THE GOOD NEWS:

RUTH KELLY SAYS, ‘LABOUR WILL DEVELOP OPTIONS FOR THE ELECTRIFICATION OF OUR RAILWAYS – AND I’VE ASKED NETWORK RAIL TO CONSIDER THE CASE FOR NEW – POSSIBLY HIGH-SPEED – LINES.’

THE BAD NEWS?

SHE RESIGNED AS TRANSPORT MINISTER FIVE MINUTES LATER!

THE LESSON?

OUR ELECTRIFICATION CAMPAIGN HASN’T ENDED. IT’S JUST BEGUN!
WANTED

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IN THE August 2007 issue of the Journal, we welcomed new Transport Minister Ruth Kelly. This month, after she’s been in the job for shortly over a year, we bid her farewell. We got on well with Ruth when we met her. She seemed a refreshingly open person in the strange world of politics.

Why ‘strange’? Well, I’ve just got back from the Labour Party conference as this Journal goes to press, and I have to say how disappointing it was to discover a gathering obsessed with personalities and individuals, rather than policies and political direction. Politics is far too serious to be treated like a beauty contest.

You see, I don’t think it matters terribly if the Prime Minister is male or female, black or white, Scottish or from Timbuktu. What concerns us far more is what that person would do if he or she became Prime Minister. It’s not as if we’re inviting them round for dinner, is it? We are employing them to do a job for us.

I don’t want a man with a nice speaking voice: I want someone who is going to be sympathetic and understanding to the elderly and infirm. I don’t want a chap with a nice haircut: I want someone who will promote the rail industry. I don’t care how white the PM’s teeth are: I want him to tax the speculators and the rich rather than working people. It worries me that we trivialise politics by making it about gossip and rumour. Extremists like the BNP thrive on people who believe politics is pointless.

I have to say that the media plays a regrettable role in all this. When Ruth Kelly resigned, she pointed out that she was doing so because she had four small children and being a government minister means she seldom saw them. In my book, that’s perfectly understandable. But the media, desperate for a spicy story, pretended not to believe her. They suggested she’s gone because she sided with Miliband and wanted to see Brown replaced. Such reporting is unfair and irresponsible – not to mention untrue.

Far more interesting, and far less commented upon, was Ruth’s conference speech which included a commitment for Labour to ‘develop options for a rolling programme of electrification of our railways’ and revealed that she’s asked Network Rail to consider the case for new lines – including high speed.

That is real news – and personally I’m sorry that Ruth Kelly won’t be there to see it through.

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY
ASLEF’s the Underground union!

THE last 12 months has seen a surge in new members joining ASLEF on London Underground. Although a large majority of drivers are members of our Union, LUL has historically had many drivers who are in the so-called “cheap alternative”.

District Organiser Steve Grant, EC member Terry Wilkinson and the ASLEF Trains Council reps have now made recruitment a priority. We started by going through our branch lists, making sure they were up to date, and comparing them with depot establishment lists. That meant we got an accurate picture of where our strengths and weaknesses are. After all it’s difficult to target people to join if you don’t actually know who the non-members are!

In the past we may have been a little complacent about recruitment in some areas. There was a bit of an attitude of “well if they don’t want to join us, we aren’t going to ask them.” Now we are making a concentrated effort to explain to every driver why it’s important to be in ASLEF.

We have also worked hard to improve communication, both by producing regular combine wide bulletins, and asking branches to work on local news letters and e-mail lists. An ASLEF agreement book was produced for every member along with LUL specific material as part of the “More than just a Union” campaign. We are also producing a special District 8 badge to make sure that our members are proudly showing off their membership at work. It’s important that recruitment isn’t just seen as the job of the branch secretary or the senior reps. The best recruiters are often local activists who explain to their colleagues why they themselves joined ASLEF. We want as many members as possible to carry membership forms with them and encourage their workmates to join.

Interestingly, those joining include both brand new recruits to the grade and long established drivers. One of the key reasons is that ASLEF is the only union that allows drivers to elect their own reps. If you are a member of another union on LUL, then your reps are often elected by people who work in different grades, or even for different companies. “I was a member of another Union for many years”, one Central line driver told me, “There was a lot of talking big and banging the table, but no results. I came to realise that ASLEF was the only Union that is focused on looking after drivers.”

No organisation will ever be perfect, and there will always be lots we can do to make our Union better. Every driver who joins ASLEF makes us stronger and better able to protect our conditions at work. So next time you happen to be chatting to someone in the mess room, ask them “So, have you joined ASLEF yet?”

Short Rails

TEXTING BLAMED FOR 25 DEAD IN US TRAIN CRASH

Investigators into last month’s train crash in California which killed 25 people say that the driver may have been using his mobile phone to text messages as he drove through a red light. The Metrolink passenger train was carrying 222 passengers between Los Angeles and Moorpark when it smashed into an oncoming freight train. The impact drove the Metrolink engine back inside the front carriage.

The driver – Robert Sanchez - was among the 25 dead, and a further 130 people were injured. The incident has led for calls to make the use of mobiles phones a criminal offence with a penalty of £11,000 for an infringement.

UNION ADVISES 40 MPH MAX AFTER IVRS FAILURE

The union last month advised members driving trains between Wingfield and Taptont to adhere to a 40 mph maximum speed because of concerns about IVRS - the emergency communications tool which guarantees contact between all train drivers in the area and the signaler.

The union was informed by representatives of the failure of the IVRS system for over a mile south of Clay Cross Tunnel and of further problems and unreliability in the whole stretch of track between Wingfield and Taptont.

Accordingly, it advised members driving in the area to avoid running at speeds in excess of 40 mph. This affected trains on the main line between Chesterfield and Derby, including locos from at least eight companies, including Crosscountry, East Midlands, Northern Rail and three freight companies.

The union maintained that this was vital in order to ensure the safety of its members and the travelling public.

ASLEF advised Network Rail of its concerns in relation to trains being operated at line speed through axle counter areas where the IVRS is not working and is seeking an urgent response before it feels able to reconsider the advice it has given to its members.

SADDAM’S TRAIN BACK ON THE TRACKS

A luxury train which once belonged to Saddam Hussein is to be brought back into service on the Baghdad to Basra line. Iraqi railways have recommis-

Saddam’s train which once belonged to Saddam Hussein is to be brought back into service on the Baghdad to Basra line. Iraqi railways have recommis-
ASLEF says ‘we’ll talk to the Tories’

AT this week’s TUC the biggest union in the country – Unite – said that it wasn’t prepared to talk to the Tories. ASLEF took a different line. General Secretary Keith Norman said he would talk to anyone if he thought it would improve the prospects and conditions of UK train drivers.

The differences emerged as it was revealed that several unions had already held discussions with Richard Balfe, (above) who is the Conservatives ‘trade union envoy’. Last March Mr Balfe became the first elected politician to abandon Labour for the Tories for 25 years. Up to that point he had been the longest-serving Labour member of the European Parliament.

Keith says that his willingness to discuss the future of rail and the conditions of train drivers with David Cameron’s representatives by no means indicates that he has resigned himself to Labour losing the next election. ‘It would be foolish to give up on an election that is two years away,’ he said. ‘There is plenty of time for Labour to change and recover. Being traditional Labour supporters doesn’t conflict with us talking to other parties.’

ASLEF is a very small donor to Labour, but a number of unions who make huge donations support the union’s position. The GMB, Unison, USDAW and the CWU have already met Mr Balfe. ‘Last time the Tories were in government we complained that they didn’t speak to us,’ Keith says. ‘It is hardly logical that we now refuse to speak to them!’

Keith confirmed that ASLEF had held meetings with Boris Johnson’s advisors. ‘If you don’t speak to people, you can hardly blame them for ignoring you. We’d speak to the devil incarnate if it was for the benefit of our members,’ he said, before joking that it looks as if we might have to!

The only statement from the Cameron camp about rail at the moment is that they are ‘considering a feasibility study for high speed rail’. ‘Clearly if this is as far as their thinking has developed, they need our help,’ Keith declared.

How to challenge rail travel – open a railway!

IF YOU can’t fight them – join them! That seems to be the message from Air France. The company has been losing a lot of ground to Eurostar over recent months, both in terms of the environment and of efficiency. It seems to be a sign that rail is very much in the ascendancy that Air France is getting ready to run a high-speed rail service to Paris.

Eurostar – whose traffic has risen by 18% in the first half of 2008 - has a monopoly over the route until the end of next year. After that, Air France has plans to develop a competitor that will run at 40 miles an hour faster than the current trains – reaching 224 mph.

