was just a room with tables and chairs with 'no proper back-office support, no computers or keyboards and no free tea or coffee facilities'.

If there were problems with the internet or phone signal, no one was on hand to help. The room was not always available when needed, so a late reporter would have to leave half way through their shift and finish it at home.

"The news industry is a 24/7 business," one reporter pointed out.

Chris Morley, NUJ Reach national coordinator, while acknowledging the need for a base, questions whether reporters have time to mentor as they are 'foot down to the pedal all the time'.

So is this the future for newsrooms?

Sophie Flowers, journalism lecturer at the University of Gloucestershire, sees it as more as an addition than a replacement. "As somebody who started as a trainee reporter and worked in a busy newsroom until the pandemic, I think it's really sad that newsrooms are starting to disappear. I think it's important there are spaces where reporters can get together with editors to share ideas. I hope we can help to meet that need but I'd like to see more newsrooms as well."

Your package could

Stephanie Power laments the decline of small local stories on BBC radio

I love small stories. You know the ones. Little slices of life. Radio packages with tiny moments that really take you to a place. It might be Nick Ravenscroft at a beer festival saying ‘man, man, man, woman, man’ as a way of telling you it’s a room full of blokes or a young Scouse film-maker getting overexcited at the prospect of The Batman being filmed in his city during lockdown. The space outside Lime Street station had been turned into Gotham City. I met a friend who is a big fan and we were hysterical in minutes. Broadcasting House played the hysteria and it went out again on Pick of the Week.

They’re not the stories that would ever lead news programmes, but they are the ones that might bring a smile to a listener’s face, a bit of light in the shade of our oh-so-heavy news cycle.

I make radio packages and tell those small stories, mainly from Liverpool.

I’ve done a series in lockdown about life in my local park – the only place we could go – and how it became so important to those who used it. In fact it was a psychological life-saver.

I’ve followed the development of a theatre in the second poorest borough in the country, taking some schoolkids around it and finding out why they thought Shakespeare was so important today. One 12-year-old told me that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* could be interpreted as a message about climate change.

And I’ve asked football fans about their daft superstitions ahead of a crucial game: “When I’m

driving, if I get through all the traffic lights on green, then Liverpool will win the league.”

But lately, I’ve been finding it much more difficult to get anything on, and I couldn’t understand why. Like many freelancers, while working alone means you avoid office politics, it also means you often don’t have a clue if things are changing.

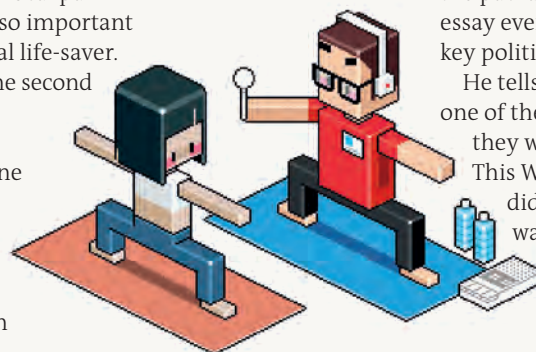
But they are changing.

Two years ago, all the Radio 4 news sequence programmes – Today, The World at One, PM, The World This Weekend and Broadcasting House – lost all their dedicated reporters. You will still hear a reporter package from a foreign correspondent, such as Steve Rosenberg in Russia, or Jeremy Bowen, and in the UK from people such as Fiona Trott and Jon Kay, but far fewer than before. If a news sequence programme editor wants a package, they have to ask a reporter in the central pool to do it. Very often, those reporters are tied up with another part of the BBC News output. One editor told me that radio had lost out with this change because you don’t have access to people who are able to make a crafted radio piece.

Until November 2020, Mark Mardell was the presenter of The World This Weekend. Known by his editor as the king of the package, he used to put together a 12 or 15-minute radio essay every week for the programme, delving into one of the key political stories of the time.

He tells me: “I haven’t really talked about this before, but one of the reasons I left the BBC – the main reason – was that they wanted to cut back my hours for making The World This Weekend. I didn’t want to lose the salary, but also I didn’t want to lose the production time for packages. I was told that they didn’t want them any more.

“But packages are important because they give you a dipstick into the way the country is feeling, or they can do. I remember going around towns in



Nick Ravenscroft, a former Radio 4 reporter

Packages allow changes of gear on radio in intriguing ways, says Nick Ravenscroft.

“The temperature was Baltic in an empty nightclub

just off the M25. And that was with my clothes on. Pity the poor naked actors needing a convector heater between takes.

“Being on the set of a porn film brought to life a piece about whether access to adult material online

should be restricted to protect children.

“More than that, taking the trouble to go there, meet them, watch them at work... made the actors and director more open about why they made porn and also more eloquent about

why it mattered to them.

“Yes, there were some sniggers afterwards about what sound effects we could get away with in when it was broadcast. But it was journalism I could achieve only through a package.”

Idn't be delivered

Memorable and magical moments

I love making radio packages. They've given me so many memorable moments, writes Stephanie Power.

Here are some of my favourites...

Hillsborough survivor

Not long after I moved to Liverpool, I met someone

who'd been at Hillsborough and a policewoman had saved his life. He wanted to find her. So I did and they met again in Sheffield for a rare package for Five Live.

Two yachts Abramovich

I got sent to Euro 2004 with James Munro, a TV sports reporter - who had never

done a radio package in his life. We walked the length of Roman Abramovich's two yachts moored in Lisbon - which took four minutes, giving us the perfect timing for a World Tonight package on money in football.

Doggie singer's final interview

As part of Liverpool's Capital of Culture year in 2008, one of the museums curated an exhibition on music and the city.

They had a dress belonging to Lita Roza, the first woman

to get to number one, with How Much is that Doggie In The Window?

I asked PM if they would be up for an interview with her. They agreed and I spent a wonderful afternoon with her in Wandsworth, south London. She told me a story

about Sean Connery that I couldn't repeat. The package began with the sound of her opening the door of her old wooden wardrobe. The scratch of the metal lever at the top of the door is unmistakable. It was the last interview she did; she died a few months later.



