

# Annual report 2017-18

[www.writersguild.org.uk](http://www.writersguild.org.uk)

# Contents

**3** General  
Secretary's report

**6** Chair's report

**8** President's report

**10** Treasurer's report

## CRAFT COMMITTEE REPORTS

**12** Books

**13** Comedy

**14** Film

**16** Radio

**17** Television

**20** Theatre

**22** Videogames

## REGIONAL AND BRANCH REPORTS

**23** East Midlands

**23** London & South  
East

**24** North West  
(Manchester &  
Lancashire)

**24** North West  
(Merseyside)

**25** Scotland

**26** South West  
(Devon and  
Cornwall)

**26** South West  
(Wessex)

**27** Wales

**28** West Midlands

**29** Yorkshire &  
North East

## OTHER REPORTS

**30** Editorial &  
Communications  
Committee

## OBITUARIES

**31** Remembering  
WGGB members

### JOIN US

If you are not a WGGB member, and  
would like to join, you can do this online:

[www.writersguild.org.uk](http://www.writersguild.org.uk)

Or by phone: **020 7833 0777**

### CONTACT US

If you want to contact any of the WGGB Officers,  
Craft Chairs or Regional Representatives featured  
in this annual report, you can find their details on  
our website:

[www.writersguild.org.uk/contact/](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/contact/)

You can also follow us on Twitter:

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

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/thewritersguild](https://www.facebook.com/thewritersguild)

# General Secretary's report

Equality Writes has been the theme of our work this last year – the name of the campaign we launched recently, and underpinning many of our other activities.

Last October we spoke out in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal, which shocked the entertainment world, on both sides of the Atlantic. The waves are still being felt today, but fortunately industry is coming together to tackle the issue of bullying and harassment, which we already knew was so endemic, from our longstanding Creating Without Conflict campaign with the other entertainment unions.

In February, we joined with BAFTA, the BFI and many other organisations to support a new set of principles and zero-tolerance guidance to eradicate bullying and harassment and support victims more effectively. I was delighted that industry bodies and trade unions put their differences aside to work together. It was a remarkable show of unity and illustrates just how serious this issue has become. The work will continue.

In March, a group of over 70 women television writers wrote an open letter to broadcasters in response to the news that out of nine new dramas planned by ITV for 2018, only one was written by women. Sadly, this is nothing new – we have been concerned about a glass-ceiling for women in prime-time drama for several years now – and we supported the women who wrote the open letter, many of whom were our members.

In May we launched our Equality Writes campaign – following the publication of an independent report commissioned by WGGB, and funded by ALCS, which showed just how shocking this problem has become. Films and TV shows written by women in the UK have flatlined over the past decade – only 16% of working screenwriters in film are women and only 28% of TV episodes were predominantly written by women during that period.

The creative industries are by their very nature collaborative and we hope that all those who can make change happen will work with us, and our Equality Writes campaign, to end this injustice, once and for all.



Gaining access to equality data in future, one of the key planks of our campaign, will mean that we can address this issue for other groups, too. We know that BAME writers, writers with disabilities, LGBT+ writers and working-class writers are all under-represented and it is vital we get our hands on this data so we can tackle this problem. This is why we continue to boycott the broadcasters' Project Diamond diversity initiative – until they agree to release the programme-level data we have asked for and which we believe is so crucial.

On the world stage – or at least the European one – the Brexit negotiations continue to rumble on. We have been lobbying MPs and Peers, to ensure writers' rights are protected during the negotiations. Protecting the right to create across borders is an important part of our work here as restrictions on freedom of movement will have a significant impact on the creative industries, which are now worth £92 billion a year to the UK.

Against the backdrop of these global and national developments, our equally important, day-to-day negotiations continue – last year we secured pay rises for TV, radio and theatre writers, no mean feat in the light of long-term pay freezes and indeed cuts that many workers have faced.

The rapidly changing digital landscape continues to evolve at a breathtaking speed. We endeavour to stay one step ahead of the game to ensure writers, whose livelihoods are so affected by these changes, are protected by whatever lurks around the corner. The Writers Digital Payments scheme – set up by WGGB and the Personal Managers' Association – means writers are remunerated whenever their work is shown on ITV Player or BBC iPlayer. An impressive £2.75 million has been paid out to writers since the scheme launched in 2015.

And on a similar note, we are in negotiations with the BBC to ensure that podcasting – which is becoming the entry level for new radio writers – is included in our national agreement with the corporation.

Our awards are an important part of our work in advocating for writers – to raise the profile of the profession, support new writing and showcase just how important writing is to our culture. Our annual Writers' Guild Awards go from strength-to-strength and this year we revived our Best First Novel Award and introduced a new category – Best Online Comedy, which went down a storm. Our Olwen Wymark Theatre Encouragement Awards and Tinniswood audio drama script award are two other important dates in our annual calendar.

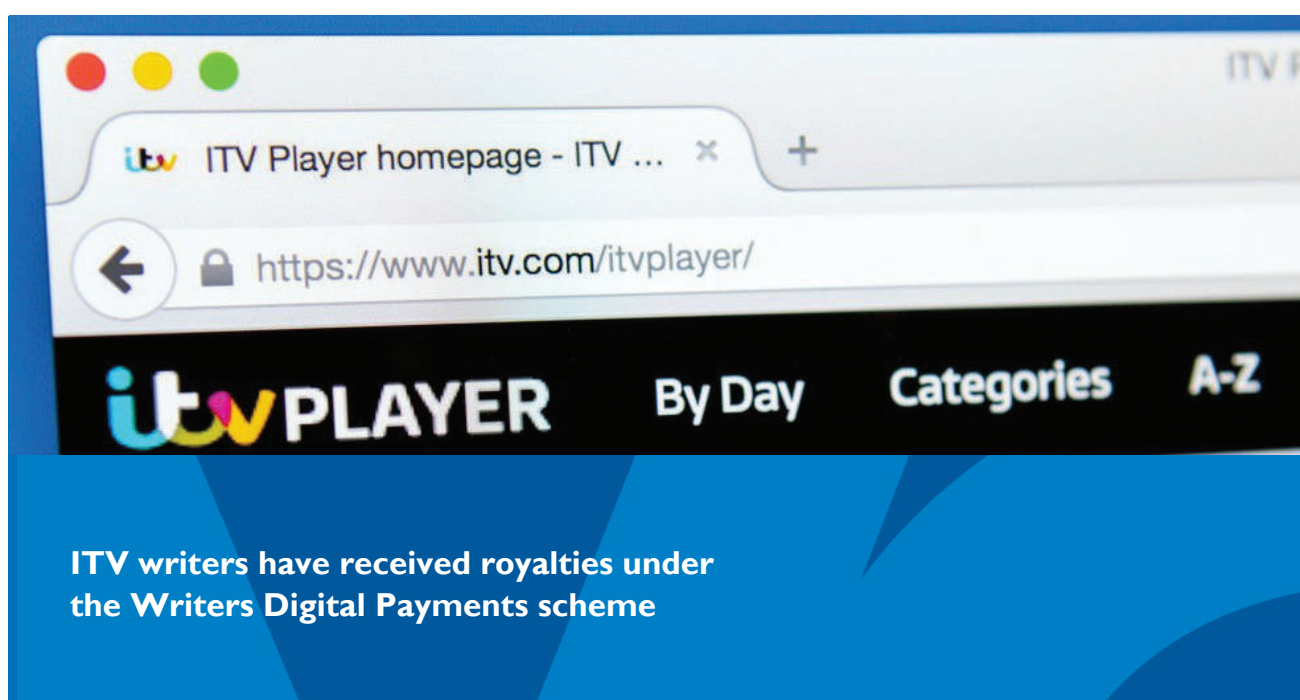
A great deal of this work is driven by our committees – volunteer members themselves who give a great deal of their time to take part in negotiations and campaigns or organise our events and awards. I would like to thank them, and all our Executive Council Officers, for their continued hard work this year. You can read the reports of all our Officers, Craft Chairs and Regional Reps on the following pages.

I would also like to thank all our staff and welcome two new members – John Sailing, who joins as Organiser responsible for Casework and Campaigns, and Lesley Gannon, our new Assistant General Secretary.

