Institute stands up for the local press

CIOJ gives evidence at House of Lords inquiry

By Amanda Brodie, Chairman, Professional Practices Board

The cause of local newspapers was strongly defended by the Chartered Institute of Journalists at a public inquiry in the House of Lords.

The Institute’s general secretary, Dominic Cooper, was one of three panelists giving evidence to the House of Lords Communications Committee inquiry into the future of investigative journalism.

The inquiry, broadcast live on the web, was chaired by Lord Inglewood and attended by several other peers including Baroness Deech, Baroness Fookes and Lord Bragg.

Cooper spoke out strongly against the problem of local authorities ignoring Government guidelines on publishing their own propaganda-style newspapers. The guidelines were introduced to try to prevent local newspapers being damaged by such publications, but there is evidence that some councils are ignoring the advice.

He told the inquiry: “The impact has been dramatic – the publications that they produce are simply passed off as independent newspapers, unless you read the very small print. And they accept advertising as well, which possibly took away significant strands of advertising from local media in that area. “The Government’s changed Publicity Code has had an impact, but there is still evidence of local government newspapers flouting the Code, which we are campaigning on still.”

Lord Clement-Jones asked: “Are there any new funding models or ownership structures which might help secure the future of newspapers?”

Cooper replied: “When we started asking our members about other funding models that they could work with, they were very keen to point out that their independence is seen among their local community, because they are completely apolitical.

“They are not tied to any funding model from any particular political influence. It comes back to something that was touched upon earlier: the notion that the story is somehow lost because of political influence. We do not find that necessarily the case. It is largely manpower these days, where stories get lost, rather than that.”

Exposed – the “fake take” on press cards

By Robin Morgan

A n attempt to create a fake take on the British press card has been uncovered by the Chartered Institute of Journalists. We believe the crude forgeries, which featured the treasured Royal Coat of Arms in our official logo, emanated in the United States.

We have reported the discoveries to the Privy Council which zealously protects the use of the Royal Coat of Arms and to the anti-terrorist squad at Scotland Yard – although we have no evidence to suggest that the fake cards would be used in the United Kingdom.

The fake take came to light after we had received an untraceable e-mail,

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Editor’s Comment

In the wake of the phone hacking scandal, and with the Levenson inquiry in full swing, the clamour for press regulation is a seemingly unstoppable force.

Enemies of press freedom have the scent of blood in their nostrils. Celebrities who feel they have been unfairly hounded by the tabloids, and MPs still smarting from the Daily Telegraph’s exposure of their parliamentary expense claims, see their chance for revenge.

Let’s be clear. This witch-hunt has been brought on us by a tiny minority of our fellow journalists. These people have behaved unethically and, indeed, criminally – but it is not just the wrong-doers who are being punished.

It is the entire journalistic profession. In this heated climate, the danger that Britain’s long tradition of press freedom will be swept away and State regulation of the British media introduced is a very real one.

EU control?

Worse still, it is highly likely that the decisions on this will ultimately be made not here in the UK but at the European level.

This is a nightmare scenario if ever there was one! Journalists, and all those who value the freedom of the British press, must stand together on this, and resist the witch-hunt.

But simply defending the status quo is no longer tenable. We must present a new and more viable alternative to State regulation.

There is already a growing consensus on this among responsible journalists and editors.

Most agree that what our industry needs is a voluntary independent regulator – but one with real teeth. The Press Complaints Commission has never had the powers of investigation or enforcement that it really needed from the start.

If we had had a strong PCC from the outset, it would, for instance, have been able to interrogate News International over phone hacking, and then deal effectively with any wrongdoing, and as a result we would not be facing the threats that we do now.

Let us have a strong press-wide campaign for a new and more robust form of self-regulation – one in which all can have confidence.

Andy Smith

For he’s a jolly good Fellow!

Glasgow-based freelance journalist Jim Filbin has been elected to Fellowship of the Chartered Institute of Journalists.

As his Fellowship citation said, “He has worked hard for the Institute and has brought the finest traditions of journalism into our fold… He entered journalism as a freelance in the early 1960s and gained his diploma by distance learning from the London School of Journalism. He went on to work as an agency reporter and independent freelance, writing news and features for publications as diverse as The Universe, Glasgow Guardian, Western Mail, Irish Weekly, Aberdeen Press and Journal, Sunderland Echo, the BBC, Milngavie Herald, Sunday Times, Scotsman, Sunday Post and the late lamented Scottish Daily News and Sunday Standard. He has also contributed to The Institute’s own Journal. Jim also has a historical political publication to his name, ‘The Covenant: Lessons From Scotland’s Past, 1945-79’ as well as ‘The Nordic Roadmap’… In today’s spin and PR culture, it is good to know we have a member proudly linked to radical journalism.”

Jim Filbin, 79, was presented with his Fellowship certificate in November. President Norman Bartlett and general secretary Dominic Cooper travelled to Glasgow to make the presentation and to meet other Scottish CIoJ members and guests.

The Fellowship ceremony and reception took place at Òran Mór, a cultural centre in Glasgow’s West End. This is an interesting building constructed in the late 19th century as Kelvinside Parish Church, deconsecrated in 1978, then used by BBC Scotland as a storage facility before being converted into a centre for the arts. The main auditorium has a ceiling mural by Alasdair Gray, poet and painter, claimed to be one of the largest works of art in Scotland.

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The effect on local newspapers and on investigative journalism of the across-the-board loss of journalists’ jobs in recent years, was another area of concern expressed to the inquiry by the CIoJ.

Lord Razzall asked: “Do you think local newspapers are particularly important for investigative journalism?”

“Yes,” said Cooper. “Very often, stories are broken on a local level before they hit national anyway. Of course, local journalists will have a very close connection to the communities they serve, and so they are honour-bound to make sure that accuracy is key.”

Cutbacks

Cooper added: “The recent cutbacks we have seen in local newspapers have diminished staff to a desperate level. The journalists on the papers are still keen to get out there and forage for their stories, because, by their very nature, that is what they want to do, of course. Does it play a declining role? Yes, I suspect, in the sense that there are fewer journalists doing it. In that sense, yes, but it is not in the sense of its importance as part of the chain.”

Fellow panelist Martin Moore of the Media Standards Trust told the inquiry that Media Wales, a major publisher of local newspapers in Wales, has lost 81 per cent of its editorial and production staff since 1999.

He said: “They (the journalists) are, if you like, on a hamster wheel, desperately trying to keep the paper afloat and to keep the stories in the paper. That makes it very difficult to spend any length of time on one story or to do an investigation, particularly if the investigation might not come off and might not be a success.”

The third member of the panel was Lain Overton of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, who gave evidence on various subjects including influences in broadcast journalism and funding models for investigative journalism.

Members also asked questions on the impact of social media on established media brands, and the influence of advertisers on editorial content.

A video of the session at which Cooper appeared is available via www.parliament.uk, then go to “Parliament TV” and search the archive under November 8, House of Lords.

Other journalists and media representatives appearing before the Lords committee have included Daily Telegraph London editor Andrew Gilligan and former Sunday Times editor Harold Evans.

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The Media Society staged a lively panel discussion in the historic surroundings of Britain’s first cinema. It was much better known latterly as the Regent Street Poly but is now the main auditorium of the University of Westminster.

Chaired by Professor Julia Hobsbawm, the panel featured three opinionated journalists:

Roy Greenslade, Guardian blogger, former Daily Mirror editor and professor of journalism at City University;
Andrew Gilligan, Daily Telegraph’s London editor, and reporter for Channel 4’s Dispatches, formerly reporter for BBC Radio’s Today programme;
Roger Bolton, presenter of Radio 4’s Feedback, current affairs programme maker, and former editor of BBC’s Panorama and ITV’s This Week.

Making up a foursome was the University of Westminster’s Professor Steven Barnett, who took the opportunity to promote his book “The Rise and Fall of Television Journalism”, on sale in the lobby.

