THREE young freelances told February’s London Freelance Branch meeting how they got here and shared their strategies for success.

Marianne Lehnis told how much work comes her way from attending conferences (on Twitter she’s @MarianneLehnis). She recommends talking to everyone everywhere you go, whether in your beat or not. At one such tech conference an editor told her, “Go home and send me six feature ideas tonight.” She interviewed conference-goers then and there, wrote these up and emailed them that night to the editor. She got a regular contributor gig on a niche magazine for “disruptors” that was “very bad at paying” before it “closed down owing me about £3000” – an example, she says, of why it’s good to be an NUJ member.

But Marianne “didn’t feel as bitter as I should, because it got me a lot of work”, some via a tech editors’ Facebook group, which in turn led to work on an investigative YouTube channel on bitcoin scams. She pitched the story about a large-scale bitcoin investment company that pitched the story about a large-scale “sideline hustles” in Jake’s chosen field include indie music labels paying around £150-200 for press releases of 1500 words, or for festivals £200-250 for longer press releases taking “half a day”.

Then there are the much more lucrative copywriting rates for a major label – and, even more so, work consulting for brand strategists. Rum distillers wanted “to have a thing at a festival” for example. Apple Music needs descriptions written for their play lists, plus there’s the “solid work” of transcribing lectures by DJs at the Red Bull music academy.

Jake’s now “trying to do more features writing”. One gig led to “research into bird smuggling legislation” in the British Library. After the best part of a year from commission to publication, he earned £2500 for 5000 words for a Guardian Long Read – he’s heard they pay four grand for more experienced writers.

He’s also written features for Wired, more recently for FT Weekend, who “kind of pay OK but (are) kind of a lot of work”. The “ratio of specialty and diversification” is “always really difficult”.

@MattSalsbury
The Rate for the Job

London Freelance Branch Committee member Nicci Talbot has, with the Freelance Office, negotiated to reinstate discounts for NUJ members on Apple products. These range from 6 per cent to 10 per cent depending on what you’re buying. For more details see www.londonfreelance.org/ft/1903disc.html

Freelance discounts are back

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The Gong

THE GONG is awarded to publishers who need a wake-up call on late payments. This month’s award goes to women’s lifestyle website The Pool. To be fair, we should say that The Pool have themselves woken up to a late payments problem. They announced that they are suspending commissions while they work through a “backlog” of late payments to freelances. They were as of mid-January already in touch with freelances owed money, according to Press Gazette. This is an example of best practice in dealing with late payments issues compared to some clients previously featured in The Gong. By contrast, some of these have been so chaotic they seem unaware they owe money in the first place. We remind freelances: you may not even be legally owed money until the client becomes aware of your invoice. So invoice promptly, to avoid – as recently happened to one NUJ freelance – ending up being owed £1800 by one client as a result of invoicing procrastination.

THE NUJ Trinity Mirror Chapel on Merseyside recently concluded a house agreement with Reach (it owns Trinity Mirror and Express titles) that includes freelances and recognition of their copyright. In it is a commitment to raise freelance shift rates in line with staff pay rises.

Northern Organiser Chris Morley said: “It was pleasing to be able to include those elements in the new agreement but of course we would wish for more… employers are often fiercely hostile to inclusion of any reference to freelances in house agreements… Fortunately we did have something in the old agreement to build on and it was thanks to the Chapel’s insistence that it was retained and improved that we got what has now been concluded.”

Seek red ress for Universal Credit woes

MANY freelances have relied on assistance such as Working Tax Credit to get through lean times and have had problems being moved to Universal Credit – see the December Freelance. Leigh Day solicitors write:

Tessa Gregory’s team at Leigh Day represent an individual who is self-employed and finds herself in significant financial hardship due to the application of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) since she first had to claim Universal Credit in October 2017. She has brought a legal challenge against the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions challenging the lawfulness of the application of the MIF on the basis that it discriminates against self-employed individuals and is irrational.

We have now reached the stage of the challenge in which we need to collate and prepare supportive evidence.

