Clegg’s comments “a slur on our profession”

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg seized on the controversy surrounding phone hacking to advocate media regulation and an overhaul of the Press Complaints Commission.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme, Clegg said that the News of the World scandal should be used as an opportunity to “clean up” the Press, and alleged that the scandal “clearly goes beyond News International” and was indicative of a a too-cosy relationship between the Press and the Police.

He added that the rules on media plurality should be re-examined and the “entirely toothless” Press Complaints Commission looked at.

Amanda Brodie, chairman of the Chartered Institute of Journalists’ Professional Practices Board, expressed concern about the tone of the Deputy Prime Minister’s comments.

She commented: “As a professional institution which protects the rights of journalists, we are very concerned at this latest suggestion from the Government that such illegal practices as phone-hacking are so widespread within the industry.

“To suggest that illegal practices are endemic amongst the Press is wholly wrong, and a slur on our profession. The vast majority of journalists are happy to subscribe to the Press Complaints Commission code of conduct and go about their business in a responsible and totally legal fashion.”

She added: “It is also disingenuous of the Government to start complaining about the ‘cosy’ relationship with the Press, which so many politicians encouraged and benefited from, but are now condemning because it is politically expedient for them to do so.”

During his interview, Clegg accused the PCC of being “in the pockets of the media it is supposed to be regulating” but gave no evidence to back up his statement.

“The role of the PCC certainly needs to be looked at,” said Ms Brodie, “but the Government has no power to do this since the PCC is not a Government organisation. It can of course legislate to regulate the Press, perhaps by creating a new body, but who is to say this new body would be any more independent, especially if it is set up and administered by Government?

“We should not forget the vital role the Press plays in protecting the public, and it must be free to continue to do this.

“It should not be forgotten that it was elements of the Press that kept the pressure on regarding illegal phone hacking, long after the police and the NoW had found no further need to re-examine the affair.

“However, we do welcome Mr Clegg’s comment that: ‘It is important that we do not let the free Press be undermined by the out of control Press. We hope this will be the Government’s mantra as it seeks to determine any change in the laws of media regulation in this country.”

PCC’s chairman resigns

The importance of a free Press has never been greater, Press Complaints Commission chairman Baroness Buscombe said in her resignation statement on July 29.

The News of the World phone hacking scandal was brought to light by investigative journalism, she said, and newspapers and magazines must have the freedom to expose wrongdoing wherever it was found.

Her decision to leave before her three-year term of office expires in the new year came in the wake of criticism of the Commission’s handling of the hacking scandal.

Prime Minister David Cameron had accused it of being “ineffective and lacking in rigour”, saying an entirely new body was needed, while Labour leader Ed Miliband said it was a “toothless poodle”.

The commission said Baroness Buscombe

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Editor’s Comment

It is difficult in a quarterly publication like the Journal to comment on the current political “hot topic” without risking one’s comments being instantly overtaken by events – but in the case of the News of the World phone hacking scandal it is impossible for your Editor to avoid making some observations on the longer term issues and questions raised.

At the time of writing, the full implications for the company at the centre of the storm – News International – are still unclear. Nevertheless, whatever the fate of the Murdoch empire, and indeed that of its erstwhile political allies (on both sides of the House of Commons), “backgate” is set to have far-reaching consequences for the relationship between the Press and the various institutions of the British state.

Under close inspection now, are not just Britain’s media and privacy laws but the ethical standards of the journalistic profession itself – the profession whose interests and values our Institute has striven for over a century and a quarter to uphold and to strengthen.

For many politicians, mired in the scandal themselves in one way or another, the reaction has been to cynically court popularity by demanding Press regulation. We should not be in the least surprised, as the default position of most politicians when under attack is to blame the media.

David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Ed Milliband – and legions of their supporters have been allowed to slip. But we cannot allow the lack of professionalism in one of our institutions of the British state to bring about the destruction of press freedom in this seedy corner of our industry.

The Daily Mail may have been over-reacting when it accused the Lib-Con Coalition of emulating Zimbabwe’s Marxist dictator Robert Mugabe in seeking a state-controlled media, but even if the Mail’s language was a bit rich, the central argument is sound. Governments that seek to regulate the Press usually have something to hide.

Press freedom is the very cornerstone of a free society and the Press plays an absolutely vital role in highlighting abuses of power. Just think what risks we are taking if we hand regulatory powers over to bureaucrats and politicians. Would we, for example, have known about MPs’ expenses if we had a state-regulated Press? And, even more to the point, would the News of the World’s illegal phone hacking ever have been exposed?

This really is the slippery slope. That is why our Institute is supporting and endorsing Press Gazette’s petition in defence of a free press, and why in the coming months we will be developing our own campaigns and initiatives to ‘take the fight to the enemy.’

Journalists are not blameless. Standards have been allowed to slip. But we cannot allow the lack of professionalism in one of our industry to bring about the destruction of press freedom in this country. Too much is at stake.

Andy Smith
Phone hacking inquiry: terms of reference

The Government has set out the draft terms of reference for the judge-led inquiry into phone hacking.

**Part 1**

1. To inquire into the culture, practices, and ethics of the press, including:
   a. contacts between national newspapers and politicians;
   b. the relationship between the press and the police;
   c. the extent to which the current policy and regulatory framework has failed; and
   d. the extent to which there was a failure to act on previous warnings about media misconduct.

2. To make recommendations:
   a. for a new more effective policy and regulatory regime which supports the integrity and freedom of the press, the plurality of the media and its independence from Government, while encouraging the highest ethical and professional standards; and
   b. for future concerns about press behaviour, media policy, regulation and cross-media ownership should be dealt with by all the relevant authorities, including Parliament, Government, the prosecuting authorities and the police; and
   c. the future conduct of relations between politicians and the press.

**Part 2**

3. To inquire into the extent of unlawful or improper conduct within News International and other newspaper organisations.

4. To inquire into the way in which the police investigated allegations of unlawful conduct by persons within or connected with News International, and the review by the Metropolitan Police of their initial investigation.

5. To inquire into the extent to which the police received corrupt payments or were otherwise complicit in such misconduct or in suppressing its proper investigation and how this was allowed to happen.

6. To inquire into the extent of corporate governance and management failures at News International and other newspaper organisations.

7. In the light of these Inquiries, to consider the implications for the relationships between newspaper organisations and the police, and relevant regulatory bodies and to recommend what actions, if any, should be taken.

**Process**

The first part of the Inquiry (1) and (2) will be conducted by a Judge assisted by a panel of experts. It will report within 12 months. The second part of the Inquiry to be considered in light of the ongoing criminal proceedings. It will report jointly to the Culture Secretary and the Home Secretary.

The inquiry is led by Lord Justice Leveson, who prosecuted Rose West and was the judge in the Damilola Taylor case.

The Chartered Institute of Journalists will play an active part in the inquiry process.

What the others say...

Magazine editor says: “Don’t muzzle the Press”

The editor of the journalists’ magazine Press Gazette has expressed alarm at the “knee-jerk” reaction to the News of the World phone hacking scandal. Dominic Ponsford fears that with all three major political parties running for the Press Complaints Commission, there is a growing danger that Parliament may try to impose far-reaching legislation to muzzle the press – “a Dangerous Dogs Act for journalists”. The magazine is promoting a petition to show that the vast majority of journalists do act in the public interest and need help, not further hindrance, to let them continue to do so. Press Gazette will publish the names of those who sign this petition and submit it to Number 10 and to the inquiry into press standards in due course.

The petition reads:

The vast majority of Britain’s journalists work hard to tell their readers the truth under increasingly tough conditions.
We deplore the actions of journalists who have intercepted mobile phone messages. And we condemn any journalist who has breached the trust of their readers/viewers by being involved in corrupt practices.
As journalists, we believe in free speech and a robust free press and media. We also believe we have an overall duty to serve the public interest and the common good.
The press should be fearless, exciting, entertaining, waspish, commercial and competitive.
At the same time journalistic integrity must be respected, encouraged and protected from political, commercial and other pressures.

IFJ welcomes inquiry

The International Federation of Journalists welcomed the announcement of inquiries into the illegal phone tapping and breaches of media ethics following revelations of widespread telephone hacking by journalists at the News of the World. “We welcome these inquiries, which should expose the web of illegal practices involving corruption and violation of people’s privacy,” said Jim Boumelha, IFJ President.

“The growing tide of public outrage at these revelations is understandable and trust in journalism cannot survive if they are not stamped out for good.”

The IFJ says its report “Case for Reform Is Unanswerable”, commissioned last year to look into the role of the PCC after the controversy erupted over telephone hacking of celebrities, has been vindicated. The report found that the PCC lacked the power, capacity and mandate to carry out proper investigations and was not independent enough from the media industry.
Phone-hacking: is it time to get tough on the Press?

As the News of the World scandal was breaking, with almost hourly revelations, that was the question tackled at a debate at the LSE on July 13. It was chaired by Charlie Beckett, director of Polis, the LSE’s media think-tank, and the speakers were the Times columnist David Aaronovitch; the libertarian blogger Paul Staines (alias Guido Fawkes); Martin Moore, director of the Media Standards Trust, and lawyer Charlotte Harris, of Mishcon Private.

Beckett said that the furore around the phone-hacking scandal at the News of the World had raised wider issues such as the ethical standards of British newspaper journalism and regulation of the press. The general consensus was that while imposing tougher legal restrictions on the press might prevent a recurrence of what had happened at the NoW, the price paid in restricting journalists’ freedom to investigate and expose wrongdoing would be too high. Moore hoped that the scandal would make journalists, especially those working in the “popular press” think more carefully about what was in the ‘public interest’, rather than “of interest to the public”, a debate they had so far refused to take part in because they saw the distinction as a restriction. There may be a case for legally protecting genuine investigative journalism, he added. Harris said that NoW scandal had made everyone more aware of how some parts of the press operated and she hoped that this would lead to a permanent change in the balance of power between journalists, politicians, the police and the public. Staines warned that tighter legal regulation of the press would accelerate the “downward spiral” of newspapers. He wanted to see an end to the parliamentary lobby system which created an unhealthily cosy relationship between journalists and MPs. Aaronovitch described the affair as a “media firestorm” which had been blown out of proportion. We had learned nothing new: what had caused the furore was not what had been revealed but how it had come to light. If NI executives had carried out a proper investigation and “fessed up” who had down what at the beginning we would not be going through this now, he said.