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The subject was “The PCC is dead. Does television hold the key to better press regulation?” The Media Society promoted the event with the standfirst, “...television is by far the most important source of news in Britain, and broadcast journalists are easily the most trusted. Broadcast journalism works within a framework which promotes high ethical standards but does not inhibit serious watchdog journalism which holds power to account. Are there lessons here for regulation of the British press and for the Leveson Inquiry?”

There are two propositions contained in the title and the fireworks began quite soon.

Greenslade hammered home the point that all the today’s Press trouble came from News of the World. He was dismissive of the purpose of the Leveson Inquiry.

“Now the cancer has been cut out they are looking everywhere for tumours,” he declared.

He was equally dismissive of the TV-style regulation through Ofcom. The BBC could never have done the exposure of the MPS expenses that the Telegraph did nor could it have run a long campaign as the Times did on the thalidomide calamity. BBC News follows the newspapers, he claimed, quoting the Today programme’s typical output.

Gilligan, while not dwelling on his fall from grace over the Iraq business, believed that humiliation would not have been possible without sanction from Ofcom. He believed the news was being dumbed down on television. He acknowledged that while most people got their news from the TV, and trusted its journalists, TV was not the most reliable source.

Crushed

“TV will not cover issues that are close to government,” he declared. “Public interest journalism is crushed by government and, or Ofcom.” He described a recent Despatches programme which, after completion, required three weeks to go through a compliance procedure to satisfy ITV’s lawyers that it would not be troubled by Ofcom.

“Balance is not a good thing with investigative journalism,” said Gilligan. While reports must be truthful, they need not be balanced, he said.

Bolton, perhaps surprisingly as a BBC man, largely agreed that Ofcom was an unsuitable model for oversight of newspapers. The statutory requirements imposed on Ofcom do not belong in Fleet Street.

The journalists gave short shrift to Barnett’s academic suggestions on what a son of PCC would be like. No notes were taken. Or prisoners.
How to kill a report without actually bothering to read it

By Norman Bartlett

Dame Elizabeth Filkin was commissioned by Sir Paul Stephenson, lately Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, to review the relationship between the Met and the media after all the hoo-ha on hacking and cosy-cosy relationships with News International executives. Her work was continued when the present Commissioner, Bernard Hogan-Howe, took over.

The object of the exercise was to see how the Met and the media (as representing the public interest) should work together more effectively. What should the Met do in its organisation and its actions to improve the flow of information without compromising the nature of the confidential information for which the Met was legally responsible?

The 56-page report also included three appendices. One of these, “Ideas for Practical Guidance”, sets out what it says. There a number of scenarios described from the crime scene through to the conclusion of a successful trial.

One element of this advice – about alcohol – appears to have been seized on by all levels of the media. To my mind it simply reinforces the stereotype that journos are obsessed about where the next drink is coming from.

Dame Elizabeth’s advice to police officers is:

- “Alcohol is a fraught issue, and may be seen as inappropriate hospitality. In the media, drinking related to work is less and less common. Drinking loosens tongues, so common sense is needed.”
- “Mixing the media with alcohol is not banned but should be an uncommon event.”
- “You know you shouldn’t drink at lunchtime, or on duty. Off duty, for example at the end of a sentencing day may be different, but you still need to use your judgement.”

Well-balanced

This recommendation is on page 4 of a 9-page appendix to the main report yet it has been lifted out and transposed to the headlines. Even the Guardian, normally a publication with a well-balanced approach to the news, used the banner, “Met police warned over drinking with journalists”.

The appendix also contains an even briefer mention about flirting. Wow! Sensational! “Police officers in London have been warned against “late night carousing” and alcohol-fuelled “flirting” with journalists”, were the Independent’s first words on the story.”Police officers have been ordered to avoid ‘flirting’ with and accepting alcohol from journalists”, was The Scotsman’s lead par. “Police officers must stop drinking with journalists and should record every meeting with them… They should be on their guard against ‘flirting’ by reporters designed to make them drop their defences”, was the Daily Telegraph’s opening take on the story. The Daily Mirror led with “Police officers have been ordered to avoid ‘flirting’ and accepting alcohol from journalists”. The Sun did not appear to mention the report.

My reading of the report is that it provides a well-balanced analysis backed up with plenty of evidence of the sad state into which the Met has got itself in dealing with the media. There is no blame attached to the media that I could find. Rather the opposite. For example:

“Constant scrutiny of powerful organisations such as the MPS [Metropolitan Police Service] is important and the media are key players in its provision. The events of July 2011 have demonstrated that vigorous and fearless responsible journalism is vital for the public interest. In my view the MPS needs to be more open and active in responding to responsible requests for information to improve its accountability to the public.”

The report contains no suggestion that journalists should only deal with press officers, as some feared it might.

She even gives chapter and verse on what should be allowed and this is where it may get a bit too bureaucratic for comfort. “Permission of line manager” and “make notes of contact” are the sort of admin screens behind which reluctant coppers will be happy to shelter.

In my view Dame Elizabeth is very sympathetic to journalists’ jobs and at one point even comes close to defending the press for breaking the law! “I have been told by journalists that it is their job to obtain information and if necessary to break the rules, and even the law, where to do so is in the public interest. I accept the public interest test and value the scrutiny provided by responsible journalism.”

Cosy relationships

She reserves her strongest concerns for the top echelons of the Met such as “cosy relationships involving excessive hospitality, between some senior police officers and News of the World journalists, undermined the willingness of the police to pursue possible criminal offences…”

That of which the Institute has said about press officers to the Leveson enquiry in that their main motivation is to protect the organisation, she agrees: “I have also been given examples where inappropriate information has been provided to the media, to dilute or prevent the publication of other information which could be damaging to the MPS or senior individuals within it.”

She also, perhaps inadvertently, gives a plug for the use of the Press Card. In one of her pieces of advice to officers she says, “Be a little wary if you’re approached by a lone reporter you don’t know. Ask to see the press card and, if necessary, take a minute to check with your media office. It’s wise to know who you’re talking to.”

There will be a lot of effort required by the Met at all levels to fulfil the objectives that the Filkin Report recommends. However the Met has signed up to them so we shall have to watch how things develop. As a long-time career civil servant it is perhaps unsurprising that she recommends the appointment or the assignment of a senior member of staff to oversee this new regime of openness. However she places a lot of emphasis on every member of the Met embracing the concept and applying this ethical approach in dealings with the media and the public in general. It will be a responsibility of senior management to give the guidance to others on how and what to communicate.

“I consider that more, not less, contact with the media as a whole is essential, providing it is open and recorded. However it is important that the public are informed through all media outlets, not just the national print press, because different sections of the public use media in different ways. The MPS must acknowledge that providing information to the media is a part of a wider obligation to achieve open and transparent communication with the public.”

It could be said that there is an analogy here with insider dealing prohibitions in the financial sector. There should be no special relationships, she is saying. Certain publications or favoured journalists should not get access to privileged information.

You can read the report for yourself at http://bit.ly/xC8zqz

Dame Elizabeth Filkin is perhaps best known for being the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and for the ignominious way she was bundled from office in 2002 when she uncovered some doubtful goings-on in Parliament.
Amnesty launches “Write for Rights” campaign

Amnesty International has launched a new “Write for Rights” campaign in celebration of the organisation’s 50th anniversary.

Amnesty, the pioneers of activism, is encouraging people to pick up a pen and change a person’s life in a return to the classic, hand-written letter, which has proved such a powerful tool for change.

Millions of people around the globe take all forms of action for Amnesty’s campaigns, from online petitions and other methods of digital communication to public rallies and demonstrations. But in the organisation’s 50th year, the humble hand-written letter is being championed once again, in a “penaissance”.

It is hoped that more people than ever before will write a letter demanding action on one of the ten cases in the “Write for Rights” campaign.