It is a clear sign that passengers are seeing the benefits of rail over air travel,’ says Keith Norman. ‘I’m not sure how easily airlines can convert themselves into train operators – but so long as they employ train drivers, I’m not too worried.’

Eurostar are taking the same line. ‘We’ll compete with Air France whether they use wings or wheels,’ a spokesperson said.

There are rumours that Virgin Atlantic is also considering a European rail service, and Deutsche Bahn has plans for a London to Cologne route.

Make way for trucks – shut cycle paths!

UNLIKE the UK, where transport minister Ruth Kelly has ruled out trials of monster trucks, Denmark is preparing to allow them an outing. Even the trial is to cost money, as they need to rebuild road junctions to accommodate these vast lorries. In a move hardly calculated to win over the green lobby, the alterations to the roads are to be financed with funds originally intended for cycling lanes!

It’s back to work for lottery winner Carl

ASLEF member Carl France is a man with his feet firmly on the floor. When he won £6.9 million on the Lottery he took 10 months off work – but now he’s back on the job.

Carl says, ‘I know some people might think I’m mad - but trains are in my blood. My father and grandfather worked on the railways all their lives. I couldn’t spend the rest of my life on holiday.’

He had a few months in various resorts in Greece and Spain, but he says he found himself ‘itching to get back to work’. He had wanted to return as a train driver, but sadly failed a medical and had to settle for a job as a resource manager at the head office of Arriva Trains, where he deals with rotas.

He said: “I was disappointed to be told that I could not go back as a driver because my hearing wasn’t 100% - but it’s good to be back working with trains and my old workmates.’

Always a popular figure at work, Carl wasn’t swayed by what he was ‘supposed to do’ with his money. He said he could have moved anywhere in the world, but asks, ‘Why would we want to go anywhere else but Porthcawl? It’s our favourite place on the planet.’ And that’s where he moved from his terraced house in Cardiff’s Splott.
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Huge backing for action in Northern West

ASLEF members in Northern Rail West have voted by over 90% to support industrial action because of a ‘severe breakdown in industrial relations’. The Executive Committee has earmarked 13 October for the first day of strike action, but has expressed its willingness to attend further talks to attempt to find a way out of the impasse.

EC President Alan Donnelly offers this appraisal of the situation:

‘ASLEF has always been prepared to negotiate and resolve issues – but it is impossible when the other side diverts blame and publishes misleading statements.

The company magazine is not telling the truth when it says the Westside company council is to blame for the cessation of rest day working. That was an EC decision, based on the poor industrial relations and a lack of commitment and sincerity over harmonisation.

‘I want to stick to facts, not get into a propaganda war. The General Secretary and myself met Heidi Mottram and Steve Butcher on 4 September to agree a way forward. ‘The following day Steve Butcher met the Westside company council and myself to see how this could be progressed locally. With an unbelievable 70 issues outstanding, it was agreed to commence talks the following Monday.

‘To assist business we also agreed to take off the agenda the vexed questions of productivity and ‘harmonisation through the back door’. This would be better progressed in the correct forum and would also help in resolving the other outstanding issues.

‘The Westside company council was charged with keeping the EC aware of how the discussions continued. Indications as I write are that talks are constructive and hopefully agreements will be reached. Until that time, the ballot process continues.

‘ASLEF will not sit back and watch our members and activists be treated this way. We did not create the lack of trust and respect that exists today and it is regrettable that we are having to deal with industrial relations issues through the ballot box. However it is a path we will follow until our members are treated with respect, and trust is restored.’

ASLEF respect TSSA picket lines at Arriva Trains Wales

ALTHOUGH not involved in the dispute, many ASLEF members at Arriva Trains Wales decided to respect picket lines erected by the TSSA on 16 September. Keith Norman said, ‘We reminded our members that ASLEF was not in dispute with Arriva Trains Wales and therefore advised them to undertake their normal duties. At the same time, we reminded members of the principles of the trade union movement in not covering someone’s work or duty when they are in dispute.’

Keith undertook that ASLEF would support ‘unconditionally’ any member who might be subject to discipline as a result of respecting the picket line of another union.

The company advised the public to seek an alternative form of transport while the strike continued.

The TSSA dispute was about driver managers who were in dispute over the erosion of pay differentials. In addition to the 24-hour strike they have banned overtime and on-call work.

TSSA general secretary Gerry Doherty said, ‘I can only express my gratitude and admiration for the support that train drivers gave in this dispute. It will live long in the memories of our members.’

INCREASED RAIL FREIGHT GRANTS The government has announced increased rail freight grants designed to remove freight from our roads. Freight Facilities Grants are capital grants made available for rail and water freight. The total budget for the three years from 2011-2014 total £61m. The precise amount of the grants are £7 million for 2009/10, £10m for 2010/11, £16m for 2011/12, £20m for 2012/13 and £25m for 2013/14.

Philippa Edmunds said, for Freight on Rail to which ASLEF is affiliated, ‘These grants are recognition of the role rail freight has to play in reducing transport’s carbon footprint and helping to alleviate road congestion. ‘Tonne for tonne moved, rail produces between three to five times less carbon dioxide than road freight. HGVs alone, which account for around 6% of road traffic miles, are responsible for 20% of carbon dioxide emissions from all domestic transport.’

She said the grants give industry confidence to invest in rail freight, provide long-term certainty that the schemes are ongoing and crucially help offset the initial start-up costs of the transfer to rail.

TOSH SAYS THANKS FOR CANCER SUPPORT Tosh McDonald, the union’s Vice-Chair, says he has been ‘overwhelmed but not surprised’ by the generosity of union members, branches and AAD delegates to an appeal he made in aid of Breast Cancer Care. With his partner Nikki on the pillon, Tosh took part in a challenge to drive his Harley Davidson motorbike 1,000 miles in 24 hours. They left from Doncaster, sped up to Inverness, passed Loch Ness and Glasgow, looped around Birmingham and returned home on the M1.

‘Our ASLEF brothers and sisters sponsored me to the tune of £1,500,’ Tosh says. ‘It is a tribute to their generosity and humanity. I’d like to thank everyone who dug deep for this charity. It is particularly important to me as Nikki has only recently recovered from this terrible illness.’

UK needs Eurorail route MP tells Freight Forum

LABOUR MP Kelvin Hopkins addressed union activists during the ASLEF Freight Forum in August on his proposal for a new freight route across the UK. The Luton North MP gave a detailed outline of how a new freight-specific Channel Tunnel-to-Glasgow line could be configured from the existing rail infrastructure, and would require less than 15 miles of new track.

The Forum’s Chair, District 5 Officer Andy Morrison, welcomed the MP’s contribution citing his ‘longstanding and passionate commitment to freight on rail.’
A RECENT magazine survey reported that 95% of women don’t feel safe on the streets at night. 73% worry about being raped, 65% don’t even feel safe during the day and almost half sometimes don’t want to go out at all because they don’t feel safe.

This is a terrible reflection on our society. Women make up over half the UK’s population, and they are prevented from living normal lives by threats of violence. It’s not unreasonable that we should feel this way. The British Crime Survey in 2001 estimated that there are 47,000 rapes every year – and our conviction rate is just 5.6%, the lowest it has ever been. It was 33% in the 1970s and even with the advent of DNA evidence it’s been falling ever since. It’s estimated that only 15% of rapes are ever reported.

Women should be able to use public space without fear for their safety. ‘Reclaim the Night’ gives women a voice, and the march gives women a chance to feel both empowered – and safe to walk the streets of their own towns and cities on at least one night a year. And I’d argue that it’s not just a feminist issue: most men share a repugnance for male violence against women.

That’s why it is supported by many of the UK’s trade unions, including UNISON, teachers’ unions, BECTU and the civil servants’ union PCS.

MARCHING SINCE 77!
The first Reclaim The Night marches in the UK took place in Leeds, Manchester, Bristol and London in 1977 – but they took on even more significance in the following years because of the activities of Peter Sutcliffe – the ‘Yorkshire Ripper’ – who began murdering women who worked as prostitutes in the county.

Women complained that initially the police response to the murders was slow, and that the media paid them scant attention. Many still believe that the authorities only began to take it seriously when Sutcliffe began murdering young student women. But even more infuriating was that women were then advised not to go out at night.

