

the Journalist

WWW.NUJ.ORG.UK | APRIL-MAY 2024



Up close and digital

Finding online co-workers

Contents



While some people have mixed feelings about online meetings, they are now firmly part of the fabric of working life. They save time, but also much more. As our cover feature shows, they can create communities for freelancers and give a flavour of being in a newsroom or office. Our writer Linda Harrison was initially a little sceptical and then became hooked.

Another important networking and experience-sharing opportunity is explored by Helen Nugent in her piece on Women in Media.

We also have a feature on the rise of women's football in newspapers as well as on the pitch, by the aficionado of the genre Carrie Dunn.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the end of apartheid in South Africa. Conrad Landin looks at the reporting of the event.

And while we are on anniversaries, it is the 40th anniversary of the biggest industrial dispute of modern times – the miners' strike. Photographer Jess Hurd went to South Yorkshire to find that Arthur Scargill can still command an audience and prove a magnet for selfies.

I'm pleased to say that the last edition of The Journalist attracted a huge number of views on X (formerly Twitter). Read about it on Page 26 and how we are always keen to have your feedback in any format.

Christie

Christine Buckley
Editor

[@mschrisbuckley](https://twitter.com/mschrisbuckley)



Editor
journalist@nuj.org.uk
Design
Surgerycreations.com
info@surgerycreations.com

Advertising
Square7media
Tel: 020 3832 2879
hello@square7media.co.uk

Print
Warners
www.warners.co.uk

Distribution
GB Mail
www.gb-mail.co.uk

NUJ
72 Acton Street
London WC1X 9NB
info@nuj.org.uk
www.nuj.org.uk
Tel: 020 7843 3700

Manchester office
nujmanchester@nuj.org.uk

Glasgow office
nujscotland@nuj.org.uk

Dublin office
info@nuj.ie

ISSN: 0022-5541



Cover picture
Stephen Collins

Main feature

12 Defeating the isolation of working at home
Online communities make a big difference

News

4 Fight to end secrecy over salaries

Transparency boosts women's wages

5 Low pay forcing out democracy reporters

LDR funds used for company profits

6 Labour spells out priorities for pensions

Party aims to provide dignity in retirement

7 Assange awaits deportation verdict

Key decision for press freedom

Features

16 On the pitch and on the page
Is Media catching up with women's sport?

18 How a student-run body leads the way
Women in the Media attracts top journalists

22 Tough for reporters in South Africa
Journalists under fire and under-resourced

26 The Journalist gets 90,000 views on X
And we like getting your letters too ...

Regulars

10 Spotlight - Leeds

27 And finally...

On Media

Will Murdoch opt for Labour?

Page 09



Story behind the picture

Scargill's 'still got it'

Page 08

Arts

The power of investigative journalism

Page 24



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



Programmes at risk as STV faces industrial action in pay dispute

NUJ MEMBERS at STV have voted to take industrial action in protest over a pay offer that amounts to as little as 2.5 per cent for some staff.

A ballot showed strong support in favour of industrial action, with 89 per cent in favour of strike action.

The vote was set in train after 84 per cent of journalists opted for action in an indicative ballot after talks brokered by conciliation service Acas broke down.

Staff at the broadcaster, which has offices in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness, had warned that any strike would impact news bulletins and could also affect coverage of Scotland's opening football match against Germany at the Euros.

Nick McGowan-Lowe, NUJ national organiser for Scotland, said: "This is an overwhelming result which should make the STV board wake up and listen to its staff. Our members are dedicated and talented professionals who have made STV Scotland's most-watched peak-time TV channel for the fifth consecutive year – but they have had enough of being told they should accept below-inflation pay rises at a time when the company boasts of record revenues."

The company has made record-breaking revenues of £168.4

million last year. Despite a difficult advertising market, it still recorded an adjusted operating profit of £20.1m, in line with expectations. Between 2019 and 2023, STV made a total of £97.3 million adjusted operating profit on total revenues of £681.6 million. In July last year, it bought Greenbird Media for £21.4 million and, in January this year, doubled its stake in Two Cities television to become a majority shareholder.

Despite this, the company said it could not afford a pay rise that matched inflation for all staff, citing difficult market conditions in 2023. It has, however, paid the same dividend to shareholders in 2023 as it did in 2022. The NUJ had asked for 6 per cent.

McGowan-Lowe said: "Without its award-winning coverage, which allows STV to fulfil its public service obligations, STV wouldn't have been able to secure the renewal of its Channel 3 licence. It's frustrating that, after a year of reporting the impact of the cost of living on communities, management are insisting that their own staff's pay should be eroded by inflation at a time of increased costs for housing, electricity and food."

The last pay offer is equivalent to a rise of 2.5 per cent for some staff and no higher than 6 per cent for lower earners.



inbrief...

EMMA BARNETT JOINS TODAY PROGRAMME

Emma Barnett, the presenter of Radio 4's Woman's Hour is joining the Today programme ahead of Martha Kearney's departure this year. She will join the agenda-setting news programme in May and will also present TV documentaries and interviews for the BBC more broadly. Martha Kearney signalled that she would leave the programme after the general election.

PODCAST CHIEF GOES TO LEAD NEWSNIGHT

Jonathan Aspinwall, the head of BBC News Podcasts is moving to Newsnight to execute its move to become an interview and discussion show which loses its dedicated team of reporters. Aspinwall, who has worked at the BBC since 1997, will become executive editor of the programme.

JEWISH CHRONICLE TO BECOME A TRUST

The Jewish Chronicle will become a charitable trust four years after it was saved from collapse by a group of funders. It was stated at the time of the rescue that the Chronicle, the oldest Jewish newspaper in the world, would ultimately be transferred to a trust.

NUJ leaves European grouping

THE NUJ'S executive council has decided that the union will leave the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), a body it helped found more than 30 years ago.

The move follows growing dissatisfaction with the

direction of the EFJ and concern about its relationship with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

The NEC voted to disaffiliate following a debate about a proposal and background paper by

Michelle Stanistreet, general secretary, and Seamus Dooley, assistant general secretary.

The paper said that it had been made clear to the EFJ that decisions that set the EFJ on a different path and the

inclusion of non-IFJ affiliates or even non-unions, would force the NUJ to reconsider its affiliation.

The general secretary told the NEC that disaffiliating from the EFJ wouldn't prohibit work with sister unions in Europe on areas of shared interest.

Hard life for freelances

FREELANCE journalists are struggling with poor pay and little benefit from copyright, according to research commissioned by the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society.

A survey of 500 journalists found the median income for freelancers who spent at least half of their working time on journalism was £17,500. Disabled journalists earned significantly less than non-disabled colleagues at £11,250.

Report findings reveal:

- 40 per cent of journalists took on work without contracts
- 47 per cent of journalists allowed their copyright to be assigned to news publishers
- 47 per cent of journalists have signed an exclusivity clause, locking them out of

benefiting from wider opportunities, often in perpetuity

Angus Batey, NUJ Freelance Industrial Council chair, spoke at the parliamentary launch of the report hosted by the All-Party Writers' Group. Sharing his experience as a freelance journalist spanning several decades, he referenced stagnant pay rates and unfair contract terms he had encountered. "We need rates that don't stay static for decades and we need help enforcing those rights that we've managed to hold on to," he said. Parliamentarians heard recommendations including the need for rights and contract education, alongside changes to copyright legislation.

Finding your tribe, Page 12

Union pays tribute to RTE veteran Charlie Bird

The NUJ had a large presence at the Dublin funeral of former RTE broadcaster and NUJ life member Charlie Bird in March. Charlie died aged 74 after suffering from Motor Neurone Disease for the past three years.

Charlie joined RTE as a researcher in 1974 and worked in a number of roles including Washington correspondent and chief news correspondent. Seamus Dooley, NUJ assistant general secretary, said: "The qualities he manifested during his illness - grit, fierce determination and generosity of spirit, were the same qualities which marked him as a journalist."

#ShowUsTheMoney: secrecy over salaries targeted by campaign

THE UNION and other organisations including recruitment company Liberty Hive have launched a campaign to increase pay transparency. Set in motion at the TUC women's Conference on International women's Day on March 8, #ShowUsTheMoney also calls for an end to the familiar and uninformative phrase in job ads of 'competitive salary'.

Many media organisations do not disclose salaries and often ask candidates what their current salary is on application.

Cristina Lago, joint chair of the NUJ's equality council, said: "Lack of pay transparency in job adverts is a widespread practice among many employers and continues to widen the already great pay inequalities between workers. Women, disabled, black and minority ethnic professionals are disproportionately affected.

"Through the #ShowUsTheMoney campaign, we ask employers to ensure any job advertised includes salary details. Research shows this produces better results for them, so there are no excuses left for companies not to be straightforward about how much they are willing to pay new recruits."

Employers may say that posting salaries publicly could benefit competitors. The Liberty Hive pay transparency guide suggests that, if this is an issue, the salary could be shared with the candidates only.

The Equality Act 2010 prevents the enforcement of secrecy clauses in staff contracts that seek to stop employees from discussing pay information when trying to uncover differences in remuneration that may be linked to discrimination.

Employers with more than 250 staff have to report on their gender pay gap, which can indicate if pay parity is a problem.



ROGER BAMBER / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The UK gender pay gap for full-time workers is 14.3 per cent, but among higher earners and older people, it is much wider. The gender pay gap in FTSE boardrooms still stands at 70 per cent, with average pay for female directors at £309,000 compared to £1.04 million for men.

Natasha Hirst, NUJ president, said: "Low pay and insecure contracts for early career workers are a scourge on our industry, with pay gaps present from the start. Lack of pay transparency compounds these inequalities as workers try to progress their careers, resulting in the loss of talented women and diverse groups from journalism, publishing and other media roles. The time for fairness and transparency is well overdue – we call on employers to show the salary/display the pay."

When the government launched its pay transparency scheme in 2022, it said evidence shows listing a salary range on a job advert and not asking applicants to disclose salary history provides a firm footing for women to negotiate pay on a fairer basis.

We ask employers to ensure any job advert includes salary. Research shows this produces better results for them, so there are no excuses

Cristina Lago
Joint chair, NUJ equality council

Call to better protect women journalists

THE NUJ has backed a letter calling for greater protection for women journalists.

The letter, from Women in Journalism, Reporters Without Borders and the publisher Reach to national police leads on the Committee for the Safety of Journalists calls on

them to improve the recording of crimes against women journalists.

The letter says: "Accurate reporting, including clearly recording when attacks are related to a journalist's work, is essential if we are to understand the scale of the problem, formulate effective

responses and hold social media platforms to account."

It also asks for national-level guidance for police on online violence against journalists, and training on the gendered nature of online violence, the connections between online and physical violence and

best practice in dealing with such crimes.

The letter added: "We call on you, as police representatives on the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists, to regularly report back figures of crimes against journalists to the committee.

"Finally, better dialogue between police and industry is wanted. Police forces should establish direct channels of communication with journalists and representative bodies to ensure attacks can be quickly reported and effectively dealt with and perpetrators held to account."