The cases illustrate the diversity of Amnesty’s work; from people facing the death penalty to communities facing forced eviction and women who are challenging the impunity which allows soldiers in Mexico to avoid justice for rape.

Kate Allen, Director of Amnesty International UK, said: “In 1961, when Amnesty was started, our founding members had no idea whether ordinary people writing letters to Heads of State and other people in power would make any difference. It turns out that it did, and it still does.

“These days, we Tweet the President of Azerbaijan, or e-mail the head of the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles – and we will continue to deploy every weapon in our arsenal – but the humble, classic letter is a uniquely formidable tool.

“A letter has the power to embarrass, persuade, protect, coerce and force people to alter their behaviour, and ultimately to change the world. If you want to right the wrongs, write about them.”

The ten individuals and groups who feature in Amnesty International’s Write for Rights campaign, include:

- Jabbar Savalan, a 20-year-old history student in Azerbaijan who is serving a prison sentence for anti-government comments he posted on Facebook;
- 75-year-old Hakamada Iwao, believed to be the world’s longest serving death row inmate who has spent the last 43 years awaiting execution in Japan; and,
- Inés Fernández Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cantú, two rape survivors in Mexico who have tirelessly campaigned to have the perpetrators of the attack brought to justice.

Amnesty International is hoping that an unprecedented number of people across the UK and around the world, will write to people with the power to stop human rights abuses.

To find out more, visit www.amnesty.org.uk/write

New PCC chief speaks out

The new chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, Lord Hunt, says he is starting “with a blank sheet of paper” in reshaping the PCC. Hunt, a lawyer and former Conservative Cabinet Minister, said he was committed to “regeneration and renewal of the system of independent self regulation of the press”.

With the PCC currently under intense scrutiny, and fears that the Leveson Inquiry may even lead to the PCC’s abolition, Lord Hunt said he would work towards the creation of “an effective, genuinely independent standards body, which enjoys the overwhelming respect and support of the media, our political leaders and the general public.”

He added: “A free press is the distinctive and indispensable hallmark of any truly free, civilized society. I have no desire to live in a country where the legitimate, lawful investigative activities of the press are fettered at the whim of politicians. That would not be freedom at all.”

CIOJ member complains about police behaviour

Institute member Stuart Littleford has complained to the Greater Manchester Police about treatment he received from officers at a road traffic accident.

Manchester-based Littleford had stopped at the scene of the accident to offer the benefit of his medical training. After waiting for some considerable time for the police and the ambulance to arrive, Littleford stepped back to take a picture of the scene for a story he intended to write.

At that point a police officer stepped in front of him to block his view. When challenged by our member, the officer said he didn’t think it was right for a picture to be taken. Despite pointing out that the officer had no right to stop him, Littleford found himself continually blocked and unable to take the picture.

At one point the officer appeared to call police control and inform them that he intended to stop Littleford from doing his job.

“Refused to give details”

“I asked him for his badge number,” said Littleford, “but he refused to give me any details.

“I turned on my video camera to try and catch his number and he immediately jumped out of the car and said: ‘I have not given you permission to take my photograph’.

“H e grabbed my phone and tried to wrestle it out of my hand. When I refused to let go he smashed my hand against the police car in an attempt to make me drop it.”

He added: “He was like a mad man. They would have gone to any length to take anything off my phone.

“It was really scary. I felt intimidated, humiliated and have suffered physical injuries as a result of these assaults.”

A formal complaint has been made to the Professional Standards Department which is now investigating the matter.
More than a million pages of historical newspapers to be published online

Over a million pages of historical newspapers are available online for the first time, with many more millions being added over the coming decade – unlocking a treasure trove of material for historians, researchers, genealogists, students and anyone interested in when, where and how our ancestors lived and key periods of historical interest.

The British Newspaper Archive is a partnership between the British Library and Brightsolid online publishing. The aim is to digitize up to 40 million pages from the UK national newspaper collection over the next 10 years.

Highlights include:
- Contemporary reporting of major events – vivid first-hand detail and reaction to key events including the Crimean War, the Irish famine, the Great Exhibition and the Boer War
- Family notices – a wealth of detail from sources such as births, deaths and marriages, obituaries and related announcements
- Local and regional press – supplementing national titles already available online, the archive will feature a wide range of local and regional titles over many decades
- Fully searchable online by date, title and keywords – transforming access to material previously only available in the British Library Reading Rooms as print or microfilm
- The archive will be an invaluable resource to all types of researchers and we have chosen some examples to demonstrate:

The Poor Law Unions’ Gazette

Here is an example of the wealth of information that the collection contains. This publication (The Poor Law Unions’ Gazette, 1862) provides information about paupers, including those of the 10 bridesmaids.

A Royal Wedding

With all the excitement surrounding the wedding of Prince William to Kate Middleton in July, the British Newspaper Archive allows us to look back at The Royal Wedding of 1893.

The wedding of the Duke of York (future King George V) to the young Anglo-German aristocrat, Mary of Teck (to be Princess Victoria Mary, Duchess of York) took place on July 8, 1893 in the Chapel Royal in St James’s Palace.

The coverage of the event is extremely detailed with text and several sketches by artists, including those of the 10 bridesmaids.

The exuberant detail given to describe the scene at the chapel illustrates the event further than any photojournalism could:

“The scene in the chapel at the outset was particularly dull, but became animated by the arrival of a succession of gaily dressed guests. Indian Princes, fairly ablaze with diamonds, and ladies, whose precious stones sparkled in the sunlight, made the interior one of unparalleled splendour, while the occasional blare of a trumpet, the beat of a distant drum, and the echo of wedding bells served to keep the attention of the audience alert.”

CIoJ press card opens doors

By Vivienne DuBourdieu

A colleague recently invited me to lunch at The British Library. He was doing scientific research there and said he found it a stimulating place to work and said he would be very helpful when I arrived.

He suggested I apply for a library pass online. The last time I applied for a pass with the British Library was in 1994. It only lasted a month. Was it worth the trouble of applying?

Personal interview

Filling in the initial forms online was actually no more trouble than applying for a new passport: marginally complicated.

Final approval would be given at the library. The pre-requisites were a preliminary print-out, two forms of ID and utility bills dated to prove residential status. As my accountant had my utility bills, I was on the ‘doubtful’ list.

They were very helpful when I arrived and vetted my driver’s licence, bank cards and press card. They guided me through a further, self-computed process as I had put MCII after my name. The system had incorporated the letters into my surname!

I had to wait for a personal interview. A dour-looking young woman called my number and looked dubiously at me. That’s it, I thought. They’re about to send me packing.

The she looked at my press card and a metamorphosis took place. She beamed, after looking at my press card, and said, “I think we could let you have a three year pass.

“What’s more, because you want to research family matters as well as work on research for a book, we’ll let you have access to the entire library.”

I almost choked, but managed to thank her with a smile as broad as her own.

My co-author was astonished. “They haven’t given me a three year pass,” he said regretfully.

The moral: your press card works wonders at The British Library.

NB The restaurant buffet – hot and cold – is surprisingly good, too.
Media “ineffective” in covering financial crisis

New research commissioned by City University London suggests that the British public is very worried about the economic crisis in Europe but most people don’t understand the jargon used by journalists and don’t feel media coverage has helped them understand how the crisis will impact them personally. The survey also suggests a large percentage of the population don’t trust the media’s ability to report independently of business influence, a finding which the academic behind the study says may be linked with the recent phone-hacking scandal.

The poll of 2,000 British respondents was conducted as a part of a new research project led by Professor of Financial Journalism at City University London, Steve Schifferes.