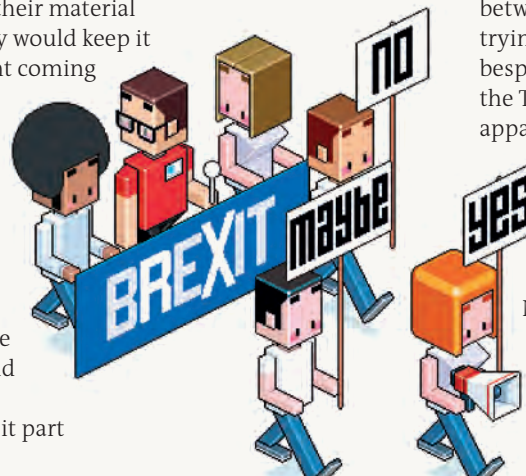
the Midlands hearing people saying they just wanted to get Brexit done - long before it became a Boris Johnson campaign slogan. If you talk to people for a length of time, not just for a quick vox, you will get a sophisticated view of politics. If we are not there, we will miss it."

It's not just that the dedicated radio reporters have gone. There is now a central commissioning unit.

Paul Siegert, the NUJ's national broadcast officer, explains: "The thinking behind it was logical, because stories weren't getting a proper airing. An exclusive for Today, for example, might not go anywhere else.

"Programmes were very protective about their material and, if they were working on something, they would keep it secret because they wouldn't want Newsnight coming along and doing their version of it."

It's true. When I worked on The World at One and PM, we would use a computerised running order, which was locked to anyone outside the programmes. There would be a space for producers on the outside of the running order where you were supposed to put the name of the interviewee you either had or were chasing. We would put things like Big Int or just write TBC. Sometimes we would put CLINTON just for the hell of it. It is quite childish looking back but, then again, wasn't it part



of what gave the programmes their distinctive feel?

Siegert agrees: "One of the criticisms of the new system is that you will wake up and hear a story on the Today programme and you'll still be hearing about that same story on the 10 o'clock news that evening, and every bit of the output in between. It's gone from one extreme to another."

What about the other problem, that of the bad re-versioned TV package made for radio?

"The big BBC bosses have always talked about bi-media and multimedia and whatever the next thing is - they wanted journalists to do everything. But there are different skills between radio, TV and online and, if you have one person trying to do everything, it's not going to be as good as a bespoke radio piece, and often a radio piece is just lifted from the TV package and the audio is totally different... it's often appalling when you've done that."

Roger Mosey, formerly editorial director at the BBC, head of BBC Television News, controller of BBC Radio 5 Live and editor of Today and now master at Selwyn College, Cambridge, has written a book about journalism - Twenty Things That Would Make The News Better.

He chatted to me while walking his basset hounds (you see how good this would be as a package) and he agrees the loss of the package is a problem.

"Packages are relatively cheap in radio and you can

broadcasting



Former BBC presenter Mark Mardell

Mark Mardell loved to get out and meet people on the street. He says: "What sticks in my mind are the individual voices, not of politicians or pundits, but of

ordinary people - from the guy at a farming fair in the deep American south who told me 'there's something about that Obama I just don't like, but I can't put my finger on it', to the pub full of people in the Midlands who said they just wanted

to get Brexit done, long before it became Boris Johnson's slogan.

"I remember too the Liberal Democrat seat where I couldn't find a single voter who would back them again after the coalition of 2010 - 'you just

can't trust them any more'.

"I'm not a fan of the vox pop if it is a series of three-second 'I agree, I disagree, I don't know' moments. But something done with time and care can be a revelation. Vive El 'package'!"

make quite a difference to the texture of a programme with one. But, these days, you rarely hear a package on Today, certainly between 8 and 9am. It's just a series of down-the-line interviews. It's OK but not having the light and shade and the reporting from around the country and the world is a real omission and the audience loses out because of that."

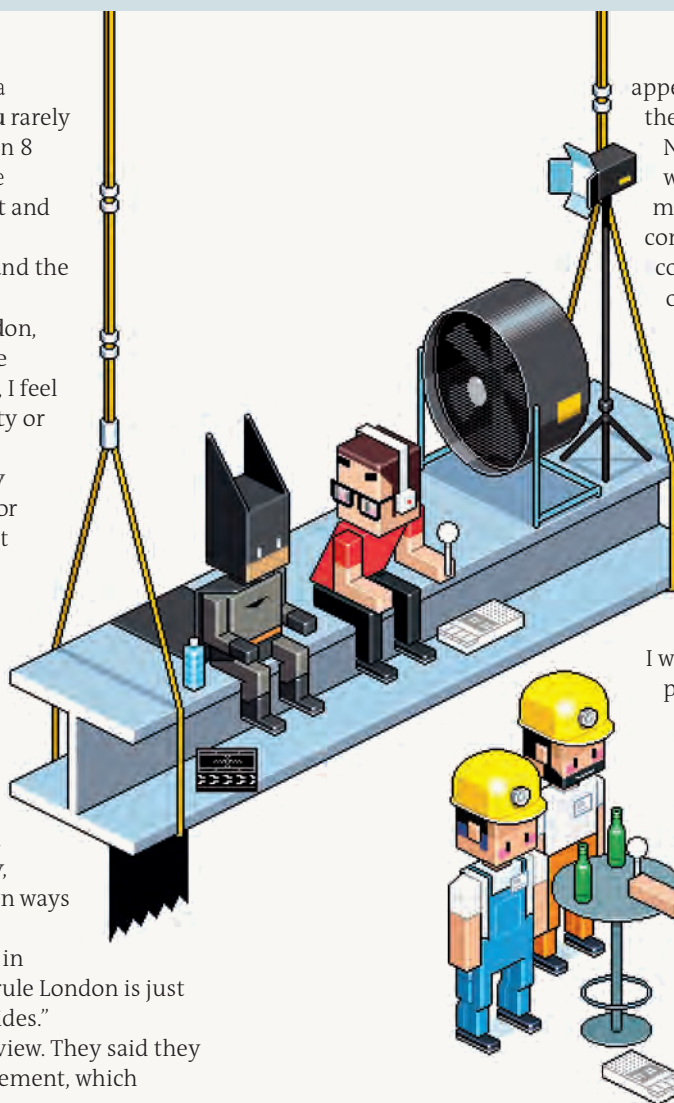
The news programmes are leaving London, bringing presenters with them for outside broadcasts. Viewing them from Liverpool, I feel that too often the stories are about poverty or gun crime.

Mosey says he calls it regionalisation by Travelodge. You send someone to a town or city for a night but what is produced is not authentically of that place.