Women in Media,
page 18

Menopause at work guide for employers

ONE IN three women has either experienced or is going through the menopause.

Around eight in 10 women will experience noticeable symptoms, of whom 45 per cent will find their symptoms hard to deal with.

The NUJ has published a guide to inform union reps and workers

about the menopause, helping members with practical ways to cope with it at work and to put in place company-wide policies that offer workplace adjustments and sources of support.

The aim is for employers to treat the issue with the importance it deserves, and for policies and

procedures to protect all workers rather than disadvantage those who are going through the menopause.

The guide is designed so you can dip in and out, focusing on the areas relevant to your employer.

<https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/nuj-menopause-guidance-feb-2024.html>



Concern over local democracy reporter earnings as staff quit

THE UNION is urging the BBC to review the funding arrangements for local democracy reporters (LDRs) amid concern over their rates of pay.

Freedom of Information (FOI) statistics from the BBC have revealed that LDRs, who cover public interest stories, are leaving their posts at an alarming rate.

Almost one in three (31 per cent) have quit since April 2023, supporting concerns raised by the NUJ of the harmful impact of low pay on staff retention.

Although LDRs give publishers a valued service providing stories by covering councils and local politics, and exposing corruption, BBC data shows minimum rates of

pay for the licence-fee funded posts are very low.

The NUJ believes it is essential to our democracy to retain skilled LDRs and support their journalism and to tackle the risks of misleading and incorrect information posed by artificial intelligence in a general election year.

FOI findings show senior reporters outside London receive at least a BBC-set minimum of £24,055, with £26,242 for those in the capital. Trainees pursuing an NCTJ diploma can be paid as little as £16,998 (£19,059 in London), even though publishers received funding from the BBC this year of £37,733 per filled LDR role (£39,953 in London).



The NUJ believes radical change is required to the BBC scheme's funding mechanism to increase pay rates and to ensure BBC money is not used to boost publishers' profits.

Current contract terms mean publishers are required only to pay the appropriate

minimum salary and pass on the 1.5% annual increase in funding to their LDRs.

The NUJ believes that, after paying wages and usual business expenses, companies can still have a surplus of up to £10,000 from the minimum salaries they have to pay.

NUJ

inbrief...

TALKTV CLOSURES AS A LINEAR CHANNEL

News UK has decided to close TalkTV as a traditional television channel by the early summer. The decision comes weeks after it announced that flagship show Piers Morgan Uncensored would stop being broadcast as a linear TV show and produce output only for YouTube.

TECHNOLOGY NEWS OUTLET STARTS OUT

A technology media outlet has been launched, aiming to go against the trend of industry decline over the past 12 months. Digital Frontier has a nine-strong editorial team producing a website, twice-weekly podcast and daily newsletter. It plans to "produce deeply reported stories on the future of business, finance and culture". It has 20 staff.

COUNTRYMAN SAVED FROM CLOSURE

The Countryman's Weekly magazine has been acquired by Edinburgh-based Fieldsports Press, saving it from closure by previous owner Metropolis. The title, which covers country sports such as shooting and hunting, has been merged with Fieldsports' The Shooting Times and Country magazine.

Pay deal agreed at Reach

JOURNALISTS at Reach plc, which publishes a wide range of national and regional papers and websites, have voted overwhelmingly in favour of the 2024-2025 pay offer.

Reach journalists will receive a five per cent uplift to their consolidated pay from

April 1, after they accepted the offer in the union's consultative ballot. The NUJ achieved a strong turnout with more than nine to one in favour of the deal.

The NUJ Reach group chapel formally approved the pay offer. The union has informed Reach of the decision, urging

the company to ensure pay increases are paid promptly to journalists in next month's pay packets.

The settlement will see no cap or ceiling applied, ensuring all journalists in the group receive the increase irrespective of role. It means that the minimum salary for a senior journalist will rise to £32,760 from April 1.

Iran convicts 44 journalists

THE TEHRAN revolutionary court has in absentia convicted 44 journalists of the charge of "propaganda against the Islamic Republic".

The action against the journalists were revealed by a hacking group.

The journalists include 10 people working for BBC Persian in London and others working for the London-based Iran International, Manoto TV and Gem TV, the Voice of America and Prague-based Radio Farda (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty).

The convictions were revealed after hacking group Edaalat Ali published a database of the Tehran judiciary's criminal cases, which includes some details of three million public and secret cases.

None of the journalists knew about their cases and had no legal representation or access to information about their indictments.

Losses mount at GB News

GB News saw its operating losses grow 38 per cent to £42.4 million in the year to May 2023, its most recent accounts filed at Companies House have shown. The broadcaster saw an 80 per cent year-on-year growth in revenue to £6.7 million, but also had a 63 per cent increase in the cost of sales as it had continued to expand. Since then, it has recruited several Conservative politicians to present programmes. In May 2023, GB News had 295 staff compared with 175 in May 2022. The latest figures mean GB News has lost £76 million since it was launched three years ago.



Labour spells out its pension priorities to TUC special conference

“FINANCIAL security in retirement is at the heart of our future plans,” Liz Kendall, shadow work and pensions secretary, promised delegates at a TUC conference on pensions under the next government, *writes Jenny Sims*.

Kendall said that Labour’s planned pensions and savings review, announced in January by shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves, will be wide-ranging, cover the whole sector and include the self-employed. “It will also look at barriers to UK pension funds investing more in the UK, so we get the best for pensioners and UK plc,” she said.

In her keynote speech, Kendall stressed: “This review is absolutely vital because two decades after the Pensions Commission - when the coalition government introduced Labour’s policy of auto-enrolment - progress has now stalled. And that’s not good enough!”

She said the recent budget had left eight million pensioners £1,000 a year worse off, and the £46 billion plan to scrap National Insurance contributions raised the question of how pensions would be paid for after it.

She pledged: “Our commitment to providing dignity and security in retirement is unwavering. Labour will be championing decent pensions for all so everyone can prepare for their retirement with confidence.”



JESS HURD

Kate Bell (pictured), TUC assistant general secretary, said the budget had left pensioners worse off, it was time to find a new consensus. She said they were supporting Labour’s review as well as the idea of a new pensions commission. The TUC’s priorities include: “Tackle under-saving by getting more low-paid workers into work-placed pensions and raising

employers’ contributions; address shocking levels of inequality which mean women’s pensions in retirement are 40 per cent lower than men’s and that black and minority ethnic and disabled workers face alarming pension gaps: keep going with the triple lock; increase the state pension – the main source of income for most pensioners, and reverse and re-open defined benefit schemes.”

Concerns raised by delegates in Q&A and panel sessions included: getting young workers to start pensions early and finding information about personal pensions, particularly if people have different ‘pots’.

The conference ended with the role of pension schemes in infrastructure investment. Sir John Armitt CBE, chair, National Infrastructure Commission defended UK funds’ right to “find the best possible opportunity” to invest anywhere in the world.

Pension tax benefits, Page 15



Our commitment to providing dignity and security in retirement is unwavering. Labour will be championing decent pensions for all

Liz Kendall, shadow work and pensions secretary

NUJ calls for tough rules on AI

THE NUJ has urged parliament to ensure artificial intelligence (AI) developers obey strict regulatory controls and tough sanctions are enforced for breaches.

In a response to the House of Lords communications

and digital committee’s call for evidence, the union raised concerns about the risks posed by large language models (LLMs) through unlawful plagiarism of copyright content. An LLM is an AI

program that can recognise and generate text.

The submission also called for new, accessible routes to redress to ensure journalists are fairly compensated.

The NUJ welcomed the committee’s

recommendation that copyright holders should have the right to scrutinise training data (information used by AI to generate content). The committee concluded that while this form of AI might have benefits for society, it was unfair for tech firms to use

copyrighted material without permission or compensation, and to gain ‘vast financial rewards’ from this.

The committee has urged the government to declare whether it believes current copyright law gives sufficient protection and to consider legislation if needed.

Home Office ‘buries bad news’

SEVEN specialist home affairs journalists on national news organisations have signed a letter protesting against the Home Office’s alleged habit of ‘burying bad news’.

Their complaint, revealed in Press Gazette, involves the release of the 361-page Sarah Everard report at the same time as damaging news on immigration.

On the day of the report’s publication,

documents were released showing a £6 billion overspend by the Home Office on immigration and asylum, including £5.4 billion on hotels and migrant support.



The timing of the publication of the report was part of a ‘pattern of behaviour’, according to the journalists.

The letter was signed by: Daily Mail home affairs editor David Barrett; Times home affairs editor Matt Dathan; Independent home affairs journalist Lizzie Dearden; Daily Telegraph home affairs editor Charles Hymas; Daily Express home affairs editor Michael Knowles; Guardian home affairs editor Rajeev Syal; and PA Media home affairs correspondent Flora Thompson.

Freedom of the press at stake as Assange awaits his fate

ONE OF the most important legal verdicts in the history of press freedom was hanging in the balance as The Journalist went to press.

The Royal Courts of Justice was due to decide whether WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange should be deported to the US where he faces life imprisonment in a maximum-security jail.

In a two-day hearing in February, two judges heard arguments about whether Assange, who has been held in Belmarsh prison for almost five years, can be granted leave to appeal against an extradition decision made in 2022 by Priti Patel, the then home secretary.

Protesters, including NUJ members and people who had travelled from many other countries, gathered outside the court and called for Assange to be released.

Assange has not been convicted of any crime but has been imprisoned for acquiring and publishing hundreds of thousands



TINITE PHOTOGRAPHY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

of classified documents, which exposed US war crimes, corruption and human rights abuses.

The disclosures by WikiLeaks exposed details of US activities in Iraq and Afghanistan, and included video footage of a helicopter attack by US forces that killed 11 people including two Reuters journalists.

If extradited, Assange will stand trial for violating the US Espionage Act of 1917 by receiving and publishing classified documents. He could be sentenced to as much as 175 years in a maximum-security prison.

Assange's wife Stella thanked the protesters who had travelled to London and said: "Please keep on showing up, be there for Julian and for us, until Julian is free."

She said that if the appeal was unsuccessful, they would apply to the European Court of Human Rights for a rule 39 order to stop extradition while it considers his case.

inbrief...

ONLINE NEWSPAPER BECOMES CHARITY

A local news outlet has become a charity - reportedly the first time this has happened in the UK. After a two and a half year process, Guildford Dragon News, an online paper that started in 2012 and is run by volunteers, gained the status from the Charity Commission.

WOOTTON QUITS AFTER RULING

Television presenter Dan Wootton has left GB News after Ofcom found his show broke broadcasting rules. He was suspended in September after comments about a female journalist were made by actor turned political activist Laurence Fox. Ofcom said Fox's remarks "were clearly and unambiguously misogynistic".

SKY'S ALL-WOMEN POLITICAL PODCAST

Sky News has launched Electoral Dysfunction, a podcast with an all-female line-up that aims to "attract people in who don't necessarily live and breathe politics", according to host and Sky political editor Beth Rigby. Co-hosts are Labour MP Jess Phillips and former Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson, who sits in the Lords.