People are very worried about the crisis
- 75 per cent of respondents said they are closely following the news about the economic situation
- There has been a significant increase in the number of people looking at information frequently about their personal finances, with 74 per cent doing so weekly or daily now, compared to just 34 per cent in 2006 (Household Financial Capability Survey, FSA)

Politicians are not trusted to solve the problem
- 65 per cent of those surveyed say government favours bankers rather than ordinary working families
- 35 per cent of respondents said that none of the political parties had the best policy on the economy (vs 32 per cent for Conservatives and 22 per cent for Labour)

People don’t think the media has helped
- 45 per cent of those surveyed said they don’t understand the implications of the European crisis on their personal finances
- 49 per cent said journalists do not tell them enough about how the crisis will affect them personally
- 35 per cent say the news uses too much jargon that they don’t understand

But they don’t blame the media for causing or exacerbating the crisis
- 60 per cent say greed and speculation are the root cause of the crisis
- 27 per cent say the reporting of the economic situation has made things worse
- 1 per cent say reporters are the MOST to blame for the crisis (compared to 65 per cent for bankers)

Steve Schifferes, Professor of Financial Journalism at City University London, said: “These poll results show that there is a serious democratic deficit in the UK, as well as in Italy and Greece where governments have just been replaced. People are very worried about the new phase of the crisis in the UK but do not trust the politicians to sort out the mess.

“This survey shows that while the public don’t blame the media for exacerbating the crisis, journalists do have a long way to go before they can satisfy the demands of the public for accurate, unbiased reporting.”

Institute condemns ads on BBC

The Chartered Institute of Journalists (CIoJ) has warned that plans to allow advertising on the BBC World Service could set a damaging precedent - and are likely to prove “the thin end of the wedge” for BBC broadcasting.

The Corporation says that the move follows a Government request that the World Service generate £3 million by 2013/14. The Service’s Berlin frequency and its Arabic, Spanish and Russian Websites will all carry advertising.

The Chairman of the Institute’s Broadcasting Division, Paul Leighton said: “The move utterly undermines the BBC’s world-wide image as a source of authoritative news and information, totally independent and free from commercial or governmental influences.

“For years there have been calls from some MPs for domestic Radio to carry advertising. Once this step has been taken those calls will become louder and more difficult to resist.

“Which branch of the BBC will be next on the list?”

The Chartered Institute is writing to the BBC Trust urging them not to proceed with the pilot and lobby Government for the restoration of Foreign Office ‘grant-in-aid’.

Local news website launches print edition

A York-based news website with ambitions to “secure the future of the local media” is launching a new monthly news magazine thanks to funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. One & Other launched in September with a mission to “re-inject the relevance, intelligence, charm, beauty and purpose” back into the regional news agenda.

The first city to have a One & Other bureau is York but there are plans to launch in another seven cities in the UK within the next three years, including daily news and culture websites, weekly newspapers, monthly magazines and events. The social enterprise was set up with the help of a small grant from UnLtd, a charity supporting social entrepreneurs, and the print edition has been supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

PPA elects new chairman

Kevin Hand has been elected chairman of the Professional Publishers Association (PPA). He takes up the role in February, succeeding outgoing chairman Charles Reed, Group Managing Director of William Reed Business Media. Hand is the former chief executive of Emap plc and Hachette UK, and is also chairman of Dods plc, the UK’s leading media data and information service. He is currently acting as a special adviser to Hearst Magazines UK, and was recently appointed honorary vice-president of the European Magazine Media Association (EMMA).

“I am delighted to be named Chairman of the PPA,” said Hand. “I look forward to working with PPA Chief Executive Barry McIlhenny and his team in leading and serving this fantastic industry, which I am proud to have been a part of for the last 30 years. It has been a privilege to have been PPA Chairman for the last two years,” said Reed. “While many challenges remain, I am confident that the PPA is in very good shape to meet these challenges and opportunities going forward.”

The PPA has around 200 publishing companies in its membership, which collectively produce more than 2,500 consumer and business magazines and journals as well as digital media, data products and events. For more information visit www.ppa.co.uk
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!

Popularity is a problem in Canada

It was a problem most organisations would wish they had – too many people wanting to join! “We can’t cope with the numbers,” was the message Mr Kennedy Crone sent to the 1911 Annual Conference from the newly-created Canadian District of the Institute.

Considering that the Institute was “practically unknown in Canada” a year earlier, the new, Montreal-based district had more than 200 members spread across a territory “3,000 miles long and half as many deep” and its officials were struggling. “It may be child’s play to a book-keeper but to a journalist it bristles with difficulties,” Mr Crone, the founding district chairman, reported.

Native-born Canadians outnumbered “Mother Country transplanted journalists” four-to-one in the rush to join. “The difficulty now is not to obtain members but to keep nominations back until we are able to sort out the work already in hand,” he said. It was hardly surprising – in 1911 Canada was the fastest growing country in the world, new papers were launching and circulations were spiraling upwards.

The exuberant Canadians invited the Institute to hold its next conference in their country with promises of tours across that nation thrown in for a hoped-for 700 members and guests! But distance and cost were problems – the 1912 gathering was held in... Brighton.

The Institute gets a library

With its own imposing Hall at Tudor Street, backing Fleet Street, the Institute had an impressive set-up for an organization at the heart of the world’s press but what was lacking, some members believed, was a comprehensive library.

That changed in 1911 when past-president and MP, Harry Lawson, persuaded the proprietors of the Daily Telegraph to donate some 400 books that had been the reference library of distinguished member Ernest Bruce Iwan-Muller who had died the previous year. They joined what was described as “the small range of book-cases which the Institute had an impressive set-up for an organization at the heart of the world’s press but what was lacking, some members believed, was a comprehensive library.

Whatever became of this Library? Perhaps it went the same way as the impressive oak panelling that lined the Institute’s Hall which was dismantled and stored for (hopefully) future use after we sold those premises... woodworm ate the panels to such an extent that they had to be destroyed.

Exploring the “land of brown heath and shaggy wood”

Institute conferences have always included a social programme designed to entertain and inform and Bonnie Scotland belied any suggestion of parsimony with a tour de force of Highland visits as it hosted the 1911 “gathering of our clans” at Dundee.

There is no record of how many members and guests attended but numbers were high – as was demonstrated by the need for fleets of special trains to make those visits. As an example of how popular and powerful the Institute was a century ago, the 1910 conference in London held a reception for 1,000 guests!

The 1911 Coronation also helped swell numbers as many overseas members who had travelled to cover the event stayed on to take in more of the Mother Country as well as the conference – so there were members from South Africa, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Shanghai and the Bahamas and many other countries.

To off-set their expense, Institute members had created a fund which subsidised steamship fares to the tune of £12 (£684 by today’s values) from New Zealand, £10 (£570) from Australia, China and Japan, £7.10s (£428) from South Africa, India, Burmah and Ceylon, and £5 (£285) from North America and Egypt. As a further help the Institute had negotiated with shipping lines for discounted fares – 25 per cent off the Cunard and White Star Lines’ first and second class rates, for example – and all agreed to make “special arrangements” on board, if possible, for our members in transit!

Britain’s railways were also anxious to please – to the extent of offering return tickets for the price of a single, but it was their willingness to provide exclusive trains for the trips that impresses.

Dundee’s West Station was pretty busy as our packed excursions left for Dunkeld, Aberfeldy, Pitlochry and the Pass of Killiecrankie, or Blair Athol, Dunfermline and Perth. The Tay Bridge station was the train’s departure point for our session at St Andrews University, as it was for the special corridor train on the post-conference five-day, four guineas all-in (£240) tour of the “land of brown heath and shaggy wood”, which took in tea at Balmoral, Aberdeen, Inverness and Glasgow at the conclusion of the event.

Dundee’s District secretary, R H K Clark, who did the brunt of the
organising, got a herogram from the President (Dundee Courier editor-in-chief, John Mitchell) at its local meeting – he presented him with “a purse of sovereigns, a silver-mounted oak tray and a silver spirit kettle” in appreciation.

It was, indeed, a bygone age!

Take note when perks are there for taking

Verbatim shorthand is a dying art among journalists in the 21st century but 100 years ago it was the stock-in-trade of the humble hack – and sometimes ruthlessly exploited by an employer. In those days it was usually immaculate Pitman’s but sometimes Gregg’s, T-line and other such speed-writing techniques would have been laughed out of court.