When women are attacked people often respond by telling them to ensure their safety by not going out alone at night, and not to draw attention to themselves by wearing revealing clothes and getting drunk. Restricting women’s freedom and asking them to change their behaviour will not solve the problem; it’s the attackers who need to change their behaviour. When racially aggravated assaults occur, the victims would not be expected to change their behaviour or appearance in order to prevent being singled out, and the same should be true of victims of misogynistic assault.

As a Train Operator, I often work extreme shifts, making my journey home in the early hours of the morning. Many other female shift workers are in the same position, and it’s especially important to me that I feel safe and free from the fear of assault.

We need better conviction rates and a change in the attitudes that puts the onus on women to prevent rape rather than dealing with those who commit rape. Reclaim the night hopes to highlight this.

JOIN US IF YOU CAN
I’ll certainly be going to the event in November and I hope other ASLEF members will think of joining me. The actual march is restricted to women – understandably given the aims of the initiative – but everyone is welcome to join us at the rally which will follow it.

The Reclaim the Night march will leave from Whitehall Place for the women-only march to Friends Meeting House opposite Euston Station where a rally with speakers and stalls will be open to everyone. If you’d like any more information, have a look at the website at www.reclaimthenight.org

ASLEF member Jacqueline Campbell is going to support the ‘Reclaim the Night’ march that will be taking place in London on 22 November. We asked her why she thinks it is important for women to support this event – and this is what she told us ...

MAKING THE NIGHT SAFE FOR WOMEN
WE DON’T NEED SURVEYS – WE HAVE ALL THE FACTS

Victoria Phillips, ASLEF’s legal advisor from Thompsons Solicitors …

THE Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has set up a steering group to evaluate the impact of measures to strengthen company director leadership on health and safety. While the HSE no longer takes direct responsibility for the rail health and safety, it’s an issue that is still important for ASLEF members.

Chairied by chief scientist John Beddington, the working group is going to carry out independent research involving random telephone surveys of employers to establish if there is any evidence of change or trends in director attitudes to health and safety – and, if there is any change, what motivation lies behind it.

BLINDINGLY OBVIOUS
Personally, I am at a loss as to what its research will show that statistics don’t already make blindingly obvious. We are six years into a voluntary health and safety code for company bosses, which is run by the Institute of Directors (IoD), and the number of deaths and injuries at work continue to shock.

Fewer workplace deaths is justifiably trumpeted by the HSE but the statistics mask the fact that in some industries, fatal accidents have increased while prosecutions are significantly down.

RAIL IMPROVEMENTS
It is of course good news that in the rail industry only two employees were killed in 2007 in the course of their duties, a reduction on the previous year and part of a downward trend.

The establishment of the Rail Safety and Standards Board and its responsibility for managing health and safety across the industry is clearly having an impact - but the number of rail industry workers seriously injured at work still went up to 223 in 2007 compared to 209 in 2006.

TWO FATAL COLLISIONS ON CROYDON TRAMS

A DRIVER with Croydon Light Rail was treated in hospital, along with five passengers, after a bus crashed into the tram she was driving on a Sunday morning last month. A bus passenger, Andrzej Karcz, was killed in the incident.

The 28-year-old bus driver was taken to hospital with head injuries and has since been arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving.

Local ASLEF safety rep David Brinkworth said, ‘Our driver was very lucky not to have sustained more severe injuries. The collision showered her with shards of glass. The impact was of such force that the tram was derailed and it’s now questionable whether it will ever return to passenger service.’

A further incident occurred less than a week later when a Line 3 tram collided with a cyclist who was riding his bike over a foot crossing. He was killed after riding in front of the tram, giving the driver no opportunity to react.’
**£15 million for strategic rail research**

THE Department for Transport (DfT) is to allocate an additional £15 million for a new strategic research programme. It will be managed by Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) and the government says it will mean a substantial boost to the rail industry's research and development capacity.

The Strategic Research Programme is supposed to help the industry achieve the policies set out in last year's Rail Technical Strategy and assist in delivering the changes it hopes to see over the coming 30 years.

Rail minister Tom Harris MP said, 'The programme will help the industry achieve the challenging long term goals set out in the White Paper, such as doubling rail capacity and further reducing the carbon footprint of rail transport in a safe and cost-effective way.'

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**NORTH WEST CARRIAGES TO BE BUILT IN ITALY**

Angel Trains has signed a £1.5 billion order for 106 express train carriages for use on the West Coast Main Line. The contract has gone to a French firm and work on the new carriages will begin early next year – in Savigliano, Italy. The new rolling stock is due to be in service at the end of 2012.

France's Alstom has won the contract to build four 11-carriage Pendolino train sets for use on the West Coast Main Line, and 62 individual carriages which will see 31 trains lengthened to 11 carriages from nine. The deal includes 10 years’ maintenance. Keith Norman welcomed the new stock, but regretted that the work had gone overseas. 'British industry is gradually becoming something we only encounter in history books,' he said.

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**TUC CALLS FOR BANK HOLIDAY FOR COMMUNITY DAY**

The TUC is backing calls for a ‘Community Day’ Bank Holiday in late October to celebrate and encourage volunteering and community activity. In a new report called ‘Why the UK can afford a Community Day’ it argues that it would actually benefit UK businesses.

The case is that many customer-facing businesses like shops, hospitality, leisure, tourism and transport have stronger trading days on bank holidays and could benefit from a new public holiday. There could be advantages for the transport sector because public holidays encourage people to go on short breaks and ‘days out’, which it estimates bring in £90 billion worth of spending a year to the economy in England alone.

It adds that employers could gain from improvements in its workers’ health and well-being. The UK currently has eight bank holidays, compared to an EU average of 10.9. Only Romania has fewer bank holidays than Great Britain.

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**TUBE TRAIN’S ‘ACID SEAT’**

Two London Tube trains were taken out of service and underwent thorough searches last month after a passenger needed hospital treatment after sitting on a seat believed to be covered in corrosive cleaning fluid. Police said he was treated for ‘skin irritation’ after the fluid burnt through his trousers. They added that they thought it had not been left maliciously, but had been accidentally spilled onto the seat.

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**SICKNESS USED TO REMOVE DISABLED WORKERS**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), revised in 2005, created important legal protections for workers who meet the law’s definition of disability. Whilst it has become more unusual for disabled workers to face dismissal or unequal treatment for the simple reason of being disabled, unions have reported that employers continue to use sickness absence procedures to get rid of workers with disabilities.

Following a seminar on this subject in April 2008, the TUC has published advice for union negotiators on the law and good practice in dealing with disability-related absences from work, and proposes disability leave agreements as part of the solution.

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**CONGRATULATIONS ON 150 YEARS OF GLASGOW TUC**

The general secretary wrote to the Glasgow TUC last month to congratulate it on its 150th anniversary.

Expressing his ‘warmest fraternal greetings’, Keith went on to say, ‘Glasgow TUC has been a pillar of strength in the British trade union movement and has held up a candle for workers in the darkest of days, founded as you were 10 years before the TUC. Representing the very best of Caledonian trade unionism your strength and determination across fifteen decades have been an inspiration for workers across the UK.’

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**HARMONISATION**

**CROSSCOUNTRY TRAINS**

Members have voted in favour of a harmonisation package for former Virgin CrossCountry and Central Trains Drivers in CrossCountry Trains. The package includes a 5% pay increase for 2008 and will bring all CrossCountry drivers onto a common salary from 28 May 2010.

**VIRGIN WEST COAST**

Management have agreed to move all former CrossCountry drivers to Virgin West Coast terms and conditions of service from 14 December 2008

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**REST DAY WORKING**

**CHILTERN RAILWAYS**

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Chiltern Railways until 27 September 2009

**LONDON MIDLAND**

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on London Midland until 27 December 2008

**ARRIVA TRAINS WALES**

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Arriva Trains Wales until 29 November 2008

**VIRGIN WEST COAST**

ASLEF is sanctioned to Rest Day Working on Virgin West Coast until 27 December 2008

**GB RAILFREIGHT**

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on GB Railfreight until 27 December 2008

**CROSSCOUNTRY TRAINS**

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on CrossCountry Trains until 26 December 2009
IT’S always been a problem for drivers to get qualifications that are recognised outside of the driving grade. None of us know what is round the corner in life. We may fail a medical and be removed from driving, or decide that we would like to progress or change our career altogether. A lot of us possess skills that go unrecognised. Therefore when the chance came along to run a pilot course of the new Level 2 ITQ qualification, we jumped at it.

ITQ is the National Vocational Qualification for IT Users. The course comprises of one mandatory and several (it depends on the points earned for each unit as to how many units are required) optional units, which the learner chooses. There are no exams, but the learner has to prove their ability to use the chosen IT packages and build a portfolio of evidence. This portfolio is sent away at the end of the course to be verified.