"I come from Bradford and, every time they do Bradford, they do urban deprivation - but the area also includes Ilkley and the moors and quite a big middle class, including an Asian middle class, which they never ever report on.

"The BBC's defence, of course, would be to say there's a big operation in Salford and there's a big operation in Pacific Quay, which is true, but they are still in their own ways metropolitan outposts and, crucially, the decision making is even more centralised in London. So the idea that Salford can overrule London is just for the birds. It can't - London always decides."

I asked the BBC press office for an interview. They said they couldn't facilitate that, but gave me a statement, which



appears to say they have more reporters around the country now than they did before: "BBC News reflects the views and voices of the whole of the UK and tells the stories that are most relevant to people's daily lives. Stories are commissioned from reporters and correspondents on the ground and, as part of our Across the UK strategy, we have more journalists based across the nations and regions to investigate and report on a wide range of stories across BBC radio news.

"Separately, the commissioning unit allows these stories - rooted in the regions and communities of the UK - to be amplified throughout the BBC's wider programme portfolio and platforms, creating more value for audiences and ensuring our journalism is seen and heard by the widest audience."

I wonder if this means there is a chance the package might make a comeback?

Mosey hopes it will: "I think, at the moment, BBC News is too centralised, with too much decision-making in London and not enough sense of radio being different. And, if you look at the broader picture, I can see strategically that talking about content is not mad in a digital world. But linear radio is still an incredibly powerful force and linear radio sometimes meets things that other mediums don't."

Bob Walker is a freelance reporter

Bob Walker tells stories from South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire.

"The biggest eye-opener for me was spending a day and a night at Rossington Labour and Social Club near

Doncaster in the run-up to the last election. It was a place where banners still commemorated the 1984/85 miners' strike.

"I went there to gauge the mood in Labour areas and was genuinely surprised. I didn't find one

person saying they would definitely vote Labour.

"Customers said that due to Labour's stance on Brexit, they wouldn't be voting for the party. I spoke to ex-miners having a pint and they said the same thing.

"I came out of the club at

about 10pm, sat in my car and thought Labour is in real trouble here.

"Inevitably, I took quite a bit of stick on social media, being accused of 'anti-Corbyn bias'. But we all know now what happened in those Red Wall seats."



Professional SNAPSHOT

A journalist survey will tell us a lot, says **Imke Henkel**

Who are today's journalists? How do they work? What ethical standards do they hold? And what professional principles? How do they use new technologies? And how has Covid changed their profession?

These are just some of the questions in a new survey of UK journalists. The survey is sent out to a representative sample of journalists working for British and Northern Irish media. You may have received an invitation.

If you did, you may have felt a little annoyed. Journalists, after all, are surveyed quite a lot, not least by the NUJ (for example on safety). There are also the regular NCTJ surveys on issues such as working conditions (although the last one dates from 2018) and diversity.

Why another survey? Because the profession is changing rapidly, as is the environment in which journalists work.

Over the past decade, the UK has experienced extraordinary social, economic and political turbulence. This has profoundly affected the media industry and consequently how journalists work and their roles in British society and democracy. Recent events, including Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, have exacerbated existing threats to the viability of journalistic work. At the same time, these events have highlighted the vital role of journalism in a democracy.

The state of journalism in the UK is also a political concern. Two recent reports, the Cairncross Review and the House of Lords report *Breaking News? The Future of UK Journalism*, are testimony to the alarm felt by politicians.

However, reliable data that comprehensively assesses how journalists' identity has changed and how they work has changed is lacking. This is what the survey will deliver.

It can build on its 2015 predecessor, a large survey that resulted in the report *Journalists in the UK*, published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. This was widely covered, including in *The Guardian*, *Press Gazette*, and *Journalism.co.uk*.

Many questions asked then are being asked again. This will allow valid evaluation of how working conditions, practices, values and opinions have evolved. There are also questions on new issues, including on safety and wellbeing and technologies such as automated journalism.

The researchers behind the survey are myself, a lecturer in digital journalism at Birkbeck, University of London, and Neil Thurman, professor of communication at Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, and honorary research fellow at City, University of London. Thurman conducted the 2015 survey.

In contrast to other surveys of journalists in the UK, this has three outstanding features:

- It will be representative of all journalists working in the UK; it is not limited to a specific group, such as NUJ or NCTJ qualified members.

- It covers topics that other surveys don't consider, or examine only in isolation; asking such a comprehensive set of questions will allow more complex issues to be covered that will be of interest – not least to journalists themselves. For example: which journalists fear most for their jobs and is technology anything to do with how secure they feel in their role? Do those whose employer uses automated journalism experience more economic pressures? How much influence do politicians or business leaders have, and is this related to whether journalists work for public or privately owned or local or national media?

- Last but not least, the survey is part of a large international research project, the *Worlds of Journalism Study*. The WJS is a global scholarly effort involving some 100 countries that regularly assesses the state of journalism; the UK survey uses the same questionnaire as all other countries, so UK and international data can be compared. Ever wondered how UK journalists compare to their colleagues in the US when it comes to economic pressures? Or how fiercely UK journalists hold those in power to account compared to their colleagues in continental Europe or Asia? This survey will provide the answers.

The value of this survey will in the end depend on how many journalists answer it. So, if you did receive an invitation and just felt annoyed – please do reconsider.

Why another survey? Because the profession is changing rapidly, as is the environment in which journalists work



LBC, a first in commercial radio, had bumpy beginnings, says **Jonathan Sale**

'IT WAS A MADHOUSE'

It was, “virtually, a disaster,” declares Marshall Stewart, when asked 50 years later about the first time he set foot in the Gough Square EC4 premises of the London Broadcasting Company. Stewart had revamped the BBC’s Today programme and now he was about to become the editor tasked with bailing out LBC, Britain’s first (licensed) commercial radio station just a few months after its launch – or splash – on October 8 1973.

“It was a shambles,” he recalls. “A madhouse. I walked into a mandatory chapel meeting which seemed to be a feature of life in Gough Square in the early days.

“But it is true to say that, if it had not been for the trade unions, particularly the NUJ and [technicians’ union] ACTT, then LBC and IRN [Independent Radio News] would not have survived.”

John Lloyd, ex-editor of Time Out, who had joined LBC as assistant features editor, said top management at the radio station, “had no real sense of what radio journalism was.”