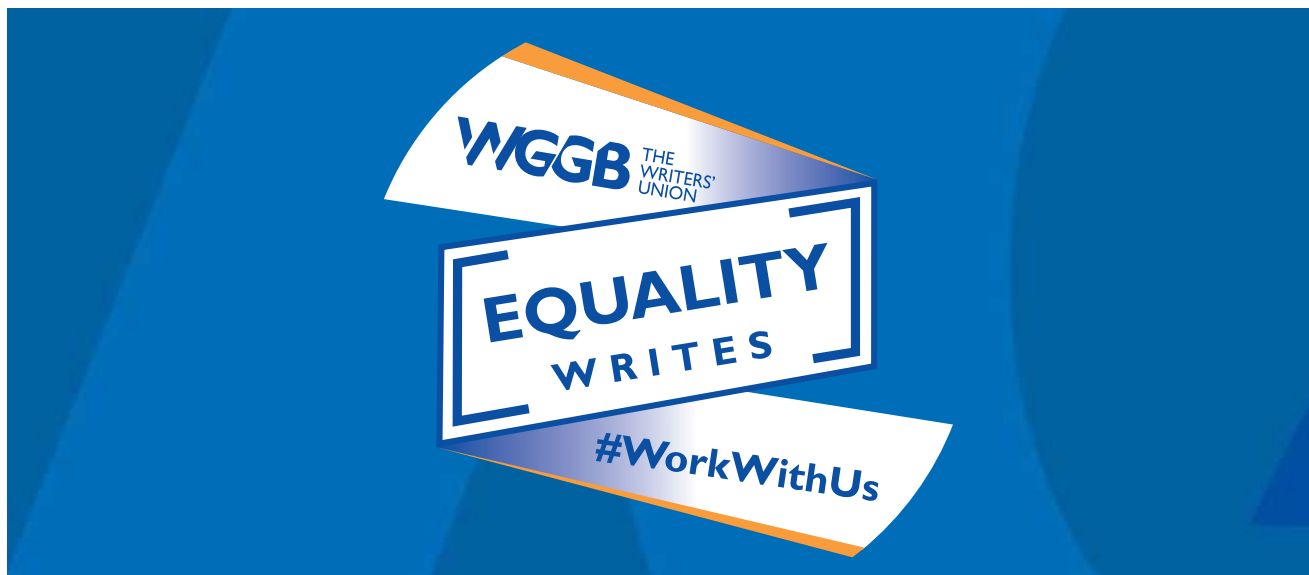
My first year as General Secretary has been incredibly positive and one of the most rewarding parts of my job is meeting and talking with our members on a regular basis. I would like to thank all WGGB members – without you there would be no union, and by working together collectively we can move mountains.

If you are a new member, welcome aboard. If you are a longstanding member, thank you for your support over the years. If you are reading this and are not a member, please join – we welcome writers at all stages of their careers, and just by signing up you will make a difference and support our vital work.

**Ellie Peers**  
**General Secretary**







**WGGB members play a vital role in their union. This year has seen a focus on equality, bullying and harassment and lobbying in Parliament on Brexit**

Bottom photo: Reece Lipman @ Chocolate Films

# Chair's report

I'm delighted to say that, as of July 2017, Ellie Peers is the new General Secretary of WGGB.

After the retirement of our previous General Secretary, Bernie Corbett, Ellie had been Acting General Secretary and, before that, Assistant General Secretary for three years. Ellie is a powerhouse and has hit the ground running. We're lucky to have her.

Let's also give a big Writers' Guild welcome to Lesley Gannon, our new Assistant General Secretary, and John Sailing, our new Organiser in charge of Casework and Campaigns. This means that our staff restructure is now complete and there are more people than ever to handle negotiations, members' problems, events and campaigns, and all the myriad of things your union does for you.

Brexit is still keeping us busy and I've been in Westminster so much I'm thinking of having my post forwarded there. The creative industries earn the UK £92 billion a year and growing, and no matter what happens politically we have to do our best to protect them. A lot of my time is spent speaking to politicians about retaining development and funding money (much of which comes from the European Union), keeping freedom of movement for co-productions and filming, protecting intellectual property, and more. We've had questions asked on the floors of both Houses, and we're often quoted in the media. We'll continue to lobby and make writers' voices heard.

WGGB has just rolled out a new campaign, Equality Writes. We commissioned an independent report, funded by the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, about gender equality of screenwriters in film and TV. The statistics on under-representation of women are staggering – and not in a good way. The union is working hard to redress the balance.

We'll also be stepping up campaigns on diversity and other issues. The union does its best to protect all members.

Along with the BFI, BAFTA and other organisations, WGGB has agreed a new policy on bullying and harassment in the workplace. Writers have a right to work free from unreasonable pressure and worries. If you have any problems, please contact the Writers' Guild. Whatever you say will always be treated confidentially and it is our job to support you.

We've also represented our members internationally, attending the Federation of Screenwriters in Europe (FSE) meetings in Brussels; and travelled to Los Angeles last October for an International Affiliation of Writers Guilds (IAWG) meeting. Our industry is global and we share many of the same issues. Common problems have common solutions and we're all stronger when we stand together.

Photo:  
Matt Writtle



None of this could have been possible without our hardworking and dedicated staff. Many thanks to Ellie Peers, Lesley Gannon, John Sailing, Sarah Woodley (Communications Manager), Kate Glasspool (Organiser, Recruitment, Training and Events) and Rose Cooney (Office Administrator – Membership and Communications).

Another huge shout out has to go to all of our EC reps, committees and branches who work like Trojans on negotiations, events, campaigns and everything else that keeps our union running – and we're all volunteers. We work for tea and biscuits.

It's important that Andrew Walsh is mentioned in dispatches. Andy will be stepping down after six years as WGGB Treasurer and three as Deputy Chair before that. It's been a joy to work alongside him. The fact that the union's finances are in such superb shape can be attributed to Andy's stewardship and careful planning. We all owe him a great debt – one that can't be entered on a balance sheet.

I'm grateful as well to Deputy Chairs, Lisa Holdsworth and William Gallagher, and also our President Olivia Hetreed, for their unfailing support, Herculean labours and sessions in the pub after.

Next year is going to be our 60th anniversary and we're already planning the tributes. The greatest tribute you could pay is to recruit other writers to WGGB to strengthen us all. And volunteer to help in a branch or on a committee. As President Kennedy might have said, "Ask not what your union can do for you, ask what you can do for your union."

To end on a positive note, thanks to Netflix, Amazon and all of the new platforms springing up all the time, more scripted shows are being made than ever before. Netflix's budget (albeit it globally) is now four times that of the BBC. Cast your eyes to the horizon.

We're writers – anything is possible. Publish your own e-book or film and upload sketches or shorts to YouTube, make podcasts, do play readings, crowdfund for your projects and use social media to promote them.

Do your own thing. That's why you became a writer, isn't it? It wasn't only so we could watch Jeremy Kyle.

**Gail Renard**  
**Chair**





**WGGB has been representing writers' interests on the global stage – from Los Angeles to Brussels**

Top photo: Shutterstock.com/oneinpunch;  
bottom photo: Shutterstock.com/Kanuman

# President's report

Elsewhere in these pages you will read about a year of tremendous activity and achievement in the Writers' Guild, ranging from new deals negotiated to an International Radio Festival. We honoured the wonderful Caryl Churchill at our Awards, an event which grows in popularity and public profile every year. The fact that our AGM is taking place in Birmingham is testament to the vigour and energy of regional activity, though there remains work to be done around the country. In my report however I will focus on two areas of Guild work, one representing our outward efforts, the other looking inwards.

Since our last AGM, a global wave of scandal and activism has changed the conversation about the way men and women behave towards each other. The Federation of Entertainment Unions (of which WGGB is a member) produced an excellent report on bullying at work, including sexual harassment, several years ago. The Creating Without Conflict campaign was a good start and its guidelines have now been updated. Recently we have been looking at what we can and should do to support our members, and to make sure that this movement marks a permanent change for the better. We took an active role in drafting the BFI Guidelines and we are working with Directors UK, the other entertainment unions, PACT, ERA, WFTV and TimesUp on ways to ensure a more respectful working environment for everyone. We have also proposed amendments to our own rules to protect our members and encourage us all to behave well.

Related to this is our Equality Writes campaign, based on an independent report commissioned by WGGB and funded by ALCS, which compiled statistics and analysed data to provide shocking proof of gender inequality in current film and television writing. The report demonstrates why the market doesn't correct this, even though women-authored films do better with critics and audiences, since informal hiring practices and systemic bias, conscious and unconscious, perpetuate unfair and discriminatory commissioning. Not only do women



find it harder to get their first writing job but even very experienced female writers find themselves more limited in their opportunities to write for other kinds of programming or to work on higher budget films. You can find the report here: [www.writersguild.org.uk/equalitywrites](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/equalitywrites)

Why does this matter? Not only because women writers and other under-represented groups should have equal opportunities to work and for their work to be seen but also because this is about the culture and narrative that we experience around us all the time. When a narrow section of the population controls and defines those stories we are all poorer for it. As writers, of whatever stripe, we also have an opportunity and I think a duty to question those dominant narratives. NEROPA is a simple method for fairer representation, originally created for casting but which writers can use in our own work to create better-balanced casts. Shockingly the fictional world often lags behind the real one: for instance, 32% of fictional doctors are female while in real life that number is 52%. By representing the world more thoughtfully we can help make the world a better place to be.