In a contribution from the floor, Bob Satchwell, director of the Society of Editors, argued that allegations of criminality by journalists, or those working on their behalf such as private investigators, would be dealt with by the law. But unethical behaviour falling short of law breaking was best tackled from within the profession by beefing up the existing self-regulatory system. The event was jointly organised by Polis and the Media Society. A video of the complete debate can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2RTN12kV6Y&feature=youtu.be

For more about Politis, and forthcoming events, go to: www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/POLIS/home.aspx

Hacking scandal boosts popularity of CIoJ Facebook page

The fall-out from the phone-hacking scandal and the growing interest in the CIoJ’s work to promote professionalism and excellence within the media has led to massive increase in the popularity of our Facebook page. The page offers a daily service of news and information alerts for journalists and others interested in media issues.

For months it had been attracting about 40,000 hits a month, but since the scandal broke that figure has rocketed to more than 121,000 (on the day of writing), an increase of 232 per cent on the previous four weeks.

That figure includes about 450 registered users of the service, a figure which has remained static.

Registered users automatically get updates posted on their own Facebook pages. Others have to go to the Institute’s page to see the latest news.

CIoJ Vice-President Charlie Harris, who set up and runs the page, told The Journal: “It is obvious that many people are visiting the page several times a day to keep informed of this fast-moving story.

“They clearly appreciate the “one-stop shop’ we offer. I monitor dozens of online news sources, both at home and abroad, so that users of our page don’t have to.”

Most visitors to the page are based in the UK, but many live abroad, with the second biggest group living in India. As of July 28, the rest of the league table’s top-10 was: Ghana, USA, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Ireland, South Africa, Bangladesh and Tanzania.

There are users in nine other countries, including a group in the United Arab Emirates.

Charlie Harris explains: “A random check on many users shows that most work in the media, so the page is an invaluable recruitment tool. As well as the regular news updates, it also carries lots of information about the Institute and a link to the CIoJ website.

“I regularly post invitations to users to consider joining us, and plug the International division to attract applications from overseas visitors.”

Harris appeals to all Institute members who use Facebook to register as users of the page and to occasionally re-post items from it on their own pages to spread awareness of the Institute to their own “friends”, many of whom probably work in the media. He would also welcome feedback from members on how the page could be developed and improved.

The CIoJ Facebook page is at www.facebook.com/pages/Chartered-Institute-of-Journalists/108017897514

All posts also appear on Charlie Harris’s Twitter feed, HotMetalHack, which has nearly 200 followers, spreading the name of the Institute even further.
Press ethics: spinning out of control?

By Roger Bush

Hardly have Charlie Harris (the Press and privacy) and Amanda Brodie (the Government’s draft Defamation Bill) raised these subjects in The Journal (Spring issue) than the whole area of press ethics has gone ballistic, with the phone-hacking scandal absorbing acres of print. I do find the whole business rather over-inflated, fuelled as it is by politicians still smarting from all those expenses stories and by media interests keen on frustrating a controversial takeover bid.

Spying and surveillance have always been a part of investigative journalism, sometimes for good, sometimes for bad. Back in the 1980s, when for three troubled years I was concerned with public relations for the Property Services Agency, I faced one intractable problem. Despite all its good work, innovative designs and projects, the only PSA stories the media were interested in were those to do with fraud and corruption, not unfamiliar activities in the construction and building industries. After a raft of reports and cuttings involving Devonport Dockyard, I asked members of the PSA Board to find me a squeaky-clean District Works Office (DWO) where I could take a BBC TV team who were making a short documentary on government public works. The office chosen was the Westminster DWO, standing almost in the shadow of the Department of Environment headquarters in Marsham Street. The TV team duly arrived, interviewed a number of key staff and took some background footage of the office at work. It’s just the way of things that about 15 seconds of film showing men loading or unloading a van in the yard behind the office were all that reached the screen; the rest was binned, I guess. But how the producers must have kicked themselves when, less than a month later, that same DWO was revealed as every bit as corrupt as the one at Devonport. The exposure was in the late News of the World, whose reporters had concealed microphones beneath the tables in a local pub and clandestinely recorded conversations between officials and a number of contractors.

Hidden cameras and microphones were just part of the equipment of investigative journalism. What has happened since is largely down to new technology. It wasn’t that easy to tap a land-line telephone or intercept Royal Mail. But now that all and sundry are communicating by e-mail, mobile phones and voice-mail, social networks and the like, security has gone out of the window.

While we are all ready to sing the praises of each new development, be it CCTV, camera phones, i-pads, Facebook or Twitter, these products usually have a down-side as well. One way and another we are all open to more surveillance. Privacy is not what it was.

Turning to defamation, the President and I were at a Media Society meeting at which a panel of speakers discussed the draft Defamation Bill. This was in Portcullis House, the Parliamentary extension across Bridge Street from the Palace of Westminster.

It was to have been chaired by John Whittingdale, but at the last minute he was called away to an urgent meeting at No 10. As stand-in chairman, John Battle, of ITN, managed the panel well. It comprised Simon Singh, a journalist involved in a high-profile case; Dr Barendt, an academic lawyer; Mark Stephens, whose firm specialises in media law; and Alastair Brett, formerly of The Times and The Sun newspapers. Members of the panel were all in favour of reform, but less sure that the draft Bill did more than scratch the surface. By several times asking for a show of hands from the audience, the Chairman established that many of those present had also been unimpressed by it.

After the meeting I talked to Alastair Brett, an old sparring partner of my friend Ivor Cole (of Associated Newspapers). He had expressed himself keen for an expanded role for the Press Complaints Commission in libel and defamation cases. The Commission has recently come under fire for its alleged lack of active investigation of phone hacking complaints.

Jack Straw, a former Justice Secretary, thought it might be strengthened into a Press Commission. Perhaps he’s got something there. Twelve years ago I tackled the question of the PCC Code of Practice, “framed by the newspaper and periodical industry and ratified by the PCC”. Unsurprisingly, it is mainly concerned with those areas that give rise to most complaints to the Commission. On ethics it simply exhorts all members of the press “to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards”.

Most codes involve an element of restraint on freedom of action. But any code that is written mainly to cope with actions that give rise to complaints will to some extent help to preserve the situation that gives rise to those complaints. A well constructed code needs to be more positive. In particular it should have something to say about the service so that the reader knows that those subscribing to the code have an interest in supplying the sort of publication he wants.

Among several suggestions I made for such a code, is one that has quite a familiar ring when I look at the coverage of the phone hacking scandal. It goes: “Where an exclusive has been labelled as such, the basis of exclusivity should be spelled out. If a story has been bought, it should carry a price ticket.”

Everyone agrees about the need for freedom of the press. But of course that means freedom to print rubbish if it is cheaper to produce and can be sold as easily as quality.

Baroness Buscombe said: “I am very proud of my work at the PCC which, from the very beginning, has been aimed at instigating the process of reform of the organisation.”

She would continue to be a campaigner for change from outside the organisation, saying: “I am convinced the answer to ethical concerns about the Press is not statutory intervention.

“What is needed is a greater sense of accountability among editors and proprietors.”

Buscombe “proud” of her work at the PCC

Continued from page 1

Buscombe’s early departure would help ensure that her successor was in a position to assist and support the Leveson inquiry. She will contribute to the inquiry as an expert in media regulation and will stay on as chairman of the PCC until her successor is appointed.

The PCC said: “She leaves the Commission structurally stronger than when she came in, and in a better position to continue its evolution.”

Baroness Buscombe said: “I am very
Privacy and the Press... again

By Norman Bartlett

In a recent article in the Financial Times, Mathew Engel was discussing the continuing appeal of the UK to rich foreigners despite all the hoo-ha from the resident rich about the penalties they incur by dwelling here.

He contrasts the dedication on the Statue of Liberty – “Give me your tired, your poor,/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free /The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,/Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me” with the aspirations of today’s rich migrants. He imagines London’s dedication would be on the lines of ‘Yearning to breathe free of your huddled masses?... ‘Give me your tanned, your rich/We won’t refuse.”

“Good schools, Harrods, and a cooperative attitude to the reputationally challenged: for the recently retired Mr and Mrs Dictator in a hurry, there’s still nowhere like London,” says one private banker quoted by Mr Engel.

“No other global centre can claim to have perfected London’s social, intellectual, business, finance, lifestyle and property offering,” says Liam Bailey of Knight Frank, a real estate firm quoted in the same article.

But then he brings press and law into the same par. He notes that the press, and especially the tabloids can be a bit irritating and unwelcome to those used to their lifestyles being less scrutinised. But the UK has done its best to accommodate the privacy needs of the high net worth individual, as well as their reputations.

“London is already known as the libel capital of the world,” continues Mr Engel. “Other more cunning weapons include the press-gagging ‘super-injunction’ whose very existence, if one is imposed, is itself a secret.”

Now contrast that scene setting from the Grub Street perspective and consider the views of Lord Chief Justice Judge. Earlier in the year he addressed the Hebrew University in Jerusalem with the title ‘Judiciary and the Media’. It was a wide-ranging speech, learned, humane and witty. On privacy he referred to the problems about ten years ago with an increasing number of cases where orders to restrict reporting were made.

“Some of these orders undoubtedly contravened the principle of open justice and did not fall within the exceptions to that principle,” he said. “So between us, the judiciary and lawyers from the media worked together to produce easily read, manageable text for use in the Crown Court and the Magistrates Court in which the essential principles were set out. They have become valuable handbooks,” he claimed, “Used regularly whenever a question of reporting restrictions arises up and down the country. Another vexed topic is the world of super-injunctions.” He explains that the Master of the Rolls is chairing a committee of lawyers representing both the media and privacy advocates that should have reported by May 2011.

However there is another aspect to this matter that seems quite perverse. While the general public has a ready appetite for the sordid and seedy antics of the famous and the not-so-famous, its sympathy can readily switch. Many people identify with the individual when a newspaper or broadcaster goes after a sports or entertainment celebrity who has been naughty. It may be, of course, that the techniques of media management from a skilled exponent like Max Clifford have been applied.