But in 1911 The Institute won an important ruling in a Lincolnshire County Court that freed a local reporter from having to act as a court’s official shorthand writer without extra payment when his employer had done a deal to charge the court for his services but did not pass on the benefit.

The Minutes and Proceedings book hailed the victory as an example of the benefits of Institute membership in “places where the local life of the Institute is least vigorous”. Members in the busier centres knew where the perks were and swapped the information amongst themselves but the poor reporter-sub-editor on a paper in the sticks, for whom the court case was pursued, probably did not realise they were there for the taking.

“We all know that such services (providing verbatim notes at the request of the court), though commonly rendered by newspaper reporters, are rendered as a matter apart from the newspaper service. The freedom, under ordinary circumstances of the reporter to do this work upon his own account is allowed as a matter of course. Within reasonable limits it is rather encouraged than otherwise as tending to the interests of the paper and the benefit of all concerned,” explained the report.

Fake Press Cards

Continued from page 1

containing the two examples, from a person whose business was manufacturing identity cards, telling us that two people with Associated Press business cards had asked for them to be made and seeking our clearance.

CIoJ general secretary Dominic Cooper immediately refused that permission and informed the e-mailer that the use of our logo contravened our copyright and was an unauthorised use of the coat of arms, which is a Crown device.

As the illustrations show, the cards contain the official logo of Associated Press in the top left-hand corner. We have notified AP and asked them to investigate that use.

Besides the rather badly reproduced CIoJ logo, the cards bear a nonsensical NUJ number, a meaningless bar code and the line ID# – but the use of the hash sign to indicate number is a give-away to its non-British origin.

The Institute’s council was aghast when it saw the fakes. Our resident IT expert Alun Hill said: “These are not even clever imitations but could easily take in the unwary.”

Another member said the use of our device suggested Crown endorsement of the holder. “Imagine if a Brit attempted to use the Seal of the President of the United States in similar fashion – the Americans would be re-opening Alcatraz for the perpetrator.”

The fakes follow on our discovery of another case of bogus press card manufacturing on the eBay auction site. That was soon taken down after complaints.

Gatekeepers

The British press card is issued by a number of organizations within the profession who are members of the gatekeepers’ organization that runs the scheme. It is a checkable guarantee that the holder is a genuine journalist. It is sometimes called the news gatherer’s card because it is only issued to journalists whose job is news reporting, and is not given to overseas journalists. Foreign journalists working in the UK are, however, qualified to hold one.

Whilst we do not believe these crude fakes would be likely to be used for nefarious purposes here in the UK, the Institute has reported the case to the anti-terrorist squad with a request that they remind all policemen what the genuine card looks like. With the forthcoming Diamond Jubilee and the London Olympics rapidly approaching, it is important from a national security point of view to ensure that the genuine press card is protected as a guarantee of identity.

While a practised eye would not be deceived by these fakes, they could easily fool low grade security workers and others who are not familiar with the British press card.
From the President’s Desk

By Norman Bartlett

Are we in danger of becoming a bit too self-important as journalists?

It wasn’t too long ago that journalists had a reputation as boozy reprobates who staggered from the pub about four o’clock in the afternoon but went on to get scoops, uncover scandals and write accurate copy for the evening deadline just the same.

Now the image has changed – some would have you believe distinctly for the worse. One Institute member wrote to me recently, “What a ‘free press’ has increasingly delivered over the last 30 years is celebrity gossip, pornography at large; the ‘big reveal’ in general, phone-tapping and bribery; not to mention ever more fragmented views on most subjects.”

While sensationalism and dumbing-down are certainly to be found, these aspects are those of populism across society as a whole. I don’t think they reflect the substance of the British media, which continues to hold government, civic authorities, commerce, industry, academia and the arts to account for their honesty and integrity, exposing deceit and hypocrisy. And, of course, it expects the same from its own: exposure of the News of the World came from within.

Those of you who were able to get to London for the AGM will know that this issue was central to the debate that we held then. Plenty of you had plenty to say about the case and the state of British journalism generally.

Unfortunately I think some of our members are confusing the issues involved.

The focus has been the behaviour of certain national newspapers. Apart from some few individuals, there has been very little amiss with what journalists have done. Yet some of our members have been very exercised about mandating higher educational qualifications and registration of journalists as a solution to the problem.

The core of the problem, in my view, is not the quality of journalists but the quality of management and proprietorship of the media for which the journalists work.

Those journalists who aspire to registration can readily do so by joining the Chartered Institute and abiding by its Code of Conduct – I hope you’ve all read it to remind yourself of what you are committed to.

I don’t think we need lawyers looking to uncover scandals and write accurate copy in the afternoon but went on to get scoops, informing and persuading, with many minor, day-to-day details of composers’ lives brought to the fore, and all interwoven in a pageant of tradition.

The author carefully shows the local, native characteristics, sympathies and home-spirit of each composer: the countryside of Worcester and the visionary views from the Malvern Hills forming Elgar’s own personal land of lost content; the beach at Aldeburgh and the grey North Sea, with flickering sunlight breaking through cloud and turning the ocean silver, made manifest in the Four Sea Interludes from Britten’s 1945 opera, Peter Grimes. Yet not every British composer gained inspiration from purely rural or coastal settings to their work.

Music in the Landscape: How the British countryside inspired our greatest composers

By Em Marshall


In the curlew- and heron-haunted Fen Country, or wandering across the lonely expanse of Egdon Heath in Dorset; on the distant South Downs, or tide-eroded Suffolk coast and Channel Islands, or communing with Nature in the blue-remembered Shropshire and Worcestershire countryside, Britain’s composers have drawn profound inspiration from the landscapes of the British Isles. Specific places, and general impressions and memories of coves, castles, hills and hamlets have shaped our musical culture.

For CIoj member Em Marshall, author of this attractive new book, the works of Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Bantock, Ireland, Britten, Bax, Boughton and Holst can only be understood by reference to the land which nurtured and inspired them. Music in the Landscape contains page after page of information concerning the main British composers; the men (and some women, such as Dame Ethyl Smyth) who began and continued what is often known as “the English musical renaissance” – a great flowering of talent and genius, usually accepted as encompassing the very late 19th-century (the time of Elgar’s great emergence as a musical voice of international significance) to the 1920s and ‘30s – the decade in which Elgar, Holst and Frederick Delius all said their musical farewells to this world, but not before planting the seeds of an enduring tradition.

The author carefully shows the local, native characteristics, sympathies and home-spirit of each composer: the countryside of Worcester and the visionary views from the Malvern Hills forming Elgar’s own personal land of lost content; the beach at Aldeburgh and the grey North Sea, with flickering sunlight breaking through cloud and turning the ocean silver, made manifest in the Four Sea Interludes from Britten’s 1945 opera, Peter Grimes. Yet not every British composer gained inspiration from purely rural or coastal settings to their work.

- Overcoming the hostility from other journalist associations and trade unions
- Gaining industry-wide acceptance and agreement (i.e. convincing publishers to use/prefer registered journalists - would Mrs Rooney be rejected as a columnist if she weren’t on the register?)
- Gaining the public’s awareness
- Establishing what might be legally done to journalists who breach the Code
- Avoiding the pitfalls of setting up what to many might be thought a closed shop
- Selling the benefits to journalists of being registered against not being registered
- Determining grades of eligibility
- Adapting the Code of Practice to whatever comes out of Leveson

Frankly, all members of the CIoj could do some way to educating the public that there is a professional register by using their post-nominals. So, ladies and gentlemen, there would be lots and lots of great endeavour required to create an industry-wide register of journalists. It would be far harder than hand-wringing over the charlatans who are invading our profession.