My inward reflections are on the reasons we have been able to take decisive action and be a strong voice in these important conversations. In order to be an effective union, supporting our members, responding to crises, offering guidance and leadership to writers right across the dramatic field, we need strong internal organisation.

Thanks to extraordinary efforts over several years by Officers of the union – Chairs, Treasurer and Deputies, all volunteers, some now retired, some still in post – there has been a wholesale reorganisation of the Guild's staffing and management. They have worked incredibly hard



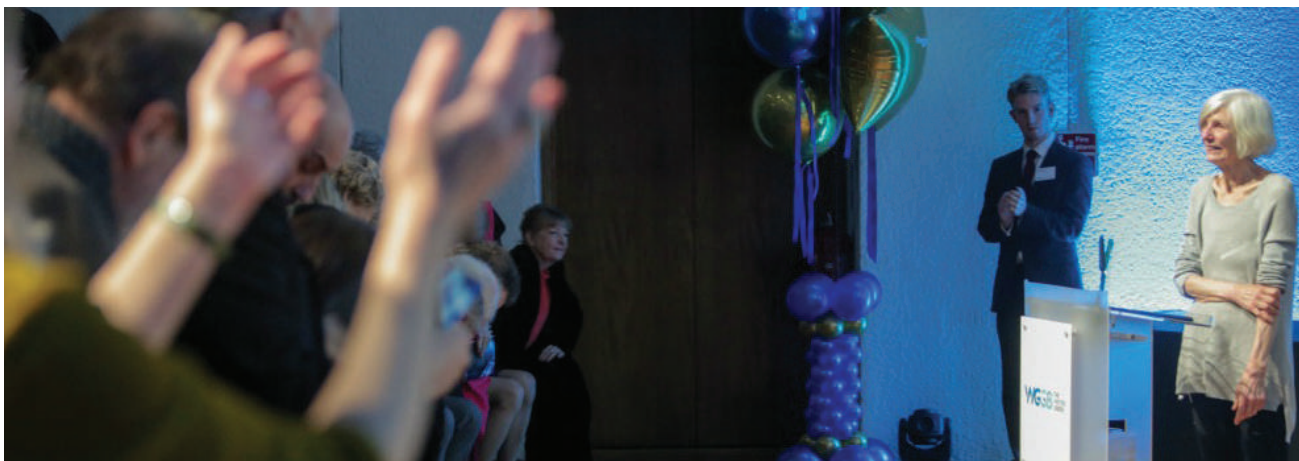
to set our finances in order, to fulfil the stringent requirements of union legislation, to find good candidates for the various new posts and fill them with the best possible choices. In all this they have succeeded admirably.

We now have a new General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary and two Organisers covering membership, casework, campaigns and events, as well as specialist PR and proper administrative support. On the website you will find all the relevant information for who to contact. For many years the union had to survive on the goodwill and overwork of a too-small staff, who regularly performed miracles. It meant also that Officers and EC members sometimes had to step into the breach to keep things going. Now we have a proper basis

for our future efforts on behalf of our members and, while the Officers will certainly not be resting on their well-deserved laurels, they have been relieved of a huge additional burden. Our grateful thanks to them all.

Finally, one of the key reasons we have been able to undertake this essential reorganisation is because of a generous legacy from one of our former members, Alan Seymour, in the form of money and royalties. Please do consider leaving something to the Writers' Guild to continue working for other writers after you have typed your last words.

**Olivia Hetreed**  
**President**



**(Top) Caryl Churchill was honoured for Outstanding Contribution to Writing at this year's Writers' Guild Awards**

**(Below) WGGB is playing a vital role in tackling bullying and harassment in the creative industries, and has been working with TimesUp, amongst others**

Photo: (top) Matt Writtle  
(bottom) Shutterstock.com/happydancing

# Treasurer's report

After an extremely busy few years that have encompassed changes to subscriptions, a restructure of the staff and changes to the way membership and retention operate, the WGGB has emerged from this period of reorganisation in a stable financial position. All the goals set by the Finance Committee (FC) over the last several years have finally been achieved. As always, financial pictures can change quickly, so our next goal will be to look at how to further strengthen the WGGB, protecting our union in the years to come.

In 2016 it was decided to spend the additional revenue we had received from a bequest from one of our members, Alan Seymour, on restructuring and expanding the staff. This process took two years to complete and implemented a revised set of staff job descriptions along with a significant increase in the number of staff days available to the WGGB.

Whilst the plan had been to fund this expansion from our reserves, until such time an increase in membership income could balance out the cost, we realised partway through 2017 that this would no longer be necessary. With an increase in subscription income for 2017 from £393,865 to £430,712 we are now in a position to fund the expanded staff directly from subs income.

Whilst a good portion of this was an issue with PayPal collections that impacted both the projected and actual subscription collections, the remainder of this surplus has arisen from an improvement in retention figures and a small increase in recruitment. The PayPal collection problems mean we have finally received a lump sum of £96,896.17 that was owing to the Writers' Guild. This brought our annual income to £552,635.53. Whilst our annual costs rose from £411,005 in 2016 to £444,257 in 2017, our increased revenue means that the WGGB is cost neutral.

After discussions, the EC and FC agreed to use the capital that was to be spent on expansion to create two new reserves and, potentially, one further new staff position. This is something the FC has long discussed as being necessary for the WGGB's future.



The first fund is a £100,000 contingency reserve to cover immediate unexpected financial costs such as an office move. The second is a £250,000 protected operating costs reserve, which would cover approximately six months of daily expenses should the WGGB hit financial difficulties. The third item agreed, pending review in September, is the potential to add another full-time member of staff to the office.

As for our day-to-day accounts, the General Fund, the amount that the Guild has in its bank account for paying wages, rent and other expenses, saw a balance carried forward at the end of the 2017 financial year of £529,833. The Royalties Account (which holds funds from the BBC, ITV and other organisations for distribution to writers) received £31,604 and distributed £10,286 in payments to writers through 2017. A total of £56,675 was carried forward for distribution in 2018 and beyond.

The Welfare Fund, which provides grants and assistance to members in times of trouble, continued to provide help through 2017, making a series of grants in excess of £5,500. Following the first Welfare review meeting in the last few years, it was decided to write off £8,788 of unpaid loans. With an income from members of £1,300 across the year, this left the fund's balance as £47,840. To assist with the Welfare Fund's operation and to spread the workload involved in the WGGB finances it was decided to appoint a Chair to the Welfare Committee. This is an unelected post appointed by the Treasurer. This Chair does not have a seat at the EC and their role is solely to assist with the administration of the Welfare Fund.

---

After several years wearing the Treasurer's hat, I shall be stepping down from the post at the 2018 AGM. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have served on the EC, FC and WGGB committees, along with the staff for the huge amounts of hard work they have put into supporting our union. It is the cooperation between all of these groups that ensures the Guild has a sound financial basis on which to carry out its work.

Thanks must also go to you. As a member, you are a writer who decided to stand up and be counted. Without you there would be no Guild. From finances, budgets, spreadsheets should come agreements, protection and a loud voice for writers. We hope that you continue to be there for the Guild as the Guild is there for you. The more members we have, the stronger we shall be.

**Andrew S. Walsh**  
Treasurer

---



**From finances, budgets and spreadsheets come  
a strong voice for writers**

Photo: Shutterstock.com/Kurhan



# Craft committee reports



## BOOKS

### WRITERS' GUILD AWARDS

This past year constituted a major move forwards for the WGGB Books Committee, which reinstated a book prize at the annual Writers' Guild Awards in 2018.

Our jury was Nick Yapp (author of WGGB's history, *The Write Stuff*), Nancy Boulicault and myself as Chair. We were inundated with a box of gleaming manuscripts for the Best First Novel category and enjoyed ploughing our way through around 60 titles, whittling them down to the shortlist of three: *Montpelier Parade* by Karl Geary, *Towards Mellbreak* by Marie-Elsa Bragg and *The Bureau of Second Chances* by Sheena Kalayil, who was awarded the final prize.

We all felt her wonderful novel encapsulated so many issues that are current in the UK: about belonging to two continents, about culture and belief, and about making sense of life in all its challenges. The jury was very pleased to be able to come to a decision that we could all stand by.

## BREXIT AND BEYOND

In December I attended two events at the House of Commons, with other EC members, to talk to MPs and Peers about the impact of Brexit on the publishing industry. A short report was written and sent to MPs concerning the impact of Brexit on e-books, printing, rights and many other areas. Brexit potentially has devastating consequences for writers' earnings due to tariff changes, import duties and issues around copyright, and we want to address that.

## PUBLICATIONS FOR AUTHOR MEMBERS

The Books Committee, including the members mentioned above, as well as Patrick O'Sullivan, Sian Northey and Ewart Hutton, has been researching and writing new leaflets/publications for author members. In particular, we are looking at e-books/self-publishing and issues around digitalisation and authors' rights. We hope to publish at least a couple of leaflets this coming year for members' use.