Two health awards for FT’s Nick Timmins

Nick Timmins has been voted “Health Journalist of the Year” by the Medical Journalists’ Association, and has been made an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Physicians – the first time this honour has been conferred upon a professional health journalist.

Timmins started his media career as a science reporter, first with Nature and then the Press Association, before moving to health and social services with The Times, followed by The Independent when it was set up in 1986, and eventually becoming public policy editor at the Financial Times in 1996. Although health policy is at the heart of Timmins’ reporting, his role as public policy editor is considerably wider. He heads a team covering education, home and legal affairs; his core task being to cover the boundary between public and private sectors on both the demand and supply side.

In recommending Timmins for his RCP fellowship, Dame Carol Black wrote: “The sight of Nick Timmins at a press briefing will put any politician or professional on their toes. Polite but fearless is how I would describe him.” At Westminster, according to a member of the opposition health team, he is regarded by all parties as: “A class act”.

Other MJA awards have gone to:

Branwen Jeffreys, BBC News: Broadcast Journalist of the Year
Stephen Robinson, GP newspaper: Medical Journalist of the Year
Nigel Hawkes: Freelance Journalist of the Year
Adam Legge, Pulse: Health Editor of the Year
Liza Williams, Liverpool Echo: Regional Print Journalist of the Year
Matthew Hill, BBC West of England: Regional Broadcast Journalist of the Year

Health Service Journal: Health Publication of the Year
BBC website – www.bbc.co.uk/health

The Medical Journalists’ Association was launched in 1967 and is open to journalists who work full or part time on health or medical science subjects, as well as to academics or clinicians who write or broadcast in their spare time, and health charity communications staff.
Celebrating 60 years of journalism training

More than 100 guests joined the National Council for the Training of Journalists in celebrating its 60th birthday at a party in July.

To mark more than half a century of providing quality journalism training, the charity hosted a celebratory bash at Devonshire Terrace near London’s Liverpool Street. The guest list included regional and national press, broadcasters, journalism trainers and a number of NCTJ student council representatives.

In his address to the Diamond Jubilee gathering, NCTJ Chairman Kim Fletcher referred to the poignancy of the organisation’s celebration of quality training and journalism standards in a week when the News of the World phone-hacking scandal was so much in the news.

After the event, NCTJ chief executive Joanne Butcher told the Journal: “It was wonderful that so many people were able to join us in celebrating this milestone anniversary. I am glad that the celebrations were such a great success and that everyone had an enjoyable evening. The NCTJ remains the respected ‘gold standard’ thanks to the hard work and support of all those involved in our work. With their help we look forward to achieving even more in the future.”

She added: “These are challenging times for journalism for so many reasons. They make carrying the torch for excellence over the next ten years even more important. Thank you to everyone who shares our values and contributes to our work: joining us to celebrate.”

Proofreaders help to protect the bottom line of your business

Businesses concerned about damage to their credibility – and their revenue – as a result of website errors should be taking sensible precautions, according to the Society for Editors and Proofreaders. The SfEP is urging companies to protect their online reputations by having all their web material checked thoroughly by trained proofreaders before it goes live.

A news story this week claimed that spelling and grammatical errors on websites are resulting in lost revenue for internet businesses. The report blamed the educational system for failing to turn out school and college leavers who have the required skills – but the SfEP believes that, rather than simply bemoaning the educational system, businesses should take action to ensure that all their written communications are clear and free of errors.

“The truth is we can all make mistakes,” says the SfEP’s Wendy Toole. “Even people who are highly proficient at spelling, punctuation and grammar can slip up. Whether it’s a typing error, or simply a mistake you don’t see in your own writing, there’s a lot to be said for having a fresh pair of eyes look at your work.”

The issue of poor spelling on websites is not new. As long ago as 2002 the Stanford–Makovskv Web Credibility Survey claimed that errors on websites “have roughly the same negative impact on a website’s credibility as a company’s legal or financial trouble”. And research by the Royal Mail in 2005 showed that over 70% of customers would not trust a business that has poor communication skills.

“It seems incredible that companies will risk their reputations in this way,” says Wendy. “Many organisations spend a great deal of money on an impressive website, only to spoil it with some basic spelling errors. By using the services of a professional proofreader they could avoid damaging their reputation – and at a fraction of the overall cost of the website.”

The SfEP has an online, searchable directory of members who proofread all kinds of written communications. More information at www.sfep.org.uk.
Championing the cause of investigative journalism

By Amanda Brodie
Chairman, Professional Practices Board

A n organisation dedicated to the best traditions of investigative journalism has celebrated its first birthday. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, which was officially launched in April last year, is the first organisation of its kind in the UK.

Based at City University, London, the Bureau aims to bolster original journalism by producing investigations for national and international press and broadcast media. It works in collaboration with other news organisations to get its investigations published and distributed. Its long-term aim is to explore new ways of conducting and funding investigative journalism.

The Bureau has worked for and with Panorama, Dispatches, Al Jazeera, Channel 4 News, the Sunday Times, the Telegraph, the Daily Mail, the Independent and the Financial Times. It has more than 20 journalists working across several major investigations.

It is headed by editor Iain Overton, who told the Journal: “Sometimes a programme like Dispatches will commission us to do something or we work with newspapers to provide multi-media stories. We do a lot of work for Channel 4 news.” He says about 50 per cent of their stories are from UK and the rest from abroad.

“We welcome story suggestions from journalists,” Mr Overton explained. “We are not going to take the story away from them. Journalists will sometimes come to us if their own publications have decided not to take the story any further.”

In the current economic climate it is increasingly difficult for editors to invest in expensive long-term investigations. The Bureau received a £2 million grant from the David and Elaine Potter Foundation, which includes distinguished journalists from all walks of the media world, including chair Ray Fitzwalter, former executive producer on Granada TV’s renowned ‘World In Action’ programme.

Also on the board is David Pallister, who for many years worked as a reporter for the Guardian. He was involved in one of the biggest libel actions of the 20th century when Conservative politician Jonathan Aitken sued The Guardian, and Pallister personally, for allegations about Aitken’s financial involvement with the Saudi royal family. He now works as a freelance writer and editor.

For more information, contact the Bureau: info@thebureauinvestigates.co.uk or +44 (0) 207 040 0081.

CIOJ backs best practice code for interns

The CIOJ is supporting the introduction of a Common Best Practice Code for High-Quality Internships. General Secretary Dominic Cooper and Immediate Past President Liz Justice have been working members of the Gateways to the Professions Collaborative Forum since last year when, at the CIOJ annual conference, several members raised concerns about the misuse of interns on newspapers and magazines.

The best practice code has been endorsed by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in recognition of the role of internships in improving access to a professional career – including journalism – by talented people who could not access high-quality university courses.

Launched

The code was launched in London by Universities Minister David Willetts MP. Liz Justice said: “Access and meritocracy remain vital stepping stones for all young people looking for a job and even more so when recruitment departments concentrate on graduates from elite universities.

“This code makes it clear that interns are not a cheap way of getting people in to do the work without pay.

“If followed, the code turns barriers into positive opportunities for a ‘win win situation’ without exploitation of the candidate or the company.”

As well as getting the backing of the Government, the code has gained support from the TUC, the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, the Social Mobility Foundation and the PRCA Commission on Access.

Dominic Cooper added: “It was reassuring that the minister said the rules relating to the minimum wage and access to university using company sponsorship are two further ways the Government were reassuring that the minister said the rules relating to the minimum wage and access to university using company sponsorship are two further ways the Government were looking to take this forward.

“Because the code was drawn up by professional bodies like ours, it allows a clear guide which if followed works for all parties. There is more work that needs doing but as a first step we can endorse and support our members using the code if they are considering using interns.”

The code is available to download from the CIOJ website - www.cioj.co.uk
From the President’s Desk

By Norman Bartlett

Here at the beating heart of the CIoJ, in the dramatic setting of London’s Docklands, the office gets letters from many people and places.

A recent receipt was from Dr Dong-Keun Shin, who modestly asserts that “I will be the greatest computer scientist if no one protests my theory” and names a computer scientist who has greater achievement than mine. I believe that I have achieved too much to be defeated by any computer scientist, not only in this era but also any future era.

He helpfully enclosed copies of his letters to HM the Queen and David Cameron setting out his claim in similar terms. He explains that since declaring himself the world’s greatest computer scientist he has not encountered any challengers. As well as the Queen and the Prime Minister he also invited me – well the President of the CIoJ to be precise - to his concert and press conference in Seoul in February last. I’m afraid I missed it and so did the Queen. What a shame.

The concert looked particularly attractive featuring a number of gospel songs written by Dr Shin, a few in association with King David such as “Cast Your Cares on the Lord”. He helpfully enclosed copies of his letters to HM the Queen and David Cameron setting out his claim in similar terms. He explains that since declaring himself the world’s greatest computer scientist he has not encountered any challengers. As well as the Queen and the Prime Minister he also invited me – well the President of the CIoJ to be precise - to his concert and press conference in Seoul in February last. I’m afraid I missed it and so did the Queen. What a shame.

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“... the theory asserts that there is no distinguishable difference between the performance of any relatively good and data independent hash functions. This concept of relatively good solutions leads to the hypothesis that they are present in all polynomial complex problems requiring exponential time algorithms to solve. He draws the inference that no matter how fast the computer, it will never be able to deduce like a human. (full details at www.dkshin.com)

The attributes might be producing only truthful and balanced accounts, declining payments from those who want to promote their own, communicating simply and directly, checking thoroughly for accuracy, respecting privacy, and maintaining personal integrity. Please offer your own suggestions on the desirable characteristics of a “Chartered Journalist”.

We may be sure that the powers-that-be are eagerly looking at some kind of regulation, using the disgrace of the hacking business to justify restrictions on reporting the goings on of politicians, celebrities and the wealthy. The Prime Minister himself implies as much.

Brendan O’Neill in the Daily Telegraph, reporting on Cameron’s press conference after the News of the World was closed, wrote: “This is a line that should send a shudder down the spine of every man and woman who cares about freedom of the press: ’It is vital that a free press can tell truth to power; it is equally vital that those in power can tell truth to the press.’ Cameron is doing nothing less than hinting at a rearrangement of the relationship between the state and the media.” It could affect individuals as well as publications. We have to be ready with an alternative approach and the Chartered Institute of Journalists must show the way.