Ministers pressed over Filipina journalist

A HOUSE of Commons early day motion (EDM) has urged the government to 'use every diplomatic effort' to secure the release of Filipina journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio, who has been imprisoned without trial since 2020.

The EDM, tabled by Liz Saville Roberts MP and supported by several members of the NUJ parliamentary group, echoes the demands made by the union and the International Federation of Journalists.

The motion says evidence

used to arrest her was 'fabricated', and that the treatment of Cumpio, executive director at media organisation Eastern Vista, was a clear violation of press freedom.

The EDM points out that her organisation has a strong

role in highlighting the plight of poor people in her region.

After a 10-day visit to the Philippines in February, UN special rapporteur Irene Khan said 81 journalists had been killed in the country but no one had been prosecuted or investigated for this.

Steve Bell





Story behind the picture

Arthur Scargill at a miners' club
40 years after the strike
By Jess Hurd

As people gathered outside the Dodworth miners welfare club and banners were unfurled for the march through the village on the edge of Barnsley, the heavens opened - a torrential downpour that lasted for the whole ceremony and most of the speeches.

Ex-miners and their families hugged and huddled under umbrellas outside the venue that was established in 1925, some men wearing their National Coal Board donkey jackets, all lined up behind the old National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) banner and led along the high street by a man playing bagpipes. It felt as if we were being transported way back in time.

Forty years ago saw the miners' strike of 1984 – industrial action that shaped the political landscape in which I grew up. I was too young for the picket lines, but when I heard former NUM president Arthur Scargill (above) was to speak at the anniversary, I wanted to attend, to document it and hear him speak about such a monumental year of working-class struggle in Britain.

Wreaths were laid at the pit wheel memorial in the village, then people made their way through the downpour back to the club for speeches from Unison Yorkshire and Humberside regional organiser Rianne Hooley, Unite organiser and Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign chair Joe Rollin and Scargill himself.

He began with a statement on Palestine, labelling the Israeli government a fascist state, calling out the indiscriminate bombing of Gaza and accusing Israel of unlawfully occupying Palestinian territories since 1967.

He spoke for over an hour as people listened intently. Even when he gave up on the microphone, it was clear, at the age of 83, he could still command an audience. The packed room in the club was a sea of yellow 'Coal not dole' stickers and badges, plus symbols and scarves of Palestinian solidarity; one man was wearing a T-shirt that read, 'Still the enemy within'.

Following the speeches, Scargill was mobbed by the crowd for selfies. I left Dodworth hoping he would be healthy enough to make the 50th anniversary.

Biggest swing voter of all is strangely silent



Murdoch hasn't named his election racehorse, says **Raymond Snoddy**

As the general election becomes ever more visible on the horizon, one very large media dog has markedly failed to bark.

In term of popular tabloid coverage, we can be sure of one thing – the Daily Mail and the Daily Express will support the Conservatives to the bitter end and, if the opinion polls are to be believed, the end could be very bitter indeed.

You can see in the columns of the Mail the scarcely hidden longing that somehow Rishi Sunak can be persuaded to either go away or be ousted, and that the man they still regard as a winner can ride over the hill and lead the Tories to an unlikely victory.

The slightly more rational minds – in this case at The Mail on Sunday – do not want Boris Johnson back as leader but believe he can have a significant role in stiffening Tory backbones along the Red Wall in the north of England.

This is an aspiration that has also received prominence on the front page of The Times.

In normal times, The Daily Telegraph could be relied on to be a rabid cheerleader for the Tories whoever was leader – but things are not quite normal.

With a new auction for the Telegraph and The Spectator likely before the election, who knows what line a new owner might take.

But it is the biggest swing media voter of them all, Rupert Murdoch, who has remained intriguingly silent so far.

Murdoch has long had an institutional taste for backing winners in elections in the hope of gaining access and possible influence.

When Tony Blair was looking like a shoo-in, the Labour leader was invited to a News Corporation management

conference on an island off Queensland, and what was reportedly a rather prickly courtship got under way.

In the old days, Murdoch was happy to admit that he decided who The Sun, and the News of the World (when there was a News of the World) would support.

He claimed then that he left the editors of The Times and the Sunday Times to make up their own minds. This was always a moot point because Murdoch had hand-picked those editors and they could scarcely be unaware of the proprietor's thinking.

Yet the then editor of The Sun found out he would be supporting Blair via a front-page piece in the Financial Times. Murdoch had spelled out, unattributed, his thoughts to a FT reporter on his private jet while flying from New York to Los Angeles.

That was then.

Some might argue that Rupert Murdoch is now 92, is chairman emeritus rather than chairman of News Corp and might even be distracted by the prospect of a fifth marriage.

Don't believe a word of it. Rupert Murdoch may not be in day-to-day control of the family media business any more but he will still affect which way the News Corp titles jump politically come election time.

So far, the silence has been deafening.

The word is that Murdoch and the News Corp executives are wondering if there will be a miracle that does not involve Johnson – that support for Sir Keir Starmer might prove to be soft and start evaporating during the heat of an election campaign.

As the Sky poll of polls stands steady at a 20 per cent Starmer lead, a lead that was not dented in the slightest by last month's budget, this could turn out to be wishful thinking.

As a result, there could be some rather unseemly jumping on the bandwagon at the last moment.

There was a clue that the Murdochs may have already have privately given up on Sunak's chances.

As chancellor Jeremy Hunt was finalising his budget speech, it was announced that from the summer Murdoch's Talk TV would cease to be a linear broadcast channel and go online. The channel has been losing millions and been outgunned by GB News.

But, with Sunak being heavily advised by senior figures in his party that a May election would be madness, it is still difficult to imagine Rupert Murdoch giving up a broadcast channel before an expected autumn election if he thought there was life in the contest.

Despite the 1992 headline *It Was The Sun Wot Won It*, the role of newspapers in general election outcomes has usually been greatly exaggerated. At best, they may have helped to amplify a wave of public opinion already on the move.

With declining print circulations in the age of the internet when digital versions of newspapers tend to be swamped by the billions of messages out there, does it matter who a newspaper owner supports any more?

Probably not – but it remains part of the ritual of general elections and might just manage a residual nudge in where we are heading anyway for old times' sake.

You can be certain that Rupert Murdoch will still want to place his bet on a winning horse before the off.

Then there will be the pleasure of watching journalists who have vilified Starmer at every turn and praised the inept Sunak to the end having to go for the reverse ferret and start singing a very different song.

It is hard to imagine Murdoch giving up a broadcast channel before an expected election if he thought there was life in the contest

Leeds

Ruth Addicott finds out why many journalists live in Leeds

Reporter Georgina Morris was just eight months into her job as a trainee on the *Dewsbury Reporter* in 2008 when a story that gripped the nation unfolded on her patch – the kidnap of Shannon Matthews. In 2016, Morris had moved to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* when another story shook the newsroom. This time, it was the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox.

“Jo’s death was a tough one for a lot of people in the newsroom to cover as many of us had met her or knew people who worked in her office,” she recalls. “I’d been at the general election count where she was elected in May 2015 and, 18 months later, I was at the Old Bailey covering her killer’s trial.”

As the UK’s third largest and one of the fastest-growing cities, Leeds has always been a hotbed for hard-hitting news and continues to draw journalists from across the country, many fed up with soaring rents and house prices in the south.

Along with Channel 4, which moved its national headquarters to Leeds in 2020, the city has seen huge growth in the number of independent TV and film companies, creating opportunities for journalists as well as a platform for local talent.

Rolleme, founded by late BAFTA award-winning writer Kay Mellor, has been making shows there for two decades. Leeds is also home to Daisybeck Studios, True North, Wise Owl Films, Talkinglens Productions, Duck Soup Films, Workerbee (previously Endemol Shine North) and independent TV trade body Pact.

Air TV, named one of the ‘best places to work in TV’ for three years running by *Broadcast* magazine, employs around 50 full-time staff and freelancers. Based at Leeds East Airport, half way between Leeds and York, it is one of the fastest growing independent production companies in the UK,

producing shows such as *Bangers & Cash*, *Helicopter ER* and *Derelict Rescue*.

“We actively recruit from journalism courses across Yorkshire and further afield,” says managing director Matt Richards. “We find that a basic journalism background and the communication and investigative skills that come with that are key to many of our job roles.”

Richards spent 10 years as a reporter on *Look North*, before becoming a producer and director on various BBC programmes. He helped launch *Air TV* in 2015 and says the ‘friendly’ and ‘straight-talking’ nature of people in Yorkshire make it the ideal base for great TV.

True North, the company behind BBC’s *Animal SOS*, Channel 4’s *A New Life in the Sun* and MTV’s *Teen Mom UK*, employs around 30 full-time staff and 80 freelancers’.

“There is much more going on in Leeds than 10 years ago and people can build a solid career here,” says talent executive Sallie Leak. “Just be aware that 2024 got off to a slow start – a downturn in advertising means broadcasters are commissioning less, so it will be more difficult to find opportunities until things pick up.”

BBC Yorkshire is in St Peter’s Square, home to BBC Radio Leeds and regional news service *Look North*. ITV Yorkshire has been broadcasting from Kirkstall Road since 1968 and employs around 500 staff.

The main recent arrival is Channel 4, which opened a permanent news studio in Brewery Wharf in May 2023 – making it the first national evening news programme to co-present from two locations, Leeds and London.

Channel 4 presenter and data correspondent Ciaran Jenkins moved to the city in May 2023 and has spent most of his career outside London, based in Cardiff, Manchester, Glasgow and now Leeds. He says the common thread is “understanding the UK as it exists beyond London”.

Although political news and a lot of ‘key voices’ are in the capital, he says it’s given the studio in Leeds an opportunity ‘to amplify under-represented voices’.

BOB SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

Watch a lot of the right TV

Box clever

Sallie Leak, talent executive at True North, says: "A solid journalism background is fantastic for working in factual programming, especially documentaries and

crime, but any sub-genre. Watch a lot of TV so you know the market - not just news and current affairs. Research the shows you want to work on and target those companies... Think

visually and ask whether stories can sustain 30 or 60 minutes."

NUJ network

The Leeds and West Yorks branch has around 500

members. Members meet online every other month, hold regular socials and stay in touch via WhatsApp, Facebook and X. The branch produces a newsletter six times a year.

Journeys from Hell

Rob Parsons, editor of

The Northern Agenda, says the biggest problem is transport. "The trains have been unreliable and slow for years. In North Yorkshire alone, it takes several hours to get from one side to the other." He advises living near a good bus route or station.

Jenkins was brought in to lead the new data team, also based primarily in Leeds.

"It is essential for the way we hold power to account – it's really central to Channel 4's remit and has always driven my reporting," he says. "By definition, this sort of journalism is more resource intensive so one of the challenges, not least in an election year, is striking that balance between covering stories being driven by the political cycle and the overlooked or untold stories that shed light on life in Britain as it really is."