## LITERARY FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

The Books Committee is aware that authors can be solitary beasts, unlike their film or TV or even radio counterparts. We are also aware that the boundaries between books and these other media are blurring, through adaptation, online publishing etc. Plans are afoot for the Committee to attend and speak at literary festivals over the next two years as part of WGGB's ongoing Free is NOT an Option campaign into unpaid work. It is essential that authors join WGGB to continue to pressure the publishing industry for decent contracts and pay.

## BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

As a committee we have been involved in the development of WGGB's policy on bullying and harassment. The publishing industry is not devoid of this unfortunate behaviour – which needs to be eradicated.

**Corinne Sweet**  
Chair



## COMEDY

We've made significant progress this year, principally in setting up the new Best Online Comedy category for the Writers' Guild Awards. Committee member Neil Forsyth chaired the panel of judges and ensured its success and smooth running. This is one of a number of areas where we've been working to publicise the union to writers who hadn't known of our existence before.

We've also been working towards policies aimed at promoting more women, BAME and working-class writers, and I'd like to thank Kay Stonham and James Cary for their work there. I'm pleased to say we have become proactive in ensuring that pensions provisions made for comedy writers in WGGB's 2012 BBC Sketch Agreement are now being properly implemented.

Comedy is changing, commissioners no longer know what they want, while diminishing budgets and slots mean it is harder than ever for comedy writers to make a living. In future we hope to run more events like last year's sell-out Situation Critical: Who Will Save the Sitcom? panel with BBC Studios Radio Comedy boss Julia McKenzie and top writers Marks and Gran, where we called on commissioners to have more faith in writers, and in audience sitcoms.

The Comedy Committee is starting to operate with other relevant craft committees within the union to make sure any comedy issues sent their way can be forwarded to us.

Thanks to everyone for their help in continuing to work for comedy writers, especially my fellow Committee members: James Cary, Kay Stonham, Neil Forsyth, Carrie Quinlan, Shai Hussain, Abi Burdess, Joel Morris and Sian Harries.

**Dave Cohen**  
**Chair**



**The WGGB Comedy Committee has been working hard to ensure sketch writers receive the pension rights they are entitled to**

Photo: Shutterstock.com/vinnstock



**Andrea Gibb (left) and Line Langebek (right), Film Co-Chairs**

## FILM

It's been a tumultuous year for the film industry. The Weinstein scandal has generated a clamour for change, giving movements such as #MeToo and #TimesUp an inexorable momentum. The Film Committee welcomes this push for change and many of our discussions have concentrated on how best to support and respond to the current debate.

As a first step, we hosted an event at Christmas to highlight and discuss the problems of bullying and harassment in our industry, in general. While sexual harassment was the main focus of the #MeToo movement we wanted to make our response more specific to our members and their experiences. The myth of the auteur has perpetuated the notion that film is a director's medium and screenwriters can find themselves shut out from the process once the script is done. Their work can be altered without permission or a director might insist on rewriting the script then demanding a share of both their credit and fee. This trend seems to have been growing in recent years and, unfortunately, producers and financiers don't always protect the script or the writer.

Representatives from Equity and the BFI attended the event along with quite a few of our own members and discussion was lively and informative. Olivia Hetreed, Film Committee member and WGGB President, is now spearheading our initiative to tackle the issue. She's chairing a WGGB sub-committee and is forging links with other external groups and organisations to coordinate a joint strategy to stamp out bullying and harassment in all its forms.

Which leads us to equality.

The publication of a recent independent report into gender inequality in the film and television industries, which was commissioned by WGGB, has also seen the launch of our Equality Writes campaign. The statistics are as shocking as we anticipated. Only 16% of all working screenwriters in the UK are female. The figures are little better for female television writers. Not only that but the data proves there's been no sustained change or progress over the past decade. So when commissioners or producers tell us things are getting better, the evidence says otherwise. We are grateful to the ALCS for funding this report and to Alexis Kreager and Stephen Follows for the integrity of their research. Now we can point to their data and say time really is up.

We were hoping to announce a new Minimum Terms Film Agreement this year but the negotiations with PACT are still in progress. Talks were initially held up because we were waiting on a template agreement from media lawyers appointed by PACT. We've now seen it and responded and have asked to proceed to the next stage of negotiations without the lawyers present. We feel strongly that final terms should be agreed between the WGGB, PACT and the Personal Managers' Association first and then sent to the lawyers for the legal perspective.

Hopefully, we'll be able to report next year that we finally have a new agreement.

In other ways it has been business as usual. Once again, we took part in viewing and voting on the Best First Screenplay and Best Screenplay categories for the WGGB Awards. Once again, we watched more than 60 films and once again narrowing them down to a shortlist was an extremely difficult task.



We were particularly impressed by the standard of debut screenplays this year. In fact, *Miss Sloane*, which won the Best Screenplay Award, was writer Jonathan Perera's first screenplay. Best First Screenplay was awarded to Babak Anvari for *Under The Shadow*. We're hoping to organise events featuring both these wonderful writers in the coming months. Once again, we'd like to thank our film jury for volunteering their time and their expertise to decide these awards and to Phil O'Shea, Film Committee member, for his excellent chairing.

The Film Committee is made up of working writers and we are grateful to them for their energy and commitment. This year's Committee was Olivia Hetreed, Phil O'Shea, Richard Deakin, Guy Hibbert, James Hughes, Anji Loman Field and Tom Williams. Andrea Gibb and Line Langebek are Co-Chairs.

Tracy Brabin, MP for Batley and Spen, was an active Committee member before she was elected and continues to support the work of the Writers' Guild. We consider her an honorary Committee member. Bob Farquhar has decided to step down to concentrate on work commitments, but we're delighted he is staying on the Awards jury. New WGGB member Sam Horley has joined in his place. She brings a wealth of experience from all aspects of the film industry and we are delighted to be working with her.

Finally, we'd like to thank the WGGB staff for all their support in helping the Film Committee do their work.

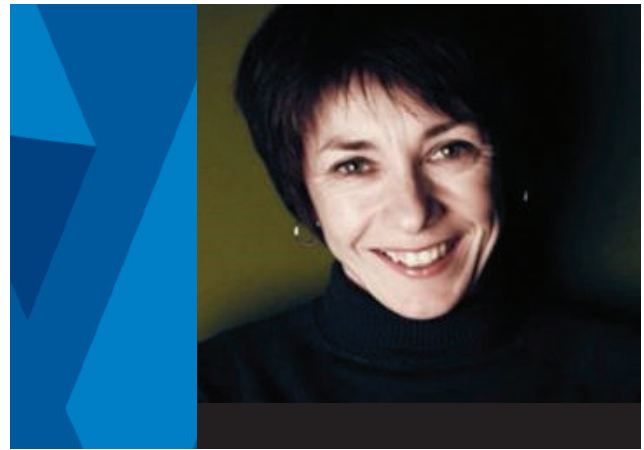
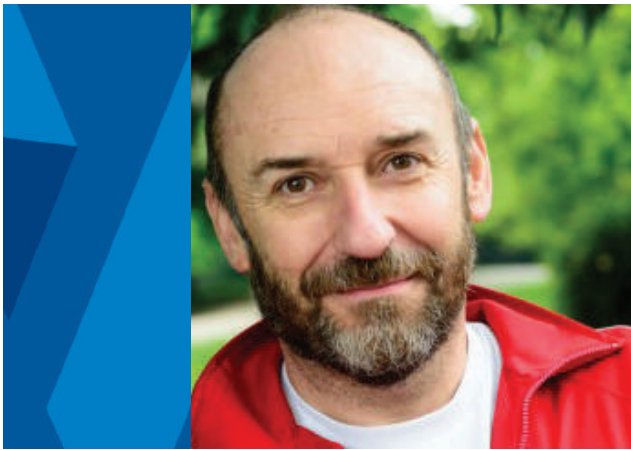
**Line Langebek and Andrea Gibb  
Co-Chairs**



**Top: The Film Committee has joined the debate and push for change spearheaded by the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements**

**Bottom: Babak Anvari (pictured on the right with presenter Tony Grisoni) was one of two film screenwriters honoured at the Writers' Guild Awards this year**

Photo: (top) Shutterstock.com/  
FabrikaSimf;  
(bottom) Matt Writtle



**Nicholas McNerny (left) and Amanda Whittington (right), Radio Co-Chairs**

## RADIO

The Radio Committee is actively developing ways to raise the profile of radio drama across the country, as well as safeguarding radio dramatists' rights in a rapidly changing landscape. As we go to press, we are in the final stages of negotiating a rise in minimum fees for BBC-commissioned works. Yet BBC radio drama is increasingly reaching beyond its traditional formats and commissioning plays for the digital space. The growth of online access to new and existing radio drama brings both opportunities and challenges.