To paraphrase Dr Shin: “We will be the leading organisation on journalistic integrity, if no one protests at our idea.”

Guardian journalist denies hacking

GUARDIAN journalist David Leigh has denied allegations by blogger Paul Staines (alias Guido Fawkes) that he engaged in phone hacking and other unethical practices including obtaining unauthorised information from the police.

Controversy was prompted by Staines’ claim that Leigh had used similar techniques to the hackers at the News of the World. Leigh was quoted as having defended phone hacking in certain circumstances, saying there was “certainly a voyeuristic thrill in hearing another person’s private messages… [but unlike NoW] I was not interested in witless little-tattle about the royal family. I was looking for evidence of bribery and corruption.”

Also, in an article he had written in February 2010, Leigh had admitted using information from “police files”, including private emails, in an article about leaks from the University of East Anglia’s climate change unit.

The police are of course subject to the Data Protection Act, which prevents the disclosure of personal data for unauthorised purposes.
Turning back the clock

It’s not like the good old days...or is it? Welcome to a new regular feature in The Journal looking at events in 1911 as reported by the Institute’s voluminous Minutes book. We find that events a century ago have an uncanny relevance to what is happening today!

Lawyers...they never change!

We did not have super-injunctions and libel tourism in those days but fears over action for libel and particularly contempt of court were rife in 1911 – just as they are in 2011. The Manchester District was demanding action from the Institute following a spate of contempt actions and a proposed Libel Bill going before Parliament.

Manchester journalists would not submit quietly to what was threatened.

The trial, in 1910 of Doctor Hawley Harvey Crippen and his hanging at Pentonville Prison, had produced a contempt case when a newspaper was fined £200 for erroneously reporting that Crippen had confessed but this was not dealt with until that trial was over.

The Manchester District reasoned that contempt of court procedure was only fit for emergencies and it should not be extended simply because judges could not deal with some things by other purposes.

No doubt untried prisoners had rights which should be protected, but so had journalists, said a report of the District meeting.

The Manchester members particularly objected to the threat to “imprison subordinates, and said this would mean in some cases that newspaper proprietors could ask their staff to sail dangerously near the wind, at the risk of imprisonment if anything appeared into which a lawyer could read contempt of court, while the proprietors themselves would have absolute immunity from imprisonment if they went through the formality of registering themselves as limited liability companies.”

The threat from the proposed Bill was such that no journalist would be safe in the future in reporting circumstances which had come to his knowledge and which he thought the public should know, said another member.

Our North-eastern District was equally perturbed. Institute President John Mitchell told its New Year meeting it was "exceedingly hard" that after newspapers had ‘assisted in the capture of a criminal who has escaped, a few technical points should have been raised against journals who were taken into the courts and mulcted in heavy penalties.’

“It was regrettable that in certain high quarters a tyrannical antagonism was growing up against the Press of the country,” the President said.

Mr Mitchell could have been living in the present when he complained that at no time in his 30 years’ connection with the press..."were lawyers so anxious to take up cases against newspapers, or when juries were so ready to award heavy damages against journals.” He went on to urge that more protection be given against ‘frivolous actions and blackmail and it was absolutely essential for journalists that more freedom should be given to the Press.

The Institute began taking legal advice in a controversy that would last throughout the year.

“Machine gun publicity” – resist the flood, editor urges

Warning to this column’s belief that there is nothing new under the sun, 1911 saw, as now, concerns expressed about what we today call “churnalism” – the uncritical use of PR puffery masquerading as news. A century ago they tended to be called “Editorial Notices” but the purpose was the same – to give an advertiser a free mention.

At the newly-created Circle of Scientific, Technical and Commercial Journalists’ first dinner, Institute member A C Meyjes, Editor of the Chemist and Druggist, laid into what he called “the Publicity Wangle” with a prescription for probity: “No editor has a right to be overborne by pressure on the part of the advertisement department... what is the true worth of paragraphs inserted merely to please an advertiser?”

“An Editor’s individuality, and the ultimate prosperity of his paper, are measurable by the strength of resistance to such pressure,” he thundered in his speech reported at length in the Minutes book.

The average British manufacturer, imperfectly educated in advertising, leaves it to some employee “who is ignorant of all that pertains to the press,” he said.

Machine-gun publicity

And it was not just advertisers who irked him. Publicity managers (a.k.a. PROs these days!) who flooded news desks with volumes of bumf came under his microscope: “Sending out, as one did, 18 press notices in a single week is endangering valuable journalistic lives.

“I wish to remind these gentlemen of the saying that true Art is that which conceals Art. Their methods are too obvious, too wanting in reserve. To send identical paragraphs to a score of papers, merely typing-in the name of each journal, savours of machine gun publicity,” he said.

He reckoned: “The rate at which most Editors admit these announcements as news stand in inverse ratio to the strength and influence which they know their journals to possess.”

Any ears burning?Mr Meyjes laid down four rules: “An Editor should notice genuine novelties as matters of trade interest; criticism should be independent and temperate but fair; no payment should be accepted for announcements inserted as news; and, the Editor should reject all notices written by advertisers themselves.”
Surprise, surprise... papers sensationalise stories to make money, says 1911 judge

As Britain prepares to take another look at the state of its libel laws, and newspaper proprietors campaign for less swingeing damages, the same debate was taking place a century ago in an atmosphere almost identical to today.

But as perceived victims of libel are, these days, complaining of the high cost of suing, a century ago journalists were complaining of losing out when vindicated against against writ-happy plaintiffs who went bankrupt.

The Devon and Cornwall District invited Mr W Blake Odgers KC, recorder of Plymouth and the leading author on libel, to survey the situation.

The judge could have been talking about today’s red-tops in some of his remarks about the attitude of juries towards damages.

“Some juries (believed) that what appeared in some newspapers was inserted there in order to bring money into the pockets of proprietors, and in that respect a newspaper differed from a (libellous) letter, pamphlet or a book, and they said the man whose regular business it was to make money by publishing things should pay more damages than a private citizen.”

Bring in the money

Warming to his theme, Mr Odgers continued: “The only consideration with some newspapers seems to be ‘What will bring in the money?’ “So they produce sensational headlines, and sensational contents bills, and are sometimes led to disregard the rights and liberties of other people in their desire to make money. Whenever a jury finds that, they will give swingeing damages.”

Ears burning, Fleet Street? Sage nodding by regional journalists? The judge recognised the difference. “Speaking down here (Plymouth)...you are not conducting a mere trade whose only object is to make money. You belong to a noble profession, and it is the high privilege and duty of the newspaper Press to take a high tone, to lay before the public clear, and accurate, and prompt information on all matters of public interest, to judiciously direct the public taste on all matters of criticism, to fearlessly and fairly discuss, and to promote a sound opinion on all matters of local and Imperial government, and, above all, to elevate to the highest level the tone of society in all matters of personal purity and morality”, (applause) recorded the Minutes.

Institute president John Mitchell, visiting the West Riding District, said the there was a feeling among some members that “the Scottish system should be adopted in England, which was that a judge had the right to throw out a case if he deemed it to be frivolous without hearing the action.”

Juries, he alleged were tempted to think: “Well, newspapers are able to pay, and we can set heavy damages against them.”

Writ-happy plaintiffs without the cash to fund a libel claim but relied on being successful to recover their costs were the bane of the 1911 judge’s remarks about the attitude of juries towards damages.

“Some juries (believed) that what appeared in some newspapers was inserted there in order to bring money into the pockets of proprietors, and in that respect a newspaper differed from a (libellous) letter, pamphlet or a book, and they said the man whose regular business it was to make money by publishing things should pay more damages than a private citizen.”

Making an exhibition of ourselves

June 22, 1911, was Coronation Day for King George V – and the Institute was determined to celebrate it with him, although by today’s standards the celebration was more funereal than fun.

We had joined with others in the industry to stage a newspapers section at the Coronation Exhibition, being held at the White City, Shepherd’s Bush (site of what is now the BBC TV Centre).

A glass cabinet, proudly filled with documents and the odd picture and meant to illustrate the Institute’s full majesty, must have been a daunting prospect for any but the most determined visitor – certainly the Minute Book’s detailed listing of each item makes for dreary reading.

Mindful of its Royal Charter, the Institute could not let the King’s Coronation pass without its loyal assurances:

“To the King’s Most Excellent Majesty. May it please your Majesty, – At our first meeting since the Coronation, we, the members of the Institute of Journalists, beg to send your Majesty our loyal greetings...Since its foundation, the Institute, has received many tokens of good-will from the Throne, and we now desire to present to your Majesty our heartfelt allegiance, and to pray that you have a long, happy and illustrious reign.”

It obviously paid off because the King, who had earlier noted that the annual conference was being held in Dundee, had invited members to take a special post-conference tour of Balmoral and enjoy afternoon tea in the house as his guests. Replying to the Institute’s loyal address, King George recognised “the debt of gratitude due to journalists for the incessant and untiring zeal with which, collectively and individually, they strive, by day and night, to discharge their great public duty.” His reply also said he was “glad” that the members of the Conference would visit Balmoral, and he hoped “they will spend a pleasant day there.”

Would Buckingham Palace say the same today?

Note: Until very recent years the first day of the Institute’s annual conference resolved to send a telegram of loyal greetings to the Monarch, whose grateful reply was read at the closing session.
Singapore offers much more than expected!

By Ursula Geike-Garson

If you think Singapore is a clinical, blandly efficient and unadventurous place to spend some time, than you are very mistaken. In fact, it is one of the most enjoyable cities in Southeast Asia!

Driving in from Changi airport, your ride takes you along lush tree-shaded expressways and in almost no time you have reached the centre of the city with its amazing contrasts of towering glass and steel skyscrapers, fashion emporiums and huge shopping malls intermingled with attractively renovated old houses, temples and antique shops. Dozens of beautiful city parks invite you to have a stroll.

Very few cities can boast of such a diverse and bustling ethnic community as “The Lion City”. Dive into the cultures of China, India and Malaysia, against a backdrop of ultra-modern Western style. In this city you can treat your palate to the world’s most delicious cuisine. In fact, food is the national obsession and you will discover very quickly why! Be it for lunch or dinner try a few of the many hawker centers or food courts and sample some of the enormous array of Asian dishes, such as Laksa soup, Chili Crab, Indian Curry served on a banana leaf, Fish Head Curry, Nasi Padang and Chicken Rendang to mention just a few.