Now owned by Global, the station was run by a Canadian media company with no experience of operating in the UK.

Stewart remembers that the Canadian managing director took some time to appreciate the new opportunity presented by parliamentary broadcasts or, as he saw it, broadcasting direct from “your British Parliament”. In fact, thanks to political editor Ed Boyle and the newsroom’s Peter Allan, this turned out to be a great success and helped raise the station’s profile in direct competition with the BBC.

Independent Radio News, which was in the same premises as the London station, fed stories to the evolving network of commercial broadcasters which, beginning with Capital a week later, were just being switched on.

“One of the best stories was the Balcombe Street siege,” Stewart recalls. This was an extraordinary drama in which IRA gunmen took shelter and hostages in a London home. “Jon Snow covered that single-handed – live – for IRN and LBC.”

The BBC had more boots on the ground. But, says Stewart: “Whenever there was an opportunity to make a point that we were in competition, we took it. When a BBC strike prevented the transmission of the final episode of [major TV series] The Pallisers, we hired Michael Jayston to read the concluding chapters. And, when the BBC dropped gardener Percy

Thrower from his regular slot, we promptly picked him up.”

It cannot have helped in attracting listeners from the Beeb that LBC’s frequency was switched early on. It also didn’t help that “the press hammered us”, according to Stewart.

Just how big the hammer was could be deduced from the first press column that I presented after the first few days. Having bumped into Lloyd in the street outside Punch, where I had my day job, I was signed up and given a bundle of cruel newspaper reviews about LBC from which I assembled a cruel script.

The LBC pioneers

ON OCTOBER 8 1973 LBC, Britain’s first commercial radio station, was very much the new – not to say naughty – kid on the block.

None of its journalists was newer to the media than Jon Snow, who after a year at university had been the director of the New Horizon charity for homeless teenagers. He became its first news reader, before going to ITN and then Channel 4.

In 1974, ex-BBC man Marshall Stewart was parachuted in to give the kiss of life to the by now ailing LBC, leaving three years later and eventually joining the

board of Central Television.

Other early staffers included Carol Barnes, who was for years a newscaster at ITN, and foreign correspondent Julian Manyon, who covered the fall of Saigon for both ITV and LBC.

The late Bob Holness (pictured), who had joined LBC as an airborne traffic reporter, and Douglas Cameron, who remembers reading the news when a cleaner turned up to plug in a vacuum cleaner, together presented the AM Programme breakfast

show for 10 tasty years. Peter Allen was not only an early newsman at LBC, but also was in at the birth of the BBC’s Five Live.

Sports editor Mervyn Hall was another who kept the LBC show on the road, as did the late Peter Thornton, editorial director.

Features editor Geoffrey Wansell too was in at a couple of media births, that of LBC and then of the unlamented Now! magazine, the expensive vanity project of James Goldsmith, father of Zac and Ben. This lasted only two years – unlike LBC.



PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The station used this unaltered. On this occasion, the journalists reading the extracts included Janet Street-Porter, whose vigorous tones contrasted with the smooth (though bogus) Old Etonian cadences of Paul Callan, the two presenters of the morning show into which my tiny slot was inserted.

During his three years, Stewart was able to hire talent that included Michael Parkinson and David Frost.

Advertising picked up. This had at first consisted largely of an advert for gripe water – the background of crying babies in this commercial did not help to spread much of a reassuring atmosphere.

Says Stewart: “After 18 months – and it was a long 18 months – we increased the audience figures to a million and a half. I was pleased that, by the time I left, LBC was successful from the financial point of view, advertising and audience.

“It was a 24-hour operation. I found people asleep at their desks because they were working round the clock.”

“There was a phone-in that lasted all night,” adds Lloyd. “Sometimes, there was nobody calling in at three in the morning.” Some of the callers were clearly very disturbed. While the BBC took the precaution of vetting callers and ringing them back only if they were on this side of sanity, LBC at first used to put everyone straight through to the defenceless call-in host.

Punch drama critic Sheridan Morley was an early victim. Among the theatregoers ringing up to enthuse about a current play, he once experienced a grumpy homophobe whose message was that a certain famous actor was “a dirty p**f”, to which there is no reply except a theatrical “Farewell”.

Unfortunately, I missed the response of the irascible Spectator editor George Gale (alias George G Ale – thank you, Private Eye) when a friend about to stay with him rang up to ask, “Where’s the key?” and instead was put through to the live broadcast.

Some of the ex-BBC people left, recalls Lloyd, “contemptuous of everyone around them”. On



2013 GETTY IMAGES



GETTY IMAGES

the plus side, lacking the straitjacket of BBC programming, LBC coverage was very flexible.

So too were the journalists. A sports reporter hauled into the studio to declaim snippets for my piece on occult magazines had me desperately shoving a handkerchief into my mouth to muffle my giggles at his hysterical impersonation of a witch. Jon Snow also voiced quotes from another set of publications (maybe these were religious journals – after all: his father was a bishop). As he put it in his enthralling autobiography *Shooting History*, “Two days before we went on air, the station had failed to appoint any newsreaders. This was an omission....”

Despite “my embarrassingly upper-class vowels”, he it was who was selected to read the very first news bulletin of the new independent network: “Israeli tanks are heading for the Golan Heights.”

Stewart soon told him that newsreading was all very well but he ought to get out more – which indeed he did, pedalling about for stories on London streets as a human mike on a bike.

“Lloyd ‘rebranded’ himself as a reporter. “I was sent out to cover the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. We were trapped in a hotel between the Turkish and Greek parts of the island and were rescued by the British army.”

Did he enjoy his 18 months of commercial radio? “Up to a point. I was young and everything was new. It didn’t have any depth and there was no space for reflection and in-depth reporting. But the people there weren’t stupid and it was competition for the BBC – and good for the BBC. It probably did broaden what was available for people on the radio.”

“Now LBC is 50 years old,” says Stewart. “Staggering!”

His credit for it lasting 50 years cannot be denied. My own tiny contributions to the station did not last even 50 weeks, since they disappeared as part of his economy drive, so I stayed put at the day job at Punch from which I was moonlighting.