The course was delivered at East Midlands Trains Derby depot and times were kept flexible to accommodate shift patterns. The four learners were all Derby based drivers, one was a union rep and another was a driver instructor. Both of these fitted the prerequisite for the course easily as their roles require them to use programmes like PowerPoint, Spreadsheets and Data Bases.

With the other two drivers it was a little harder, but luckily ITQ now recognises an individual’s own skills which may have been developed through hobbies or interests away from work.

Therefore one of the drivers was able to use the skills in graphic design he’d developed as the secretary of a paint ball team. The other had a holiday property he rents out and uses a web site to advertise it on, so he used Desktop Publishing.

The results were surprising for the college – if not for us! They didn’t expect train drivers to have such high levels of IT knowledge. All four completed the course with no major problems - although all needed ‘up-skilling’ in some areas.

This was only a small pilot project, but it proved the level of IT skills drivers can work at.

IT is being used more and more in the industry. You have only to look at the OTMR systems based on Word and the fact that some companies are issuing Traincrew with Blackberries or laptops.

Meanwhile EMT is also developing a ‘state of the art’ road learning web site. In view of these developments, it’s only right for us to be given the chance to have those skills recognised - and ITQ is the perfect qualification to achieve our aim.

Finally I’d like to thank EMT for having the faith to let me run the pilot. Also I’d like to express my gratitude to West Notts College tutors Norman Rice and Gary Robinson for their professionalism and commitment to the learners and the project.

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First UK train drivers to get new ITQ qualification

by Chris Nutty

Lead Learning Rep at EMT

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Liverpool hosts Spanish Civil War exhibition

ASLEF Regional Organiser Colin Smith went to the opening of a Spanish Civil War exhibition in Liverpool’s People’s Centre last month, and spent some time talking with Jack Jones, the former T&GWU General Secretary who was a volunteer in the fight against Franco’s fascist regime in the 1930s.

‘I had a good conversation with Jack,’ Colin says. ‘He was born in Garston in Liverpool in 1913 and his two brothers were engine cleaners who joined ASLEF and became active within the trade union. Jack spoke highly of the ASLEF movement during his early days as an activist and had fond memories of train drivers through his train driver brothers.’

Colin says Jack who is 95 years old now, still delivers a speech with ‘the passion of a true working class hero’.

Colin, who went along with ASLEF colleagues Pete Cashman, Peter Grant and Richie Cash, says the exhibition well deserves a visit. ‘It’s a splendidly catalogued and documented historical chapter in working class history,’ he says.

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‘Working class hero’ Jack Jones

Richie Cash, says the exhibition well deserves a visit. ‘It’s a splendidly catalogued and documented historical chapter in working class history,’ he says.

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CHARITY THANKS UNION FOR SUPPORT

ASLEF has received heartfelt thanks for creating ‘some much needed magic’ in the lives of some of the country’s most neglected young people.

Camila Batmanghelidjh, director of children’s charity Kids Company writes that the ‘incredibly generous donation’ made by ASLEF enabled the charity to take groups of children, many who had suffered ‘horrific levels of abuse and neglect’ camping for the summer holidays.

Batmanghelidjh writes that the children, who ‘were amazed by the greenness of the grass’ were offered food, bedtime stories and compassion and that ‘for years to come these young people will be able to draw upon the experience in order to remain hopeful’.

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October 2008
The annual congress of the TUC was held in Brighton this year, and once again ASLEF played its part, especially in the transport and environment debates. The event has changed a great deal since the heady debates of the ‘60s and ‘70s for two main reasons: motions tend to be ‘composited’ together, which means differences are ironed out before the debate comes to the hall; and because many unions have sacrificed their own identities for the security of a section in a mega-union.

**GREENPEACE BACKS FREIGHT RAIL LOBBY**

ASLEF joined forces with the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) and Greenpeace at a fringe meeting at the TUC Conference urging ‘Take a Freight Train to a Cleaner Planet’. The General Secretary chaired the meeting and Simon Weller spoke for the union.

Keith Norman set the tone for a relaxed and informal meeting as he warned that worrying about the school run paled into insignificance compared with the environmental benefits that could be gained from taking freight off the roads. Stephen Joseph, director of CBT, warmed to the theme. ‘The main problem,’ he asserts, ‘is that the benefits of rail freight are recognised by the government, who know rail is three times more carbon efficient - But the message doesn’t get as far as the planners who are entirely road-orientated. And the costs are incredible. Upgrading a 21-mile stretch of the A14 is going to cost a billion pounds!’

‘That looks like going ahead, although local people in Huntington would prefer to spend the money on a parallel rail freight line.’

He says one factor affecting progress is that civil servants and the government are worried about losing road tax income. ‘Every drop of fuel used is welcomed by the Treasury,’ he insists. ‘It prevents them from looking at an integrated solution.’ Stephen also stressed the need to protect old BR land for warehousing and not to see it sold off.

Benet Northcote from Greenpeace thanked ASLEF for inviting him along. ‘The climate change threat means we need more and stronger alliances. We are keen to link up with unions like your own. I am not exaggerating when I say the alternative is disaster.’

Benet insists that the planet’s future is tightly balanced. ‘An increase of 6% in global temperatures will see alligators at the North Pole. A decrease of 6% will mean the most severe Ice Age we have ever known.’

The first priority is to ensure that temperatures are no more than 2% above pre-industrial levels. ‘Anything more than this would involve moving 125 million people whose land would be flooded.’

He said ministers had to be more involved and positive about rail freight. ‘Rosie Winterton told me recently that the problem was that, ‘Rail doesn’t get you to your front door.’ Well plane travel often doesn’t get you to the same county!’

Benet says that we need to start looking afresh at how we live on the planet. The solution was not just moving goods, but thinking about how much we all
need. ‘We can’t keep on as the disposable society,’ he insisted. ‘We need to think about what we throw away and what we replace instead of repair.’

For ASLEF, Simon Weller stressed the value and importance of the union’s campaign to electrify the network, insisting that reliance on oil is short-term folly. ‘We all need to be more imaginative,’ he insisted. ‘Why not begin by linking rail contracts to guarantees about using renewable energy? Why not accept that road-widening is ultimately self-defeating? Our roads are clogged and will stay that way – the road to Dover is practically a lorry park! ‘Business says that road congestion cost £15 billion last year. We can’t go on this way.’

Closing the meeting, Keith Norman told Congress that it was a ‘tragedy’ that the UK – the land that gave railways to the world – had to sit and watch as the likes of Spain and France built high-speed routes and hugely increased passenger capacity. ‘If the public could use the money that is made available to private rail companies, we’d have the best network in the world,’ he declared.

The Community Union pointed out that rail services were vital for people with disabilities, and called for more concessionary rates, while the Unison delegate reminded conference of President Mitterand’s assessment of the then-new Eurostar. ‘We will be able to take the high speed TGV to the Channel,’ he said. ‘After that we can admire the English landscape! ’The joke is less funny with each passing year, he said.

As a result of the union motion, the TUC General Council is charged with arguing for the construction of freight terminals and examining freight-only railway lines as well as backing our call to electrify the line.

TELLING ROLE FOR CLIFF AT TUC!

‘David Gould from ASLEF’s policy department asked me if, as I was a delegate, I’d go on the list to be a teller at the TUC conference. He said, ‘It’s good for the union to say we’ll do it, and don’t worry - you won’t get asked. And even if you did, there won’t be anything to do. They don’t have card votes these days.’

‘I feel ashamed to say it – but – even though I knew he worked at ASLEF head office - I believed him!’

Cliff Holloway is pretending to be indignant. Inevitably he was asked to be a teller (which means sticking to the conference hall like gum to a shoe) - and the first time his services were called upon was day one, debate one!

‘I was allocated a quarter of the conference hall,’ Cliff says. ‘When a card vote was called I had to scoot along my section filling in a yellow form noting the voting strengths of those voting for and against.

‘We were told not to hurry, to make sure we were accurate – and not to take too long! With instructions as conflicting as that, it was like being back at work!’

Cliff’s fellow tellers were from Unison, PCS and USDAW – but he hardly had a chance to speak to them.

‘It is one of those jobs where you just can’t leave your post or you know a card vote will be called right away,’ he says.