Explore on foot, take the underground or just hail a taxi; taxi rides are very reasonably priced.

English is one of the four official languages and the most commonly used.

The local currency is the SGD (Singapore dollar)

Colonial District

Stroll around Esplanade Drive and take the lift to the platform of the newly opened Marina Bay Sands Hotel and take in the fantastic, panoramic views from the top. Then stop by at the charming Fullerton Hotel, which was converted from the former Post Office, and have a drink on their spacious terrace.

Architectural sights in this district are the Old Parliament House, City Hall and Supreme Court, St. Andrew’s Cathedral, Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall, Empress Place Building, now housing the Asian Civilisations Museum.

And, of course, the world renowned Raffle’s Hotel, which opened in December 1887.

The Quays

The Boat Quay, Clarke Quay, and Robertson Quay were all developed into an entertainment, dining and shopping precinct. This stretches along the Singapore River and offers almost everything visitors can imagine.

Chinatown:

Chinese temples sprang up, but as the quarter was not homogenous, Taoist and Hindu temples, churches and mosques now stand side by side, representing the multicultural spirit that makes this city so unique.

Visit the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple, Thian Hock Keng Temple, Sri Mariamman Temple (Singapore’s oldest Hindu temple) and Jamee Chulia Mosque.

Little India

Family-run shops with imported goods from India give the quarter its authenticity. Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple and Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple are worthwhile visiting.

Kampong Glam

attracted Muslim residents such as Malays, Bugis (from Sulawesi) and Arabs. Visit the Malay Heritage Centre and the Sultan Mosque.

The Botanic & Orchid Garden, the Zoo, The Bukit Timah Nature Resort and the Butterfly Garden are all worth a visit.

Where to stay

Whilst there is an amazing variety of hotels, SWISSOTEL The Stamford is an excellent choice, located right in the heart of the city’s business, historical, cultural and shopping districts. The building is one of the highest (71 storeys) in Southeast Asia and therefore the views of the city are spectacular and unforgettable.

The second Swissotel in Singapore is the Merchant Court. It is situated by the historic Singapore river and adjacent to all the hotspots of Clarke Quay, close to Chinatown and within walking distance of the financial hub at Raffles Place.

The hotels are so diverse, but have one thing in common – Swiss hospitality at its best. Visit and see for yourself!
Riot police still using terrorism laws to thwart photo-taking

Photographers covering the recent riots in London have reported that police have demanded they delete pictures.

Both professionals and members of the public have made such claims, with some asking on Twitter whether police have powers to make such demands. The simple answer is “No”.

This has been a growing problem over the past two or three years, with journalists and tourists being bullied into deleting pictures by officers either ignorant of the law, or choosing to ignore it.

Sometimes the anti-terrorism law is cited as an excuse.

In two well-publicised cases, a father and son from Austria visiting London on a bus-spotting holiday were threatened with arrest unless they deleted pictures of a bus garage in NE London, and a BBC staff photographer suffered similar problems while taking stock photos of a sunset over St Paul’s Cathedral.

Although it may be difficult to stand up to police officers when there is a riot going on, Institute members are advised to remind a police officer acting beyond their authority of the “all forces guidance letter” issued by Chief Constable Andrew Trotter, chairman of ACPO’s Communication Advisory Group, in August 2010.

Mr Trotter’s letter was in response to many complaints to forces around the country, by both individuals and organisations such as the Institute and the campaign group “I’m a Photographer Not a Terrorist”.

He declared unequivocally: “There are no powers prohibiting the taking of photographs, film or digital images in a public place. Therefore members of the public and press should not be prevented from doing so.

“Once an image has been recorded, the police have no power to delete or confiscate it without a court order.”

And he warned officers: “Unnecessarily restricting photography, whether for the casual tourist or the professional, is unacceptable and undermines public confidence in the police service.

“We must acknowledge that citizen journalism is a feature of modern life and police officers are now photographed and filmed more than ever.”

CIoJ members should always report such incidents to the relevant force as soon as possible, quoting Mr Trotter’s letter, and also inform Institute head office.

Go to http://photographerhotanterrorist.org/bust-card/ for a “bust card” that can be printed out and carried to help resist unlawful demands by police officers.

Congratulations Camilla

There was a sense of satisfaction at July’s meeting of the CIoJ Orphan Fund as on the previous day one of the Fund’s beneficiaries, Camilla Greenwell, received a BA honours degree in Fine Arts from Central St Martin’s College of Arts, in a ceremony at London’s Royal Festival Hall.

Camilla has been supported by the Fund for the last 14 years, at first with the standard package of financial help on the death her father, Tom Greenwell, former chief leader writer of the Yorkshire Post, and then with total support after her mother, Vicki, died some nine years ago.

That help has included all her school fees and educational costs, accommodation and living expenses throughout her time at the Leeds Girls High School, at an arts foundation course at Leeds College of Art and Design and her three year degree course at St Martin’s.

She won the respect of the Orphan Fund trustees with her unfailingly excellent reports and progress and the provision of first-class equipment enabled her to pursue her interests in photography (in which she gained her 2:1 degree) to the extent that she is now receiving some professional commissions.

Fund trustee Robin Morgan, who has kept in close touch with Camilla throughout her years as a beneficiary, said: “We are all filled with pride at Camilla’s achievements. I worked with her Dad and knew her Mum and I know they would have been bursting with pride at that degree ceremony. Tom was instrumental in many of us joining the Institute and his loyalty to our organisation deserved the care that the Orphan Fund has been able to give to his daughter.

“It has been an object lesson why every young journalist should join the Institute for the protection it gives, particularly when misfortune strikes and children, as happened with Camilla, need to be protected and provided with a good education.”

Camilla said: “I will be eternally grateful to the Orphan Fund for all the help it has given me.

“I would never have achieved what I have without its help.

“I agree with Robin when he says that the Institute provides invaluable help – it certainly did for me.”

A wise investment for our Bob

Stalwart CIoJ West Yorkshire member Robert Benson, the former Agricultural Correspondent of the Yorkshire Post, is pretty happy that Past-President Gerry Armes forcefully persuaded him to invest £50 for life membership of the Newspaper Press Fund – now known as The Journalists’ Charity.

Robert – Bob to his many Institute friends – had a reputation for being “careful” with his money and President Armes’ ‘persuasion’ at the Birmingham conference was a work of art for a man well-practiced in promoting the charity and gaining it members.

Bob forgot he was a member of the Charity but when he suffered a severe stroke last April, former colleague and friend Robin Morgan remembers the incident and reminded Bob of its ability to help. Bob and his partner, Jenny, contacted the fund and asked if it could help him. Their cottage, in the picturesque Dales’ village of Addingham, was totally unsuited to his new needs and a search had begun for a suitable bungalow.

The Charity maintains a sheltered housing project, in Dorking, Surrey, and has made a two-bedroom bungalow available for the couple who hope to move in the autumn.

Bob, who is making a slow recovery through regular physiotherapy sessions, said: “The Journalists’ Charity has provided the ideal solution to my problems and I am jolly glad that Gerry Armes did persuade me to buy life membership all those years ago when I never expected that one day I might need the support.

“I urge all journalists to become members... you just never know when its help might come in handy.”
A new nation is born amid strife

By Stuart Notholt

On July 9, 2011, Juba, a dusty, nondescript town in southern Sudan became the capital of the world’s newest nation – the Republic of South Sudan – as Africa’s largest country, Sudan, split in two. Clof Past President Stuart Notholt was there as an official guest of the South Sudanese government, representing the NGO, Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust.

The new South Sudan was born amid joy and exuberance as the people celebrated their hard-won liberty after decades of war and violence at the hands of north Sudan.

Even before the church bells rang out at midnight in this overwhelmingly Christian nation, the streets were overflowing with people dancing and honking car horns - and everyone seemed to own a brand new South Sudanese flag.

Much of independence day itself was taken up with commemorations at the national stadium, where the representatives of the international community queued up to congratulate the new nation. Ban Ki-moon confirmed South Sudan’s admission to the United Nations at the earliest opportunity, and South Sudan duly became the UN’s 193rd state a few days later. For the UK, William Hague announced the immediate establishment of a full embassy in Juba, the first major government to do so, while Susan Rice, speaking for the United States, received a particularly warm reception when she reminded the crowd that “your freedom was not a gift you were given; it was a prize you won.” The Chinese promised that they would work closely with South Sudan on areas of mutual interest – primarily meaning oil exploitation. Given China’s past partiality towards Khartoum this is potentially a highly significant development, signalling that Beijing, pragmatic as ever, is willing to engage with South Sudan as a key African partner.

Apart from the joyous South Sudanese themselves, the most enthusiastic participants in the independence process were probably the Kenyans. Clearly, Kenya sees the emergence of a new African nation on its western border as an extremely positive event. Kenya, together with Mauritius, has indicated its support for fast-tracking South Sudanese membership of the Commonwealth – giving South Sudan access to the world’s second largest international body, and one to which many of its neighbours are already members as are key international players such as the UK, Canada, South Africa, and India.

The international media were also present, despite Juba being neither very easy to get to nor particularly comfortable once one arrives. Media coverage ranged from very positive reportage by the Kenyans and a balanced feature from Al Jazeera, through to the sour knocking copy of Khartoum and its allies. Sadly, the BBC coverage fell firmly into the latter category. The BBC correspondent on the spot filed a report at least two thirds of which was negative, highlighting the difficulties the new nation will face. Incredibly, Sudanese-born Zeinab Badawi, reporting from Khartoum, thought it newsworthy to run a feature about various southern collaborators with the Khartoum dictatorship who have lost their jobs now that the South no longer has need of their dubious expertise. Ms Badawi’s star exhibit was the female quisling governor of one of the southern regions, an individual whose “personal friendship” with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has now been summarily rewarded with a P45. A case of he (or she) who sups with the devil needing a long spoon? Her “friend” is, after all wanted on war crimes charges by the International Criminal Court. Journalists’ actions have consequences, otherwise there would be little point being in the news business. The British are already regarded by many South Sudanese as overly sympathetic to Khartoum and the grudging coverage of the independence celebrations by the main British newsgathering organization will hardly dispel this impression.