No hard feelings though: he married my flatmate and we were chatting happily the other day about those pioneering days at what was known - affectionately, I like to think - as the ‘London Brick Company’.

by **Mark Fisher**

arts

Books >

A Death in Malta

Paul Caruana Galizia
October 26

Hutchinson Heinemann

Subtitled "an assassination and a family's quest for justice", this is a son's reflection on the life of investigative journalist Daphne Caruna Galizia, killed by a car bomb in 2017 after years of harassment because of her work.

<https://tinyurl.com/236anlgr>

Depraved New World

John Crace
November 2

Guardian Faber Publishing

Witty sketches from the frontline of British politics as the Guardian's sketch writer charts the absurdities of a post-Brexit parliament. "Please hold, the government will be with you shortly" reads the subtitle.

<https://tinyurl.com/2a3n7hsz>

Property: the Myth that Built the World

Rowan Moore
November 2
Faber

The Observer's architecture critic considers how home ownership switched from a basic right to an

investment opportunity. He looks at how oligarchs and developers turned property into a weapon.

<https://tinyurl.com/227yvuel>

Event >

The Cramlington Train Wreckers

Tyneside Irish Centre, Gallowgate, Newcastle
October 25



Long-standing NUJ member Ed Waugh gives a talk to accompany the 1970 BBC film *Yesterdays' Witness* about the eight miners imprisoned for derailing the Flying Scotsman at Cramlington, Northumberland, during the 1926 General Strike. They had intended to interrupt the movement of blackleg coal but inadvertently took a passenger train off the tracks.

www.tynesideirishcentre.com

Exhibitions >

Women in Revolt!

Tate Britain, London
November 2-April 7

Charting two decades of 'art, activism and the women's movement' from 1970, this survey of more than 100 artists takes in Greenham Common, Rock Against Racism, Section 28 and the AIDS pandemic.

<https://tinyurl.com/24lbzldz>



Festivals >

French Film Festival

UK wide
November 1-December 14

Film critic and NUJ member Richard Mowe is the director of the annual celebration of French cinema, now entering its 31st year. The programme pops up everywhere from Plymouth to Lerwick.

<https://frenchfilmfestival.org.uk>

Belfast International Arts Festival

Belfast
Until November 5

Highlights include *Burn Out*, a new black comedy by Gary Mitchell, a gig featuring Marc Almond, journalist and NUJ member Gary Younge and the Belfast Ensemble and *FIQ!*, a riot of tumbling by Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger.

<https://belfastinternationalartsfestival.com/>

Films >

Allegedly: the Trial of Loski

In cinemas
November 10

Documentary by Damian Thomas about Jyrelle O'Connor, the South London drill musician who was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in January after being convicted of possessing a loaded revolver while in an Uber.

<https://tinyurl.com/259gwm3j>

Tish

In cinemas
November 17

Tish Murtha reflected the lives of working-class communities in north-east England in her black and

In depth >

Freedom of Information

In theory, you shouldn't need a book about freedom of information (FOI). In an ideal world, anyone should be able to make a request and expect an answer.

Martin Rosenbaum knows we do not live in an ideal world. After 16 years working for BBC News as an FOI specialist, he understands how complex it can be. He has distilled his experience into *Freedom of Information: a Practical Guidebook*.

"I wanted to put down on paper everything I'd learned during that period," says the FOI consultant, trainer, lecturer and writer.

"Sometimes, it is obvious what you want, it is simple to ask for it and you get it. But there are

lots of occasions when you encounter delay and obstruction."

In such cases, you need to know how to argue your case. The manual provides guidance on the law and suggests tactics for using FOI effectively.

Knowing how to phrase a request can mean the difference between

getting what you need and being palmed off with material they would prefer you to have.

"There is a certain degree of bureaucratic inefficiency, but the main thing is the tendency of organisations not to let embarrassing information out if they can possibly avoid it," says Rosenbaum.

"Very often, they will delay answering or come up with reasons they shouldn't release the information that don't hold water. They hope the requester won't be bothered or won't know how to challenge it."

Despite this, he believes the 2005 Freedom of Information Act is a boon.

"FOI is a very good thing in general and for

journalism in particular," he says. "It's not to say the system works perfectly, but there are probably over 100,000 public bodies covered, so it is a far-reaching FOI act.

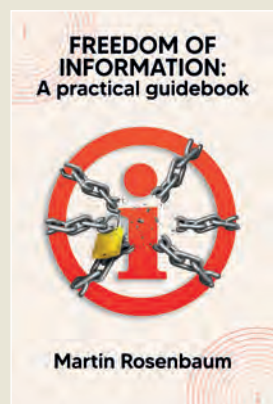
"Two things could be improved.

"One is extending it to cover private companies fulfilling public services.

"The other is the way authorities have been allowed to get away with delay. We're now seeing the UK commissioner prioritising important cases.

"This is important for journalism, because journalists are more likely to be asking about something of broader public interest."

Freedom of Information: a Practical Guidebook, out now, Rhododendron Publishing
www.rhododendronpublishing.co.uk



white photographs. Paul Sng's film follows her daughter Ella as she revisits moments in her mother's life. <https://www.modernfilms.com/tish>

Music >

Desperate Journalist

On tour
October 4-January 7

A bad review from rock journalist Paul Morley prompted the Cure to rename one of their songs Desperate Journalist in Ongoing Meaningful Review Situation. That in turn gave these indie popsters the idea for their name. They support Suede in December. <https://desperatejournalist.co.uk/>

Dead Man Walking

In cinemas
October 21

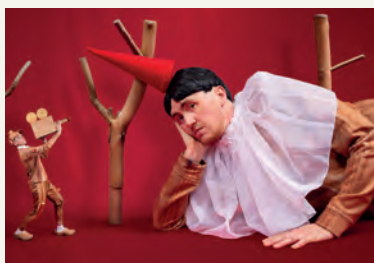
Streamed live as part of The Met: Live in HD series, Jake Heggie's opera is based on the true story of Sister Helen Prejean, who tried to save the soul of a man on death row. Ivo Van Hove's production stars Joyce DiDonato as Sister Helen. <https://tinyurl.com/25cfvw74>

Theatre >

The Making of Pinocchio

BAC, London
November 1-10

Funny and intelligent show by Rosana Cade and Ivor MacAskill who use the story of a puppet who becomes a real boy as a metaphor for changing gender. <https://tinyurl.com/4m4mw427>



England and Son

Touring
Until 9 December

Comedian, campaigner and NUJ member Mark Thomas is in a one-man play written by Ed Edwards, based on characters from Thomas's childhood and Edwards's experience of jail. <https://markthomasinfo.co.uk>

Spotlight >

Holiday snaps

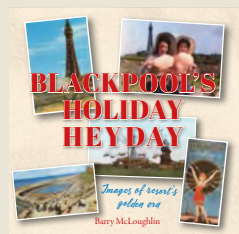
Life member Barry McLoughlin's book, *Blackpool's Holiday Heyday: Images of Resort's Golden Era*, recalls the glory years of working-class tourism in the UK's most popular holiday destination.