‘Now – where can I get hold of that David character ...!!!’
ELECTRIFICATION – IT’S NOW OR NEVER

argues Hugh Potton, a Trainee Driver at First Great Western in Paddington

I APPLAUD ASLEF’s campaign to fully electrify the tracks in this country. The relevant page on the ASLEF website is informative and concise, and gives a good general overview of the situation confronting the railways of this country.

However, I am concerned at the article’s failure to be more specific in identifying particular ‘at risk’ areas of the rail network, and also at the apparent lack of urgency. The Great Western Region serving destinations between Paddington and the West Country is a total ‘sitting duck’ in this respect. It is a vast network entirely reliant upon diesel traction with the single exception of the electrified spur to Heathrow. This will make it especially vulnerable when the cost of fuel soars out of all recognition – something that appears inevitable in the not too distant future.

OIL PRICES WILL ROCKET

Acknowledged experts in ‘Peak Oil’ – such as Dr. C. Campbell, the former Exploration Geologist at Shell Oil and Matt Simmons, an Energy Advisor to the White House – are predicting that the ‘Peak Oil’ event will really begin to bite and inflict severe damage on our economies between 2010 and 2015. If they are correct, that leaves us between two to seven years to bring projects such as electrification to fruition. If it’s not completed prior to this event, it is very doubtful that it will ever happen at all.

A large infrastructure project like the electrification of the Great Western Region would probably take between five and ten years once given the go-ahead, so the ‘window of opportunity’ is closing fast. Indeed, we may already be too late.

At last the Secretary of State for Transport seems more amenable to electrifying the rail network. However, the time for talking about it is long over. Action is required immediately as a matter of the utmost urgency and priority. If we further procrastinate and waste the little precious time remaining to us, we are effectively delivering the death-blow to substantial areas of the rail network.

WHAT HAPPENED ON WEST COAST

The renewal of the West Coast Main Line, the only opus magnum infrastructure project undertaken since privatisation, offers an instructive case in point. There were protracted construction delays and overruns, major disruptions to services and the final price tag was exorbitant, exceeding the initial delivery dates and cost estimates substantially. If this is what happens when undertaking a relatively simple renewal exercise under conditions of economic prosperity, one can only too easily foresee the ‘Mission Impossible’ nature of the task when attempting to build from scratch in the throes of recession and depression.

Government, economists and the general public alike seem to be under the impression that the present economic downturn is part of a purely cyclical and transient phenomenon. The assumption is that we are now approaching the trough or low point in the economic cycle. They believe it will pass, we will eventually emerge from recession and our economy will begin to recover once more.

A LASTING RECESSION?

I cannot share this hubristic viewpoint. The truth is that this recession is underpinned by geological constraints (that is, peak oil) – and not economic factors. On this basis it will be permanent rather than temporary.

Those who regard this interpretation as unduly negative or pessimistic need only take a closer look at what is happening around us, in order to ‘join the dots’. Aside from the obvious and sudden volatility in oil prices, we have construction firms shedding jobs like water. We see bank and mortgage lenders going bust or requiring government intervention on both sides of the Atlantic. The cost of basic foods is soaring worldwide. Airlines are going bust or merging for survival with subsequent dramatic hikes in air travel costs. We see escalating international conflict over the remaining fossil fuel resources – like the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq or Russian intervention in South Ossetia. Anyone who fails to make the connection between these occurrences is either burying their head in the sand or turning the proverbial blind eye to the telescope.

CONSEQUENCES FOR RAIL

What consequences does this have more specifically for the railway network? It effectively means that we are now very much in the ‘last chance saloon’ with regard to undertaking major infrastructure projects such as electrification. If we do not seize the initiative here and now and ‘run with the ball like crazy’ they will almost certainly never happen. Our last ever chance will have been squandered with the attendant social fallout that loss of the rail network will entail. Even electrification of the rail network is not itself a guarantee of the industry’s future survival if I am right about the economic holocaust that I believe is about to unfold. I feel it does represent the railway’s best possible chance to remain a viable mode of future transport.

However, I hope you succeed in convincing the government of the sheer magnitude of the problem now confronting us all.
TO celebrate 40 years of ASLEF, the branch secretary, Bro Ray Garland organised a function at Hither Green Railway Club on 31 August. Among the many guests at the well-attended function were Bros Graham Morris (District Organiser), Simon Weller (Executive Committee), and Peter Rowland (Drivers Company Council).

The branch commissioned badges to mark this special occasion under the supervision of Bro Joe Church and they were presented by Bros G Morris and S Weller. Badge No 1 went to Bro Don Warner (who has a footplate seniority of 1964) while badge number 92 is being sent to Head Office to be placed on display.

Bro D Deacon of Grove Park depot applied to open an ASLEF branch on 18 March 1968. Permission was granted by the general secretary of the day, Bro A.R. Griffiths. The original confirmation letter from ASLEF, signed by Organising Secretary Bro D K Pullen, is framed and hangs in the LDR room at Grove Park depot.

The Grove Park branch members have moved from the old shed building built in the 1960s to a newer accommodation block built in the 1980s. ASLEF membership in the branch has steadily grown to over 100 members, making it one of the newest but also one of the largest branches in the South Eastern region.

Joe Holmes
Drivers Company Council - Southeastern

Joe Holmes DCC, Ray Garland Branch Secretary, Simon Hill LDR, Martin Morris Health & Safety, Malcolm Hirst LDR

Roger Gilbert was presented with his 45 year badge from Albert Penfold

45 BADGE FOR RUGBY’S ROGER

Roger Gilbert was presented with his 45 year award by Albert Penfold, the Acting Chair of the Rugby branch, at the LMRCA Club on 8 Sept 2008 at the monthly branch meeting. Roger retired earlier this year but is still a regular at meetings and his input and experience are appreciated in all matters relating to the union. Our branch meetings are held on the second Monday of each month – and all interested parties are more than welcome!

Alex Lakic
Secretary – Rugby Branch
KINGS CROSS CELEBRATE RETIREMENT FUNCTION

18 APRIL was once again party time at the Kings Cross branch – and if you missed it you missed another great day! Those retiring invited friends, relations and work colleagues from all over the country to come and celebrate their transition into retirement. Happily they came in their droves.

As usual at these celebrations Kings Cross and ASLEF take the opportunity to make a presentation to the retirees and give awards to other branch members, to thank them for their contribution to Kings Cross, ASLEF and the trade union movement.

Presentations were made by the branch’s two vice-chairmen, Graham Russell and Mark (‘Trixy’) Trundle. They worked under the strict supervision of ‘ringmaster’ Branch Secretary Les Muir! As Les called up the recipients he read out their ‘pedigree’ - to the delight of both the recipients and those present.

The retiring members were as follows:

- Alan Lincoln (NXEC 1960–2008) who started at Kings Cross Top Shed on 4 January 1960 and moved to Kings Cross station when the Top Shed closed. There he remained except for his later years when he covered the Depot Drivers post at Bounds Green. Along with his ASLEF retirement certificate Les presented Alan with his ASLEF 45 year service badge.
- Brian McCarthy (NXEC 1961–2008) who started at Stratford on 4 January 1961 before moving to Hornsey in October 1962, and then to Kings Cross station in March 1968. Along with his ASLEF retirement certificate Les presented him with his ASLEF 45 year service badge.
- Paul had the distinction of having worked the Royal Train. Not known for his love of privatisation, Paul decided ‘enough is enough’ and retired early. Along with his ASLEF retirement certificate Les presented Paul with his ASLEF 35 year service badge.

After the retiring members had been recognised, Long Service awards were presented to Wallis Blazey (50 year medallion) Chris Street and Richard Wells (5 year badge) Martin Darmanin and Peter Buckland (15 year badge) Steve Jacob (25 year badge) and to Chris Luesley and John Sharp (30 year badge).

To those retiring we say welcome to the ASLEF Retired Members Section, and we offer our congratulations to all those receiving Long Service awards.

The retiring members would like to thank friends, families and colleagues for their support and the staff of Hatfield Social Club for their hard work which ensured that all had a good time.

Peter Smith Reporter - Kings Cross Branch

CRICKLEWOOD 10 OCTOBER The next Cricklewood reunion will be at the RAFA Club in Ashburnham Road in Bedford on Friday 10 October from noon onwards. Further information from Grahame Nash in Bristol or Bob Hodson in Wolverhampton.

MARYLEBONE 17 OCTOBER The Marylebone ASLEF Drivers reunion will be held on 17 October at the Hobgoblin pub which is on the corner of Balcombe Street and Taunton Mews in NW1. All ASLEF members are welcome from 1700 until late. A buffet will be provided. We hope to see you there!