It would be helpful for the court to be provided with other examples which show the broad and varied range of situations in which individuals are caught by the UC provisions, as well as the different ways in which the application of the MIF has affected peoples’ lives.

If you are self-employed, have been moved on to UC and have had the MIF recently applied, earn roughly the National Minimum Wage across the year, but experience significant fluctuations in income on a monthly basis, we would be grateful if you could provide a short summary of your situation which sets out how you came to be on UC and how the MIF is affecting you.

We would of course discuss your situation with you before sharing any information with the court and if requested by you we would anonymise the information.

If you are affected by the MIF and are interested in hearing more about our challenge, please do not hesitate to contact us with any queries at universalcrediterquiries@leighday.co.uk

Watch for news of strikes at Newsquest and INM

NUJ MEMBERS working at Newsquest titles in Cumbria held a one-day strike in December over a pay freeze, staffing cuts and the company’s attitude to journalistic standards. Staff at the Cumberland News then reported their own newspaper to press regulator IPSO, over its company, brand consultancy, per day £250; Best Practice In Nursing: day conference & reporting, £175.00 + travel and accommodation; Africa Confidential, subbing day £150.00; Sun, consumer finance reporting, 9 hours, £120 XXXX.

Teaching: Richmond WS (what’s that?), day teaching PR & writing £350.

Words, per 1000: Album box set booklets: middle rank artist, shortish £250; small record label, (obscure artist) £100 XXX; middle-rank artist, enormous booklet, total £3000 = £150; major record label, US$1000, FT Weekend, review £460; Private Eye, “Letter from…” 750 words @ £200 = £266.66; BBC3 online short feature £187.50 X; The Register, column £160 X; Independent IndyBest, reviews up to 1000 words £80 XX.

Words, other: pop promoter, tour programme note £150; Mirror entertainment section, feature £800 X; Songlines review £15 XXXX.
EU Settled Status guidance

THE NUJ has issued guidance, with Thompsons Solicitors, explaining the current legal rights of our EU-national colleagues living in the UK.

This covers the possible rights which might be conferred on if the Withdrawal Agreement is ratified; the Government’s current plan for EU nationals and their families to have the right to apply for “Settled Status”; and proposed changes to the settled status scheme in the event of a no-deal Brexit. — the UK leaving the EU without any agreement on the terms of its withdrawal.

It also looks briefly at the Government’s proposed new immigration system.

Please take the time to study its 20 pages. It outlines the EU Settled Status application procedure. There is currently a voluntary trial of this, but it’s probably best to wait until the bugs in it are ironed out and for the full EU Settled Status applications programme to open on 30 March this year.

The briefing confirms that a “qualified person” eligible for EU Settled Status does include “a self-employed person working in the UK” as well as the retired, those off work due to illness and those actively seeking work with a “realistic chance of getting it.” The advice warns that the Common Travel Area allowing freedom of movement between the UK and the Republic of Ireland may not be legally binding.

There is UK legislation on the shelf that would give Irish nationals the right to “remain in the UK without restriction” in the event of no deal, but this will have to pass the UK Parliament.

The NUJ’s guidance also goes into the arrangements for an Administrative Review if your EU Settled Status is rejected – there’s still a fee for this review.

The Guidance for EU workers on applying for Settled Status is linked from www.londonfreelance.org/ fl/1903sett.html

© Matt Salusbury
• The Branch meeting on 11 March featured advice from Bindmans Solicitors on these matters.
• Watch this space for possible announcements of further advice sessions. See below for an update for our UK national members based in other EU member states.

What fate for UK expats?

ANNOUNCEMENTS have been made by most EU member states on the rights of UK citizens to work and reside in the event of a no-deal Brexit. See our January update online covering UK nationals in Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland at www.londonfreelance.org/ fl/1901ukeu.html

Since then, Malta has announced UK nationals there will have a “special immigration status” giving them access to the labour market for the next decade. The Prime Minister of Cyprus had pledged to safeguard UK nationals’ “rights of residence and access to benefits on the same terms as they presently enjoy” even in the event of no deal. Portugal has announced a 21-month grace period to apply for a residency permit.

