A HAPPY AND SAFE 2009 TO ALL ASLEF MEMBERS
“I don’t know what I would have done without the Railway Friendly Society - it was a real life saver”

Member who experienced first hand the financial support that the Society offers.

Family Protection Plans from the Railway Friendly Society offer effective family protection at affordable prices. We are a mutual society that has been working exclusively in support of railway families for over 100 years.

How can I protect my family?

**STEP 1 - CALL NOW - FREEPHONE 0800 0 324 326**

for your personal application form.

**STEP 2 -** When you receive your form, simply select the level of cover you require to protect your family.

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<th>BENEFIT</th>
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<td>On accident or sickness</td>
<td>£50 per week</td>
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<td>On permanently unable to work and ill health retired</td>
<td>£5,200</td>
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<td>Death benefit</td>
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<td>Children’s benefit for 1 child</td>
<td>£270 per 4 weeks</td>
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<td>Children’s benefit for 2 children</td>
<td>£360 per 4 weeks</td>
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<td>Children’s benefit for 3 children</td>
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Additional benefit for up to 6 children at no extra cost.

**STEP 3 -** Check out how little it costs to protect your family each week. Affordable Family Protection from only £2.80 per week.

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<th>Your age now*</th>
<th>STANDARD PLAN</th>
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<tr>
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<td>£2.80 per week</td>
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<td>£3.80 per week</td>
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*You must be aged between 16 and 44 to be eligible for this plan.

[www.railwayfs.co.uk](http://www.railwayfs.co.uk)
YOU will see in this edition a report of an informal ASLEF Members’ forum we held over a weekend in Nottingham last month. It was something of an experiment, but it was part of my on-going search for better ways for the union to communicate with our members.

This is not a criticism of the people who work on ASLEF’s internal and external comms, but every time ASLEF members get together, communications features high up the grumbling list. It is our most common complaint: ‘I wasn’t told. I didn’t know.’

Since I’ve been general secretary I have done my utmost to improve this. Since I took over the hot seat, the union has developed a facility for central text messaging, updated and improved our web site and provided a members’ discussion area. We’re working on a common system of ASLEF emails, we’ve tried to broaden the appeal of the Journal, we’ve improved the quality of our campaign literature and whenever possible we’ve responded to individual branch requests for publicity material.

I’ve also looked at what other unions are doing, including recent ventures into trade unions having their own television channels. This is not something I’ve pursued, because I don’t believe enough of our members would watch it to justify the expenditure.

The key to good communication is not to provide every new technological facility on the market. It is to define what you – the members – want to know, and to work on finding the best way to get it to you.

Our traditional and basic communication method - the branch meeting - increasingly has its critics. To be honest, I accept that it is not always the first place you’d choose to spend an evening or a Sunday morning. But when there is a burning issue like pay or industrial action on the agenda, people make the effort. So I don’t think it is always a failing about getting the information out about when and where the meeting will be. It is a problem about how to make them interesting and involving – or to find an alternative.

I don’t accept that we are yet sufficiently technologically advanced to be talking about ‘on-line’ or ‘virtual’ branches, and I don’t want to spend money on something that isn’t going to be used.

But there is a positive side to all this - when members want to know something they find out. You have only to ask the people who organise our socials, those events that bring drivers together and prove that ASLEF is ‘more than just a union’. The message gets around by means of the finest communication tool ever invented: which is people talking to people.

That is what we were trying to resurrect in Nottingham last year. It was a useful trial and we may try it again next year in a slightly different format. We don’t want our communications criticised – we want to provide what you want. But I suspect that if I knew how to do it, I’d be Brain of Britain rather than General Secretary of ASLEF!

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY

Cover Photo: Douglasinscotland@blueyonder.co.uk
‘Open union’ at Nottingham forum

ABOUT sixty ASLEF members from all over the country attended an informal union forum in Nottingham last month to hear reports on new initiatives, raise their own concerns at question and answer sessions and discuss the union’s industrial agenda.

Declan MacIntyre spoke about the strides the union is making in the education field. Simon Weller gave an update on the continuing pension talks. Kevin Lindsay spoke about the union’s determination to represent drivers on light rail, Victoria Phillip spoke about the union’s part in legal precedents and MP Kelvin Hopkins detailed his vision for a nation-wide freight line (see pages 12 and 13).

General Secretary Keith Norman and President Alan Donnelly responded to a host of questions on issues as diverse as axle-counters, the union’s head office building, rest day working and the credit crunch.

The atmosphere was informal and friendly and Keith Norman said it was a pleasure to discuss union matters in such a relaxed way. ‘It was good to talk about the future of the union with ordinary members as well as committed activists,’ he said. ‘It’s all about keeping in touch at every level – local, branch and national.’

UNION SETS UP FUTURE RAIL SEMINAR

ASLEF joined forces with centre left campaigning organisation Compass for a rail industry discussion seminar in the House of Commons last month. The initiative attracted nearly 30 attendees including campaigners, trade unionists, MPs, Lords and industry experts.