In this pictorial history, the former *Blackpool Gazette* chief reporter chronicles the halcyon days of the world's first 'proletarian playground' in the six decades up to the 1960s.

More than 130 illustrations in colour and black-and-white, ranging from rare

postcards to high-quality photojournalism and memorabilia highlight the people and places that gave Blackpool its unique character.

Although the book presents a nostalgic view of Blackpool's prime, it highlights the contradictions of the resort's identity as the UK's tourism capital,



contrasting the neon glitz of the Golden Mile with pockets of severe social deprivation.

It also examines the dilemmas created by the town's dual identity over the years. Should it be a genteel middle-class watering place or a haven for Lancashire miners and mill workers? Should it be a family resort or a party town for nightclubbers? Should the interests of residents or tourism take priority?

An NUJ member for 50 years, McLoughlin has written or edited 17 books.

Blackpool's Holiday Heyday, out now, YouCaxton <https://tinyurl.com/29t2rr48>

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Your Say...

inviting letters, comments, tweets



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Post to: The Journalist, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB
Tweet to: @mschrisbuckley

£40 prize letter

DENIS CARRIER



Not posh and not out of touch either

Ye gods! Am I to be labelled 'posh' now because I am a journalist? We all might be if too many headlines like that are written.

It happened to me once before, when I was about 12, when I was sent to an independent boarding school.

My dad was a downtable sub on the old Evening Chronicle in Manchester. He wasn't posh and could probably ill afford to send me to Knutsford College in leafy Cheshire. He sent me there not to make me posh but because he thought I was too shy to cope with a state education.

He didn't realise he was sending me to a real Dotheboys Hall. My fellow students were far from posh, and I went through hell for five years.

But it knocked the shyness out of me and prepared me for 60 years of reporting during which I was well able to venture on to council estates and even doorstep the good people of Wigan in their back-to-back terraced houses. They never called me posh.

There are many dictionary definitions of posh, but few are anything to be ashamed of. What's wrong with being well spoken, well read, smartly dressed etc?

It's wrong to associate 'poshness' with private education, wealth, being upper class etc.

If you want to know how 'un-posh' an independent school can be, read my book *The No Hoper* (Amazon, £6.99), which describes my school days and early years in journalism. It might surprise you and even make you laugh. Unless you are too posh.

David Skentelbery
Life Member, Warrington

Mr Cockburn questions why the motion was allowed to be tabled, blaming the NEC. The standing orders committee (SOC) ensures that motions comply with the union's rules. The NEC (which has two members on the SOC) has no remit to stop the SOC from publishing a motion on the final agenda, which is available to all members for perusal before DM.

I'm sorry that Mr Cockburn wasn't present at the debate as I believe he might have a different view had he listened to the persuasive speeches by the many and diverse delegates who spoke in favour of the motion and our history instead of parroting the assistant general secretary's opposing speech of discarding a tradition 'based on a 10-minute debate'.

Maybe hearing the stories of those who want a more inclusive union would have prevented him from accusing those supporting the motion of 'virtue signalling' – an intellectually lazy and meaningless phrase invented to sneer and mock rather than embrace impactful change.

Interestingly enough, a quick Google search will show that 'chapel chair' has been used by NUJ members since at least 2016 – including by a delegate who spoke against the change at DM!

Cristina Lago
Equality Council co-chair

Historical terms are irrelevant today

I spoke at DM in support of the motion to replace mother/father of chapel term with something more in keeping with the times and less offensive.

The Nottingham NUJ branch has recruited a lot of younger people over the years, in particular journalism students, and the terms have no meaning for them nor even the notion of chapels.

Our branch stopped using father/mother of chapel quite some time ago and I ask for reports from the local union officials. Likewise, I don't use the expression mother/father of chapel when I am speaking at the Nottingham trades union council meetings.

Vote to change chapel rep title was democratic

Paul Fisher Cockburn equates the democratic vote at the Delegate Meeting (DM) to abolish the terms father/mother of chapel to "brutally ending a century's tradition based on a mere 10-minute discussion involving a fraction of the union's total membership" (Your Say, August/September).

His claim suggests that the rule change was pushed through in a totalitarian fashion by a minority. I want to argue against this by highlighting the engagement work behind the motion and the NUJ's democratic processes that allowed it to become policy.

To begin with, the motion was tabled by the equality council (EC), whose members are democratically elected at DM. It was carefully drafted and

reviewed by this body after talking to members and chapels. This magazine also provided a platform for debate on the terms, including last year's excellent article by former EC chair Natasha Hirst and feedback from members.

Any NUJ member can volunteer to attend DM. Delegates speak and vote on behalf of those they represent. This 'fraction' of the membership is the legitimate voice of the entire union.

I know some people want to hang on to terms such as father/mother of chapel and chapels. They have a place in our trade union history but their use in the modern workplace is irrelevant.

Diana Peasey
Chair, Nottingham NUJ branch

As journalism shrinks, local areas expand

Your 'Local knowledge critical' feature (August/September 2023) pointed to newspaper publishers' cutbacks meaning that, in some cases, 'regions where millions of people live are covered by one lonely reporter'.

The article added: 'Reporters shouldn't need to ask directions around cities in their own patches.'

Another article in this issue was devoted to the dawn of the super-branch; regions with perhaps 1,000+ members could replace local NUJ branches in a trial scheme.

Looking at the helpful map accompanying this report, if there are more super branches, my nearest one would be Yorkshire and the Humber. This large region includes many cities of which I possess little or no local knowledge. I might well need to ask for directions.

When I first joined the NUJ in the mid-1970s, we had a Scunthorpe and Brigg branch serving two local towns eight miles apart.

Many congratulations to editor Christine Buckley, who received the TUC award for the best union journal of the year. The Journalist continues to provide plenty of interesting and informative articles, issue by issue.