UK nationals in Austria face the strictest post-Brexit conditions that we’ve heard of – they’ll need to apply for a Residence Declaration as soon as possible and they risk being treated as non-EU “third country nationals” in the event of the UK Brexiting with no deal.

UK nationals in the Netherlands can expect letters from the Immigration and Naturalisation Service soon. These will serve as temporary residence permits: people have 15 months to apply for a longer-term version or the permit.

Swedish employment lawyers warn that most UK nationals won’t be eligible for Sweden’s work permits for non-EU workers once these come into force.

In the event of a withdrawal agreement being concluded between the EU and the UK, the package of citizens’ rights for our UK national members in the EU is likely to be better (and clearer) that those detailed above.

It’s probably a good idea for UK nationals living in any of the EU27 member states to ensure they have up-to-date details on the population register (except in France and Ireland, which don’t have registers).

There is now a reciprocal deal with European Economic Area countries Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland on citizen’s rights.

© Matt Salusbury
• Watch for updates on the Freelance website www.londonfreelance.org/ fl and note the Freelance is not qualified to give legal advice.

Strike over photo rates

Shown here with their “Yes! Photojournalism has a price” banner, Dutch photojournalists in the NVJ union held a national one-day strike in December over falling fees for uses of their images. Some news websites appeared that day with blank spaces where photos would have been, as photographer refused to offer stock to picture libraries. Around 500 photographers, including members of NUJ Netherlands Branch, held a rally in The Hague. One photojournalist had told the NUJ she earned 19 euros per cent for one of her photos from Afghanistan. See a longer version of this article at www.londonfreelance.org/ fl/1902nl.html

Photo © Jens Anders Wejismark Sorensen

No deal Brexit scenario travel advisory

JUST BECAUSE you’re a UK national based in the UK, it doesn’t mean a possible no-deal Brexit won’t affect you as well.

The Freelance understands that the UK Government’s Operation Yellowhammer – the name for embassies planning for a no-deal Brexit – includes dealing with UK nationals whose debit cards might not work in the EU on 29 March: we just don’t know. They may also have to help UK nationals who are not allowed to cross a border because their passports have less than six months validity left on them.

UK nationals in the EU and UK nationals thinking of travelling for any length of time to the EU for work, should ensure that their UK passport is valid for at least six months after 29 March. Renew it now if it’s going to expire any time soon. You might just have time to renew your passport in time for the 29 March UK exit from the European Union if you get a move on.

And maybe take some euro in cash as well if you plan to be out of the UK on that date.
Regulation recommended

THE CAINCROSS Review: A sustainable future for journalism appeared in February. The review’s 156 pages list the “abundantly clear” threats to the Press – contraction in “advertising, revenue and circulation,” with the number of full-time journalists in the UK “swiftly declining.”

The review observes that over 70 per cent of consumers now read the news daily online – mostly aggregated via Google, Facebook or Apple News. It considers whether the power of Google and Facebook is such that it deserves government intervention to defend some of the “more democratic outputs” of the print media. The “internet platforms” (basically Google and Facebook) have, according to the Review, taken the lion’s share of the advertising. The Review’s recommendations include making a “better balance between publishers and platforms,” through regulation if necessary.

The local press is seen as being particularly bad shape: “society” needs “public interest news,” particularly local news, with support for public-interest news providers viewed as particularly urgent.

Recommendations? There doesn’t seem to be a specific mention of a financial levy on Google and Facebook – yet. But the review does propose that the Competition and Markets Authority “survey” the workings of the online advertising industry. The “opacity of the market” on online platforms in particular makes it ripe for intervention, in the report’s view.

Further recommendations include codes of conduct for the “online platforms” governing their relationship with the news publishers. This would mean a regulator.

Media literacy is also to be developed with the help of media regulator Ofcom. Could this lead to opportunities for freelances as media literacy teachers?