English landscapes. John Ireland – whose Legend for Piano and Orchestra recalled a supernatural incident on the South Downs – lived in and loved London, bringing such scenes as “Soho forenoons” and “Cheslea Reach” into the piano repertoire; and evoking (by turn) the brooding and jolly city in A London Overture – complete with the bus conductor’s cry of “Dilly, Piccadilly!” – something now lost to us in the age of bendy-buses and Oyster cards!

Informative and persuasive, with many minor, day-to-day details of composers’ lives brought to the fore, and all interwoven in a pageant of magnificent photographs of the countryside, the skies, the towns and villages of our islands, this is a book that you will turn to again and again. Explore our musical heritage – go to the shires and coasts to see where the great composers made their homes and sketched their works. And don’t forget to take Em Marshall’s magnificent guidebook with you!

Stuart Millson
The Rory Peck Trust has honoured the skill, courage and enterprise of freelance news and current affairs cameramen and women at its annual Rory Peck Awards ceremony. Held at London’s BFI Southbank, the event was hosted by the BBC’s Mishal Husain and Channel 4’s Alex Thomson.

Belgian freelancer Ahmed Bahaddou was presented with the Rory Peck Award for News for his extraordinary frontline footage of rebels fighting Gaddafi forces in Western Libya. In what has been an outstanding year for news entries, the judges praised Bahaddou for his enterprise, determination and skill. They said his footage was “everything you could want and more. It is incredibly composed shooting. You can almost feel the bullets whistling past you.”

American freelancer Abdallah Omeish, who was born in Libya, won the Rory Peck Award for Features, for his Benghazi film, “Libya: Through the Fire” – a portrait of the city, and one of its sons, Mohammed al-Nabbous - the first person to broadcast from within Libya and report on events in English and Arabic. Judges said the film was moving and powerful and felt the central character of Nabbous embodied the story of the Arab Spring.

Jezza Neumann was awarded the Sony Professional Impact Award for “Zimbabwe’s Forgotten Children”, which the judges described as “astonishing”. They were impressed by the continuity and emotional impact of his film about the harsh reality of life for three children in Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe, and by the quality of camerawork, especially given the difficulties of operating inside Zimbabwe.

“It’s been an extraordinary year for the Rory Peck Awards - incredibly strong entries across all of the categories and three outstanding winners,” said Tina Carr, Director of the Rory Peck Trust. “I want to congratulate all of this year’s finalists on producing such exceptional work – the sheer range and quality on show tonight demonstrates how vibrant and talented the freelance community is right now. It is a privilege to celebrate their work.”

“We are delighted to be here this evening to join the Rory Peck Trust in congratulating not only this year’s winners but all the finalists for the fantastic work they have been doing over the last year,” said Olivier Bovis, Head of AV at Sony Professional. “This has been a dramatic year in terms of world events and this year’s finalists should all be immensely proud of the contribution they have made in bringing these events to the world’s attention. The footage that we have seen has been incredibly moving and reminds us all what can be achieved when you combine technology, talent and a tireless commitment to exposing the truth.”

The judges described the film as moving and powerful and felt the central character of Nabbous embodied the story of the Arab Spring. One said: “His story carried you through events which were on a very wide scale. Through his story you could empathise with them on a very human level.”

For further information about the Rory Peck Awards and the work of the Rory Peck Trust, please visit: www.rorypecktrust.org
Journalists face threats in covering Dawit Isaac’s imprisonment

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reports that a Swedish-based journalist was publicly threatened in connection with her reporting on the case of Dawit Isaac, a Swedish-Eritrean journalist imprisoned in Eritrea for a decade without charge. In New York, bodyguards for the Eritrean leader Isaias Afwerki pushed and threatened two Swedish journalists seeking to speak to the president about the Isaac case, the journalists said.

Meron Estefanos, a contributor to the leading Eritrean diaspora news site Asmarino, was confronted by Tedros Isaac, a brother of the detained journalist whose strong support of Afwerki is extensively documented, after a public forum on the Isaac case at the Gothenburg Book Fair in Sweden.

“You mention my name and write about Dawit Isaac’s family one more time I’ll cut your throat,” witnesses and Swedish Radio SR quoted Tedros Isaac as telling Estefanos. In a 2010 column published on Asmarino, Estefanos wrote about the deep political divisions that have split Eritrean families into pro- and anti-government camps. In the column, Estefanos had contrasted Tedros Isaac’s ongoing support for the government that arrested his brother with the extensive advocacy to free the journalist that has been undertaken by other brothers.

Sweden’s Expressen newspaper reported that Estefanos had given a statement to the police and quoted Thomas Fuxborg, a local police spokesman, as saying that a preliminary police report had been written.

Confrontation

The confrontation occurred on the 10th anniversary of Isaac’s September 23, 2001, arrest. Detained in a broad crackdown on independent journalism, he has been held without charge or trial since that time, with only brief contact with his family in 2005, according to CPJ research. Estefanos has been one of the leading activists in Sweden campaigning for the release of Isaac and other political prisoners in Eritrea, according to CPJ research. At least 17 journalists are now being held in Eritrea prisons.

A statement released by the Gothenburg Book Fair and signed by Nobel prize laureates Mario Vargas Llosa and Herta Müller, as well as John Ralston Saul, president of PEN International, called on Sweden and the European Union to take a tougher approach toward Eritrea to secure Isaac’s release. CPJ research shows the Eritrean government has used agents and proxies to intimidate the country’s exile press.

A day earlier in New York, bodyguards for Eritrean President Afwerki roughed up and threatened two Swedish journalists seeking to ask the president questions about Isaac, according to CPJ interviews. “I got an elbow in the stomach,” Mats Larsson, US correspondent of Expressen newspaper, told CPJ, describing how he and photographer Axel Oberg were pushed aside after they approached the president as he walked near United Nations headquarters. When Oberg later tried to take photos of Afwerki, the journalist told CPJ, another bodyguard attempted to seize his camera and made hand signals as if to slit his throat.

Investigating

“We’re relieved that Swedish police are investigating the reported threats against Meron Estefanos,” said CPJ Africa Advocacy Coordinator Mohamed Keita. “It’s disturbing that bodyguards for President Afwerki tried to intimidate journalists Mats Larsson and Axel Oberg in New York. There is no place for threats against reporters trying to do their jobs.”

For more information, go to: www.cpj.org.

Letter from the President of the Chartered Institute of Journalists to the Eritrean Ambassador

His Excellency Mr Tesfamicael Gerahtu Ogagbighorhis
Embassy of the State of Eritrea

Your Excellency,
The Chartered Institute of Journalists, the world’s oldest professional organization for journalists, maintains a careful watch for infringements of press freedom. With its international membership we are concerned at events in Eritrea, a country where we have sadly observed the decline in democratic standards.

I am aware, Your Excellency, that your country has faced formidable challenges since it obtained its independence from Ethiopia yet that independence so sorely won at a national level is not being afforded to citizens who are journalists.

I should point out that the Chartered Institute is rigorous in being strictly apolitical. As an Institute, we have no view whatsoever on the Eritrean political divisions that have split many Eritrean families into pro- and anti-government camps but we do have a genuine interest in press freedom and protection of journalists.

We ask you to make clear to your government in Asmara that professional journalists here in the UK regard with dismay that journalist Dawit Isaac has been imprisoned for 10 years without charge. This may be the most outrageous case but our sources indicate that at least another 17 journalists are incarcerated for no other reason than they spoke out or wrote adversely about the government.

I believe, Your Excellency, that you have been in post here in London since 2007. I hope it has been a satisfying diplomatic assignment. In that time you will have seen that a government can operate quite effectively despite trenchant press criticism and without throwing critical journalists in jail.

It is not our place to lecture the Eritrean government but simply to recall that UNESCO promotes freedom of expression and freedom of the press and fosters media independence and pluralism. It also speaks strongly on the issue of journalists’ safety. Even on your own continent, the Windhoek Declaration of 1991 in Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press speaks out against the type of restraint of the press your government maintains.