Initial estimates suggested Channel 4's relocation to Leeds could contribute to the creation of more than 1,200 jobs. However, the broadcaster said it planned to cut 200 posts in January as part of its aim to move 600 jobs out of London by 2025.

Morris, who is co-chair of the Leeds and West Yorks NUJ branch, says the main concern for members is job stability and stagnating rates of pay, particularly in the regional press, with many leaving newspapers for PR, comms and policy roles to get better pay and working conditions.

The largest employers in the branch are the BBC and National World, which owns the Yorkshire Post and the Yorkshire Evening Post.

"We had strike action at both workplaces last year – over job cuts in local radio at the BBC and pay issues at National World," says Morris.

The shift to home working – not always by choice – has also led to members feeling isolated.

Alongside commercial broadcasters Global and Bauer, local stations include East Leeds Community Radio and Rangoli Radio, serving the Hindu community. Other publications include the Telegraph and Argus in Bradford, the Hebden Bridge Times in Halifax, Asian Express, That Leeds Mag and

"Leeds and Yorkshire as a whole is a fantastic place to have a TV career. There are many fast-growing independent production companies here as well as the core BBC, ITV and Channel 4 bases."

Matt Richards, managing director, Air TV

"I love the accessibility of places like Leeds. I don't feel as if I'm a particularly long way from anywhere."

Jill Foster, freelance writer

"I would advise looking at what opportunities there are in the Channel 4 News team. We have a significant presence here now and are continuing to strengthen and grow,"

Ciaran Jenkins, data correspondent and presenter, Channel 4

Yorkshire Life magazine. Reach has a presence with Leeds Live and The Northern Agenda, a daily newsletter covering regional and national politics.

Rob Parsons, editor of The Northern Agenda, moved to Leeds in 2013 after working on the London Evening Standard.

"I enjoyed my time in London, but I'm not sure I could have lived there long term. My partner is from Yorkshire and, when I saw the job of crime correspondent at The Yorkshire Post, I jumped at the chance," he says. "My quality of life is better than it ever could have been in London and there are just as many interesting stories to cover."

Jill Foster writes for nationals and also moved up north with her family for a better lifestyle.

"I'd lived in London for nearly 15 years and was very worried about finding work in the north," she says. "I was concerned it might prove a real backwards move in terms of my career because 'everything' was in London. But I don't regret the move for a second. If anything, I got more work because my contacts in London had a reliable writer in the north."

Another benefit is not having to earn quite as much as the cost of living is cheaper.

With numerous PR companies, government offices, NHS bodies and six universities and business schools in the city, there are further opportunities for lecturer roles and work in comms and copywriting.

Aside from the magnificent Victorian shopping arcades, the Corn Exchange, cricket, football, good pubs and a thriving food, music and cultural scene, there's Kirkgate market where M&S started out as a penny bazaar in 1884.

"Leeds is a really vibrant city – but the real draw is Yorkshire," says Richards. "From the historic streets of York to the rolling Yorkshire Dales and the stunning Yorkshire coast, this part of the world is a magnificent place to live and work."



Finding your

Working for yourself can be isolating. If your only co-worker is the cat, you could try online freelance communities, says **Linda Harrison**

The freelance lifestyle can feel empowering and addictive. No longer a slave to your boss and the daily commute, you're creating your own business, setting your own hours and choosing your own clients.

But, along with the many benefits, you are often working by yourself – and, after a while, that can feel pretty isolating.

When I went freelance the first time, in 2010, I knew of only a couple of online communities for freelancers. Fast forward to December 2022 when I accidentally found myself freelance again thanks to redundancy, the landscape had totally changed. Online communities for freelancers were booming. So, while I was still writing in my spare room in Yorkshire, there were lots of opportunities to work alongside like-minded freelancers.

The first group I found was the Freelancer Magazine community. I was a bit sceptical about its free virtual co-working sessions at first; why would I want to be one face on a screen of many, all working with their cameras on? It took me ages to actually join one of the sessions – but after I did, I was hooked.

It was so friendly and supportive, with a mix of freelancers celebrating each other's wins, and I got loads of work done during the two hours online. We co-worked for 45 minutes, had smaller break-out groups to chat for 10 minutes, and then went back to work again. I soon became a regular, seeing familiar freelance faces, bouncing ideas around, getting and giving advice, and connecting with people all over the world. It was like having colleagues but still being my own boss (and without having to deal with office politics).

Questions were asked about all aspects of freelance life. And other freelancers with many years' experience happily shared their expertise.

The community, started by freelance marketer and writer for the travel and hospitality industry Sophie Cross, is mainly made up of B2B and creative freelancers – and it's a heady mix. Along with writers, journalists, marketers, PR specialists, graphic designers, coaches, accountants and translators, you'll find sommeliers, street artists, drag queens and circus performers. The issues discussed are relevant for anyone who is self-employed.

Cross says: "We don't think business needs to be stuffy and formal. You can be unashamedly yourself – it's better that way. Freelancers typically work in isolation and this is not beneficial for them. We want to bring people together to work together, learn together, grow together and make friends.

"It's amazing to see readers share pictures of Freelancer Magazine when it hits their doormat or inbox and connect with each other via social media. Freelancers who have met through the magazine or our events help each other, give each other client referrals and collaborate. Just knowing other people have the same problems and questions and having somewhere to turn for support make a huge difference when you work alone."

Freelancer Magazine has four free virtual co-working sessions per week and a free newsletter called The Dunker. There are also lots of events, including the Big Christmas Party in London. The magazine is £12 a quarter, and online, self-paced marketing courses for freelancers start at £29.

freelancermagazine.co.uk

Sociable and helpful

I'd only intended to join one network. But then I heard about Being Freelance.

Set up by freelance video and podcast producer Steve Folland, it's a really sociable and helpful community.

There's an active chat forum, which Folland says members use to "help ideas percolate – or to collaborate, commiserate, procrastinate or celebrate".

It offers a lot for members to dip into, including regular virtual co-working, tea break socials, live shows, live Q&As,

CASE STUDY:

FREELANCER MAGAZINE

Carolyn Campbell-Baldwin is a Pinterest sales funnel specialist.

"I started reading Freelancer Magazine when my business was new and I was feeling pretty lonely," she says.

"Everyone I knew in real life had a proper job with colleagues and a defined timetable.

"Getting advice online from the Freelancer Magazine community helped me realise I could design my business

to be anything I wanted it to be rather than just aping the employed role I'd just left.

"I'd definitely say that the magazine and the community opened my eyes to the possibilities of freelancing."

tribe

and the coveted weekly Non-Employee of the Week award.

There’s also an inspiring podcast where Folland interviews freelancers, plus real-life and online meet-ups, the Business Book Club, Live Q&As and The Freelance Disco – a live show where a member shares the soundtrack to their freelance life.

Folland adds: “Ending 2023 by actually going out for a Christmas lunch with a group of BFFs [Being Freelance friends] was a real highlight. I hadn’t had a ‘work’ Christmas lunch like that for over 10 years.

“The main thing I hear time and again is the fact that people don’t feel alone any more. If that was the only thing, that’d be huge. But people have found work, friends, mentors...”

Membership is skewed towards creatives. Along with other journalists and copywriters, there are PRs, graphic designers, social media professionals, virtual assistants and videographers and musicians. There’s also the odd accountant.

Folland, who was named community champion at the IPSE Freelancer Awards in 2023, adds: “The stories I hear of the

CASE STUDY: BEING FREELANCE

Jessica Hartshorn, an illustrator, says the biggest benefit has been unexpectedly finding a co-mentor.

She says: “Being part of Being Freelance has dramatically changed my life.

“I met a co-mentor, Jo. We got on really well at one of the social events and we’ve got similar interests. She’s a graphic designer who does a little bit of illustration, and I do a lot of illustration and a little bit of graphic design, so we complement each other really well.

“That’s been really useful for accountability and supporting each other. With a tricky client, we help just think things through and work out the best ways forward.”

Hartshorn’s a big fan of the co-working too: “I

always try, if I can, to attend the co-working sessions – they’re fabulous, just an absolute joy to be a part of.

“It’s that sense of community, being part of something a bit bigger than myself and also outside my sector. I’ve made lots of contacts with people like copywriters and web designers as well as other graphic designers.

“We also all share things regarding accountants or pensions, and getting advice from the more business side of things is really useful.”

Angela Lyons is a graphic designer.

She says: “I really feel like I have co-workers. It’s a community filled with awesome, kind, caring, supportive, funny and absolutely brilliant people.”

//
People don’t feel alone any more. And they have found work, friends, mentors...



connections, friendships, collaborations and hires being made through the community constantly amaze me. I think a lot of us spend years being lonely while working for ourselves without even realising it.

"If you get into a community, you actually end up with better colleagues than you ever had before. And when you're happier and supported and getting to know more people, good things seem to come your way in business too."

Membership costs £15 a month (or two months' free with an annual sub). There's also a £6 basic version. And the podcast is free.

[BeingFreelance.com](#)

Mother of all communities

If you're a freelance parent, don't miss Doing It For The Kids (DIFTK) – a supportive, welcoming safe space to chat about all things work, life and children.

DIFTK was started by freelance graphic designer Frankie Tortora (pictured below) in 2016. It now has more than 350 members sharing information and experiences, making connections and supporting each other.

While the majority are creative freelancers such as designers, illustrators, copywriters and animators, there are also lawyers, accountants and web developers.

Tortora says: "The mix is really good as it means almost any question people might have can almost always be answered by someone from within the community. There's something very special about that."

It's a mix in terms of parenthood too, with solo parents, adoptive parents, polyamorous parents and LGBTQIA+ parents. And there's a big neurodiverse community – both parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities and neurodivergent parents themselves.

Frankie adds: "DIFTK is purely about mutual support, information sharing and reassurance/solidarity through the highs and lows of running a small business around small people.

"The impact that DIFTK has had – and continues to have – is pretty incredible. I've been told countless stories of

CASE STUDY:

DIFTK

Hazel Maclaurin, HR B2B writer, says: "I genuinely wouldn't have a business without Doing It For The Kids. I devoured the podcast on buggy walks and nursery runs, plotting my move into freelance life.

"I joined the community and got advice and support on everything from day rates and business banking to working around naps and

moving house. I got my first client through someone on DIFTK and found an amazing consultant to help build my website and brand.

"Now I recommend it to every freelance parent, and any parents thinking about going freelance."

Emily Dauris, SEO copywriter and blogger: "Being part of the DIFTK community has not only directly brought in business but also made me a better freelancer.



"There's an 'all-in-it-together' mentality and, while we share the stresses and frustrations, we also celebrate the benefits and the wins. Moreover, we offer advice, support one another and share ideas for generating business."

JEREMY FREEDMAN 2019

Find free groups on Facebook

No.1 Freelance Media Women

Around 9,000 members.

This community is for female freelance journalists to help each other, offer support and source case studies or experts.

Members include designers, photographers, copywriters and PRs, and it welcomes staffers who want to offer work to freelancers.

There's a pitching day (Friday) and PR hour (Monday, 11am-12pm). It's free to join.