The BBC should do more to share its expertise with local media, says the review. The licence-fee-funded Local Democracy Reporting initiative has until now merely channelled money in the direction of a few big news groups – who were part of the problem. Cairncross proposes extending this scheme, as a joint project between the BBC and a yet-to-be-established Institute for Public Interest News – described as a sort of Arts Council for journalism.

There is but one mention of the word “freelance” in the report – as a thing that makes reports expensive.

The recommendations may – if adopted and implemented – eventually result in a healthier news media landscape with more opportunities for journalists. Readily-discernible benefits for freelances would be opportunities to teach “media literacy” and grants from the proposed Institute for Public Interest News. © Matt Salusbury

Changes to employment law coming?

PROPOSED changes to UK employment law were published by the Government in December.

It’s unclear whether these will have any positive impact on freelances, although measures that mitigate “bogus self-employment” can benefit those genuinely self-employed as well. Proposals include:

- The right to for those deemed in law to be “workers” to request a more predictable and stable contract. The right to “request” something in the current labour market, though, means nothing without enforcement to make employers grant such requests.
- Clarification of the tests for employment status. This may have a positive outcome for some freelances who do regular shifts for the same client.
- Less emphasis on the theoretical right – rarely in practice exercised – to send a substitute, as a test of whether someone is self-employed. It is proposed that the degree of “control” exercised over a worker by the party engaging them should have more weight in determining whether they are self-employed.
- New guidance on holiday pay. Some freelances who do regular work for the same client have won, with the NJU’s help, back-dated holiday pay, so this could be significant.
- The burden of proof in Tribunal hearings where employment status is disputed should be reversed so the employer has to prove an individual is not entitled to protection.
- Also significant for freelances working regular “casual shifts” is a proposed change in the gap in work that can break “continuous service”. Currently it’s one week: it could rise to four weeks.

So far there are no timetables or commitments attached to these proposals. The NJU will work with the Federation of Entertainment Unions (FEU) to shape them. Our thanks to Pamela Morton – NJU National Organiser, Freelance and Wales – for the above summary.

A longer version of this article online includes news of recent legal cases around gig economy “employment status.” © Matt Salusbury

We show solidarity with the Stansted 15 – lest we be next for terror charges

LONDON Freelance Branch has passed a motion in support of the Stansted 15, a group of activists arrested after peacefully locking themselves onto a plane at Stansted Airport, preventing a “deportation flight” taking off with deportees bound for Ghana and Nigeria.

It took over a year before they went to court. The original relatively minor charge of aggravated trespass was upgraded to Aviation and Maritime Security Act 1990 offences – “anti-terrorism” charges that have life imprisonment as a maximum penalty.

The Stansted 15 were all found guilty in December of “intentional disruption of services at an aerodrome”. In February three received suspended sentences and 12 were given community service orders.

The case is of particular concern to journalists, as the use of such anti-terrorist legislation to clamp down on peaceful protest is also likely to impact on journalists carrying out their work.

It is feared that the Stansted 15 case could set a precedent for restricting photography around ports and airports.

Melanie Strickland, of the Stansted 15, replying to a message of support from LBF, said the Court of Appeal is unlikely to hear their appeals against conviction before the summer.

Defendants and their supporters gather outside Chelmsford Crown Court (below) for the start of the Stansted 15 trial last October. © Matt Salusbury

Please petition against book theft

Doesn’t an “open library” sound like a good thing? Not if it’s the project by the Internet Archive to scan all the books they can get their hands on and put them online. In an attempt to get around the authors’ copyright www.archive.org calls this “controlled digital lending” – but people who view the books get to keep a copy forever, and not buy one.

The US National Writers Union has co-ordinated 37 creators’ organisations (and counting) to sign up to the appeal at www.nwu.org/book-division/cdl/appeal/ and you can see the gory detail there. And there’s a petition against this shady practice at www.societyofauthors.org/News/News/2019/Help-us-tackle-e-book-piracy! – please sign it.

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A win with a little collective pressure

GETTING out from under a corporate rights grab can be a severe hassle. But we can report a recent successful mini-collective strategy against just such a nasty.