Compass chair Neal Lawson argued that the current economic situation presented an opportune moment to force more progressive rail policies onto the agenda, rail commentator Christian Wolmar defined the problems caused by the separation of operations and infrastructure and compared current subsidies to rail of £5.1 billion compared with the pre-privatisation figure of £1.34bn; and ASLEF’s Simon Weller emphasised how franchises had blinded the industry’s long term vision.

The outcome of the brain-storming session will be used to back up the union’s call to bring expiring franchises back into public ownership.
HEATHROW EXTENSION DECISION DELAYED

THE Department for Transport has decided to delay its decision on whether a third runway should be built at Heathrow – exactly as the Journal predicted last month. Keith Norman welcomed the Prime Minister’s assurance that a final decision will only be made after full consideration of the environmental implications. ‘If this is the case, I am confident it won’t be built,’ Keith said.

ASLEF’s main argument concerns journeys that could be undertaken by less environmentally disastrous forms of transport than air. ‘There is a perfectly achievable alternative to flying to places like Glasgow, Manchester, Aberdeen or Newcastle – and that is a high-speed railway,’ Keith says. ‘Money should be diverted from polluting a small area to the west of London to enhancing the transport system of the entire country.’

Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon said the decision was being delayed to give full consideration to all the strong views which needed ‘proper consideration’, while the Opposition has accused the government of dithering.

‘It is a contentious issue and I know that the Cabinet is not in accord over it, not to mention the 140 MPs who have signed a Commons motion urging a re-think,’ Keith says. ‘But frankly I don’t mind how long it takes so long as we make the right decision in the end.’

GOVERNMENT ‘SPENT OVER £5,000 MILLION ON RAIL LAST YEAR’ Paul Clark MP (left), the Under Secretary of State for Transport, has told Parliament that the government spent over £5,000 million on rail in 2007–8.

He said, ‘National Rail Trends states that in 1997-98, Government expenditure on rail travel was £1,829 million and rose to £5,147 million in 2007-08.’

All of which provoked Keith Norman to ask, ‘Where did it go?’

RECOGNITION AT WREXHAM Colin Smith, the union’s District 3 secretary, says that ASLEF is on the brink of being recognised officially by Wrexham & Shropshire & Marylebone Railway Limited (WSML). The firm’s driver depot and headquarters is based at Wrexham Station in North Wales.

‘I have been in discussions with the company to find a way forward for the recognition of ASLEF and I have asked the EC to endorse the draft agreement I have put before them,’ Colin says. ‘This is a relatively new company with a driver establishment of about 14 – all of whom are ASLEF members.’

LABOUR RESEARCH SAYS PAY SETTLEMENTS HAVE FALLEN The Labour Research Department says that the median (mid-point) pay settlement fell by 0.2% in the three months to October to 3.8%. The public sector median was 2.9% while the private sector median was 3.9%. The figures are for basic pay only and exclude bonuses, increments and overtime.

The three-month settlement median remained at 4.0% from July to September this year and has not been as low as 3.8% since April 2008.

ONE HUNDRED DEAD FOR CAMPAIGNING FOR WORKERS’ RIGHTS A survey by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) last month revealed that nearly 100 trade union members were murdered in 2007 for daring to campaign for better working rights in countries with violent histories of anti-union activity.

The ITUC revealed that 91 trade unionists met violent deaths – 39 in Colombia and 30 by President Lansana Conte’s regime in Guinea.
Scots launch ‘stop violence’ campaign

Under the rallying cry ‘Spread some joy this Christmas – Respect Scotland’s transport workers’, ASLEF in Scotland has, with the transport section of the Unite union, launched a campaign to ensure the safety of transport staff. Last month some 50 train drivers and the same number of bus drivers passed leaflets out at a media event at Glasgow’s Central Station with MP Jim Devine and MSP Hugh Henry.

The ASLEF turn-out for the event was quite excellent, with drivers from four companies making the journey from Ayr, Polmadie, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Motherwell, Yoker and Gourock.

The union’s officer north of the border, Kevin Lindsay, was delighted with the response. ‘We really got the message over in the media this morning,’ he said. ‘But this is only the start – now we need to put pressure on the Scottish executive to introduce meaningful laws that will ensure transport workers are not attacked or assaulted.

‘No worker should have to tolerate spitting, or verbal or physical abuse. Transport workers deserve protection in the same way as those who work in the emergency services.’

Kevin said he was anxious to have other groups of workers help drive the campaign, like postal, shop and other transport workers, including taxi drivers.

One ASLEF member in Scotland has been assaulted on four different occasions. ‘It is a sad fact that railway stations tend to attract anti-social elements,’ he said. Even more astonishing, a transport union representative described how one of his members had, last Christmas, been attacked by a man wielding a sword. ‘It beggars belief that people can act in this way,’ he said.

Jim Devine, MP for Livingston, was for four years employed in the first Scottish primary care for psychiatric services in Scotland. ‘I was only threatened once during that time, and that was verbally,’ Jim said. ‘I felt I was respected for the work I was doing. It is a sad reflection that people doing the same job today are in a very different situation.

