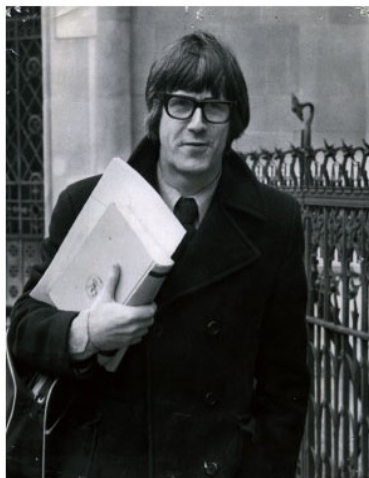


THE PAUL FOOT AWARD 2007



The Paul Foot Award For Campaigning Journalism 2007 Short List

Introduction

This year saw some especially high quality entries from regional daily and weekly papers, a fact reflected in our shortlist. These entries were particularly impressive when one takes in to account the frequent lack of support from the regional newspaper owners, the small staffs, the low salaries, absence of staff lawyers and relative lack of money to spend.

This year's entries also demonstrated the increasing use and popularity of online journalism – with *The Guardian's* investigation of BAE notable as an outstanding model of the integration of print and online media.

Despite plenty of talk recently about the 'dumbing down' of British journalism, the Paul Foot Award demonstrates that the spirit of investigative journalism is alive and flourishing throughout the British press. However it is equally evident that there is still a disturbing amount of corrupt behavior, extending right up to the highest level, that needs to be investigated.

Never has the judging been so difficult. There was an initial long list of 17 entries, with at least another five or six could have been seriously considered. Some – Tom Newton Dunn of *The Sun* or Helen Nugent of *The Times* – we felt were more scoops than investigations and we were particularly sad to leave out Jon Austin of the *Basildon Echo*.

Paul would have been pleased to see that the sort of journalism that he practiced and inspired is alive and kicking.

This year's shortlist are:

Phil Baty, *The Times Higher Education Supplement*

Year by year, working for a small but influential trade weekly, Phil Baty unearths stories of corrupt behavior in universities. He makes the shortlist this year for four examples. The first exposed a marking scandal at Bournemouth University where the examination papers of several students who had failed their archaeology course were re-marked so that only three instead of the original 13 students failed. The professor teaching the course resigned in disgust. This was the result of weeks of research by Baty which eventually secured him an interview with the professor and enabled him to break the story. Baty also exposed lax standards in the award of a PhD at Birmingham University; academic misconduct by one of Britain's most promising young historians; and after five months of patient work involving a

whistleblower and the Freedom of Information Act research fraud by a renowned neuroscientist.

Paul Keilthy, *Camden New Journal*

When Camden Council workers emptied the flat, including valuable books and antique furniture, of a 92-year-old woman who lay dying in a nursing home they thought that she had no next of kin. But Paul Keilthy discovered that in fact she had recently been re-united with her grandson and that she lived within a mile of three nieces. He found her antiques, including a Victorian commode, on sale in a nearby shop. He went on to discover that Camden Council cleared 1200 homes every year and to uncover a racket in which workers on the teams emptying the houses were running an illicit industry selling the possessions of the aged or infirm who had been transferred to nursing homes or hospitals to E-Bay or furniture shops. As a result of his work Camden set up an investigation by its internal audit team and has introduced safeguards to reduce the risk of theft and measures to locate next-of-kin.

David Leigh and Rob Evans, *The Guardian*

Four parliamentary debates, the removal of an Attorney-General, criminal investigations on three continents, another investigation by the United States Department of Justice and a special investigation of the United Kingdom by the OECD under an international bribery treaty – few investigations by British journalists have provoked such widespread international consequences as that by David Leigh and Rob Evans of *The Guardian* in their campaign to expose the issue of bribery in the British arms trade. It involved ministers engaged in cover-ups, corrupt rulers and one of the world's most powerful corporations. Leigh and Evans revealed how Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia received a billion pounds from the BAE, the British arms company, and named the two prominent Saudi middlemen to whom BAE had allegedly paid millions into Swiss bank accounts. In what one judge described as 'a model of how to integrate print and online' there was also a pioneering website called *The BAE Files* which took three months to build and which enables people worldwide to access the originals of hundreds of documents from government archives as well as video and audio clips of key players, pictures of the weapons involved and maps.