This is not to say that journalists should be blind to South Sudan’s problems. Thanks to years of northern oppression, South Sudan has among the world’s highest child and maternal mortality rates Nor should it be suggested that journalists should not be free to investigate any subject they feel is of relevance. Indeed, why the BBC should seek to align its coverage so closely with the perspectives of the Khartoum regime might itself be worthy of independent scrutiny.

Actually, it is in the north that the main news stories of the future may be found. Al-Bashir has made no secret of his desire to impose a dogmatic Arab/Islamist agenda across the whole of northern Sudan. This places Sudan’s many ethnic minorities, especially those who are black Africans, in an invidious position. Many of these peoples are Muslim, but Sudan’s recent history demonstrates that even being nominal co-religionists of the extremists in Khartoum will not spare them the full viciousness of the regime’s racial, cultural and religious sectarianism.

President al-Bashir’s address to the independence day rally in Juba set a dismal tone in this regard. While half-heartedly acknowledging South Sudanese independence, his principal theme was that Khartoum, having completed a distasteful task, now believes its duties to the international community are at an end. Indeed, the balance of his speech consisted of listing the areas in which Sudan has contributed to the peace process and other examples of self-congratulation. Some of his observations defy the reality on the ground. His claim that the contested Abyei region between north and south would benefit “through the reduction of the number of forces in the region and the heavy deployment of military and observers as was the case in the past” would, for example, carry more weight if it were not his troops that had illegally occupied the region in June 2011.

The fact is, Sudan has not discharged its obligations under the now ended Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Khartoum’s invasion of Abyei presents the international community with a fait accompli, while the mainly black African Blue Nile and South Kordofan regions have not had the consultations they were promised under the peace settlements. The bombing of civilian targets by the Sudanese Air Force and attempted ethnic cleansing by ground forces provide all the answer needed to the question of Khartoum’s commitment to further dialogue in these regions, as does the “election”, in South Kordofan, of a governor, Ahmed Haroun, who has past form – having been arraigned by the International Criminal Court for his activities in Darfur.

Sadly, all these areas will provide ample scope for further investigation by courageous journalists – provided they are willing to venture beyond the comfort zone. South Sudan finds itself born in interesting times.
Where do we go from here?

By Janice Shillum Bhend

Journalism: the profession of conducting for writing for public journals; writing of fleeting interest or hasty character.

So the Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary dismisses our profession — and profession it is and one of which to be proud.

I wrote this a couple of years ago: “It’s more than time journalists became respected members of society again — we deserve more and are worth far more than being famously loathed just marginally less than estate agents.”

With the current explosion of almost unbelievable revelations of hacking, phone tapping and bribery at the NOW and no doubt more and possibly worse yet to come regarding this and other newspapers our reputation has never sunk so low.

What can be done to restore it?

Should there be more regulation?

A version of the General Medical Council, perhaps, where journalists are ‘registered’ and could be struck off for not following a code of practice laid down by industry professionals?

Warning

A journalism industry version of Ofsted that could swoop on unsuspecting news desks at any time, without warning?

Should training be mandatory, as it is for most professionals — teaching, the law, medicine etc?

What should replace the PCC, if indeed the PCC should be replaced?

How far can regulation go before that vital freedom of the British Press is irrevocably threatened?

Journalists hold a responsible place in society: they can make or break ‘celebrities’ and politicians, bring about social change through campaigning, expose wrongdoing and injustice. But when they themselves cross over to the other side of the law the world turns upside down. Whether through pressure from publishers or determination to get the story, whatever the cost, bribery and corruption are always indefensible and inexcusable.

A journalist is a multi-talented, many faceted, well-honed news-seeking missile aimed at making the public aware of crime, anti social behaviour by the great and the good and impending threats to humanity just as effectively as acquainting readers with the latest looks in fashion. But he or she must also have built-in, self-imposed moral limitations.

Of necessity we are chameleons, capable of being all things to all people, writing a moving obituary or thought-provoking condemnation of a political system or informing our readers on the more frothy aspects of society. Whatever our specialty, we must be honest, accurate, fair, balanced, just and true to our own sense of what is right while keeping the best interests of management, advertisers and our target audience always in the forefront of our minds.

We are thorough researchers, never relying on the Internet for information but forming our own unique database of contacts that can reliably update us on the business we are reporting. We are ‘people people’, able to charm a truthful account of a tragic story from the most desperate of souls, however difficult the circumstances and as true professionals who understand that the show must go on, no matter what, we’ll never miss a deadline because we’ll always have Plan B as back up, not to mention plan C, D...

Journalists need many talents some of which cannot be taught but are already ingrained: integrity, an ability to work effectively under severe pressure, self-reliance, determination and persistence; discipline, curiosity plus a never empty well of creativity where we can find inspiring and innovative ways of making old ideas new again.

We are not afraid of hard work, long hours and low pay realising that a job as fascinating, absorbing and important as journalism is its own reward. Oh and being a good writer helps too though (and this may be contentious) it is not exactly essential so long as communication is clear, simple, impossible to misinterpret and written on a level that is suitable for the intended audience.

Instant experts on whatever we are writing about today and with an instinctive and intellectual understanding of how much or how little our readers will want to hear about that subject, we have empathy with and respect for those readers, listeners or viewers who must never be condescended to or mislead.

Above all we must have passion for our subject, for our publication or programme, for our audience — if you don’t yearn to make the world a better place you should never have become a journalist.

Society needs a healthy press; our profession is worth fighting for and our reputation worth saving. Together, perhaps we at the CIoJ can make that happen?

Please send any suggestions as to how this can be achieved to the Freelance Newsletter.

Newspeak journalism

Sometimes with the fall of Communism in the early nineties, an evil malevolence seeped out across Europe: Orwell’s predictions of “Newspeak” crept under the door of the high standards in journalism as newspapers pursued relentless circulation wars. It slipped in with the wind amongst broadcasters trying to fill the voids under the crushing pressure of 24 hours news reporting.

Oh, so quietly it became fashionable to speak illiterate, even to gaining knighthoods or becoming President. Illiteracies have become so common that you have think hard just to see what is wrong with ‘tested positive’ - heard almost every night on the news. A verb being qualified by an adjective was the hallmark of the American Hillbilly. Mercifully, American journalists’ use of grammar is invariably at the highest standard.

Indeed, the adverbs should be considered an endangered species. ‘Doing good’ instead of ‘well’, or even ‘fine’. ‘Well good’ instead of ‘very good’ seems to have been promoted by EastEnders. Worse, ‘The Play What I Wrote’ has become Standard English in some quarters instead of the joke it was originally. My German friends inform me that English is a very precise language with quite logical, if difficult, rules of grammar.

So one must wonder why UK journalists and those paid to use writing skills seem to go out of their way to wreck them so needlessly.

When your Boss says, “Well done” (adverb/ verb) or “Good work” (adjective/ noun) you feel pleased and appreciated. Were they to say, “Good done” (adjective/ verb) it would leave you confused, irritated and their authority would evaporate.

As does ours every time we write or speak so poorly.
Bill Tadd was a larger-than-life character and he went out in a similar way at St Marylebone Crematorium at Finchley. After tributes, music and poems from family and friends, John Kemp, a colleague of Bill’s from the days when they both worked and played on the Daily Telegraph, delivered the eulogy.

He said: “Where on earth do I begin to sum up the life of this extraordinary man Bill Tadd?

“Do I start with the high flying journalist, the man who landed one of the top jobs in Fleet Street? Or with the greyhound owning, horse loving, solo loving, bowls loving, party loving host for whom enjoyment was compulsory? Or with the inconsiderate, chain smoking, chauvinist pig who seemed to think the world and everyone in it was there for his benefit?”

He then went on to recap on Bill’s life story. The life-long interest in horse racing was a major part. He went on to describe how Bill made it to the big time on the news desk at the Daily Telegraph when claimed the News Editor’s chair in 1972.

“Most journalists are happy to describe themselves as hacks. Bill was too but he was always more than that it seemed to me. He had an intellect which seemed to surmount the tag.

Arguments

“I loved arguments with him and had plenty of them. But hated them too because while I might become passionate and noisy in pursuit of my point of view, he hardly ever raised his voice. He just marshalled his thoughts and relied on cold logic. He was a hard man to beat.

“I have to confess I did not seek Bill out as a friend. He was my boss, for goodness sake. He was the man who exercised power over the newsroom. He enjoyed a reputation. I wasn’t sure I was in the same league.

“But in Bill’s company one day I mentioned that I was thinking of taking my family on holiday to Spain. He said he knew a lovely unspoilt little village called Calella de Palafrugell on the Costa Brava which he was sure I would love. Stupidly I booked it. What he did not tell me was that he was planning to be in the same village at the same time. And when I arrived at my hotel I was horrified to find a note at reception inviting me to join him and Hilary in his hotel later that evening. It seemed my holiday was ruined already.

“Even worse luck while I was drowning my sorrows in the bar I bumped into a rather pushy salesman by the name of Ray Cousins and his wife Patricia who were also in our hotel and I told them of my dilemma.

“We’ve always wanted to visit that hotel,” they said. “We’ll come with you”

“And so began a saga and a friendship which has lasted nearly 40 years.

The holiday turned out to be a riot. I blush with embarrassment to think of the quantities of sangria we sank that fortnight, at the late hours we kept in the beach side nightclub run by Jimmy Reno of the Nightclub De France, of the midnight skinny dipping in the Mediterranean which followed a particularly late session. But it has to be said we were all rather led on by Pat who certainly stripped off first.

Party lover

Out of the office it turned out Bill was indeed a party lover. And we had lots of them over the years. Dinner parties, the so-called Palafrugel weekends where we revived our holiday friendship (and its hangovers) over and over and over again.”

John went on briefly to describe how Bill was a dedicated member of the Institute of Journalists. He was Father of the IoJ’s Chapel at the Telegraph but in the end it was his undoing. He thought he could continue when he became News Editor; management thought otherwise. Bill thought otherwise, stuck to his guns and after a long dispute was sacked.

The subsequent judicial battle saw a vindication of sorts for Bill but no return to the Telegraph. Bill became freelance and became much more involved with the Institute.