YORK RES 1 NOVEMBER The eighth York RES Traincrew reunion will take place at York Railway Institute bar on Sat 1 November from 1900hrs to 2300hrs. All ex-RES Traincrew and groundstaff are welcome to attend along with any others who would like to chat to old friends. There will be the usual buffet and we hope to see you there. Brian Wallace, York branch RMS.

REPRISE FOR TONBRIDGE GANG SHOW Members of the Tonbridge Gang show, with guest star Tony West! Many thanks to Tony Hollands, Dave Weddle and the ladies who ensured we went home well fed and the staff at the Club who made sure we didn’t go away thirsty!

P. J. Smith Reporter – RMS
Presented a 25 year badge to Brian Richards, thanking him for his loyal ASLEF service before moving onto the ‘bigger picture’ in the elderly and the health service. He encouraged members to support Members section, stressing the importance of pensions, care for the elderly and others suffer as a result.

Chairman Peter Cross pointed out that this was the eleventh anniversary of the branch’s formation. He welcomed District 5 Organiser Andy Morrison, Tony West the Retired Members Secretary and Peter Smith the RMS Reporter.

After reports from branch secretary Alan Gosling and from District Council rep Steve Wilson, Paul Miles gave a health and safety report. He stressed the need for more members to submit reports if we were to secure a safe and decent working environment. Under Health & Safety law we all have a duty to make reports. He stressed that members could be held responsible if a hazard is not reported and others suffer as a result.

Tony West updated the meeting about the activities of the Retired Members section, stressing the importance of pensions, care for the elderly and the health service. He encouraged members to support the NPC lobby of Parliament on 22 October. Andy Morrison then spoke on the ‘bigger picture’ in the health service. He encouraged members to support Members section, stressing the importance of pensions, care for the elderly and others suffer as a result.

Tony West updated the meeting about the activities of the Retired Members section, stressing the importance of pensions, care for the elderly and the health service. He encouraged members to support the NPC lobby of Parliament on 22 October. Andy Morrison then spoke on the ‘bigger picture’ in the health service. He encouraged members to support Members section, stressing the importance of pensions, care for the elderly and others suffer as a result.

“On August 15th 1908 I attended a special meeting of the Eastleigh Branch. The principal object of this gathering was the presentation of the Incapacitation grant of £100 to Mr J. Cox, who was for many years secretary of this branch. The gathering had been advertised as a smoking concert. The smokers attended, but unfortunately the pianist who had been engaged was missing, which made things look awkward for the success of the concert. Anxious eyes were frequently turned to the door, and one could almost read the query uppermost in the owners’ minds ‘Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?’

Ultimately it was found necessary to ‘look for another’, and while Eastleigh was being scoured we resolved the gathering into an ordinary and orderly gathering...

....The foregoing proceedings brought us pretty near to ‘nine o’clock’ (fatal hour), so Mr Cox had to retire amid many regrets, but in the meantime a lady had been discovered and persuaded to fill the vacancy at the piano. I felt sorry for her. Our singers had been delayed so long that they were becoming impatient and nearly out of hand. ”

100 YEARS AGO

The October 1908 Locomotive Journal had an account of a ‘smoking concert’ that had more of an air of disaster than culture about it! Organising Secretary H. Parfitt reported...

A marvellous report of a musical soiree in Eastleigh and an account of the activities of youth – more from the ASLEF archives ...

GREEN TIES FOR AYR THREE

On 7 September the Ayr Branch welcomed District Organiser Kevin Lindsay to their Branch meeting and invited him to present retirement certificates to Eddie Watson, Tam Vorsteman and John Cochrane. They were also given their green ASLEF ties, which for some reason they were not too happy about … I don’t know why! I think it’s got something to do with Celtic and Rangers. Eddie, Tam and John were all Drivers for First Scotrail and based at Ayr station.

We wish them all the best for a long and happy retirement.

Tony Kahler Secretary - Ayr Branch

WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

Peter Smith Reporter – RMS

100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

50 YEARS AGO

Labour’s Youth Officer Alan Williams wrote in the October 1958 edition, outlining the activities of Britain’s youth. It’s a fine snapshot of ‘the way we were’ …

“…The foregoing proceedings brought us pretty near to ‘nine o’clock’ (fatal hour), so Mr Cox had to retire amid many regrets, but in the meantime a lady had been discovered and persuaded to fill the vacancy at the piano. I felt sorry for her. Our singers had been delayed so long that they were becoming impatient and nearly out of hand. ”

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO GROW UP?

A nation-wide survey taken a few years ago amongst young people 16 and 24 years of age showed that 66 per cent. went to an organised meeting of some kind, such as a youth club, evening class or trade union branch meeting; 25 per cent. went to a dance hall or dance club; 24 per cent. just sauntered (?) round with friends; 18 per cent. went to the church or chapel; 12 per cent. visited a pub, and 11 per cent. played football and similar games.

They certainly cannot be dubbed lazy, even though some may argue that their time is misspent.

A nation-wide survey taken a few years ago amongst young people 16 and 24 years of age showed that 66 per cent. went to the pictures at least once a week; 52 per cent. visited friends; 26 per cent. went to an organised meeting of some kind, such as a youth club, evening class or trade union branch meeting; 25 per cent. went to a dance hall or dance club; 24 per cent. just sauntered (?) round with friends; 18 per cent. went to the church or chapel; 12 per cent. visited a pub, and 11 per cent. played football and similar games.

The average young man was out three evenings a week, and the average girl twice, but these figures are almost doubled during the summer.

Well, you may ask, how on earth can a Ward or Youth Section meeting hope to compete with all these demands on a young person’s time?”

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott
JOHN NIVISON – A DRIVER WITH BOXING GLOVES

IT IS with sadness that I report the passing away of retired member John Nivison at the age of 73.

Born in 1934, John started his railway career two days after his 15th birthday at Woodside and South Croydon Railway as a junior porter. He then moved to Stewarts Lane as a cleaner, joining ASLEF in October 1950.

In 1952, whilst still at Stewarts Lane, he got his job as a fireman. From '52 - '54 he did his National Service and afterwards returned to his job, becoming a passed fireman in early '59 and later that year getting his appointment as a driver at Norwood.

John was a driver for 14 years before promotion to various roles such as yard supervisor at New Cross Gate, traincrew supervisor at Holborn Viaduct and Hither Green and traction inspector at Norwood. His final move before retirement in 2000 was to Selhurst.

Even in retirement he still found time on his holidays to drive steam trains. I’m sure his Polish Brothers will miss him too!

People say that he spent all his waking hours at work! This can’t be true because he devoted an enormous amount of his time to the Croydon Amateur Boxing Club as well.

He has touched the lives of many boxers from across the country from Southend and Sittingbourne to Chichester and Portsmouth.

He will be missed by a great many from the railway and from a sport he loved and gave so much to.

ANDREW COOK - Secretary – Selhurst Branch

ERIC DOUGLAS ORMANDY – A LOVE OF STEAM

I WISH to inform those who knew him that Kings Cross Retired Driver Eric ('The Red') Ormandy has moved in to the top link.

Eric was born on 13 February 1930 on the Coldfall Estate in Muswell Hill, where a number of families had railway connections. Although he didn’t start on the railway straight from school, he found he couldn’t stay away. Finally he decided he wanted to fulfil his boyhood ambition to be an Engine Driver and started at Hornsey Loco, where he progressed from Cleaner and Fireman to Driver.

Eric served his National Service as a Gentleman of the Royal Engineers.

When he married Mary Summer, who was another resident of the Coldfall Estate, he transferred to Hatfield Loco in order to obtain a house to raise a family. Hatfield Council had built a large number of houses to encourage workers to come and work in the industries there.

When dieselisation displaced steam, Eric and others became surplus and were transferred to Hornsey or Kings Cross. He unfortunately became medically restricted and finished his career at Ferme Park on the pilot.

Eric never lost his love of steam and took a great interest in the construction of A1 Tornado. Although he donated to the construction fund, he unfortunately did not see its first outing in steam.

We offer our condolences to Eric’s wife Mary, his daughters Maria and Teresa, their children and all his family, friends and relations. As I parted from the family, one of his daughters said, “I suppose he is now driving in heaven - or firing in the other place!” I said, “They don’t call him Eric the Red for nothing. He’s probably at the Peary Gates arguing his case with St Peter!”

They roared with laughter and it seemed I had struck a happy chord – so may Eric Rest in Peace.