Rob Waugh, *Yorkshire Post*

An 18-month investigation by Rob Waugh ended this year when six whistleblowers who were sacked after telling the *Yorkshire Post* about wrong-doing in council children's homes won a £1 million settlement. The six revealed shocking standards of care of vulnerable children but the council tried to undermine the allegations, the staff's motives and the credibility of Waugh himself. A Freedom of Information request demonstrated that the Children's Rights Director of the council had stopped the NSPCC from carrying out a full investigation of the allegations. The result of Waugh's investigation is that the Children's Rights Director has called for changes in whistle-blowing procedures to ensure that similar injustices do not occur again, the six were finally vindicated and on the eve of a tribunal the council eventually conceded defeat.

The Salford Star

The Salford Star is a free magazine, surviving from hand to mouth, written and produced by Salfordians for Salfordians – as the staff say, 'with attitude and love xxx', and distributing about 15,000 copies quarterly. That word 'attitude' sums up the approach of the magazine to Salford Council - which has been so irritated by that attitude that it has blocked its funding applications and removed minutes from its website to stop the Star finding out about council decisions. Page after page of the Star attacks the council: thanks to the Star The Lowry has dropped charges for community groups. Thanks to the Star, Salford Council has been shamed into supporting the Salford Film Festival. '*Our stories come direct from people at the sharp end of 'regeneration' and we try to get them to write about their experiences*', the staff

say. 'They do the "from the gut" stuff; we back it up with facts and figures and too many hours of research'.

Richard Brooks, *Private Eye*

Richard Brooks hoped that his entry went some way to upholding the Foot tradition of probing parts of the state that have been considered beyond reach, exposing a particularly self-important official in the process. It certainly did. It was Brooks who reported that the National Audit Office, which should be holding the government to account for its spending of £500 billion a year, had declared that the deal under which the Inland Revenue sold its tax offices to a tax haven was a 'good deal'. He also reported the removal of criticisms from its report on the NHS's £12.4 billion IT fiasco after bullying from the Health Department. It was Brooks who revealed that the NAO's boss, the Controller and Auditor General Sir John Bourn, had been on 43 foreign trips on 22 of which he was accompanied by his wife, in the three years up to March this year. The travel bill for Bourn's private office was more than £336,000, of which £76,000 went on Lady Bourn's fares. As a result of Brooks's persistent hounding of the NAO, Bourn now has to submit his expenses for approval and accept the same spending limits as civil servants.

Deborah Wain, *The Doncaster Free Press*

The Learning and Skills Council and Doncaster Council committed £37.5 million to Doncaster Education City, an integrated post-14 education system with a new college building fed by five community campuses. It was the highest capital spending education scheme in England and Wales. Deborah Wain's reporting has revealed that not only has the scheme become a costly fiasco but also that corrupt inner circles have creamed off cash to serve their own ends. Head teachers refused to sign up to the plans throwing the scheme into disarray. Many decisions moreover were taken in cosy, clandestine meetings between Dr George Holmes, the college principal and chief executive of Doncaster Education City, and Martin Winter, the elected Mayor. Using the Freedom of Information Act, Wain discovered big pay increases for Holmes, huge payments to consultants, and £1500 chartering a private jet to fly Winter from Bournemouth to Doncaster to attend a meeting. She expects to uncover more examples of corrupt spending. When Holmes left for a University post, his successor David Gates was sent home after seven months and later dismissed with a big pay-off. An Ofsted report has suggested that Doncaster has ended up with an expensive new college building without any increase in educational standards. And that the governors spent too much money on departure packages for senior staff. Most of this would not have come to light without the work of Deborah Wain.

The 2007 Paul Foot Awards will be announced at the Media and Spin Bar, Millbank Tower on **Monday 15th October 2007**.