One of the writers involved said: “I was asked to sign an all-rights grab contract that also insisted on applying such terms retrospectively to all work I’d done for the company’s publications. But then another writer, asked to do the same, contacted me and a third colleague, asking whether we felt similarly uncomfortable.

“Having pooled our thoughts, we replied separately – though willing to join forces if necessary – explaining why we felt this was not appropriate. The response took little time: we were told we would be able to continue working under our original terms,” the writer reports.

“It just goes to show that – at times, anyway – it’s worth objecting to such contracts, however much one fears the possibility of losing work. Our writing is as valuable to them as it is to us, and if writers communicate with one another to consolidate their power, it can prove effective, and remain amicable…”

Witch Walks writer

AMID THE lobbying against copyright, we come across a reminder of how it’s supposed to work.

The Prolific North blog reports that in October Ian Thornton-Bryar was awarded damages of £19,187 plus costs against Lancashire County Council. The Council had published extensive extracts from his The Lancashire Witches Walk on a website.

It seems the Council published it on its Forest of Bowland website in 2014. Thornton-Bryar complained and the Council agreed to remove the text, but a year later it put it back online with only some amendments.

Brief support from an unexpected quarter

THE COMMISSION – the EU’s Civil Service – posted an article on the Medium website that strangely echoed the Freelance’s analysis of the row about the Copyright Directive. This was rapidly removed on the grounds that “it has been understood in a way that doesn’t reflect the Commission’s position” – but not before it had been archived.

Entitled “The Copyright Directive: how the mob was told to save the dragon and slay the knight”, it noted that the Directive “supports a free press and could enable journalists to get some money when their articles are shared online”. It noted that “there is ample evidence from respected sources [giving links] that ‘Big Technology’ has even ‘created’ grassroots campaigns against the Copyright Directive in order to make it look and sound as if the EU is acting against the ‘will of the people’”. That phrasing might have had something to do with its removal.

It concluded: “So next time, when you get a sponsored message on your timeline, which says something like ‘the EU will kill the world wide web as we know it’, stop, pause and consider for a moment. Ask yourself: ‘Cui Bono? Who really benefits from this message or this wider negative campaign?’ Anti-copyright lobbyists seized on this – or, rather, its over-exciting headline – as they did journalists’ unions’ statements.

COPYRIGHT from page 1 proportionate remuneration for all authors, including journalists. It places transparency obligations on publishers (to report to us what use they make of our work). It opens up the possibility of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms which could be useful in some EU member states to avoid lengthy and expensive court cases. It also allows authors to be represented by their unions in that process. I welcome that very much.

I also welcome the new article 9a which safeguards extended collective licensing models as they could be models for future licensing in the digital area to ensure remuneration of journalists. This is a visionary approach with a lot of possibilities to make licensing easy and smooth.

There has been much noise about Article 11 of the Directive, which gives newspaper publishers rights to licence to the likes of Google News. It is important to try to improve this. Newspaper publishers and journalists’ unions agreed last July that journalists must be remunerated for the payment related to article 11. We should clarify provisions and proposals contained in Article 11 of the text – and Recital 35 that interprets it – to support authors in the press sector obtaining fair and proportionate remuneration for their work in future national legislation that will implement this directive.

We have a huge job in front of us in making sure that member states implement the Directive well. We need in particular close cooperation among all the stakeholders: it is in the interest of all of us to use the tools to bring the digital platforms to the table for negotiation.

David Bailey takes up NUJ Life Membership at our year-end do

The well-attended LFB party on 10 December 2018 had a surprise special guest – world-famous photographer David Bailey (sketched above). He dropped in to pick up his Life Membership of the NUJ in celebration of his 40 years in the Union.

Drawing of David Bailey © Pennie Quinton

More online

The Freelance is regularly updated online and at www.londonfreelance.org/fl you will find:

• Chinese censorship forces rewrite: book printer can’t put China in a “bad light”

• What does being a Branch Welfare Officer involve?

• More to come soon
Covering complex protest; specialist fields

OUR BRANCH meetings have a new, earlier, start time – they begin at 6.45pm. They will also finish slightly earlier, at 8.45pm, so that everybody is out of the building before 9pm. This is to prevent our colleagues, the receptionist at the NUJ’s HQ where we have our meetings, doing unpaid overtime.