Peter Smith - Kings Cross Branch Reporter

CHRIS WHITE – A DEEP SHOCK

MANY friends and colleagues gathered at the Bethlehem Chapel in Treherbert to celebrate Chris’ life and to say goodbye to a good friend.

Chris came to Margam when he was made redundant at Radyr in 1982 and soon settled in. He quickly got the nickname of ‘The Depot Cat’ because of his cheery smile! He was always a figure at socials and – unlike some! – he was always first to the bar.

He loved his cycling and regularly travelled from his home in Treorcy to work by bike. He was always fit and it came as a deep shock to us all to find he was suffering from a virulent form of skin cancer. He battled against this horrible disease for months but lost the fight on 2 August at the age of just 48.

In all the months of this battle he never complained once, always smiling in a crowd – and still buying the beer. Goodbye, old friend. You will be missed. Our hearts and sincere condolences go out to Chris’ wife and family.

D. Curtis – Port Talbot

BERNARD PIERRPOINT – UNASSUMING MAN DIES AT 90

Bernard Pierepoint passed away on 5 September aged 90 years. He was born in Mansfield and retired on 12 November 1982 after 45 years of railway service.

As was normal in those days, Bernard worked at a number of depots. He began in his home town and subsequently moved to Kirkby, Derby, Mould Junction in Wales, Annesley, Langwith Junction and finally Shirebrook.

Shortly after he retired, Bernard was diagnosed with throat cancer but he got over it, and lived on for another quarter of a century. He was a keen cyclist and swimmer and enjoyed dancing and music. He played, and was a member of, the Wurlitzer Organ Society. Sadly, Bernard’s wife Doris died shortly after their Diamond

Bernard will be remembered fondly as a decent and unassuming man by all his past workmates, many of whom attended his cremation at Mansfield Crematorium on 12 September.

Keith Gillett – Secretary – Worksop Branch

JACK COXSEY - A SALTELEY STALWART

IT IS with sadness that I report the passing of Jack at the age of 86 following a short illness. His popularity was reflected by the many who attended his funeral on the 3 September. Jack started at Saltley after the 1982 strike and the depot gates on pay day.

In 1963 he became Branch Secretary of Saltley. At that time is was one of the largest branches with over 700 members. In those days subs had to be collected at the depot gates on pay day. Jack was very much the guiding light of the Branch for the next 20 years, visiting the sick and always being available during the 1982 strike and the 1984 Miners strike.

A Branch Secretary second to none, he was also delegate to District Council 6 for a number of years and later provided by ASLEF that I would have no doubt that without the combined efforts of everyone involved I would now be seeking alternative employment.

Steve McKelvie – Gloucester

BARRIER FOR FREIGHT DRIVERS

AS A freight driver when I’m on duty there are times I have to use a pass with a variety of TOCs. Usually we have no problem.

However there are difficulties when we go through their ticket barriers. I go up to a member of staff in my full uniform with my driver’s bag, lamp and hard hat – and I get a look as if I’m the Creature from the Deep Lagoon. So out comes the diagram, and they ask what it is. So I show them my Authorisation of Travel covered by the freight duty travel agreement between my company and all TOCs. That usually results in my getting the third degree.

This can be easily resolved. All drivers who have to travel pass can be issued with a universal pass and gate pass for barriers. If we’re confronted by station staff we all should have reciprocal arrangement between them all for free travel or, even as Stuart Marlow suggests, a capped rate on all privs.

I feel sorry for those who are employed by the FOCs who are not safeguarded and have no travel facilities whatsoever. This puts me off from applying for a position with a FOC as my current travel facilities are well used.

I hope other members have the same thoughts as myself and Stuart Marlow on this issue so that something can be done to introduce a national free pass for all of us.

Ian Rolph - Staffordshire

THE UNION’S DONE ME PROUD!

FOLLOWING an incident at work at the end of last year, I was removed from driving duties and subjected to almost a year of uncertainty regarding my future. There is no doubt in my mind that without the support of my colleagues and the first class representation provided by ASLEF that I would no longer be driving trains.

I now consider myself fortunate to be returning to driving duties, hopefully, in the not too distant future and cannot commend the benefits of ASLEF membership enough. Whilst some people may complain about the recent rise in membership fees, as far as I am concerned the amount of sheer hard work and effort undertaken on my particular case goes to show that ASLEF membership gives extremely good value.

Many of my colleagues at Gloucester made personal sacrifices on my behalf and I would like to thank, through your pages, all of those who showed their support for me throughout this difficult period. In particular I’d like to mention Tony Kyte and Branch Secretary Steve Price for their hard work and organisation behind the scenes. I would also like to pass on very special thanks to District Organiser Stan Moran, EC Member Nigel Gibson and DDC Secretary Steve Davies who more than proved their worth when representing me. I have no doubt that without the combined efforts of everyone involved I would now be seeking alternative employment.

Steve McKelvie – Gloucester

SUPPORT FOR STUART ON PRIVS

I FULLY agree with Stuart Marlow’s comments on priv rate fares for staff. I too find them poor value for money compared to the advance purchase tickets out there for the general public.

The advantage of a priv ticket is that we can travel unrestricted – as opposed to being stuck to one particular service – and that we can just turn up and go. But it is frustrating that the priv rate is based on the higher open fare tickets. If the privs were based on Saver fares, it would be value for money – but some TOCs have certain staff travel restrictions on some peak services. This means that after paying a high fare, albeit discounted, we are still unable to travel.

There are ways round the high priv fares for us all but it needs a lot of looking into. Take Crewe to Holyhead for example. There is no day return fare if you wish to travel for the day, so you need to buy two single tickets. However, if you travel after 0900 on Mon-Fri you can take advantage of a rover ticket which costs less than a single!

It is frustrating that the TOCs cannot get together and have a reciprocal arrangement between them all for free travel or, even as Stuart Marlow suggests, a capped rate on all privs.

I feel sorry for those who are employed by the FOCs who are not safeguarded and have no travel facilities whatsoever. This puts me off from applying for a position with a FOC as my current travel facilities are well used.

I hope other members have the same thoughts as myself and Stuart Marlow on this issue so that something can be done to introduce a national free pass for all of us.

Ian Rolph - Staffordshire

MORE PRIV PROBS

MY SON is train and plane mad, so during the school summer holidays he talked me into taking him to Manchester Airport for a day out. As a non-safeguarded driver I used the staff priv discount, which meant paying a quarter of the fare. From Milton Keynes to Manchester Airport cost me £38.25 return. I thought that was a lot of money to stand in the Manchester rain watching planes for a couple of hours!

I guess what I am trying to say is to please keep pushing for free travel for all rail staff. Over the last 10 years it has cost me a lot money travelling

(Continued on page 20)
(Continued from page 19)

PICKING OVER THE WORD

I’m writing in reply to the member of the Doncaster Branch who complained about the use of the word ‘scab’ in the modern world. I would like to remind him that at either end of his patch there used to be two big National Union of Mineworkers lodges at Bentley and Rossington. I wonder if he’d like to ask these trade unionists what they think of the word? I think he’d get a very short and sharp answer.

Some things take a very long time to be forgotten. I still see old retired Drivers who talk about the 1955 ASLEF strike. The union won, but the disloyal also benefited. We lost in 1982 - but a lot of scabs made a lot of money.

Even in the post privatisation era people have scabbed during Free Day bans when they won’t even lose any money. I think the ‘word we must not use’ is just as important today as it was in the past.

ANDY DERRETT – Chairman – Ipswich Branch

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

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LETTERS to the EDITOR

up and down the country.
I read lots of letters like mine in the ASLEF Journal, but there doesn’t seem to be much progress. Please keep us non- safeguarded staff up to date.

Mick Rowlinson – Driver – Bletchley

ASLEF IS WORTH THE SUBS

I WOULD like to put on record my thanks to my local rep, John Taylor.

After an appeal two years ago I was awarded a reprimand for a minor ‘safety of the line’ incident. It was incorrectly entered onto my service record for ‘life’, which could possibly affect any potential move to another TOC.

Against the advice of others, John argued my case and thanks to his efforts and perseverance the reprimand has now been expunged. Three other drivers at the depot also had their records corrected accordingly.

This represents a change of stance on the issue by SWT and ASLEF membership worth every penny.

Neal Taylor - Guilford Electric

THANKS COLIN

I WOULD like to take the opportunity through the Journal to thank Colin Smith, the organising secretary for the North West, and all the ASLEF branch reps at Liverpool Lime Street.