Mr Kemp said: “Bill was a thoughtful man in many ways, he expected life and others to revolve around him. And the absurd thing is we all accepted that. In a way we found it rather endearing. And the good things about him certainly made up for the irritations.

“Bill Tadd had many passions in his life. There was music, opera, Arsenal football club, military history. And he pursued his passions with vigour. It was not enough to just read military history. He then had to visit the battlefields. He very nearly persuaded me to join him in buying a horse.

We thought about it for a long time and ended up buying a greyhound or three. He had a knack for leading his friends astray.

“You would not call Bill a sporty chap. Once or twice he joined me and Ray in a game of golf. I still treasure the memory of him swinging his club (or bat as he insisted on calling it) missing his ball and falling flat on his back.

“Of course you can’t talk for long about Bill Tadd without also mentioning that he was a bit of a smoker. Well, a lot of a smoker. In fact smoking rather defined his life. It was the first thing he did in the morning and the last thing he did at night.

Smoker

“I reckon he smoked at least 40 fags a day from his teenage years to his death. That means he must have smoked something approaching a million fags. Put them end to end and they would stretch from Cambridge to Barnet. If there was an Olympic class for it Bill would have earned gold.

“He was also a scruffy smoker. You knew exactly where Bill had been. You just followed the trail of fag ash.

“Throughout his life he loved intellectual pursuits including cross words, sudokus and other puzzles.

“When I visited him at home in later years it was usually to find him hunched over the table in his conservatory a cup of tea beside it was usually to find him hunched over the table in his conservatory a cup of tea beside another one of his passions with vigour. It was not enough to just read military history. He then had to visit the battlefields. He very nearly persuaded me to join him in buying a horse.

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“When I visited him at home in later years it was usually to find him hunched over the table in his conservatory a cup of tea beside him, a fag in one hand, a pencil in the other and with a puzzle of some kind in front of him. It kept his mind sharp even as his body failed.

“Bill Tadd was one of those people you really can describe as a character. He was not someone you could ignore.

“He was a rainbow man among the grey.

“It was a privilege to have known him, to work with him as a colleague, to share his cigarette smoke, his passions, his port, his parties, his family and his friendship. ”

The congregation left the building to the sound of a recording of Bill and his cousin Stan accompanying each other on guitars to “Are you from Dixie?”

It was a memorable send off.
Death of a legend

Institute member Gilbert Johnson, a legend in the North of England and The Sun’s man in Yorkshire for many years, died on July 29 at the age of 81.

Gilbert started his career on the South Yorkshire Times before going to work, in 1955, on the Hull Daily Mail. Within two years he was working for the nationals, covering the Yorkshire area for the Daily Herald, then the Daily Sketch and the Daily Express. He then joined the Sun in pre-Murdoch days and also did work for the News of the World.

He was a character and few Northern journalists could fail to come up with an anecdote about Gilbert – though few would be publishable!

In an obit in Press Gazette, his daughter, Susan, said: “On returning from National Service with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in Kenya it was expected he would resume his studies for the priesthood. But he told the priest he had decided mortal sin was much better, so he became a newspaperman!”

His career on The Sun was interrupted when he decided to quit the nationals’ rat-race and return to local journalism – as news editor of the Doncaster Evening Post. He joined on a Monday, quickly found that he and the editor did not see eye-to-eye and by the Friday was bitterly regretting his change of career. Gilbert went off to the pub to drown his sorrows, popped into a bookmaker’s shop to place an ‘impossible’ bet – saw it come up and, flushed with winnings, returned to the office to tell the unpopular editor what he could do with the job...and was back working for The Sun the following week!

When a major story broke in the North, once the cry went up “Here’s Gilbert” the story took on a new, usually hilarious, dimension as his personality and popularity became dominant.

Among the many ‘majors’ he covered were the John Poulson scandal, the Cod Wars and mining disasters. He was at the heart of the newspaper coverage into the crimes of Peter Sutcliffe, and was one of the first to coin the “Yorkshire Ripper” identity.

He is survived by his wife Shirley, their son Chris, daughters Kate, Susan and Vicki and grandchildren Amy, Hayley, Matthew and Max. Robin Morgan

Sean Hoare – a tribute

By Charlie Harris

The death of Sean Hoare, who is being dubbed the “News of the World whistleblower”, is not only a tragedy for his family and friends, but for journalism.

Sean was a natural reporter, a man with an unerring nose for a story who loved sniffing one out, and a journalistic character of the old school, despite his relative youth.

I first met Sean in the late 1980s when he was a trainee reporter with the Watford Observer in Hertfordshire, just north of London, and I was district editor of the Observer’s sister paper, the Borehamwood Times.

In April 1989 we both transferred to the Watford Free Observer, I as deputy editor and Sean as a reporter, and for about four years I sat opposite him, my view obscured by a constant fug of smoke and a pile of cigarette ends spilling from a giant ashtray that sat between us on the newsdesk.

Sean was instantly likeable, a welcome splash of colour in a local newspaper world in which young journalists were even then beginning to lose a lot of the eccentricity that made newsrooms such agreeable places in which to work. Always smartly dressed, with Brylcreemed hair that gave him an appearance of having arrived from a slightly earlier age, he never wore socks.

In terms of traditional office rules he was not the most reliable of men. He was not a good timekeeper and would regularly vanish from the building for long periods, rarely telling me or our editor where he was going. “I’m just going for a mooch around town,” he would declare, as he left in a cloud of smoke. We never knew quite when we’d see him again.

But in one way he was 100 per cent reliable: he’d always come back with a notebook full of good, often offbeat, stories. His natural charm made it easy for him to make and maintain contacts from all walks of life.

Back in the office, he’d get a mug of coffee, light up another cigarette, and knock out his copy at great speed – before heading off to find more stories.

We all knew that local newspapers would not hold Sean for long. He was always meant for bigger things and he never made a secret of the fact that despite loving the work he was doing his heart was set on joinging a national tabloid, which was his natural habitat.

He eventually achieved that ambition, transferring to the Sun, a paper big enough to hold and make full use of his huge character and talents.

I lost touch with him, hearing news of his exploits only from mutual friends and colleagues.

After a while he dropped out of sight completely until one day in Dublin in September 2010 I settled down in a bar with a pint of Guinness and the only English newspaper I could find in the nearby newsagent’s – the Guardian.

There, tucked away at the bottom of an inside page, was a piece about the interview with the New York Times in which he had claimed that Andy Coulson, under whose editorship at the News of the World Sean had worked as showbiz correspondent until being sacked, had commissioned unethical and illegal practices.

I texted another former Free Observer colleague in London to tell her to get hold of the Guardian and later spoke to a few people on the phone about Sean’s amazing claims.

None of us could have guessed what those claims would lead to - the closure of the Sunday paper he had once worked for, the arrests of a series of very senior journalists, the resignation of the UK’s most senior policeman and one of his colleagues, emergency debates in Parliament, and both the Murdoch media empire and the British Government being rocked to their foundations.

News of Sean’s death came amid an amazing few days for Britain and is being reported as part of an international scandal.

But it is also a personal tragedy for Sean’s family and friends and for all of us who shared part of our lives with him, however briefly.

The lives of those to whom he was closest, and English journalism, will be a lot duller.
Peace Journalism. War and Conflict Resolution
EDITED BY RICHARD LANCE KEEBLE, JOHN TULLOCH AND FLORIAN ZOLLMANN
(Peter Lang, New York 2010)

Many of us will remember Scoop, Evelyn Waugh’s disrespectful romp through the excesses of journalism in a conflict situation. For instance Corker of Universal News and his unstinted admiration of the ace American journalist, Wenlock Jakes: “Why, once Jakes went out to cover a revolution in one of the Balkan capitals. He overslept in his carriage, woke up at the wrong station, didn’t know any different, got out, went straight to an hotel, and cabled off a 1000-word story about barricades in the streets, flaming churches, machine-guns answering the rattle of his typewriter as he wrote, a dead child, like a broken doll, spreadeagled in the deserted roadway…. “ Such was his reputation that the story was splashed in national newspapers. Other media rushed to catch up in such numbers that they precipitated a crisis in an otherwise peaceful country that brought about “an honest-to-God revolution, just as Jakes had said”.

Yes, but Scoop was written in the 1930s. Surely Lord Copper and his “That is The Beast policy for the war” is a thing of the past? Read this book and you won’t feel quite so sure.

I have to admit that though, nearly sixty years ago, I was a conscientious objector to National Service with the armed forces, I had not come across 'peace journalism'. I was quite unaware of the body of work collected together in this book. And so I still would, had I not attended a one-day conference to which the book author, Alan Cork, had invited me, and made one of its editors, who come from the Department of Journalism at Lincoln University.

In covering wars, large or small, journalists are subject to a number of constraints, even if they are not actually ‘embedded’ with the forces of one or other of the parties to the conflict. In such circumstances it is far from easy to avoid promoting the version of events favoured by the military or government interests. To go too independent may result in denial of access or even expulsion from the country or countries concerned. Hardly surprising then that some of the contributions to this book amount a critique of present-day media performance. Some of the detail is quite disturbing - indifference, bias, herd behaviour and plain misinformation all surface in the section devoted to an analysis of mainstream journalism.

Peace journalism is seen as giving the media a role in promoting conflict resolution rather than war and violence. To the extent that editors and reporters are able to make choices about what to report and how to report it, there is clearly an opening for them to involve society at large in considering whether conflict can be resolved in a non-violent way. At a time when our still very large expenditure on the armed forces is facing cut-back, this is a book that is recommended reading for all those concerned with the media coverage of war, whether in the front-line reporting of conflict or in analysis and comment.

Roger Bush

The Greater Bad
ALAN CORK
Amazon Kindle, £5.74
www.thegreaterbad.com

When copywriter Martin Lock loses his job following an acquisition by the murky merger corporate, QPL, an unexpected and terrifying train of events ensues. Why has his closest friend been killed? Who is Mr. Stone – who are the Life Stealers, and what is the meaning of the codeword, Athena? And more, importantly, how can our hero keep alive in a world that has suddenly turned upside-down, a world in which he is now a hunted animal? Institute member, Alan Cork, has hit the world of thriller-writing at full speed in his keypad-tangling new e-novel – a sort of journalists’ North by Northwest, or perhaps a modern version of The Thirty-Nine Steps.