Nigel Fisher
Retired freelance member
North Lincolnshire

AI remembers things - and makes stuff up

Artificial intelligence (AI) is an inaccurate and misleading term, referring to a variety of applications.

Search engines are AI. The systems used by Amazon and YouTube to make recommendations are AI too. Siri and Alexa both use AI; self-driving cars, automatic pilots on aeroplanes, Adobe Photoshop – all AI. AI is not intelligent. AI remembers stuff and compares things. It is good at copy and paste.

By the way, many are keen to use AI everywhere, regardless of the consequences or potential legal pitfalls. It has been used to create film backgrounds and can even be used to

create an avatar that reads news bulletins while the actual newsreader is researching a story.

AI gives the illusion of intelligence by remembering things and quoting and copying from diverse sources.

When it has no source, it creates its own data. As the New York Times reported in August, Dutch politician Marietje Schaake was accused by an AI chatbot of being a terrorist – based on nothing.

AI can be used to fabricate photographs and, to create those, the AI sources countless sample images regardless of whether it has a licence or permission to do so.

Amnesty International used AI-generated images to illustrate reports on Colombia's 2021 protests, as The Guardian reported. This use of made-up images to illustrate alleged police brutality was outrageous and undermines journalistic standards.

Journalism must be about accurate reporting in words and pictures. Our standards prohibit us from using AI as it is both unreliable and untrustworthy.

We need firm, clear legislation on a global basis to strictly control how and where AI is used, and we need it now.

Pete Jenkins
Nottingham

AI: don't pay me for work stolen to make fake news

I use artificial intelligence all the time. Machine learning trains the autofocus and autoexposure systems in my cameras and, likewise, the software for processing my raw files. I use it to perfect the accurate photographic records of what I see before my eyes.

But, as now reported daily, this dual use technology is also used to create extraordinarily realistic but totally fake pictures of events that never happened.

On World Intellectual Property Day, the International Federation of Journalists issued a statement (<https://bit.ly/44Faf13>) dealing with this ethical threat to public trust in what we do, and defending authors' copyright. It calls, rightly, for AI material for be distinguished from authentic journalism, both by being labelled as such and by giving human creators the right to be credited.

It ends, however, with a call I find truly alarming: "Human authors must get recompense when our work is used to train 'AI' and machine-learning

systems." Really? Why?

I do not want to get paid for this unethical abuse of my intellectual property. I do not want my pictures, scraped off the internet, used this way at all – pay or no pay. The IFJ even recommends collective licensing "when there is a need to use large numbers of materials from numerous rights holders, as is the case when using works to train AI systems".

I'm told I can opt out – but how? – especially as the IFJ also helpfully points out that "mechanisms exist to extend collective licensing remuneration to authors who are not... members of collecting societies". Not only should we not be roped in by default, but also we should be taking no part, with or without permission, in this betrayal of what we stand for.

We should not be seeking – and the NUJ should be opposing – the collective licensing of – and payment for – our pictures being stolen and then fed into the lie machines.

Andrew Wiard
London

Thanks to the NUJ for my correct pay-out

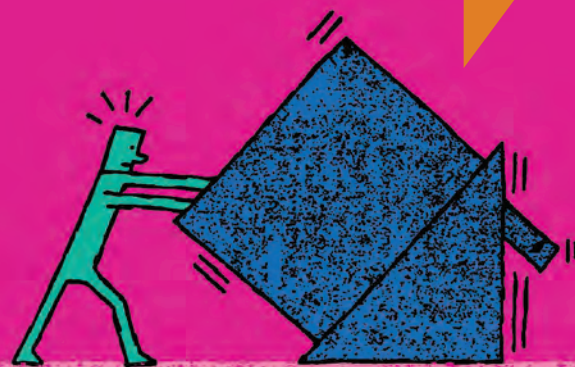
This is a note of thanks to the NUJ, which gave me legal aid when I sued my former employer, Sightline Media Group, for failing to pay the full redundancy pay as set out by French law. I have now received the full pay, plus legal costs and fees, after the French court ruled in my favour.

It took almost five years of legal pursuit of SMG, but it was worth it. The court has ruled three times in my favour. To thank the NUJ, particularly the legal department, I made a personal contribution of the same amount as the legal aid to the NUJ Extra fund. The personal contribution means NUJ Extra gets extra (pun not intended) funding by gift aiding the donation.

That payment reminds me, a couple of years ago SMG also paid years of back payment to my pension account after I sued the company for failing to pay employer's contributions. Funnily enough, they paid up shortly before the case went to court.

Pierre Tran
Paris

Moved house or changed your email address?



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You can update your membership record on the website nuj.org.uk or email membership@nuj.org.uk

NUJ
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JOURNALISTS



Patrick Nicholson

Patrick Nicholson was a long-time chief sub-editor of The Sunday Times Magazine from 1976 until he took early retirement in 1991.

Patrick was a journalist of the old school, starting his career as a junior reporter on The Kentish Mercury in south-east London aged 16, long before there was any formal training.

He used to say the only tuition he received was half a day in the magistrates' court with a senior colleague before being left to cope on his own.

National service, which was in existence at the time, was something of a busman's holiday for Patrick – he edited a garrison newspaper at Catterick Camp in Yorkshire during his two years' military service. He did the layouts, wrote most of it, subbed all of it and delivered copies by bicycle.

After demobilisation, he returned to the Mercury for a while before going north as a reporter on the Hartlepool Mail (then called the Northern Daily Mail), the Liverpool Echo and Liverpool Daily Post.

He moved to the Manchester Evening News, where he was a diary

writer (finally diary editor) and feature writer.

Patrick went to Fleet Street as a sub-editor on The Daily Telegraph and later The Times, leaving briefly to be an assistant to the TV editor of Radio Times.

He returned to The Times and became deputy chief sub in the Special Reports division.

He joined The Sunday Times Magazine at the invitation of Harold Evans, who was then editor, with whom he had worked on the Manchester Evening News.

While he was chief sub, he also specialised in writing profiles of legendary comedians, including Arthur Askey, Tommy Trinder, Cyril Fletcher and Stanley Holloway.

Hunter Davies, who edited the magazine for a while, wrote in an anniversary issue how the famous back of the book column, A Life in the Day, came into being:

"I tried the idea round the table one lunchtime. Let's get the trivia inside someone's day, not the working part of their life, just the routine, mundane tasks and thoughts we all have. Oh, it'll be boring, they said.