The LFB meeting on Monday 8 April will discuss the problems faced by writers and photographers covering complex protests such as the Gilets Jaunes in France – not to be confused with the far-right yellow-jacketed ones in London because they’re far more confusing, though some are just as likely to attack journalists. One of our speakers will be Chris Myant, Chair of Paris Branch of the NUJ as well as a correspondent for the Morning Star.

We are also looking for someone to speak about the recently-unmasked French Facebook group that ran online harassment campaigns against feminists, female journalists, writers of colour and gay people: – and some of whose members seem to have been male journalists. Please check the links below for updates.

On Monday 13 May we will be discussing how to make more money in specialist fields, and whether groups such as the British Association of Science Writers, the Medical Writers’ Association, the Garden Media Guild and so on can help alongside your NUJ membership. Again, more details will be online.

This went to press on 26 February. Please submit your copy for the April online-only issue by 22 March.

LFB meetings (except for new members’ meetings) are always on the second Monday of the month, from 6.45pm to 8.45pm in the basement of the NUJ’s HQ at Headland House, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB, accessible to people who use wheelchairs. The nearest Tube is King’s Cross or Chancery Lane. If you need the Branch to pay for care for a child or dependent so you can attend a meeting, contact a Branch officer.

For updates on meetings and for confirmation of themes and speakers for forthcoming meetings, see the Branch calendar web page www.londonfreelance.org/lfb/meetings.html and LFB’s Twitter feed www.twitter.com/NUJ_LFB

Can members who have difficulty reading the agenda on paper please contact us to get the agenda in electronic form ahead of the meeting?

We draw members’ attention to the microphone that will be passed to you if you indicate you wish to speak at a meeting. This is so that our members with hearing problems can hear you via the induction loop.

For updated guidance on etiquette on recording or live-tweeting from LFB meetings, see the notes at www.londonfreelance.org/fl/1805film.html

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STRUGGLING with time management and procrastination? Experienced and qualified coach with background in journalism will help you draw up and implement a plan of action to get organized. Email Sara Dewar at sara@saradewar.co.uk

RETAIL RESIDENCE in SW France. Owner NUJ member; Broadland Quiet village near rail and air. www.faugeres.co.uk Contact: enquiries@faugeres.co.uk with discount code: FHLNUJ18

SHADOWING SOUGHT: I have had the pleasure of interviewing eminent politicians in Nigeria from the local to federal level. Now I would like to understand UK politics and have more field experience by shadowing an experienced political or criminal journalist. Please contact Ebi Ekhator at danielcharles312@gmail.com

NEW MEMBERS MEET

Come and share experience with us

OUR NEXT meeting for members who have recently started freelancing is on Thursday 25 April. It’s from 6pm at the Camera Museum, Museum Street, London WC1A 1LY. We had a full house for the last new members’ meeting on 31 January, as the photo shows.

Freelance organizer David Ayrton joined Branch committee members Phil Sutcliffe, Francesca Marchese and Larry Herman – and 18 new members joined us during the hour-long meeting. Six were university students and three photographers; seven were women and four seniors.

We discussed: the Rate for the Job; how to write an invoice; how to pitch and follow up pitches; the best ways to present yourself; the Freelance Directory which is free to NUJ freelances at www.freelancedirectory.org and what new members can get out of attending branch meetings and courses organised by the branch and those from the Federation of Entertainment Unions.

Words and photo © Francesca Marchese and Phil Sutcliffe

WELCOME TO A NEW COMMITTEE

WE WELCOME new and returning members to the LFB Committee following recent elections. See our updated list of Committee contacts linked above. Our new job-share Branch Secretaries are Nick Renaud-Komiya (left) and Tony Levene (right) shown above taking minutes for the second Monday of the month, from 6.45pm to 8.45pm in the basement of the NUJ’s HQ in Headland House, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB accessible to people who use wheelchairs. The nearest Tube is King’s Cross

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