In October last year, the BBC set out its intention to make a greater number of original podcasts, particularly aimed at a younger audience. With the BBC Radio Forum, we are negotiating BBC terms and conditions for podcasting, which is likely to become the main entry point for new radio writers. Our *Writers' Guild Best Practice Guidelines for Radio* will be published when ongoing negotiations around podcasting are concluded. The Committee is also researching the impact of the growing number of digital radio archives now available online.

In 2017, we held three Radio Drama Roadshows in partnership with the universities of Aberystwyth (27 September), Chichester (21 October) and Sunderland (4 November). The roadshows aimed to celebrate radio drama as an art form and share industry knowledge both with WGGB members and potential members. All featured a varied programme of talks and discussions, writing workshops, script feedback and listening rooms. Panels included representatives from the BBC and the independent sector. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive,

and areas for improvement and development were identified. Bringing the events to regional centres was much appreciated by attendees. We are now planning to roll out future roadshows, in partnership with universities, in various locations across the country.

The Best Radio Drama category of the Writers' Guild Awards received a record-breaking 32 entries this year. The field contained an impressive range and breadth of work, and a diversity of voices. Special thanks to Katharine Way for, once again, rising to the administrative challenge of securing scripts and audio copies for each entry. In a very strong field, our winning drama was the outstanding *The Things We Never Said* by Ming Ho.

In addition to his work as WGGB Radio Committee Co-Chair, Nicholas McNerny was appointed project manager for the 4th International Radio Drama Festival, which took place at Herne Bay in March. Sponsored by WGGB and ALCS, the festival broadcast 50 plays from 17 countries in 15 languages. It was a rare and remarkable opportunity not only to experience radio drama from across the world but to read English-language translations. Recordings can still be heard online at [www.radiodramafestival.org.uk](http://www.radiodramafestival.org.uk)

In 2017, Radio Committee member Nicholas Warburton stood down after many years of excellent service. We also welcomed radio writers Gillian Richmond and Keri Davies onto the Committee. We sincerely thank each and every one of our Committee members for their active support, commitment and good humour over the last year: Nicola Baldwin, Steve Chambers, Lucy Flannery, Lucy Gough, Martin Jameson, Katharine Way and Phil Nodding.

**Nicholas McNerny and  
Amanda Whittington  
Co-Chairs**



## TELEVISION NEGOTIATIONS

We have negotiated a 1.5% increase on minimum rates for BBC TV drama and scripted comedy, including sketches; and a 2% uplift on minimum fees for ITV writers. Full rates can be found on the WGGGB website: [www.writersguild.org.uk/rates-agreements/](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/rates-agreements/)

We are in a tripartite negotiation with the Personal Managers' Association (PMA) and PACT on a new TV agreement (the current one is 15 years old). We now have a forum set up with PACT and it's going well. However, there are currently issues to be resolved on Subscription Video On Demand (SVOD).

*Emmerdale* has been having a highly successful period recently, winning lots of awards, yet writers are still not appropriately recognised/rewarded. We raised this at the ITV Forum and negotiations are ongoing.

## FUTURE OF UK TELEVISION WRITING EVENT

Thanks to WGGGB Deputy Co-Chair Lisa Holdsworth for organising this event on 26 September 2017 at the Northern Film School in Leeds. Expertly chaired by Lisa, the discussion featured guest writers Dominic Minghella, Vinay Patel, Sophie Petzal and Amy Roberts. It covered a wide range of issues around working on team-written TV shows. The panel was reported in *Broadcast*, and we had great feedback. We were wonderfully supported by Northern Film School, and hope to capitalise on our relationship by holding more major events in Leeds in the future.

## BBC CONTINUING DRAMA

An email to our members about conditions for writers on the BBC's continuing dramas (CDS) received a huge response, and we are now raising these issues on their behalf. We have had meetings with Oliver Kent, Head of Continuing Drama Series for the BBC; and Simon Harper, Executive Producer of *Casualty* and *Holby City*, to discuss our concerns about these shows. The meetings were constructive, and we will be following up on them.

*Doctors* has now been running for 18 years and still pays less than our minimum fees because of a special arrangement made years ago on the basis that it was a 'training show' – which it has not been for some time. We have a meeting set up to talk about this and other issues raised by our members.

In all our CDS meetings I have reminded executives of their duty to pay rebrief fees when major storyline changes occur that a writer could not have foreseen.



## WGGGB continues to negotiate minimum terms for writers with the BBC

Photo: Shutterstock.com/mikecphoto



Members should all be aware that they have a right, and should demand, these fees.

As always, we are keen to hear about our members' experiences, positive and negative. Please feel free to get in touch with me by email: [tv@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:tv@writersguild.org.uk)

## WRITERS ON 'AUTHORED' SHOWS

In recent months we have received complaints about the way writers on individual episodes are treated on shows where there is a lead writer acting as a showrunner. This current trend has thrown up several problems, including individual writers losing remuneration when their scripts are rewritten.

It appears that the writers' room system is failing to thrive here – unlike in the States, where it is more established – as so few British companies can afford the commitment of hiring writers to come in and work all day, every day. Additionally, British writers have little experience of, or training in, a writer-showrunner system.

We plan to create a WGGB best practice guide for working with writer-showrunners, and would welcome our members' comments (please email me on [tv@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:tv@writersguild.org.uk)).

## GENDER EQUALITY

The dismayingly low number of female writers being handed major commissions was highlighted in March this year in an open letter by WGGB's Deputy Co-Chair Lisa Holdsworth and supported by 76 female writers. The letter became a big story in the media and hit the front page of *Broadcast*.

An independent report commissioned by WGGB and funded by ALCS, launched in May this year, showed clearly that female writers are under-represented across film and TV, in all channels and genres. What is even more thought-provoking is the fact that there has been next to no improvement in the last 10 years.

Our new campaign, Equality Writes, launched off the back of this report, and we hope to expand the campaign to address problems faced by other under-represented writing groups – BAME writers, writers with disabilities, LGBT+ writers and working-class writers.

## PROJECT DIAMOND

Along with sister unions BECTU and the NUJ, WGGB has been boycotting the broadcasters' Project Diamond diversity monitoring initiative – until they release programme-level data. Until there is an improvement in the nature and quality of the information available to us, we will not accept Diamond statistics as an accurate picture of the diversity of freelance TV writers. However, we are working with broadcasters and the Creative Diversity Network, who set up Project Diamond, to resolve our concerns. And WGGB is still recommending that members fill in the Project Diamond monitoring forms.

## WRITERS' GUILD AWARDS 2018

Congratulations to the winners of the Writers' Guild Awards this year, across five TV categories. You can see the full list on the WGGB website: [www.writersguild.org.uk/category/awards](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/category/awards)

The awards are judged by volunteers, all of whom are busy professional writers themselves. Many thanks to the TV Jury Chairs this year: Darren Jones, Samantha Doland-de Vaux, Karin Young and Lisa Holdsworth.

WGGB members interested in becoming a juror or jury chair for the 2019 Awards, please contact [tv@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:tv@writersguild.org.uk)

Finally, WGGB undertook a major staffing restructure last year. As TV Chair I have served on various staff appointment panels and it's exciting to see the union increasing its negotiation and campaigning strength. The TV Committee would like to congratulate Ellie Peers on her appointment as General Secretary. We welcome Lesley Gannon as the new Assistant General Secretary, and John Sailing as Organiser, Casework and Campaigns. Thanks also to Sarah Woodley, Kate Glasspool and Rose Cooney for their continued hard work.

---

Welcome to new members of the TV Committee  
Sophie Petzal, Darren Jones and Amy Roberts.  
And my eternal gratitude to ongoing TV Committee  
members: Jenny Davis, Kate Delin, Neil Forsyth,  
Henrietta Hardy, Shai Hussain, Matt Leys,  
Katharine Way and Miranda Walker, with a special  
shout out to Maggie Innes and the indefatigable  
Lisa Holdsworth.

**Emma Reeves**  
**Chair**

---



**The Taboo writing team scooped up one of five  
TV gongs at the 2018 Writers' Guild Awards, for  
Best Long Form TV Drama**

Photo: Matt Writtle



**David Edgar (left) and Jenifer Toksvig (right), Theatre Co-Chairs**

## **THEATRE**

Our main achievement this year has been conducting a major research project on the way that British theatres relate to playwrights. In addition, we have continued to negotiate with UK Theatre (UKT) about non-compliance with our agreement, met with the Arts Council and organised public meetings to promote playwriting and playwrights.

Our research project arose out of the need to update our *Engaging with Theatres* guideline booklet, which was published in 2011 (alongside our contracts booklet *Agreements and Contracts*). Because of the rapidly changing context in which theatres develop plays, this is now seriously out-of-date. Accordingly, it was decided to conduct a survey of theatres and venues, to devote our annual Literary Managers' Forum in London (on 15 September 2017) to a discussion of its findings, and to hold a second meeting in Manchester (on 13 November) to conduct a wider-ranging discussion of current and best practice. The London meeting was held at the Almeida Theatre and attended by 30 literary managers and 12 playwrights; the Manchester meeting was held at the Royal Exchange Theatre, in collaboration with its dramaturg Suzanne Bell. It was attended by 15 literary managers, 12 playwrights, and six facilitators from the Theatre Committee.