"I looked round the table and said to the chief sub, Patrick

Nicholson, come on then, Patrick, do you lay out your clothes the night before or do you decide when you get up?

"I consult my diary, he said. I've always kept a note of exactly what clothes I've worn so I can check to make sure that today's clothes have not been worn in the last two weeks.

"We were all silent. Absolutely nothing of importance, just a little chink of his real character shone out. Who knows what we might get by asking Famous People such trivial questions?"

In 1979, the management suspended publication of The Times and The Sunday Times in a desperate attempt to solve the problem of industrial action by the print unions that was crippling both papers.

Philip Norman, who had been a staff writer for some years, wrote a long time later: "I doubt if we could have weathered the year-long suspension in 1979-80 as the present staff did,

continuing production in the persistent hope that a settlement would come within the six-week lead time.

"I remember, in the darkest hours, coming upstairs to find Patrick Nicholson, the chief sub, alone at his desk like a starship commander, piloting his craft single-handed through the strike-deserted galaxies."

In retirement, Patrick continued to write – but most of his work was fiction.

It was widely published both at home and abroad and also featured on the internet. He was 79 when his first novel was published – Drink to the Devil – the story of a Fleet Street journalist.

He was member of the National Union of Journalists from the age of 16 and on his retirement he was made a life member.

Patrick Nicholson wrote this himself before he died on 6 September 2023, aged 93

Here for YOU

NUJ Extra is the union's charity. We provide support, confidential advice and financial assistance to members and their family at times of need when they may have nowhere else to turn.

An illness, accident or other problem may leave you needing help. While we can't boost the income of those struggling to make a living from journalism, we do help when we can.

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Surefire ways to secure a scoop



There are lots of ways to land that elusive exclusive, says **Chris Proctor**

Exclusive! That's the word publishers want over every header. They believe if a story is designated 'Exclusive!', potential punters will snatch up copies quicker than you can say, "It's on the wires so everyone's got it."

'Exclusive!' The pinnacle of our trade, the valued dream, the ultimate ambition for any aspiring newsgatherer. How we long for an exclusive, a story published by only one source. Oh! The joy!

Except, in common with keyboards, lunch hours and expense claims, they are no longer what they used to be. An exclusive used to last all day when newspapers were the main news outlet. Now, an exclusive has a shelf life of the 10 minutes it takes the competition to key in, rewrite and repost. Then it's as exclusive as Gregg's.

But the allure of the scoop remains. Newspapers love them. Look at their advertising banners: the Mirror offers the 'latest stories and exclusives', both The Independent and the Evening Standard announce 'exclusive latest news' and The Sun claims to offer the 'latest news and exclusives and opinion'. It is our Holy Grail. People even call us 'Scoop'.

'Exclusive!' I take my hat off to the Guardian, which recently came up with an exclusive that was 700 years old. It revealed, exclusively, that Geoffrey Chaucer asked for a day off in 1385 and that he wrote the request himself. Unlike the rest of us, a professor from Ohio was jolly excited about the news.

More recently than the 14th century, AP came up with an exclusive story that a perfume shop had a storeroom.

Well, it actually said the smell-making House of Guerlain had a newly opened archive: a 'warehouse of wonders' that was unfortunately 'shrouded in secrecy and hidden from public view'. So you can't actually go there. On the other hand, no one else reported it. Is it possible they didn't care?

Newspapers should realise that 'exclusive' isn't the magnet it used to be. They need to rethink the angle. Search for a different Holy Grail. Here are a few suggestions:

'All the news but with a nasty right-wing slant!'

'Updates presented in a liberal manner.'

'21st century news, 19th century views!'

'As common as yourself.'

'Full news updates just underneath the 10th puzzle!'

(This last one will be particularly attractive to weekend papers. I'm not a puzzle person, but I can't help staring at them. I don't attempt a solution. I just try to work out what they mean. As soon as I'd grasped the sudoku rules, they came up with a variation involving only using the letter T, sinking a battleship and unravelling an anagram.)

'Only partly fabricated!'

'Free map of every country mentioned in our international section!'

(Usually a sketch of Wales will suffice.)

'OK for the servants to read.'

'Unsubbed!'

'We used to be good!'

But, lest exclusive-seekers despair, there are still several routes to securing one of these endangered species.

One is to simply enhance what we mean by 'exclusive'. Take the story about a cargo ship with sails that set off on its maiden voyage recently. Its sails allow it to be blown along by the wind.

This appears brand-spanking new but the core of the tale is: 'Yacht invented.'

Let me offer three more suggestions: The easiest is to work for an esoteric magazine such as Pond Life Gazette, Baking in the Buff or Oil Wrestling Monthly. If you turn out copy about an outbreak of newt tonsillitis, a balm for buttock blisters or news of a slip-up in the previous edition, the likelihood is that you will be safe with your exclusive.

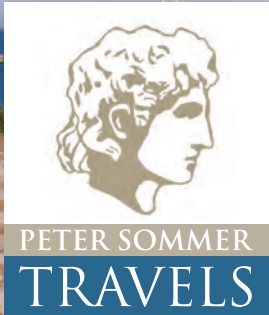
Local papers can be a first-class breeding ground. Your story will, unless it's a very slow day, remain unshared with national media. 'New car park threatens badger sett', 'Couple plan weekend wedding' and 'New right of way at by-pass roundabout' give you a good chance of an exclusive to brag about.

And, finally, exclusives abound in the glossy world of celebrity news. Outlets such as Hello! and OK specialise in weddings, offering cliquish pictures of the happy nuptials of people who wouldn't speak to you unless it was to say: "Fetch me a Campari."

Mind you, these don't come free. If you are stinking rich (which seems most unfair) the mag will pay for everyone's dinner for pictures. I'd have offered access to my own wedding if they'd paid for the pies. And it would have offered good copy towards the end when an altercation arose when our well-oiled Peter met the cousin of the then-new now-ex missus's cousin who turned out to be a LibDem and a Man U supporter.

The success of these examples can be summed up in the formula: 'Go for a story that interests no one.' It is a sure-fire road I wholeheartedly recommend. Remember: if it's not good, it's not pinched. My professional advice is that if you want exclusives, make sure your stories are hopeless.

I take my hat off to the Guardian, which recently came up with an exclusive that was 700 years old



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