[facebook.com/groups/No1FreelanceMediaWomen](https://www.facebook.com/groups/No1FreelanceMediaWomen)

Journo Resources

Around 16,000 free and 600 paid members. Some 20,000 people visit the site each month

One of the largest and most diverse journalism and media communities in the UK, Journo Resources is a member-led social enterprise.

Started by Jem Collins after she was made redundant from her job as a journalist,

it is aimed at anyone working in journalism – or who wants to.

Collins says: "We regularly hear from people about how they've landed a new job or freelance pitch.

"We're especially proud of our fellows – people of all ages who are just starting out, who we give mentoring, a paid commission and more support – they've gone on to work at the BBC, Press Association and many more."

It has a redundancy support programme offering tailored coaching, and nearly all resources are free, including its weekly jobs round-up, databases of salaries and freelance rates, and advice.

Free members receive a weekly newsletter. Paid membership, which includes weekly co-working sessions, a Discord channel, a transcription app and weekly events, starts from £5 per month. There's also an option to donate a membership.

[journoresources.org.uk](https://www.journoresources.org.uk)

Freelancing for Journalists

Around 7,000 members.

Started by Lily Canter and Emma Wilkinson, this community provides resources to support taking the leap into freelance journalism – and making it a success. Check out the training plus weekly podcasts with journalist interviews.

Free resources include the online community, newsletter and podcast. There are also paid-for webinars and guides.

www.freelancingforjournalists.com

JournoAnswers

Around 4,000 members.

Journalism lecturer Susan Grossman created this group to offer support to journalists. Members are encouraged to network, post and answer questions, and share job opportunities. It's free to join.

[facebook.com/groups/JournoAnswers](https://www.facebook.com/groups/JournoAnswers)

freelancers within the community hiring each other or recommending each other to one of their clients or contacts. As someone said on a thread recently: "There are loads of people in here now with such a variety of skills that this is my first point of reference [for finding a freelance]. I also tell clients that I can source freelances if they need me to, from here." DIFTK is a bit of a freelance ecosystem in itself.

"We've also seen strong friendships form, business partnership start and all sorts of collaborative projects born out of connections made."

As well as access to the online community, there are mini meetups online – including one for copywriters – as well as in real life, plus mega meetups twice a year in London and Manchester (you can bring your kids).

There's also the award-winning DIFTK podcast, with an agony-aunt format for freelancing/parenting questions.

Membership costs £14 per month or £140 per year. Or, if you're on parental leave, in your first year of business or just cannot currently afford the full price, there's a £6 monthly rate for six months.

www.doingitforthekids.net

How saving for later life can save you thousands

Paying into a pension brings tax benefits, explains **Samantha Downes**

The Panama Papers have shown us how the world's rich use tax breaks (some legitimate, some not so) to make their money go further. These advantages are not just for the wealthy. Anyone of working age, whether on a salary or self-employed, can take advantage of an incentive that can save you thousands of pounds over a lifetime.

You do not need an expensive accountant or an offshore account to use it; all you need is a pension.

Do I need to set up a pension?

If you are in a staff job, then your employer automatically pays into a pension on your behalf. You pay in five per cent (you may be able to choose to pay more) of your pre-tax salary each year, and the employer pays in an extra three per cent of your annual salary, which is a legal requirement.

If you are a freelance you need to set up your own pension, not just for your retirement but also as a savings and tax planning tool.

Unfortunately, freelancers are the least likely of all UK earners to have a pension. The Office for National Statistics found freelancers aged 35-54 were more than twice as likely to have no pension than workers who were employed by a company.

How do pensions work?

You can pay up to £60,000 into a pension each financial year and not pay tax on that amount. The amount you can pay does depend on your

profit/earnings, so your tax return will need to show you've earned £60,000.

If you earn more in one year than the next, you can make use of any annual allowance from up to the previous three tax years; this is called 'carry forward' and is useful for freelancers' whose income may vary from one year to the next.

What type of pension should I have?

The most basic type of pension is a stakeholder pension, which has capped charges and limited investment options. An ordinary personal pension will come with a choice of investments, such as managed funds (which are baskets of investments that include shares and some other stock market listed assets).

Or you can choose a self-invested personal pension (SIPP). This has more expensive fees but, if you own shares or are interested in the stock market, it is worth considering. You can include property and land; some SIPPs will allow you to invest in residential property through real estate investment trusts.

Pensions if you are a sole trader

If you pay your tax as a sole trader, then your pension options are fairly simple.

After you choose what type of pension you want to pay into, you can set up a

Get a check-up

State pension

You need to have paid national insurance contributions for 35 years to get a full state pension. You can check your status online at Check your State Pension forecast - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Get a booster

If you don't have enough qualifying national insurance payments you may be able to top up. Go to National Insurance: introduction: Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

direct debit or standing order and pay into your pension monthly, or you can choose to pay in lump sums (although check with your pension provider).

If you have a limited company

If you run your writing and journalism through a limited company, you can pay into a pension by either using the salary your limited company pays you in the same way as a sole trader or directly, as an employer, from company profits after corporation tax. It has to be from your salary, dividends do not count.

Pension payments are considered a business expense so can be offset against a corporation tax bill and you can use the carry forward rule mentioned before.

Corporation tax rose from 19 per cent to 25 per cent of income in the financial year April 2023 to April 2024. Employers also don't have to pay national insurance (NI) on pension contributions, so this means they save money.

Do self-employed workers get the state pension?

You need at least 10 qualifying years of national insurance contributions or credits to get the state pension; self-employed workers need to pay either the class 2 or class 4 NI rate.

Where do I find a pension?

Most of the big pension providers such as Nest, Standard Life and Royal London, can be found online. You can set up a SIPP through companies including Interactive

Investor or AJ Bell. You'll need to compare fees if you are looking at SIPPS.



Women's sports are mainstream. Are the media catching up? asks **Carrie Dunn**

On the pitch, on the page

Women's sport on the front and back pages – it's been a long time coming. Add Alex Scott helming prime-time television shows, Jill Scott a reality television legend and Karen Carney's voice known to millions as a co-commentator, and it's clear women's sport is well and truly mainstream.

And yes, football – the national sport – is leading the way, and people in the UK are watching more women's sport than ever before. The 2023 Women's World Cup broke new ground, according to the Women's Sport Trust, with the highest ever viewing figures in the UK, with almost half of those viewers (43 per cent) being female. Notably, of the almost 30 million people who watched the Women's World Cup on television, 11.5 million did not watch the men's World Cup in Qatar the previous year.

There are similar booms in other sports, with 6.5 million people watching coverage of the Women's Ashes (up from 3.8 million from the last Ashes in 2019), and 5.6 million watching the Netball World Cup (up from 4.5 million in 2019).

Yet it all comes more than a decade after the event that was supposed to be the turning point for women's sport – the London 2012 Olympic Games. Headlines celebrated it as 'the Women's Games' – because it was the first Olympics at which every participating nation had sent at least one female athlete. While that is cause for some celebration, it hardly signals a female takeover of the globe's most beloved sporting event.

It appears that, since the turn of the millennium, sports journalism has become more welcoming to women, but this might be because of high-profile female faces in sports broadcasting – from Sue Barker to Gabby Logan to Hazel Irvine to Kelly Cates. In the Olympic year of 2012, journalism researchers Suzanne Franks and Deirdre O'Neill found that the average frequency of female writers' bylines in the sports pages of UK newspapers varied between 1 per cent and 2.3 per cent. In 2013, the Sports Journalists' Association (SJA) reported that, of its 700 members, 10 per cent were women, with around half of those working in PR and related fields. It does not take great mathematical ability to work out that this means only around 35 of the SJA's members then were female sports journalists.

It is difficult to get any definite statistics about the number of women in sports media now, but there is certainly not parity between men and women. We may have seen a huge rise in the profile of women's sport – but the numbers of dedicated reporters are rising much more slowly.

30m

People who watched the 2023 Women's World Cup on television

How it's changed

I ALWAYS think I was part of a special generation, growing in the late 1980s, because I vividly remember watching women's football on television – terrestrial television at that, *writes Carrie Dunn*.

For a few seasons, Channel 4 showcased a generation of female players – the likes of Gill Coulter, Marieanne Spacey and Karen Walker, who enjoyed huge success with their teams and were part of the first England squad to compete in the Women's World Cup in 1995.

When I became a full-time sports writer, just after the turn of the millennium,

Cast your minds back to the 2015 Women's World Cup in Canada. A handful of journalists were covering England, with the BBC sending a commentator and pundit. If reporters are not there in person, they cannot spot news stories or ask questions, so are likely to rely on press releases and statements. This tournament also saw the insidious rise of user-generated content to bolster coverage, particularly for online provision – with fans who were actually there being asked to send in pictures, video and comment so journalists back in the UK could turn them into a story.

Outlets realised very quickly that there was demand for greater coverage than they had planned to provide. The popularity of women's sport always seems to take organisers and governing bodies by surprise – and the media fall into the same traps, not preparing properly to give the depth and frequency of coverage that audiences genuinely want.

making the case on a heavily male-dominated sports desk for covering women's competitions was not easy.

Often there were the mocking comments, alongside the usual tired tropes that women's sport didn't attract an audience. I was aware it was a vicious circle; women's sport needed to be presented with thought, care and respect – then it would be received as such.

I was one of a handful of journalists following England during their 2011 Women's World Cup campaign in Germany. Even fewer of us made the trip to Canada in 2015. With a couple of

honourable exceptions, this small group were freelance – few outlets sent staffers until England began to rack up the wins and looked to be contenders for the trophy.

I vividly remember the lack of demand for a formal press conference with England manager Mark Sampson (pictured) – an impromptu chat was set up in a Montreal café. Imagine Sarina Wiegman being expected to do the same now.



TONY HENSHAW / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



SHOOT-OUT JOY FOR LIONESSES

...NAILBITING PENALTIES V...
...ADNESS EARNS H...

>75%
More than three out of four people say women's sport is inspiring

IMAGES: KATHY DEWITT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

sports reporting

Still, at least the tone of coverage has mostly changed. When the first official England team competed in 1972, teenage defender Wendy Owen was asked to pose in the changing room, make-up compact in hand, long blonde hair loose around her face. (Owen never wore make-up; she had to borrow it for the photo, feeling that she ought to obey the instructions given to her.) It was, at least, an improvement from three years previously when Joan Tench rose for a header in an unofficial England international against Scotland; her shorts were pulled down, exposing her underwear, and the cameras clicked happily.

The Women's Sport Trust says that what the media say about women's sport can create – or put off – fans. "Research we did, Turning Moments in to Habits, showed that while more than 75 per cent of people agree women's sport is inspiring, the most significant correlation with consuming women's sport is if it is perceived as exciting," says Tammy Parlour, chief executive of the Women's Sport Trust. "Other research we carried out with Gemba showed that player skills, personalities and stories are key to driving the interest of the committed women's sport fan."