The survey was sent to 124 theatres and venues, of whom 60 replied. The wealth of data produced by the survey and discussions has been codified, and a summary of its findings published in a report by Theatre Committee Co-Chair Jenifer Toksvig. The report contains a summary of current practice in the development of new writing in theatres (from initial contact with theatres via various forms of engagement

to full-scale commissions) and recommendations for future best practice (including a Guild version of the Kitemark to confirm such practice). It will form the basis of a new edition of *Engaging with Theatres*.

On pay and conditions: we have negotiated increased rates for playwrights with the TNC (National Theatre, RSC and Royal Court), UK Theatre and the Independent Theatre Council.

We have continued to meet with UK Theatre (regional theatres, subsidised touring companies and London medium-scale theatres) to discuss the issue of non-compliance with the WGGB agreement. Due to UKT's difficulties in fielding full teams of negotiators, these negotiations continue to make slow progress. The deal on offer to UKT contains a new deal for studio theatres, a changed definition of non-commissioned plays, improvements in rehearsal attendance payments and a robust system of enforcement. We have had two meetings with a small number of UKT negotiators, on 30 June 2017 and 26 April 2018, and another meeting is planned, at which we hope to achieve agreement. However, we are pleased to note that our campaign has had an effect, in that theatres are becoming more compliant with the agreement.

We continue to promote our RIGHTS cards, outlining the most important provisions of our agreements with theatres, and encouraging playwrights and their agents to make sure theatres honour them.

In addition, we are seeking to revise our agreement with the Independent Theatre Council, and to embark on negotiations with the Theatres National Committee theatres (the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Court) to incorporate terms and conditions on the live streaming of plays into our agreements. We retain an ambition to achieve an agreement in the commercial sector.



We continued to hold discussions with Stage Directors UK (SDUK) about their campaign to improve the pay and conditions of stage directors. We support this campaign, but we are concerned that directors' grievances are not met at the expense of our royalty and copyright agreements. In collaboration with Equity, SDUK is now in negotiation with UKT and the Society of London Theatres (SOLT), and SDUK is consulting us about clauses which might infringe playwrights' rights.

Having reactivated our once regular meetings with the Arts Council England (ACE), in 2016, we met ACE's Neil Darlison (Director of Theatre) and Alex James (Relationship Manager for London) on 1 June 2017, and another meeting is planned (with new Director of Theatre Tarek Iskander) on 31 May 2018. Issues raised included the preservation of the single-voice writer, and the extent to which ACE can insist that funded companies use and comply with union agreements. A new 'fair pay' clause in theatres' agreements with ACE was noted and welcomed. The ACE delegation is led by Richard Pinner, who continues to pursue a revival of his ground-breaking writer development programme, Playwrights' Progress.

The Committee mounted two public Meet the Playwrights events. The first was in London on 12 June 2017, where the panel was Charlene James, Bryony Lavery and Ali Taylor. The second was at Derby Playhouse on 20 February 2018, where the panel was Amanda Whittington, Amelia Bullmore and Zodwa Nyoni. The event was chaired by Nick Wood.

On 2 February 2018, our annual Olwen Wymark Awards were held, honouring individuals and organisations which have made a particularly strong contribution to playwrights and playwriting. As usual, this was organised by David James, and proved – as ever – one of the highlights of our year. This year there were 26 attendees and nine winners: Northern Broadsides Executive Director Sue Andrews (nominated by Debbie McAndrew), freelance trainer, curator and author Ghislaine Kenyon (nominated by Diane Samuels), playwright Nicola McCartney (nominated by Mary Jane Wells), actor Jon McKenna (nominated by Anthony Mariani), director, dramaturg and actor trainer Deirdre McLaughlin (nominated by Poppy Corbett), actors and campaigners Emma Manton and Matthew Woodyatt (nominated by Jenifer Toksvig), director John Retallack (nominated by Zena Forster), Salisbury Playhouse's Artistic Director Angela Street (nominated by Pippa Roberts), and the Salon Collective and its Artistic Director Dominic Kelly (nominated by Mike Elliston).

At the WGGB Awards on 15 January 2018, the Guild awarded its Outstanding Contribution to Writing Award to playwright Caryl Churchill. The award was presented by Guild member Lucy Kirkwood, who won the Best Play Award for *The Children*. Sarah McDonald-Hughes won the award for Best Play for Young Audiences with *How to Be a Kid*. Jenifer Toksvig has now set up a structure for nominating a new award for Musical Bookwriting. The Musical Theatre Kit – jointly developed by Jenifer Toksvig with the Musicians' Union – was launched at the National Theatre on 12 March 2018.

We have retained the collegiate structure of the Committee and its work. David Edgar and Jenifer Toksvig are Co-Chairs, with Jenifer representing theatre on the EC. David and Nick Wood are our TNC/UKT negotiators, with Sarah Woods, Vanessa Brooks and Dan Rebellato joining the team. Along with Vanessa and Jenifer, Poppy Corbett is joining the ITC negotiating team. Richard Pinner leads on the Awards (last year's readers were Debbie McAndrew, Roy Kendall, Amelia Bullmore, Lisa Evans, Brian McAvera, David James, Vicky Ireland and Nick Wood).

We are grateful to all Committee members for their work and their enthusiasm, as well as to Guild staff. General Secretary Ellie Peers plays a crucial role on our negotiating teams.

The full Committee is Amelia Bullmore, Brian McAvera, David Edgar, Deborah McAndrew, Jenifer Toksvig, Lisa Evans, Nick Wood, Richard Pinner, Roy Kendall, Sarah Woods, Vanessa Brooks and Adrian Beckingham. Aline Waites and Robin Soans left during the year, and Jan Woolf has joined. The Committee and the Negotiating Team expressed its particular gratitude to Robin Soans for his vital work for the Committee and for playwrights over many years.

### **David Edgar and Jenifer Toksvig Co-Chairs**

## VIDEOGAMES

Aside from supporting the work necessary for the WGGB's Best Writing in a Videogame Award, the Committee has been busy looking at a number of key initiatives aimed at increasing recruitment and opening up the videogames industry to a wider range of writers.

The Committee's annual panel event took place in December 2017 and focused on the topic of making and building a career in videogames writing. It was well-attended, received great feedback and a number of the people who came along have stayed in touch with Committee members. This has been followed by other social events that have been used to promote the WGGB videogames guidelines and to make contact with games writers on behalf of the union.

Moving forward from 2018 into 2019, the Committee has begun a review of the survey used as the basis for the WGGB videogames guidelines. Once completed this survey will be sent out to assess the current state of the industry. As the videogames sector continues to evolve quickly, the Committee wishes to ensure these guidelines are kept up-to-date. It is hoped that this revision will form the central pillar of a new recruitment drive to bring more videogames writers into the WGGB.

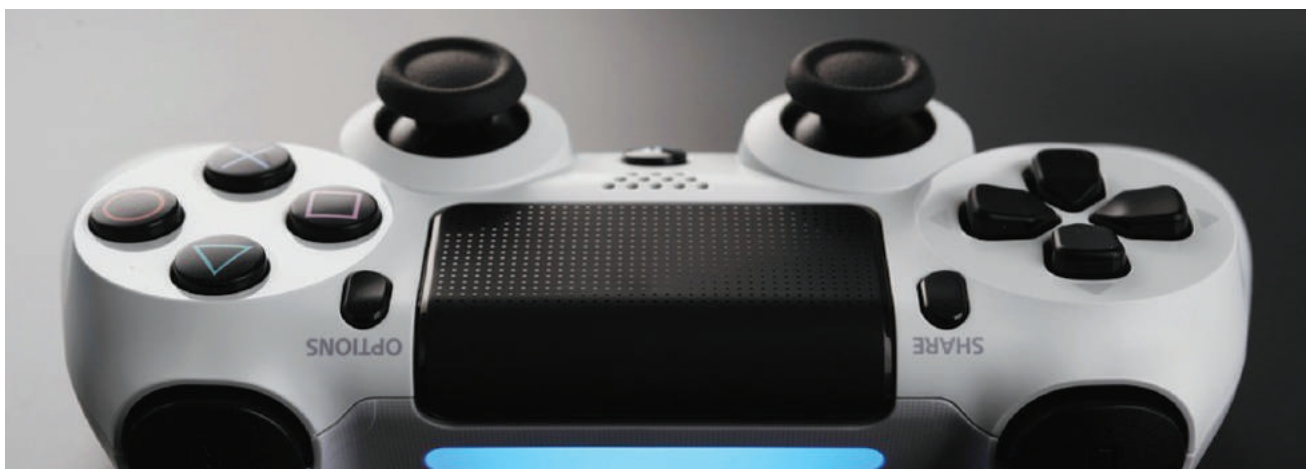


Sadly, the Committee's Chair Luke Openshaw stepped down partway through the year. The Committee thanks him for the hard work, dedication and enthusiasm he brought to the role.