Please advise your government that the Institute calls on the release of all journalists who are held without charge. It believes that the credibility of the Eritrean nation would be enhanced immensely by allowing a free and open press.

The Institute would be pleased to receive your comments but even more to hear that your government is behaving in a civilized manner toward its journalists.

Yours respectfully,
Norman Bartlett, FCIJ
President
Security for the future

By Bob Benson (with Jennie Priestley, and a little purrfect help from Emily the cat)

WHEN you are young and in your 20s or 30s – all raring to go – most people don’t think about it. Life is a bowl of cherries. Reach double that figure and the words “old age”, “infirmity” or “finance problems” become increasingly daunting. No-one knows what our futures may hold – for good or for bad.

Most of us have heard of the Journalists’ Charity, formerly the Newspaper Press Fund, set up as long ago as 1864, and known that it is a form of insurance if hard times befall. But how many of us know what the organization can really do for us, and for our dependents and families.

I didn’t myself, at least until recently, even though I subscribed to the Newspaper Press Fund 40 years or so ago. I think it was at the Birmingham Conference that Gerry Armes, an Institute of Journalists stalwart and one of the charity’s longest serving supporters, got me to part with fifty pounds to become a member.

Being Yorkshire-born and bred that must have taken some doing – but it was in the bar.

There are over 100,000 journalists in Britain, but only 4,000 support the Journalists’ Charity with money raising events or with donations. This shows how little is known about the organization, which has not probably publicised itself well enough in the past.

I was lying in hospital recently, having suffered a severe stroke which left me almost paralysed down the right side, when I was reminded by Robin Morgan, the former industrial correspondent of the Yorkshire Post, that we had subscribed to the fund many years ago.

Although you don’t have to be a member to possibly benefit from the charity if you fall sick or meet up with some other setback, you must be a journalist or be a retired one. It’s simple, all you have to do is get in touch and they will tell you whether they can help or not. Their recently revamped website, www.journalistscharity.org.uk, tells all.

The charity owns a delightful sheltered bungalow complex at Dorking, in Surrey, where my partner, Jennie, and I now live. We were lucky. There was a vacant bungalow, just when we needed one.

Spacious

The complex is extremely spacious and we are surrounded by trees. Talk about going green and this autumn red, gold and amber and chestnut-coloured leaves turned the area into one of the most beautiful landscapes.

Having a stroke really turns the world upside down, so getting in touch with the charity was probably one of the best things I have ever done. Everyone is really helpful – installing a cat flap and hand grips in the shower and on the walls, no problem. They really do bend backwards to satisfy your needs.

And talk about social affairs. There’s something for everyone and it is happening all the time, from coffee mornings to a bring-and-buy, proceeds of which are for the Dorking Hospital. There are various outings by mini bus and for those without a car, weekly shopping expeditions to the local supermarket.

Next year there will be a special happening to celebrate the 50 years of the Dorking complex. This has yet to be decided upon, but having sampled the hospitality so far, it will be very special and something to look forward too.

Apart from the bungalows, there are apartments for fellow journalists that require a little more personal care and when life has got that little bit harder, the charity can offer the most superb accommodation at Pickering House – a nursing home par excellence.

It is set in spacious grounds and designed to offer the most complete care and attention that anyone could wish for, including delightful sitting rooms overlooking the garden, a dining room and bar and comfortable accommodation.

The move down South has not been as daunting as I first thought and as yet I have not missed the Yorkshire Dales, my old stomping ground when I was the agricultural correspondent of the Yorkshire Post. I’ve got to admit that the Surrey countryside is just as breathtaking and the people we have met so far could not be more friendly.

I think the only confusing thing is when talking about London being up, rather than down. You people down south normally talk about going up to the capital, but we Yorkshire folk always insist on it being down!

One of our fellow journalist retirees here in the bungalow complex edits a monthly free-sheet which contains a myriad of interesting information about forthcoming events, people who are new to the block and the like.

She asked me to write an article about my recent hospital stay, which I duly obliged. As you will see it was not all that dull and boring.
A writer’s retreat… with space for dogs

Rural Ireland may be known for warmth and generous hospitality, but dogs are often viewed as working animals rather than pets, so finding accommodation for a professional couple with an energetic border collie and a giant baby Irish wolfhound proved something of a challenge! Careful research paid off, however, and I discovered a plethora of places that pleased and enchanted.

Starting in the east, with the ancient monastic site of Glendalough, Wicklow Mountains (vast wild spaces perfect for bracing walks), and Rathgall Stone Fort nearby attractions, County Wicklow offers two real gems. Rathsallagh House is reminiscent of a sprawling French farmhouse, with ivy scrambling over white-washed buildings, and rustic courtyards. Graceful lounges, with roaring fires, paintings and antiques, lead to a more modern dining room, and the food is superb. Breakfast is magnificent – tables groan with whole hams, tender smoked salmons, kedgeree, bacon and sausages, cheeses, fruits, cold meats and breads.

The interior of the Ritz-Carlton, Powerscourt, a little further north, is grand, imposing and opulent – dark polished wood, marble and brass. The Georgian-inspired bedrooms, some with adjoining living and study areas, dressing rooms and two bathrooms, are pristine and sport all mod-cons – curtains are even drawn via a bedside touch-screen panel. Dinner, in the Gordon Ramsay restaurant, features dishes such as roasted quail, suckling-pig-filled ravioli, braised lamb – tender enough to be eaten with a spoon, and wonderfully flavoursome duck, which emerges from the vast and gleaming kitchens. Most impressively, nothing seems too much effort for the hotel staff, who bend over backwards to help in any and every way.

Continuing to head west, Cork’s Newtown House is an austere grey-fronted house with gardens sloping down to an inlet’s edge. The house is full of light, with large, well-proportioned rooms – the spacious pastel-shaded bedroom is elegantly furnished with well-maintained antique furniture, and the bathroom – small but not cramped – professors a free-standing bath and luxurious towels. The immensely comfortable bed invites sound sleep, the charming owners’ friendly conversation, and an excellent breakfast caps the stay.

Spoil yourself with dinner at nearby Michelin-starred Cliff House Hotel, an almost futuristic building with views out to sea. The food is fun and inventive (think goats-cheese-filled carrot macaron amuse-bouche). Salmon starters come in hot-smoked-filled glass domes, removed with flourish and swirls. And here I experienced the most tender piece of meat I have ever tasted – rose veal with the consistency of fish rather than meat, literally melting into flakes. Highly-organised waiters are attentive and the ambience vibrant.

Wild and beautiful

In wild and beautiful Connemara, isolated Lough Inagh Lodge hangs over its lake, surrounded by mountains and moors. It features cosy lounges with peat fires, varnished floorboards overlaid with warm red rugs, and spacious bedrooms with huge beds, comfortable seating areas, and dressing rooms. The staff impress with their outstanding service, and meals, in the mint-green dining room, are excellent – the only draw-back being that the hotel’s mountain location attracts stormy weather! The clouds lift as one heads coastwards – to famous Kylemore Abbey, or smart Clifden, with its good pubs and restaurants.

Centrally-located Offaly is lushly green and undulating, and offers many wonderful ruins, Abbeys and castles, although we found a dearth of decent restaurants. The good B&B options include prayerflag-bedecked Brendan House in Birr; a riotous jumble of colour and objects, from leopard skins and Moroccan copper sinks to a surreal bath and gollywogs; the wonderfully atmospheric and historically fascinating Cloghan Castle; or well-proportioned Ardmore House in Kinitty. Large rooms feature wooden shutters, dark floorboards covered by Chinese rugs, antique furniture and quirky objects from around the world.

In the North, sophisticated Rathmullan House Hotel is highly recommended. Dog rooms are practical and comfortable, with French windows onto the garden, wooden (underfloor-heated) floors, separate dog bathrooms, and reasonably-sized, graceful bathrooms. A series of beautiful lounges lead to the dining room. Donegal offers a wealth of delights (fascinating ruins and wild beaches) and Rathmullan House is a wonderful base. Any of the places mentioned above will welcome you most warmly and offer outstanding accommodation – whether you have dogs or not!