The Mirror's Women's Football News has been one of the success stories of 2023, with Reach's dedicated women's football journalists working with Reach Sport and Mirror Football to produce a monthly standalone supplement. However, Reach has announced swingeing job cuts, which look likely to impact heavily on this. The inaugural editor Natasha Henry – still in post as this feature was being written – explains that the project began as a one-off to commemorate the Lionesses' World Cup campaign, and she is proud to have taken it forward into the season after returning from maternity leave (another factor, perhaps, in this section of media being less accessible to women). She says that even though some may argue that football already dominates column inches and broadcast minutes, a separate media space for women's sport is vital.

"Anyone who says that doesn't realise how little space and coverage is afforded to women's sport specifically," she says. "I see men's and women's football as siblings, not twins. There are similarities but both have so many amazing and inspiring stories that the best way to tell them is via topic-specific channels, whether that be websites, publications or podcasts."

Henry thinks that new avenues for telling women's stories offer opportunities for more journalistic voices to be heard – and perhaps a more supportive path for women.

"I think the continued growth of women's sports definitely offers a different route into the industry for those who feel it isn't inclusive," she says. "For those of us who have to find our own way into sports media, it is often easier to start by telling the stories closest to our hearts. That often means you start by writing about other women."

With the Lionesses leading the charge, now could be the time sports journalism truly begins to change into a more diverse, more welcoming and, yes, more interesting one.

Carrie Dunn is the author of *Woman Up: Pitches, Pay and Periods - the Progress and Potential of Women's Football*, published by Hero Press.



THURSDAY 17 AUGUST 2023 Number 3973

CULTURE
Ancient gold and gems stolen from British Museum

History-making Lionesses become first national reach World Cup final as they prepare to bat

Media women U

A student-run body for women in the media is proving a success, says **Helen Nugent**

It attracts the top tier of female journalists to its annual conference, supports women keen to forge a career in the media, inspires young people – and it’s all run by students.

When Women in Media was founded in 2016 by a group of undergraduates at the University of Manchester, each of whom was hoping to break into the media industry, it was based on a desire to effect change. Even at student level, these women had noticed that writers, radio presenters and interviewees were predominantly men. They were acutely aware that, the further up the ladder you went, the worse it got.

Fast-forward to today and what began as a yearly meet-up for women to discuss their work in the media and pass on their expertise, has evolved into something much bigger, as Rachel Pennington, the current chair of Women in Media, explains.

“We have become a society rather than just a conference. It really has progressed over the years. We have a wider scope now, hosting events throughout the year, led by women as well as people who identify as women and non-binary. And all that culminates in the conference in May.”

With branches across the country, the student-led organisation aims to tackle intersectional barriers in the media industry, where some individuals suffer more than one form of discrimination, based on their gender, ethnicity and so on, and encourages and motivates young people. New for 2024 is a zine that will be published in print. Entries have been encouraged from women nationwide, whether that’s essays on the female gaze, poetry about misogyny or reflections on women in history.

Pennington, who is in her second year at Manchester University and is studying English literature, says: “We opened our submissions for the zine to our general membership but also to the wider public. We want them to speak on women’s issues – to speak about the women they find inspirational. We hope that we’re a group that brings women’s voices to the forefront, those voices that have been marginalised in the media.”

Nevertheless, the key event in the calendar remains the annual conference, held at the university’s student union. Previous speakers have included political journalist Laura Kuenssberg, Sally Nugent from BBC Breakfast, presenter and scientist Anjana Khatwa and Dr Radha Modgil, a broadcaster and author.

Run entirely by students from the University of Manchester, around 30 of whom sit on the main committee, Women in Media is a non-profit organisation which, in addition to its support for young people, raises money for good causes through ticket sales and fundraising events. In 2024, it has nominated two charities – Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH) and Refugee Women Connect. The latter supports female asylum seekers, refugees and survivors of trafficking to build a secure life in the UK while MASH supports women who do sex work. MASH’s initiatives include an in-house clinic and street outreach team.

As for Women in Media, its organisational structure is well thought out. This year, different teams are handling the various elements, including finances, fundraising, logistics and marketing. The society also receives support from The Mancunion, the university’s student paper and recent winner of best publication (north) and best digital (north) in the regional Student Publication Association awards. Several Women in Media committee members write for it.

While the conference, which takes place on May 4, is still at the planning stage, delegates can expect panels, workshops

Finding inspiration

EACH year, Women in Media invites influential women from a wide range of backgrounds to share their stories, expertise and challenges.

One former speaker is Jem Collins, director of Journo Resources, an award-winning enterprise that helps young people break into and progress in the media industry.

“I’ve spoken at the Women in Media conference several times now, both in Manchester and online during the pandemic,” she says. “I think the first time I went was in 2018 and, generally, I’ve given advice on getting a journalism job each time.

“Every time I’ve been part of the conference, it’s been a really wonderful experience. It feels really special to gather so many women in the media in one place, and I also found their media-wide perspective really refreshing. “It isn’t just a journalism conference – it brings together people from all parts of the wider media industry, which means it’s

an amazing place to find inspiration.

“I think it’s so important that organisations like Women in Media exist. Women still face substantial barriers to progression across the industry and it’s so important to find inspiration, collective support and guidance.”

Mollie Simpson is a journalist at The Mill, an email-based newspaper for Greater Manchester, and a University of Manchester graduate.

Of being involved in Women in Media, she says: “It’s incredibly important to have women-led organisations, especially since there’s so much misogyny in the [media] industry.”



united



and keynote speakers. Speakers already lined up include filmmaker and director Basma Khalifa. The event this year holds extra significance as 2024 is the 200-year anniversary of the University of Manchester.

Pennington describes how she came to be involved with Women in Media: "I started writing for The Mancunion last autumn and then I saw that the Women in Media applications were open. And I thought, why not go for chair, see if I can do it? I'm an English literature student and have always had a passion for writing. It's fascinating seeing yourself in print. And, as a woman and a feminist, it's incredibly important to me to give voices to women who may not have had a voice for a very long time.

"Also, I thought it would be an amazing opportunity, particularly as I'm thinking about going into journalism after university, to start working on acquiring more skills now. I'm very interested in management and I really enjoy running a team and getting things to run smoothly. And then just being able to take huge pride in a group of women who are working together to provide opportunities for other women. It's really inspiring."

She continues: "Obviously, it's great for networking, not just for the people running it but also for those who come, whether it's men or women. We want them to feel empowered by the conference... it's about breaking down barriers for people who want to enter the media as a career, whether that's written journalism, publishing, broadcasting or anything else. Every year, we seem to reach a wider net of people and hear a greater range of voices which is really uplifting."

Women inspiring women

Last year, the most popular panel was Women Behind the Camera which included Julie Ritson, a camerawoman and journalist for BBC News. Also well attended were panels focusing on journalism, publishing, social media and radio. The keynote speaker was Branwen Jeffreys, the BBC's education editor, and other guests included Keisha Thompson, artistic director and chief executive of Contact, a multi-arts venue in Manchester, and Lucy Dyer, editorial development manager at News Associates which runs journalism courses.

In 2023, the organisers sold 115 tickets for the conference and welcomed 34 speakers. They are hoping for a similar level of interest in May. In addition, last year's event raised £1,200 for charity including money for Smart Works Greater Manchester, which supports unemployed women in both its area and the wider north-west region.



"It was great to see that so many people were interested in our event," says Annabel Benton, who chaired Women in Media last year. "And it wasn't just women who attended. Lots of young people wanted to be there as well as industry people and people from other universities."

She adds: "We got some really positive feedback, including a lot of people on the day who told us it was inspiring. I think the workshops in particular went down well, which was great because we really wanted to emphasise hands-on experience at the conference. It was also nice to see people talking to the speakers after the official events. In all, I think it was a lovely and supportive environment."

A third-year English literature student at the University of Manchester, Benton says she realised early on that she wanted to be part of Women in Media.

"I attended the conference in 2022 in my first year. I found it so inspirational. I knew it was something I wanted to get involved in. Then, when it came to applying for roles for the committee, I thought it would be a great opportunity to get experience, from marketing to conference planning, fundraising to interviewing, and also push myself to do something different."

<https://www.womeninmedia.org.uk/>
<https://www.facebook.com/womeninmediacon>

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.

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.

For more information on how we can help or to make a donation please visit:

www.nuj.org/nujextra

NUJ  **extra**

Headland House, 72 Acton Street, London. WC1X 9NB

Email: extra@nuj.org.uk

Tel: 020 7843 3738

'Loony MP backs bomb gang...'

Chris Mullin on the press reaction to his Birmingham Six investigation



PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The role of Mr Chris Mullin in this sorry affair leaves a nasty odour that will not go away. Mr Mullin is paid to represent the voters of Sunderland South. Instead he acts as a mouthpiece for the IRA."

So said an editorial in *The Sun* in 1988 after the Court of Appeal rejected an appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings. There was much more in this vein. 'Loony MP backs bomb gang.' That occupied an entire front page. 'Mr Odious.' 'Twenty things you didn't know about Crackpot Chris' (I didn't know most of them either). And then the somewhat more sinister, 'We would have been tempted to string 'em up years ago.'

Ever wonder what prompts the death threats and abuse that shower down upon anyone who takes a stand on an unpopular issue? I can laugh about it now but, given that I depended on votes for a living and *The Sun* was read daily by perhaps a quarter of my core voters, it didn't seem so funny at the time.

Personally, I was also disappointed that fellow journalists, some no doubt members of the union, were willing to engage in this type of journalism (a practice known as monsterring in certain newsrooms).

I have never been too worried about it because I was always confident that I would eventually be vindicated.

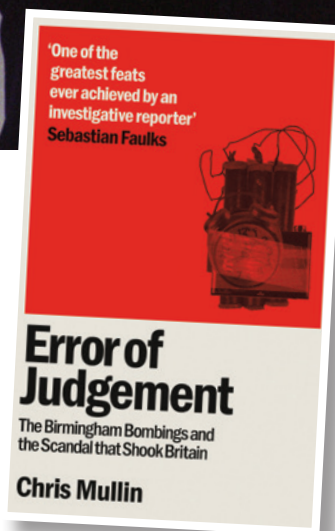
Knowing this, I made a practice of including the most egregious abuse from fellow journalists among the accolades printed in the front of each edition of *Error of Judgement*.

Step forward Ray Mills in the *Daily Star*: "Anglo-Irish relations are at a new low, the IRA have scored a major propaganda triumph as the Birmingham Six enter Irish mythology... Much of this is Mr Mullin's doing and I believe he has done it as the unwitting dupe of the IRA: a simple stooge for the dark and sinister forces who seek to impose anarchy on Ireland."

And how about this from George Tyndall of Birmingham's *Sunday Mercury*: "The sight of Labour MP Chris Mullin relentlessly plugging his book while prattling on about justice is enough to make you throw up."

I make no complaint. When it comes to selling books, a colourful denunciation is at least as powerful as the highest accolade.