Any member interested in leading WGGB's work in the area should do one of the following:

- Before 31 May 2018, visit [www.writersguild.org.uk/birmingham-to-host-this-years-agm/](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/birmingham-to-host-this-years-agm/) and download the Vacancies information/form.
- After 31 May 2018, email [admin@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:admin@writersguild.org.uk) for an update/further details (please put Videogames Chair vacancy in the subject field).

**Andrew S. Walsh**  
On behalf of the Videogames Committee



**The Videogames Committee is currently revising its guidelines for games writers**

Photo: Shutterstock.com/para

# Regional and branch reports

## EAST MIDLANDS

The priority for the region is the reinvigoration of the Committee and election of a new East Midlands Chair. Anyone who is interested in leading WGGB's work in the area (or indeed would like to make a contribution to the Committee) should do one of the following:

- Before 31 May 2018, visit [www.writersguild.org.uk/birmingham-to-host-this-years-agm/](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/birmingham-to-host-this-years-agm/) and download the Vacancies information/form.
- After 31 May 2018, email [admin@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:admin@writersguild.org.uk) for an update/further details (please put East Midlands Chair vacancy in the subject field).

## LONDON & SOUTH EAST

This was my first year as Chair of the London and South East Committee as I took up the position in October 2017.

The Committee meets on a monthly basis. We are lucky in that the majority of WGGB members live in or are based in London, however we are looking at co-hosting an event in another area of the country.

Events in the past year have included:

- Tour of Pinewood Studios and talk from producer Iain Smith.
- We held a Meet the Playwrights event, which was well-attended and received good audience feedback.
- Former Committee Co-Chair Poppy Corbett gave a talk at the University of Greenwich which featured a WGGB information stand.

We are aiming to do more events this coming year including one for new members.



I'd like to thank Poppy Corbett and Jamie Rhodes, Co-Chairs of the London and South East Committee before me. Our current Committee members are Katharine Way and Piers Beckley. We are looking for more Committee members and if you'd like to get involved please email me at [londonse@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:londonse@writersguild.org.uk)

**Gary Thomas**  
Chair



**Meet the Playwrights was co-hosted by the London and South East and Theatre Committees**



---

## NORTH WEST (MANCHESTER & LANCASHIRE)

The Chair of this Committee is currently vacant. Anyone who is interested in leading WGGB's work in the area (or indeed would like to make a contribution to the Committee) should do one of the following:

- Before 31 May 2018, visit [www.writersguild.org.uk/birmingham-to-host-this-years-agm/](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/birmingham-to-host-this-years-agm/) and download the Vacancies information/form.
- After 31 May 2018, email [admin@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:admin@writersguild.org.uk) for an update/further details (please put Manchester and Lancashire Chair vacancy in the subject field).

## NORTH WEST (MERSEYSIDE)

The Chair of this Committee is currently vacant. Anyone who is interested in leading WGGB's work in the area (or indeed would like to make a contribution to the Committee) should do one of the following:

- Before 31 May 2018, visit [www.writersguild.org.uk/birmingham-to-host-this-years-agm/](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/birmingham-to-host-this-years-agm/) and download the Vacancies information/form.
- After 31 May 2018, email [admin@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:admin@writersguild.org.uk) for an update/further details (please put Merseyside Chair vacancy in the subject field).



## SCOTLAND

### EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE 2017

We once more took a stand at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Participants Fair, an event which is always very popular with Fringe-goers and takes place in the middle of the hugely busy Edinburgh Fringe. As always it's a great opportunity to chat with existing and prospective members about their work and the WGGB.

### CROSS-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP (CGP) ON CULTURE, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT, HOLYROOD

The CPG on Culture meets quarterly and is chaired by two Members of the Scottish Parliament. It is a valuable forum for discussion of arts-related topics in Scotland.

### EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (EIFF)

A pilot scheme ran at the 2017 EIFF to help foster new relationships between writers and producers. I attended a very well-run event which generated new contacts and I hope the scheme is run again at this year's festival.

## CONSULTATION ON NEW BBC CHANNEL IN SCOTLAND

WGGB General Secretary Ellie Peers and I attended a meeting in Glasgow with key BBC personnel in September 2017 to discuss the new BBC channel being proposed for Scotland. Once Ofcom consent has been granted, broadcasting should begin in late 2018, hopefully opening up many new opportunities for drama and comedy scriptwriters based in Scotland.

## LITERATURE ALLIANCE SCOTLAND (LAS)

WGGB member Julie Ann Thomason has represented WGGB on the LAS for many years. They meet four times a year, with three meetings in Edinburgh and one in another Scottish city, normally Glasgow.

## CULTURE COUNTS

The WGGB is a core member of this lobbying organisation, whose main areas of focus are arts policy and funding.

### Alistair Rutherford Outgoing Chair

If you are interested in leading WGGB's work in Scotland please do one of the following:

- Before 31 May 2018, visit [www.writersguild.org.uk/birmingham-to-host-this-years-agm/](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/birmingham-to-host-this-years-agm/) and download the Vacancies information/form.
- After 31 May 2018, email [admin@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:admin@writersguild.org.uk) for an update/further details (please put Scottish Chair vacancy in the subject field).



**WGGB continued its presence at the Edinburgh Fringe this year**

Photo: Shutterstock.com/lvica Drusany

## SOUTH WEST (DEVON AND CORNWALL)

As I took over the Chair of the region in 2017, most of this report is looking forward to what we have got planned in the next 12 months.

In the coming year, the South West (Devon and Cornwall) Branch is hosting a Celebration of Writers series of events, from Exeter to Penzance, with lots of stops in between. These pop-up events will create a local focus for all the West Country writing talent that is out there. The aim is to form an ongoing relationship with as many established and aspiring writers as possible.

Whether you are a WGGB member already or thinking of joining, writing in TV, film, theatre, radio, books or videogames, come along and get involved.



There will be live reading opportunities, a chance to meet other writers, find out more about WGGB, join up if you are not a member, and let us know what you think we could be doing locally for writers.

The events are free and to find out more just email: [swdc@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:swdc@writersguild.org.uk)

**Malcolm Kat**  
**Chair**



**The Celebration of Writers series of pop-up events is touring Cornwall and Devon in 2018**

Photo: Shutterstock.com/lanWoolcock

## SOUTH WEST (WESSEX)

It is still early days for me as the South West (Wessex) Chair, but I have plans for the future, and remain hopeful that I can build WGGB's presence in the region.

I'm currently accruing contacts – and gaining insights into prose and publishing. The union is sometimes seen, I think perhaps unfairly, as prioritising scripted entertainment, and I would like to do my bit in changing that at a local level.

My longer-term aim is to continue to act as something of a conduit, and a voice for all writers in the region.

**Martin Day**  
**Chair**





## WALES

The situation for writers in Wales continues to be challenging, opportunities scarce and the landscape still in flux. This is particularly true in broadcasting, where changes in the funding of the S4C channel have finally been agreed, following a review by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). How this will work out (and what stability it will offer) remains to be seen.

The channel will be entirely publicly funded, through the BBC, from 2022 onwards, following the DCMS review – a decision which has had a very mixed reception for many reasons, but primarily concerning S4C's editorial independence, funding levels and guarantees. It has also raised calls for broadcasting to be devolved to the Welsh Senedd. TAC (the Welsh TV, film and producers body) wants guarantees that from 2022-23 S4C's total TV Licence Fee funding will not be less than the combined total funding, which currently comes from the Licence Fee plus the DCMS grant, and that it will be inflation-linked.

In the meantime, S4C has approached WGGB to discuss new ways to access and broadcast its archive. It is an extremely complicated issue and will need detailed examination as the remuneration S4C has been proposing so far for writers has been unacceptable.

The Welsh Committee would like to thank WGGB General Secretary Ellie Peers for her experience, advice, support and commitment to negotiating on these issues.

On another front, negotiations are still pending with the BBC regarding *Pobol y Cwm* and there has been an attempt to drastically reduce storyliners' payments, which we have rejected.



Other issues in broadcasting are (still) the question of writers being asked by major organisations to undertake development work with no payment, and an increasing tendency for script editors on TV series to be asked to write scripts without being paid additional fees. The Committee is seeking to discuss these issues with broadcasters and TAC. Other long-standing contractual issues with the latter have finally been agreed this year thanks to Ellie Peers.

In theatre, the Committee has been busy focusing on new writing in Wales, where opportunities – particularly in the Welsh language – are diminishing. It has now been confirmed by the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) that new writing is no longer part of the formal remit of the Sherman Theatre, despite this being the original arrangement, following its absorption of Sgript Cymru. The question has arisen of where the funding which was meant to be devoted to new writing has been spent.