Twists and turns through the streets of London lead Martin Lock to the dark heart of a cult formed in Victorian times – a movement that seeks, not the greater good, but its exact opposite. The murder-conspiracy genre has found a new exponent in the form of CIoJ member, Alan Cork, an author who makes you jittery just at the thought of the new management team that is about to take over your company.

Stuart Millson

Unreliable Sources
JOHN SIMPSON
published by MacMillan, 2010

In his most recent book, John Simpson describes some of the crucial wrong turns we have made over the last century. Usefully, he also shows us how we reported them at the time. As a foreign correspondent, and more recently as the BBC’s World Affairs Editor, Simpson has won three BAFTAs and, in both his reports and his books, has revealed much that we would otherwise not know about the Afghanistan and Kosovo conflicts.

Young journalists will find Unreliable Sources a reliable point from which to begin an historical journey on the precedents that have led to present disputes. As they do so, they will gain an overview on the subject both of journalists and of journalism. The book will certainly go far to dislodge conditioning and assumptions passed on by those who are stuck in their ways. Simpson quotes extensively and generously from newspaper and broadcasting reports throughout the book.

There appear to be weak points around the world that spark calamity and woe in a cyclical way for humankind. Simpson notes that Britain was more often mentioned “not as a participant, but as a concerned and anxious onlooker” in the days leading up to the outbreak of World War I. It was much the same at the outset of World War II, of course.

Just as importantly, he reveals what was really going on by dint of comparing journalist reports across a broad front. This way, he throws new light on many of the crucial battles and crisis points of the last hundred years. Amongst other things, Simpson tackles the problems journalists face when they wish to report accurately and honestly, but are under pressure to toe the party line.

For instance, Simpson cites the decline of The Times as 1908. From this point, it was “owned by Alfred Harmsworth, now ennobled as Lord Northcliffe: the man who had single-handedly invented yellow journalism in Britain, and had made the Daily Mail and the Daily Mirror the loudest and most aggressive newspapers in Fleet Street.”

He speaks of journalists being hamstrung as much in World War II as they had been in previous conflicts. “The rule that there should be no specific reporting of the V-2s was even more unpopular with the press than the V-1 ban had been. According to Rear Admiral Thomson, it was even unpopular with the censors themselves. Often the stories were so heavily edited that editors felt there was no point in printing them.”

He continues: “The worst thing about censorship is that if newspapers and radio cease to tell (people) what they know is true, people lose their belief in anything they are told officially, and rumours, no matter how wild, take over.”

He is objective when discussing Margaret Thatcher’s role in office, and shows that she was very capable. Nonetheless, Simpson also notes that she “had no real idea of the
true nature of the Murdoch effect... all she knew of the newspapers came from the brief press reviews Bernard Ingham prepared for her. By allowing this to happen, she tacitly encouraged the “culture of soft porn, hard politics and celebrity gossip”.

Then we roll forward a few chapters to Blair, who “did the kissing” when “Murdoch presented his cheek to be kissed. There are some surprising revelations about Alistair Campbell, whom Simpson describes as a “complex figure, personally honest, remarkably bold, and surprisingly thoughtful.”

In the next sentence, he adds that Campbell “was a thoroughly bullying, like several of his predecessors in the job of prime minister’s spokesman, yet anyone who stood up to him found it was worth doing; the flow of invective always seemed to fade away.” It is likely this remark is based on personal experience.

Vivienne duBourdieu

The Diary of a Lady
BY RACHEL JOHNSON.
I must confess I was stumped by this latest offering from Penguin. How is it really possible to review a book about people who live in Notting Hill, who visit other people who live in Holland Park, who write for the FT, or know Dave or Boris, and then go on to edit The Lady (the oldest women’s weekly in the world) when you live miles away from such an ambience? In order to acquire at least a slight measure of understanding and empathy, I decided to visit Notting Hill, join the cafe society for a late morning observation, and at least (over strangely-named coffees with froth) rub shoulders, or elbows, with people whose names might be Ivo, Clemmie, Marco, Stefano or Rosie etc. Quite a world away from Wetherspoons in Maidstone, where the house mag is Ad Scene or The Big Issue, and people are called “Oi Mate”.

I felt like Tony Hancock in that wonderful film The Rebel, sitting in a forlorn state, unable to comprehend that the world has moved on from a cup of tea, or an ordinary cup of coffee with no froth. Cappuccino? I laughed to myself: it sounded like the name of a species of monkey. However, I do feel some affection, and even a tenuous sense of connection to The Lady: their old Editor Arlene Usden printed an article of mine way back in 1994, all about English music. Jolly good for her.

Rachel Johnson is a highly-entertaining writer, and her account of how she gained this most distinguished of editorial appointments will amuse countless readers, especially those who enjoy the cut-and-thrust of London journalistic life – a world of celebrities, sardonic asides at parties, and the occasional i-Nap. Yet it is a pity that the author approached The Lady as something of a moderniser, expressing her frustration at how hopelessly old-fashioned it all was – “doilies, flag-waving patriotism, jam still for tea”. But why is this bad? Why change a winning formula?

There are moments in the story when the readers begin to stir at all this change, such as the time when a “spew” of angry letters arrives – the discontented correspondents complaining about the decision by the now forward-looking magazine to place an advertisement which featured a pregnant nun. The ad’s slogan, something about an immaculate conception, did not go down well in Wiltshire! You see, not everyone appreciates London sophistry.

I certainly enjoyed reading about life on the magazine, and about all the famous people who visit or come into contact with The Lady. I also enjoyed Miss Johnson’s descriptions of meetings and luncheons – particularly when you know that you will never be able to eat in Marco Pierre White’s restaurant unless someone like Rachel Johnson takes you! And after this review, I don’t think that that will ever happen.

Stuart Millson

My Persian Girl
JONATHAN RUSH
ISBN 1-935383-24-8
Jonathan Rush, a member of the Chartered Institute of Journalists and a British-based writer and PR specialist, spent many of his formative years in Germany, Cyprus and Australia, and the early part of his career in Iran. Sensitive to local cultures, cultural nuances, religious and political movements as befits a well-seasoned traveller, Jonathan Rush has arrived on the literary scene with an exciting, absorbing, well-sustained and tense novel about Iran in its last days under the Shah.

Autobiographical and authentic, My Persian Girl can be viewed as a contemporary, or even living historical novel, as its story inhabits a world which most readers will remember from anxious late-1970s’ BBC news bulletins – the upheaval in Tehran, the siege of the Iranian embassy (1980) – and a political situation in the Middle East with which we are still having to contend.

The story concerns a student, James Harding, who falls in love with Shahnaz, the beautiful daughter of a well-to-do, westernised Iranian family. Their romantic entanglement begins during student days in England, but it is a romance that ends (at least, in part) when Shahnaz dutifully returns to Iran, and marries Raman Zabaran – a ruthless young officer who is destined to become head of the Shah’s deadly secret police, Savak. The years go by, and Harding finds himself living and working in Iran – part of the large British and American community of expats and contract workers in the Middle East. But as the gin and tonics are poured at the British and American clubs, tremors are beginning to be felt across the country: the edifice of the Shah’s Iran is crumbling, as dissidents and Islamic fundamentalists begin to draw the country back centuries in time.

Caught up in the tidal wave of protest and civil strife that suddenly engulfs this ethnically-complex nation, James meets, once again, the love of his life – Shahnaz, who must – because of her marriage to Raman, the Shah’s most loyal servant – desperately find a way out of the fast-collapsing country. And so James begins the most dangerous journey he has ever undertaken, an exhausting escape to the Turkish border with Shahnaz and her two bewildered young sons.

As a plot for a novel, the subject-matter is as compelling as anything one could read by Le Carre or Forsyth – yet what injects the chapters with such lifeblood and realism is the fact that the author experienced the very terror which cracks and explodes across the pages: the menace of the large protest march which is fired upon by terrified soldiers; the thud and crackle of gunfire across the once-peaceful city; the strange sight of Iranian women, who once wore Western clothes and visited western shops, now dressed in the black robes of ancient Islam – their hysterical shouting for Allah – in the sight of Iranian women, who once wore Western clothes and visited western shops, now dressed in the black robes of ancient Islam – their hysterical shouting for Allah – in
Death threats editor is assured of CIoJ support

Institute member Campbell Thomas (left) is pictured with editor Sener Levent during a recent visit to the Afrika newspaper office in Turkish-occupied Nicosia, Cyprus.

Thomas, who was shown bullet holes from one of two attacks this year, assured the Afrika staff of the CIoJ’s support in the face of repeated shootings and death threats. Speaking after the meeting, he told The Journal: “I know from my own experiences how difficult reporting the news in north Cyprus can be, but Sener Levent and his staff put their personal safety and lives at risk every day they go to and from work.”

It was an honour and quite humbling to meet these journalists and photographers who are determined to stand up to those who threaten them and the occupying authorities who they see as trying to stifle their freedom of expression.”

Sener Levent said: “Thank you for coming and for giving us your support. This is very important to us.”

CIoJ President Norman Bartlett has written to the Turkish Ambassador in London, seeking assurances for a thorough police investigation into the incidents.

CIoJ AGM 2011
London, Saturday 24 September

With the recent revelations at the News of the World rocking the very foundations of the journalistic world, this years AGM will focus on the forthcoming attack on our profession.

Inquiries are already being held and a judicial inquiry by Lord Justice Leveson has been ordered by the Prime Minister.

The Institute needs to be at the forefront of this inquiry, defending our members and the profession, and, by doing so, maintaining the fight for a free Press.

You should have your say in how we defend ourselves against these attacks. Collectively we can come up with worthwhile campaigns and make a real difference to the journalistic profession in the coming years.

Look forward to seeing you!

Register your attendance by contacting Diane at memberservices@cioj.co.uk or call on 020 7252 1187.

Can you offer...
...your experience by standing for election to the Professional Practices Board?

Members who wish to stand for election to the PPB at this year’s AGM should contact the General Secretary, Dominic Cooper, for a nomination form. Forms should be returned by September 18.

Venue

The Victory Services Club, 63-79 Seymour Street, London, London W2 2HF

A 5-minute walk from Marble Arch station.

Rooms are available at the club for delegates
Tel 020 7723 4474