It can be dangerous, however. Labour MP Jo Cox was murdered by a man chanting the Brexit slogan 'Britain first'. And I have no doubt there are many politicians, horrified by what is happening in Gaza, who are afraid to speak up for fear of getting sucked into the vast toxic sludge that surrounds allegations of anti-Semitism – an



allegation skilfully exploited by those who wish to defend the indefensible.

Birmingham was in denial when I first went there. When the first edition of *Error of Judgement* was published in 1986, the city's main bookshop stocked just two copies – on a shelf labelled 'Irish interest'. The regional BBC TV refused to touch the story, even though publication of the book was leading the bulletins on its rival, Central Television.

I later discovered an unhealthy close relationship between the West Midlands Police and members of the local establishment. The notorious West Midlands Serious Crime Squad, which eventually had to be disbanded, held an annual dinner at the city's Albany Hotel. Guests included lawyers, magistrates and senior journalists. I am pleased to report that, following the release of the Birmingham Six in March 1991, the dinner was hastily abandoned.

In the case of *The Sun*, I had the last laugh. Even after the six innocent men were vindicated, *The Sun* – and let it be said, much of the legal profession – carried on whispering that they were all guilty. In the end, it cost the paper more than £1 million in costs and damages. Since when not a peep has been heard from any *Sun* journalist on the subject.

I made a practice of including the most egregious abuse from fellow journalists among the accolades printed in the front of each edition

An updated version of *Error of Judgement* by Chris Mullin is published by Monoray. Arts, Page 24

Thirty years on from the birth of democracy

Conrad Landin charts the role of journalists in South Africa's political transformation

In a large church in Soweto in southern Johannesburg, hundreds of journalists, political activists and family members gathered earlier this year for a memorial service for Peter Magubane, a legendary South African photojournalist.

His pictures of the struggle brought the violence of apartheid to the eyes of the world. Leading the prayers, Father Jeffrey Madondo remembered Magubane “for images portrayed of you, Christ, in our midst”. Deputy culture minister Ncawu Mafu told the congregation: “Our democratic project would not be complete without Dr Peter Magubane’s part in it.”

Journalists had a unique ability, after all, to objectively portray the moral depravity of racial segregation and the disempowerment of the black majority. This complemented the struggle of the African National Congress (ANC), including its armed wing uMkhonto weSizwe, and the campaigning prowess of the United Democratic Front, which led the movement at home after the ANC was banned. The role of media workers was arguably summed up by Magubane’s advice to the Pulitzer-winning photographer David C Turnley: “Listen, don’t talk and, if you need to talk, don’t say anything.”

Thirty years on from the birth of South Africa’s democracy, the country’s journalists are still shaping its politics. Yet they do so amid hostile conditions that will be familiar to their colleagues the world over.

The recent anthology *Journalists and Job Loss* chronicles how South African media companies slashed almost half of their jobs in the 10 years following the global financial crisis of 2008. The publicly funded South African Broadcasting Corporation cut its workforce by half in October 2018, laying off 1,200 journalists. In 2008, there were 575 local newspapers in print; that had fallen to fewer than 200 a decade later.

Decline has affected not just newsrooms but unions too: the South African Union of Journalists was defunct by 2010, while the Media Workers’ Association of South Africa, famed for representing black journalists from the 1970s, was officially deregistered as a trade union in 2019.

The South African National Editors’ Forum (SANEF) is not a

union, but amid this decline, it has taken a leading role as the voice of the profession. Its executive director Reggy Moalusi is keen to compare the conditions afflicting South African media to those facing journalists worldwide. “If you look, at the moment, you’ll get one journalist trying to work three jobs at the same time, expected to be writing, do video, do pictures and all of those things,” he says. “Much as newsrooms have gotten smaller, we have seen other media entities closing; the few journalists who are left are still doing an incredible job.”

As in many parts of the world, readers often cannot understand why journalists expected to do more with less cannot produce work of the same standard as that of the better-resourced past. “Often, as a media, we get the criticism that we don’t quite reach the nook and the crook of the country, we don’t travel far and wide as we should, we don’t tell the stories that we should,” Moalusi acknowledges. “But there’s only so much we can do with the resources we have. Where we’re at now as the fourth estate, we’re doing a pretty decent job.”

Writer resistance

MUCH OF South Africa’s media, including state broadcaster SABC, played a role in propping up apartheid – but the story of the liberation struggle is inseparable from that of the brave journalists who stood up against it.

As editor of South African radical newspaper *The Guardian* and later radical journal *Fighting Talk*, South African Communist Party activist Ruth First exposed the brutal conditions in labour camps. After a period of detention, she was acquitted of treason. While in exile in Mozambique, she was assassinated in 1982.

Nat Nabasa’s columns told the story of apartheid, “for one man living through it”, as Nadine Gordimer wrote. He was awarded a fellowship to study journalism at Harvard University in 1964, but was unable to return home and took his own life aged just 28. His remains received a hero’s welcome when returned to South Africa in 2014.

Having cut his teeth in journalism in the pre-apartheid era, Henry Nxumalo served in Egypt during the Second World War. On his return to South Africa, he became frustrated with the few opportunities for

black journalists, but in 1951 he became editor of *Drum* magazine, which was aimed at a black audience. He was murdered in 1957 while investigating suspicious deaths at an abortion clinic.

Donald Woods, arguably South Africa’s most famous anti-apartheid journalist, befriended Steve Biko, Black Consciousness Movement leader, in the 1970s. As *Daily Dispatch* editor, he published criticisms of the government and photographed Biko’s body after he was beaten to death in 1977. He was banned by the regime and escaped South Africa disguised as a priest. The story of his friendship with Biko was told in the Richard Attenborough film *Cry Freedom*.

the



The 1976 youth uprisings in Soweto.
PETER MAGUBANE / PMHA/COURTESY
THE MAGUBANE FAMILY

Journalists have played a crucial role in exposing the ‘state capture’ that overshadowed the presidency of Jacob Zuma, in which the billionaire Gupta brothers siphoned off huge sums of public money through lucrative public sector contracts and arrangements.

One leading voice in these disclosures was the Daily Maverick, an online news portal with a weekly print publication set up in 2009. Funded by philanthropic donations, commercial activities and reader support, its voluntary membership scheme has kept online content free from paywalls. Along with the likes of GroundUp and amaBhungane, it is one of a number of media start-ups to have graced the South African scene since the 2008 crash.

At the same time, according to Glenda Daniels, associate professor of media studies at Wits University, “many journalists became embroiled in factional battles” under Zuma’s presidency, splitting “the journalist community in two, with one side following professional codes and ethics, the other siding with certain politicians”.

One such case did, however, arguably show the resilience of press regulation in the South Africa. In 2014, The Sunday Times alleged that former intelligence minister Ronnie Kasrils, who had opposed Zuma’s rise to the presidency, was the “mastermind behind most of the manoeuvring” at a key party conference and the link with former president Thabo Mbeki in a supposed anti-Zuma network. After lodging a complaint with the press council’s ombudsman, Kasrils successfully secured not only an apology and retraction from the newspaper but also the unprecedented step of Sunday Times street posters amplifying his victory.

Some journalists who held firm to the principle of speaking truth to power have faced accusations of disloyalty to the nation. “Let’s not fool ourselves,” says Moalusi. “If you’re going to look at the current government... there are politicians who hate journalists, who just can’t stand the media, and equally there are politicians who think they’re smart enough on how to use the media and exploit the media. And then you also get politicians who appreciate journalists.”

The legacy of apartheid and the liberation struggle figure large in South African discourse – and can be exploited in an attempt to shut down scrutiny. “The government of the day says ‘we are trying to reverse what apartheid has done, and you guys are just judging us for this past 30 years’. And we are

saying [that] three decades is a long time. With what you’ve wasted with all of our tax money, you could have done much better than what you have done now.

“We are not judging them unfairly. Apartheid did do much damage, and this is the patriotic line we should take, but is it a patriotic line that says ‘don’t do your job’? You must just overlook [a minister who says] ‘I don’t do my job, [and] you should not do your job as a journalist – perhaps we can have a better relationship?’ If me and you can’t have a relationship because I’m doing my job, so be it.”

Daniels agrees, saying: “They’d rather us to be like China.”

Start-ups can be vulnerable too. In July 2022, less than four years after it was founded, left-wing online journal New Frame abruptly shut up shop. An investigation by news body amaBhungane, which reports on issues of public interest, found that New Frame had spent R122 million (£5 million) in its short existence, which came largely from US tech mogul Neville Roy Singham. An outspoken supporter of the Chinese government, Singham has contributed large sums to political and media projects in the Global South.

Shortly before its downfall, New Frame editor Richard Pithouse had boasted that funding was secure for an astonishing 20 years. But the plug was pulled – a decision attributed by Pithouse to the outlet’s “very high costs for a very small audience” – and journalists laid off. amaBhungane noted that, unlike other projects funded by Singham, “New Frame appears to have been the odd one out — never entirely falling into line with the [pro-China] ideological boundaries that came to define the network”.

Ahead of South Africa’s elections this year, SANEF has collaborated with the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa in a training programme to keep journalists up to date with recent changes to electoral law. “Your pens, cameras and microphones are not just tools: they are instruments of democracy,” the organisation told the ranks of the profession in a recent statement.

South Africa’s democracy is still young, and the past decade has seen a definite weakening of institutions that are crucial to maintaining it, the media among them. But the vital work of journalists in the country should not be underestimated. A decade and a half of job losses and closures has “made it harder”, Moalusi concedes, “but making it harder it doesn’t mean that the journalists who are left have stopped working”.

“
The government
says ‘we are trying
to reverse what
apartheid has done,
and you guys are
just judging us for
this past 30 years’.
And we are saying
that three decades
is a long time



by **Mark Fisher**

arts

Books >
Error of Judgement
Chris Mullin
Out now
Monoray

The longstanding NUJ member and politician updates his landmark investigation into the 1974 Birmingham bombings and the wrongful imprisonment of six men, one of the most significant miscarriages of justice ever. This edition includes a new preface and two additional final chapters in a book that remains an invaluable testament to the power of investigative journalism.
<https://tinyurl.com/2aydbp5f>

An African History of Africa
Zeinab Badawi
April 18
WH Allen

The broadcaster, journalist and filmmaker takes us 'from the dawn of humanity to independence' as she visits more than 30 countries, countering western narratives about slavery and colonialism as she goes.
<https://tinyurl.com/2auwysud>

Comedy >
Rosie Holt: That's Politainment!
On tour
April 11–May 31

Variouly playing a Tory MP, an

alt-right talk-show host and a left-wing comedian, Holt (below) takes her Edinburgh Fringe show on the road to lambast a desperate political generation.
<https://www.rosieholt.co.uk>



Exhibitions >
Visions of Hooley
Belfast Exposed
Until April 27

Music journalist and ex-NME man Stuart Baillie celebrates his friend Terri Hooley, an alternative Belfast icon, veteran of anti-war protests and counter-culture magazines, not to

mention someone who gave a leg-up to the Undertones.
<https://tinyurl.com/2d26wc5a>

Caroline Walker: Nurture
Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh
Until June 1

On show are paintings depicting women at work, whether their labour is paid or unpaid. The last collection by Walker focuses on nursery school teachers, health workers and grandmothers engaged in childcare.
<https://tinyurl.com/247jdoev>



Festivals >
Tradfest
Edinburgh
May 3–13

Co-organised by NUJ member Douglas Robertson, this year's celebration of roots music kicks off with Valtos, aka Daniel Docherty and Martyn MacDonald from Skye, and goes out in style with Julie Fowlis, a champion of Gaelic song.
<https://edinburghtradfest.com>

HowTheLightGetsIn
Hay-on-Wye
May 24–27

Speakers in the Big Ideas line-up include Gillian Tett, chair of the FT editorial board, Christina Lamb, Sunday Times chief foreign correspondent, and Claire Provost, investigative journalist. Priya Hall and Leila Navabi are among the comedians offering light relief from the heady debate.
<https://tinyurl.com/2bkc2n39>

Films >
Stephen
General release
April 26

Documentary by visual artist Melanie Manchot about a recovery group in Liverpool who make a semi-fictional film-within-a-film to consider gambling and alcohol addiction, past and present.
<https://tinyurl.com/2cr5nbek>

In depth >

Ukraine in time of war

Jen Stout was overjoyed. The Shetland-born journalist had finally fulfilled her dream of studying in Moscow.