The issue of dedicated funding and a strategy for the development of new and original writing by Welsh writers – in both English and Welsh – is at least now finally on the agenda. Members of the Committee have met with senior ACW officers and the Chair of ACW spoke to the Committee in April, but no concrete proposals have yet been made. Again, the Welsh Committee would like to thank Ellie Peers, and in particular the WGGB Theatre Committee, for their support and help over this complex issue.



**Writers in Wales are facing pressure across the board and the Welsh Committee has been working hard on their behalf this year**

Photo: Shutterstock.com/StephenRees

---

CULT Cymru (Creative Unions Learning Together) has had its Wales Union Learning Fund funding renewed for at least another year, and our role in it continues, holding workshops on various topics. The Committee also continues to run and host recruitment events whenever possible.

The Committee would like to warmly congratulate Gary Owen on his Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Affiliate Theatre for *Killology*, and Neil Docking with *The Revlon Girl* for his Olivier nomination in the same category.

Finally, it was with great sadness that members in Wales learned of the death of one of our most accomplished and prolific playwrights, Meic Povey, who died of cancer on 5 December 2017 aged 67. Both he and his writing will be deeply missed by many.

As outgoing Chair, having served the maximum six years allowed, I would like to particularly thank Ellie Peers and the stalwarts on the Welsh Committee for their commitment, and again, would send out a plea to those writers in Wales who could contribute more actively to our work – particularly younger members. Writers in Wales are facing serious pressure across the board and from all directions at the moment, and for many different reasons: so please, use your union, support your Committee. We need to work together to secure a future for our art.

**Manon Eames**  
**Chair**

---

## WEST MIDLANDS

We've had personnel changes this year as the previous regional representative, William Gallagher, was elected as WGGB Deputy Co-Chair. He succeeds Tim Stimpson, who is now working with me in my role as the new West Midlands representative.

The new Committee continues our policy of working with local arts organisations and this has seen us involved in careers fairs with the Royal Television Society and Arts Connect.

We've also spoken at Writing East Midlands events and worked with Writing West Midlands on their now twice-yearly Birmingham Literature Festival and annual National Writers' Conference.



This work is important but it means we've had fewer public events than we would like. We've had another Networking social event and plan more of these.

**Chris Jury**  
**Chair**

## YORKSHIRE & NORTH EAST

It's been a period of transition in our region, as Lisa Holdsworth – the previous Chair for Yorkshire and North East – has become WGGB Deputy Co-Chair, and has handed me the baton. It's still fairly early days, but I have already really enjoyed representing local writers and getting to know some new names. There is something incredibly satisfying in knowing you've helped a member avoid being ripped off or given useful advice that might help a career move forward. It's an honour to help fellow writers with the problems that we all face regularly.

Looking back over the past 12 months, the highlight was undoubtedly the event held by WGGB and the Northern Film School in Leeds on the Future of UK Television Writing last summer. Organised and chaired by Lisa Holdsworth, a star-studded panel including writers Dominic Minghella, Sophie Petzal, Vinay Patel and Amy Roberts attracted a large and engaged audience and was a roaring success. We'd love to do more events like these in future, so if you have any ideas about an event exploring any medium – radio, TV, film, theatre, fiction, videogames – then please do get in touch by email:

[yorksne@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:yorksne@writersguild.org.uk)

The Writers' Guild has been involved locally in the last year with working to try to bring *Emmerdale* writers' pay into line with their *Coronation Street* colleagues. *Emmerdale* is an important employer



for many writers in the region and WGGB is in negotiations with senior ITV management to secure a positive outcome.

In the coming months, I'm planning to set up a regular newsletter for local members, promoting our own work and providing information about opportunities and events in our region. Our job is solitary enough as it is, and we all know the extra challenges of working outside London, so I think anything that gives us a sense of community is welcome. I would love your input, ideas and feedback on this or any other matter.

I look forward to representing Yorkshire and the North East in the coming year. It's a pleasure to be working for you on behalf of the Writers' Guild.

You can contact me by email on:

[yorksne@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:yorksne@writersguild.org.uk)

**David Allison**  
Chair



**The Future of UK Television Writing event in Leeds last summer featured a stellar panel of writers**

Photo: Paul Harness Photography



# Other reports

## EDITORIAL & COMMUNICATIONS

The Editorial and Communications Committee helps set the communications strategy for the WGGB.

Over the last year, we achieved the following:

- Connected with other creative unions to share best practice
- Brought our digital strategy up-to-date
- Started to measure and manage our social media presence
- Identified stakeholder groups for communications

The Committee is currently working on the following projects:

- Advice sheets on the appropriateness of writers volunteering their time for free
- The Diamond anniversary of the WGGB
- Improving our social media footprint
- Maximising our impact with external policymakers and influencers
- Ensuring that our successes are more widely known to the public



If you think you could help the Editorial and Communications Committee on these – or any other projects – we are always looking for new members. You don't have to have any experience, and it only takes a few hours each month. Just email [editorial@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:editorial@writersguild.org.uk)

Thanks to the following people who served on the Committee this year: Poppy Corbett, Thom Fell, Lesley Gannon, Kate Glasspool, Susannah Saary, John Sailing, Jenifer Toksvig and Sarah Woodley.

**Piers Beckley**  
**Chair**



**This year the Editorial and Communications Committee has brought our digital strategy up-to-date**

Photo: Shutterstock.com

# Obituaries

WGGB has sadly lost some long-standing members in 2017-18, who have contributed to the strength of the union over many years. We would like to remember all of the following members, listed below (obituaries can be found on our website: [www.writersguild.org.uk/category/obituaries/](http://www.writersguild.org.uk/category/obituaries/)).

We have also printed a speech given at the Writers' Guild Awards 2018 ceremony by WGGB Chair Gail Renard, in commemoration of Rosemary Anne Sisson.



**Ronald Chesney**



**Meic Povey**



**Rosemary Anne Sisson**



**Peter Whalley**

---

## ROSEMARY ANNE SISSON REMEMBERED AT THE WRITERS' GUILD AWARDS 2018 BY WGGB CHAIR GAIL RENARD

Rosemary Anne Sisson, or Romy as she was known to all her friends, was a former Writers' Guild Chair, President, activist and also the best role model any of us could have had.

Romy was a prolific playwright, author and screenwriter. Her career was vast and varied. When she started, she co-authored a play, *A Ghost On Tiptoe*, with Robert Morley. She told me she learned a lot and the luncheons were wonderful.

On television, she wrote for *Upstairs, Downstairs*, *The Duchess of Duke Street*, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* and how long have you got?

Romy cocked a snook at ageism. Late in her career, she wrote *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* for George Lucas. She took great pride in wearing her Lucasfilm silk bomber jacket well into her late 70s.

She was delighted that she wrote *Murder, She Wrote* when Angela Lansbury and she were both nearly 80.

Did I mention Romy also wrote films starring Bette Davis, David Niven and Jodie Foster?

Yet in her spare time she worked ceaselessly for the Guild and negotiated some of the television agreements which we still benefit from today.

Once, with Guild support, Romy and six other writers brought a case of copyright infringement against a major television company. They claimed their work had been used without credit or payment.

Romy refused to back down. The Guild won the case but coincidentally Romy's work dried up shortly after.

Romy of course wrote to the company and asked if she was on an unofficial blacklist? The company of course denied it. She was soon offered work again. You didn't mess with Romy.



**Rosemary Anne Sisson, pictured  
on the right with former WGGB  
General Secretary Bernie Corbett**

When the new Broadcasting Act was passed in the early 90s, some disreputable people without any credentials – or money – set themselves up as independent producers. Romy wrote:

“A producer who has no money is not a producer but a wannabee, and if he commissions work without paying for it, he is a crook.”

Romy was part of the Guild negotiating team who, along with the PMA, gave us the first PACT agreement, which lays out the terms for writers when working with independent producers. We all have a lot to thank her for.

Till the end of her life, Romy was passionate about the Guild and attended AGMs. No one knew our Rule Book better than her.

She was the first person I ran to with Guild news and gossip and, most importantly, for wise counsel. I miss Romy's enthusiasm, friendship and also her talent.



**Published by The Writers' Guild of Great  
Britain, 134 Tooley Street, London SE1 2TU,  
June 2018**

The Writers' Guild of Great Britain has made best efforts to ensure all information in this annual report is correct at the time of going to press.

Up-to-date news can be found on the WGGB website:  
**[www.writersguild.org.uk](http://www.writersguild.org.uk)**

Design: **[www.savageandgray.co.uk](http://www.savageandgray.co.uk)**

Please contact us if you need a large-print or text-only version of this report.

Email: **[admin@writersguild.org.uk](mailto:admin@writersguild.org.uk)**

Tel: **020 7833 0777**