Em Marshall

FACTFILE

Lough Inagh Lodge Hotel, www.loughinaghlodgehotel.ie, 353 95 34706
Ashley Park House, Tipperary, www.ashleypark.com, 353 67 38223
Brendan House, Offaly, www.tinjugstudio.com, 353 57 9121818
Rathmullan, Donegal, www.rathmullanhouse.com, 353 749158188
Ardmore House, Offaly, www.kinitty.com, 353 57 9137009
Cloghan Castle, Banagher, 353 579 151650
European Parliament journalism prize

French, Italian, Finnish and German journalists received the European Parliament’s fourth annual prize for excellence in journalism on October 19 from EP President Jerzy Buzek. The winners, in four categories, written press, internet, TV and radio, each received €5,000.

Romain Gabert of the French weekly journal Le Point won the written press award for his article “The incredible story of the Euro”. The article relates the story of the Euro, with testimonies from some of its progenitors, such as Jacques Delors and Christian Noyer. The jury described the article as “an outstanding piece of work that meets all the criteria of good, solid, investigative journalism” as well as “a superb educational tool for understanding the Euro”.

Massimiliano Nespola of Italy won the internet award for his article in the Sapienza University of Rome’s electronic journal. The article was entitled: “We do not know when, but a European constitution will come.” Inspired by a conference on the book “Europa 2.0”, the jury said that the blogger skilfully depicts the EU as an institution-in-progress, representing not just economic interest groups but all Europe’s citizens.

Tero Koskinen of the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE won the TV award for the reportage “Return of the Roma”, on the conditions of gypsy adults and children. “A brilliant piece of journalistic work” was the panel’s verdict on this radio report, which investigated how the EU deals with refugees at its frontiers, notably on the Greek-Turkish border. The jury said the author had found some highly interesting interviewees and created an almost cinematic atmosphere. The prize was received in Brussels today on Steffen Wurzel’s behalf by Mehmet Uksul, the producer of the programme.

500 million Europeans

Awarding the prize, EP President Jerzy Buzek said: “I know how difficult a task it can be to explain Europe, its policies and its decisions. Promoting a better understanding of the EU is sometimes hard and complicated. But it is vital. We are some 500 million Europeans and we are all concerned.”

The award ceremony was followed by a panel discussion entitled “Nothing is impossible: reporting on human rights and international conflicts”.

The national winners from EU Member States attended the event, as well as 60 young journalists who are participating in a workshop hosted by the European Parliament.

Mark Jackson finds the silver screen

A SHORT film written and directed by a ClIoJ member is being screened in London over the next few months.

SMITH, which was shot in the North East of Scotland, has been selected for the prestigious 11th Annual Imperial War Museum Film Festival and Competition.

It will be screened as part of a rotating schedule from now until the end of February, 2012.

The film was made by film-makers Carly Bowie and Mark Jackson. They worked with a small band of volunteers, who either acted in the film or formed part of the crew.

“We were informed this week and are very pleased. It was a real team effort from all the cast and crew.

“Everyone involved in the film was a volunteer and this demonstrates what can be done,” said Jackson, who is a member of the Institute’s Freelance Division.

Carly praised the effort that Henry Duthie MBE, who played the title role, and the other actors put in:

“It was a three-day shoot with very long days and everybody worked really hard. I am delighted that the film will be screened at the Imperial War Museum.

“We get an invite to the awards ceremony and that is pretty exciting in itself,” she said.

Duthie plays the part of a man terrorised by a gang of youths, until one night, he rediscovers the man he once was.

The script has been short-listed for BBC Scotland’s Tartan Shorts strand. However, it was not ultimately commissioned:

“Carly felt it was too good a project to be allowed to wither, so we asked people in Fraserburgh if they wanted to be involved and this is the result.

“We hope that people will go along and see the film. It is a drama and only has a couple of lines of dialogue as the aim was to tell the story in pictures,” added Mark Jackson.

The same core group are just completing their second short film STOKED and hope that it too will be selected for film

New visitor centre at European Parliament

Journalists or anyone can discover and experience the European Parliament as never before, thanks to the Parlamentarium, a new interactive European Parliament visitor centre in Brussels, which opened in October.

The Parlamentarium, which is open 7 days a week all year round, caters to the public in all 23 official languages of the EU. Hand-held audio guides, speaking in each of the 23 languages, are available to visitors wanting to have guided tours. Facilities are available for people with special needs – the wheelchair bound, the deaf, the blind. There are no admission charges.

The centre has dynamic, interactive multimedia displays, at one of which visitors can take part in a virtual debate in the European Parliament. A 360 degree digital surround screen takes visitors into the heart of European Parliament action.

They see the people who make it happen, the elected members of the European Parliament at work. A touch-screen allows visitors to find out more about the tasks and duties of MEPs, and to see what their particular MEP does.

The Parlamentarium is only closed on six days in the year: January 1, May 1, November 1, December 24-5 and 31.

Press visitors requiring special facilities should contact Constanze Beckerhoff before their visit, at constanze.beckerhoff@europarl.europa.eu.

The Parlamentarium is at: European Parliament Visitor Centre, Willy Brandt Building, Rue Wiertz 60, 1047 Brussels, Belgium.
The Chartered Institute of Journalists is “a small but cherished organization”, CIoJ President Norman Bartlett told the Institute’s annual general meeting, at London’s Victory Services Club, on September 24. On the key issue of the day – the mounting pressure for State regulation of the media – he said the CIoJ “cannot match the firepower” of major international networks like PEN and Index on Censorship, but we can still play a vital role in defending freedom of the press.

The main focus of the Institute’s activity in recent months had been on newspaper journalism, Bartlett said, but the impact of our campaigns would be much wider. Journalists in broadcasting and the trade media would also benefit from the CIoJ’s defence of press freedom and championing of high journalistic standards, as “all in our profession are being tarred with the same brush”. The Institute President listed 13 current inquiries and investigations into the media.

As well as giving evidence to many of these inquiries, the CIoJ was spearheading the formation of an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Journalism, and was expanding and enhancing its training role, placing education and skills at the centre of the Institute’s work. “We should never forget that we are a membership organization”, Bartlett added. “We value our members, and we put our members’ interests first.”

The President also highlighted the essential role of the CIoJ charities – the Orphan Fund, Benevolent Fund, Pension Fund, and Oak Hill & TP O’Connor Fund – which, he said, demonstrated the Institute’s longstanding commitment to the welfare of members and their families.

Tidal wave

Amanda Brodie, Chairman of the CIoJ’s Professional Practices Board, reported on the “tidal wave” of challenges the Institute has faced in the past year – from WikiLeaks to the attacks on journalists in North Africa and the Middle East during the ‘Arab Spring.’

She said the Institute had also challenged the Hungarian government’s attempts to control the press, death threats against reporters in Northern Cyprus, and of course commented on the phone-hacking scandal and its aftermath. PPB members have contributed to consultations on tribunal reform, investigative journalism, privacy and injunctions and the draft Defamation Bill.

The economic downturn also continued to have its effect, and recent ABC figures show that only three UK local dailies had seen any improvement in circulation, while most regional newspapers were experiencing falling print sales. Web traffic however was up by more than 25 per cent.CIoJ Vice-President Charlie Harris addressed the AGM on the subject of “council pravdas” – the propaganda sheets disguised as newspapers that are still being produced by local authorities up and down the country, some – such as Greenwich – in direct contravention of government guidelines. The Institute would continue to “name and shame” transgressing councils, Harris pledged.

All photos courtesy of Andy Smith

Don’t forget

You will find many of the CIoJ’s forms, leaflets and guides available as downloads on the members’ area of the Institute’s website, www.cioj.co.uk.