But, just a few months into her course, President Putin sent the troops into Ukraine. The Alfa Fellowship for early-career journalists was cancelled.

Rather than return to Scotland, her instincts – both humanitarian and journalistic – told her she had to go to Ukraine.

Improvising her journey, she headed to Austria, then Romania and eventually Odesa, Kharkiv and all over Ukraine.

She reported for publications including the BBC, RTÉ, the London Review of Books and the Sunday Post.

However, there was much more she wanted to say. She has now done this in *Night Train to Odesa* in which she gives a first-hand account of the human cost of war. It has been acclaimed by journalist Neal Ascherson as "moving and unforgettable".



It is less about geopolitical machinations and more about individual stories. "I'd done so much arm's-length straight reporting and I felt if I wanted to tell those stories it needed to be in a bigger narrative," says Stout, a member of the NUJ's freelance industrial council.

"I thought the best way to do that was as this journey through all these extraordinary places. So much of what I want to tell you about is the people I met, some of whom are really good friends, and I couldn't write that at a distance."

Despite fiercely held political opinions, she didn't want to write a book about politicians. "I think I only mention

Zelenskyy about three times," she laughs.

"This is a book without any famous people in it. I interviewed some officials, but it's more, 'I bumped into this person as they walked off a boat and they told me about their life'."

This, of course, has a politics of its own. "I want to explain why this war has happened, but I explain it through the anecdotes and stories of the people," she says.

"I need to feel their rationale, their emotions, their thinking to understand how they see the country they're a part of."

Night Train to Odesa: Covering the Cost of Russia's War, Polygon, May 2
<https://tinyurl.com/2czc2nj9>

On Resistance Street
General release
April 26

Richard David's documentary celebrates the role of music in the fight against fascism, racism and bigotry. It looks at Rock Against Racism in the 1970s, as well as 1950s campaigns and more recent right-wing populism.
<https://tinyurl.com/24p5hbqo>



Television >
The Regime
Sky Atlantic
April

Kate Winslet and Hugh Grant star in a satirical six-part set in the time of an authoritarian European government as it starts to fall apart. Will Tracy, who worked on *Succession*, is the writer. Stephen Frears directs.
<https://tinyurl.com/22v7cg66>

Theatre >
Wor Bella
Bread & Roses Theatre, London, and Theatre Royal, Newcastle
April 22–28

NUJ member Ed Waugh's play about women footballers in World War 1. Alan Shearer has a recorded cameo.
<https://tinyurl.com/2cp9au9h>

1884
Shoreditch Town Hall, London
April 17–27

In 1884, an international conference in Berlin led to colonial powers taking control of 90 per cent of Africa. Rhianna Ilube joins game-maker Coney for an interactive re-enactment.
<https://tinyurl.com/29xppl7>

Boys from the Blackstuff
Royal Court, Liverpool, and National Theatre, London
April 19–May 8

This staging of Alan Bleasdale's seminal series about working-class survival in 1980s unemployment makes a welcome return.
<https://nationaltheatre.org.uk>

Spotlight >
Against ideals

Like so many of us during the pandemic, Siobhan Wall looked inwards.

Where previously she had taken photographs of restful places in her book *Quiet London*, now she put herself in the frame. The selfies she took put her alopecia in foreground – a side effect of the medication she takes for multiple sclerosis.

"It's trying to make something good out of losing a lot of hair," says Wall, who sits on the NUJ's disabled members' council.

"It helped me to think, yes, it's possible

to look beautiful even though you've got no hair. It's a political act: challenging images of ideal beauty."

She has turned the series into a limited-edition book, *Hair Less*, which she is showcasing in an exhibition in Shoreditch in London.

"Activist art is crucial at the moment," she says.

As well as a book launch on April 18, she



will be running two workshops: Make your own photobooks! (April 20); and Learn Surrealist Collage (April 21). The first is about Japanese stab binding and self-publishing; the second is about combining images and text creatively.

"Being playful with found materials is a great way to counteract the fact that the world is not in a good state," says the former university lecturer.

"I'm interested in doing things for yourself. It's very punk."

Hair Less,
Photobook Café, London,
April 19–21
<https://tinyurl.com/29vcjwho>

EROL SULEWMAN

theJournalist

To advertise your products or services in **The Journalist** and reach over 25,000 journalists. Please contact us to find out about the opportunities that are available.

020 3283 4055

hello@square7media.co.uk

★ Financial advice for hacks from a hack and qualified financial adviser. Contact Nigel Bolitho of BV Services, authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Email: ncfb007@gmail.com
Phone 01954 251521

Southwell, Tyrrell & Co.

Tax Consultants

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

We can help and advise on the new changes under Making Tax Digital including helping to set up the MTD compatible software and bookkeeping.

Our services include accounts preparation, tax reporting, business start-ups and advice on possible incorporation, payroll services, management accounts, bookkeeping and more.

For further details, contact us on
T 020 7606 9787
E info@southwell-tyrrell.co.uk

Thank you for your feedback!

The last edition of The Journalist made its presence felt on X (formerly Twitter) clocking up nearly 90,000 views of pages and links to the magazine. Highlights included the Post Office journalism cover feature, a report from the frontline in Ukraine, NUJ and Me and Ray Snoddy's column. It's gratifying to have such a great reach and to see members post the magazine.

Social media is the way many people comment on the magazine but we are keen to have feedback from letters too. Do get in touch.



Your Say...



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



An odd occupation of senior eccentrics



As images take over, **Chris Proctor** fears writing is dinosaurs' work

On holiday last month, I was approached by the gent who worked behind the hotel bar. I expected the worst, like when I go through customs.

But no. He said he had my pen. "Someone left this on a table last night," he said, brandishing a Parker biro. "I thought it must be yours."

It was mine, although this was incidental as I'd have claimed it anyway. Nice pen. But how did he know it was mine? It was because I was the only one who wrote.

Subsequently, I spent time in the bar, researching and, apart from one woman doing a sudoku, pens were as absent as the ruddy sun, but that's another matter. They didn't write; only a few read; but everyone looked at pictures on their phones.

Images have taken over. Almost completely. Writing, it dawned on me, is an odd occupation indulged in by senior eccentrics. Industrially speaking, writing is a dinosaur in the Cretaceous period.

When journalism first grasped me to its bosom, the point of a picture was debatable. Readers were invited to peruse columns of tight print, undisturbed by images. Now, web and print pages are full of images. The job of a writer is rapidly becoming that of caption compiler.

As if this wasn't bad enough, we're not even trusted to do it on our own.

As I was cutting my quill yesterday, I noticed a byline in my local paper. A story was attributed to a journalist – and then it read 'with AI assistance'. I nearly knocked over the ink stand. It seems so unfair that it took 185 years – from 1785 until the 1970s – for Times

journalists to be given bylines. And now some menacing mechanical development is given one without even asking.

I suppose at least it's positive that they, unlike university undergraduates, admit to using AI. I loathe it. I heard someone talking about 'a friendly, chatty little bot' the other day. No, I had to remind him, it's neither friendly nor chatty. It's a job-destroying, imagination-numbing, skill-stealing, down-dumbing, hostage-offering, sloth-inducing, brain-sagging threat.

That's actually what I mean to say, but only put together later, on the bus.

Anyway, the top dogs in journalism are the picture people. They are the ones who fill the pages, draw the attention, attract the public. They are the wanted. The coveted. Chosen ones.

So how come they're not filthy rich? Normally if a trend starts and the product's popular, like women's football, the income of the players skyrockets. The reverse seems to happen with photographers. The more sought-after the product, the more employers choke the providers. Apart from the obvious, it's a pretty ridiculous business model.

My only reservation about pictures is that you can't trust them. I accept that there is actually a case that you can't trust words either: listen to Donald Trump. No, don't do that to yourself. Take my word for it.

Anyway, back on my holidays, I was taken from my bar research for a stroll along the seafront. On the way, I took a picture of my partner Amanda which she didn't say was foul and I resolved to frame. It was only later that I noticed the liquefied natural gas terminal steaming over her right shoulder.

That is why we pay photographers so regally. Or rather, we don't.

One of the people I was researching was from Newcastle but otherwise fine. I told him I was thinking of going to Porto Moniz the following day and I was reading up about it. He looked at me in amazement and edged up close.

"I can show you Porto Moniz!" he declared. He opened his mobile phone and showed me pictures. Pictures that told me, exactly and precisely everything about the geography, facilities, design and attractions of the town. Moreover, his visual record was polylingual (always useful with a Tynesider) and required little effort to access.

When I next saw him, I didn't bother asking if he'd like to scan through a few pars I'd written in my diary.

Visual images are an amazing tool. One picture can convey a world. One suffering child can speak for millions. I think of how many thousands of words I could waste failing to describe Gaza. And one photograph can speak it. Should I have bothered getting my pen back?

I cheer up when I think there's always room for an opinion piece. "You can't put that in a picture," I told myself.

That very day I was sent a cartoon image. It depicted a frail Joe Biden with a blanket on his knee, dozing, while a truant and thuggish Trump leans over to sneak-steal the food from his plate.

By now I'm getting desperate about the writing trade in its entirety. I fall into despond. My trade is dying. I may as well have told the waiter it wasn't my pen after all, and just shown him my cropped picture of Amanda. He'd have laughed: "I know Camara de Lobos. That's next to the gas depot."

“**The top dogs in journalism are the picture people. So how come they're not filthy rich?**”



PETER SOMMER TRAVELS



CROATIA



GREECE



ITALY



TURKEY



UNITED KINGDOM



EXPERT-LED ARCHAEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL TOURS
FOR SMALL GROUPS



6 TIMES
UK TOUR OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

TEL: 01600 888 220 / WWW.PETERSOMMER.COM