On 10 August last year I was relieved of duty while suffering from breathing difficulties. After two medicals the company doctor failed me for all duties.

Colin took up my case in May and August he negotiated a settlement which was very acceptable to me. It let me leave the industry with dignity. As a ‘thank you’ gesture for Colin’s efforts, I enclose a cheque for the union’s orphans charity.

John Ogilvie – now retired from Lime Street

HUMBLED AT ASLEF SUPPORT

I WOULD like to express my deepest thanks and gratitude to Kevin Lindsay, the District 2 Organiser for all his help and assistance after an off duty incident put my rail career under threat. With his help I am now back driving again and can get on with my life. I would also like to express my gratitude to my fellow union members on the North Clyde who have offered support and good wishes during the time I was away.

I was really quite humbled and lost for words at the way the brothers and sisters rallied round to support one of their own.

It can truly be said that I’m ‘proud to be union’.

John Patrick - Driver - Airdrie

THANKS SHARON!

AS a member of the Women’s Representative Committee, I would just like to say ‘thank you’ to Sharon Allen, the Equalities Advisor who has now, unfortunately, left ASLEF.

Sharon championed all the Equalities Committees and was of great help to me when I was first elected. Her workload was immense but she ploughed through with good humour and patience.

Good luck Sharon in whatever you do next.

Deborah Reay - WRC member - District 8.

WALES HAS A NORTH AS WELL!

HAVING read the four page supplement about ASLEF in Wales in the recent copy of the journal, I was bitterly disappointed that there was no mention, by our GS nor the First Minister of Wales, of the railway in North Wales.

Not that I was surprised because no one in the (South) Welsh Assembly is concerned about what happens north of the Brecon Beacons.

Isn’t it time that we mid- and north-Walians were given some recognition by ASLEF? the (south) Welsh Assembly and Arriva Trains (south) Wales.

To add insult to injury there were also mistakes in the Welsh translation.

I have a Sat Nav for hire if anyone would like to visit.

H. Ellis – Machynlleth

LONGSIGHT BRANCH has produced a Commemorative Badge Limited to 500 Numbered Copies. They are available for £5.00 plus £1 p&p from the Branch Secretary Fred Clarke at 80 Brookfield Avenue, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 1JE. Please make cheques payable to FClarke.

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PICKING OVER THE WORD

I’m writing in reply to the member of the Doncaster Branch who complained about the use of the word ‘scab’ in the modern world. I would like to remind him that at either end of his patch there used to be two big National Union of Mineworkers lodges at Bentley and Rossington. I wonder if he’d like to ask these trade unionists what they think of the word? I think he’d get a very short and sharp answer.

Some things take a very long time to be forgotten. I still see old retired Drivers who talk about the 1955 ASLEF strike. The union won, but the disloyal also benefited. We lost in 1982 - but a lot of scabs made a lot of money.

Even in the post privatisation era people have scabbed during Free Day bans when they won’t even lose any money. I think the ‘word we must not use’ is just as important today as it was in the past.

ANDY DERRETT – Chairman – Ipswich Branch

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Authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.
THE union has an obvious interest in climate change campaigns, most directly because it is a major argument for the expansion of rail and light rail – and it was difficult not to be swept along with the enthusiastic commitment of director Franny Armstrong and producer Lizzie Gillett when they spoke to us after the private viewing.

Quite apart from anything else, it is astonishing that the film is being made. When they conceived it, back in 2004, they had one major hurdle. They were broke – and needed £450,000 to make the film.

So what did they do? They decided to ‘crowd-fund’ it. And what exactly does that mean?

‘I know this sounds incredible – I can hardly believe it myself at times – but we asked people to invest £2,500 to buy a share. Remarkably, people did. It is an indication of how much this issue matters to them. Of course, we recognised that few people could afford £2,500 by themselves, so we welcomed syndicates of friends, families or colleagues. We’ve had a hockey team and an alternative health centre clubbing together to buy a share! We didn’t think to ask ASLEF, which is a shame. You might even have made money out of it.

‘The administration is going to be a nightmare. We’re going to have to send cheques each year to a couple of hundred ‘investors’ as well as the 100-odd people who worked on the film. That’s why we didn’t want to offer ‘shares’ below £2,500. It would have just got too complicated in the future.’

Do you still need money now – even though the film has been made?

‘We sold the last share in May of this year, so we’re not looking for any more investors, but we still welcome donations to help us with promotion and distribution.’

Apart from the fact that you got the money, are there other advantages to ‘crowd-funding’?

‘Yes there are! It means we control 100% of the copyright, so we can distribute the film where we want,’ Franny says. ‘I made a film of the ‘McLibel’ case in such a way that I could sign what deals I want. Incredibly it is estimated that 34 million people have now seen it – either on TV, internet and cable, at colleges, film festivals and cinemas. When Channel 4 made a drama version of it, only about 650,000 people saw it on UK TV.’

Franny was also fortunate to find actor Pete Postlethwaite, who says his involvement with climate change meant that, ‘I had no hesitation when the call came through to do this work. I’m delighted that I did. I think it’s stunning. I think it’ll make people think. I think it’ll make people debate. I think it’ll freshen their memories if they don’t already know about what the hell’s going on. I hope they’ll be moved.’

One of the most telling points the film makes is that climate change is remarkable because everyone is concerned about it – but no one actually does anything about it. ‘It’s not continuing because of ignorance – but because of indolence,’ Franny insists.

‘We all know there are massive chunks of ice drifting away from the Antarctic, that deserts are advancing, that storms like Katrina are becoming increasingly devastating, that oil is running out.

‘We even know the solutions – using trains instead of planes, recycling - basically using power sources that don’t harm the planet. But we’re all reluctant to do anything. There is a section of the film where a wind farm is being proposed. Local residents protest against it, while at the same time they think it’s a good idea. But not here – over there.

‘We can’t all keep saying it’s someone else’s problem. It’s all our problem. I just hope “The Age of Stupid” is going to do something to make people realise that, and so do something about it. That’s what I really want. I don’t want people to sit in the cinema – I want them to get out on the street!’

For more information about this remarkable project – and brilliant film - visit www.ageofstupid.net
FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. In the first six months of this year we have secured £1,442,369 in compensation claims! Call the helpline on 0808 100 8009

EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members' Emergency Hotline on 07980 996159.

SACKINGS OR OTHER PROBLEMS AT WORK Harassment, discrimination or bullying? If your local, branch or district representative is unavailable, call the Industrial Relations department at union headquarters (020 7317 8600) or email info@aslef.org.uk

ASLEF more than just a union

Prize Crossword No. 30
set by TLC

Solution to Crossword No 29 which appeared in the September edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to Peter Griffith from Essex.

ACROSS: 1 Steer Clear 6. Stop 10 America 11 Sandown 12 Straw Poll 13 Ennui 14 Soggy 15 Frenchman 17 Patriotic 20 Trier 21 Named 23 Munitions 25 Radical 26 Reardon 27 Sale 28 Bridgnorth DOWN: 1 SPADS 2 Eyebright 3 Railway Viaduct 4 Lead Off 5 Absolve 7 Biting blast from Siberia perhaps 8 St Pancras 14 University town 15 Sets free from captivity 16 Fairy tale giant 20 West End show about a small girl and her dog Sandy 21 Vote into office 22 A person or agent exercising government over the people 23 Preferred class of rail travel

Thanks for all your responses to the 29th ASLEF crossword in the September edition. If you complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

ACROSS
3 Wheeled vehicle for transporting rail passengers (8)
8 Bone of the forearm (4)
9 Busy London station (5,5)
10 No charge (4)
11 Egyptian river (4)
13 Threaded nail for fastening pieces of wood (5)
17 The first Inter-city railway station built in London (6)
18 Bottom piece of a flitch of bacon (6)
19 Rub out (5)
22 The back of something (4)
24 Blue flower (4)
25 Home of the Stadium of Light (10)
26 Sudden rush of wind (4)
27 Offering protection during air-raids or bad weather (8)

DOWN
1 Warning signal (5)
2 Usual job of a secretary (4,5)
4 Fail to agree (5)
5 Boulders (5)
6 Secret love affair (5)
7 Biting blast from Siberia perhaps (4,4)
12 Railway track (4)
14 University town (9)
15 Sets free from captivity (8)
16 Fairy tale giant (4)
20 West End show about a small girl and her dog Sandy (5)
21 Vote into office (5)
22 A person or agent exercising government over the people (5)
23 Preferred class of rail travel (5)

The winner of this month’s crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

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23
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