‘We must be aware of the complacent view that ‘it comes with the territory’. It doesn’t. It is not acceptable for any worker at any time. We all have the right to go to work free from fear.’

MSP Hugh Henry echoed this. ‘I have had it said to me that despite changes in Scottish law to defend emergency services workers, they still continue – so it is not worth pursuing. This is nonsense. If we accepted this logic, we would have no sanctions against murderers!’

He said it was right that the campaign had kicked off just before the festive season. ‘Transport workers have a right to enjoy themselves over Christmas and the New Year as well as everyone else,’ he said. ‘That is why your slogan is so appropriate.’

He promised that he would do all he could within the Scottish Parliament to further the union campaign in the coming year.

‘Politicians will rely on you for evidence and support. We will make progress so long as the unions and their political party work in harmony.’

ASLEF executive committee members Hugh Bradley said that the issue also affected freight drivers because they often had to change over in remote places at unsociable times.

HUGH BRADLEY, the EC member for District 2 and a freight driver, has been involved in Scottish Parliament discussions about the development of the Grangemouth Freight Hub.

‘As things stand, Grangemouth is a bottleneck with both road and rail facilities inadequate to handle the volume of traffic generated by the port and the surrounding distribution centres,’ Hugh says. ‘If it is developed as an intermodal transport hub it can prove crucial to Scotland’s economy and environment.’

This is why the union has been actively supporting the Grangemouth Transport Forum, which brings together international and local businesses, community representatives and elected members who back its development. Hugh, with Tam McKendrick from DRS Works Council, are intent on using the Forum to secure a co-ordinated approach to create a fit for purpose hub at Scotland’s largest container port that will also meet the concerns of the local community and hopefully provide new passenger services.

The site, the union argues has an impressive list of statistics to support its development. It is 26 miles from both Edinburgh and Glasgow, has easy access to 60% of the Scottish population and its container traffic has increased by 125% in a decade.

‘For a start, the rail line needs to be adjusted and the siding extended,’ Hugh says. ‘We also need to look at improved railhead access within the port, and electrification of the rail link through Falkirk Grahamston.’
SEVERN TUNNEL IS ‘A HOLE’ ASLEF official Stan Moran told last month’s Welsh affairs committee at Westminster that the Severn Tunnel was known as ‘The Hole’ by rail workers because of track problems. Stan pointed out that trains travelling through the main line tunnel into Wales had to slow down, signals deteriorated and tracks were ‘abysmal’.

‘There is a desperate need for investment in rail infrastructure to boost staffing and standards,’ he declared. The union was, with the RMT, giving evidence on cross-border rail services. They criticised the franchising system and the government’s failure to regulate fares and company profits.

Stan also stressed that staffing and services standards were suffering because there were not enough drivers and there were concerns that some drivers were working without proper training. He also insisted that if a Severn barrage was built, it should include a new rail link running along the top, and argued that freight must be pushed higher up the level of priorities. Stan pointed out, ‘The Freight Transport Association has warned that cross border road links are not adequate and called for a better north/south Wales link.’

RMS SECTION RAFFLE RAISES OVER £4,600
The fund-raising raffle organised by the union’s Retired Members Section this year raised over £4,600. The winners were; 1st Prize £1000 ticket number 016456 won by Yvonne Deacon; 2nd Prize £500 ticket number 021012 won by John Ashby; 3rd Prize £200 ticket number 042508 won by P Begley; 4th Prize Eurostar Trip ticket number 024612 won by M Cooper. There is a report from the Retired Members Section AGM on page 14.

WELCOME FOR UPGRADE OF CROSS LONDON RAIL FREIGHT
FREIGHT ON RAIL (FoR), to which ASLEF is affiliated, has welcomed the upgrade to the key freight and passenger route across London - the North London Line - which the government announced as part of its ‘Sustainable Transport’ plans. The line is a crucial artery for freight traffic from Tilbury, the East Coast ports and the forthcoming major redevelopment of the Thames Gateway.

FoR spokesperson Philippa Edmunds says, ‘We’re pleased that the importance of this vital cross London rail route for freight is being recognised. Not only can each container freight train using this route remove up to 50 HGVs from our roads but this rail traffic will produce at least three times less carbon dioxide than road distribution. Rail offers a low carbon, energy efficient and safe alternative.’

Secretary of State for Transport Geoff Hoon says work will commence in 2012.

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CAMPAIGNING FOR CHANGE

Jason Torrance, Campaign Director of Campaign for Better Transport explains why the support of ASLEF is a vital key to unlocking solutions to Britain’s transport problems.

THE gap between what’s needed and what is happening has never been quite as great as it is today. We and our children’s generation are set to experience an unprecedented level of change in our towns, our cities and our planet. With our roads clogged and our skies filled it’s no wonder that our things are changing so much and transport is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Our transport system touches everyone’s lives and as such is a much quoted driver of our economy. So, why then are many people priced off of our railways, condemned to sit in traffic jams, witness to the death of almost 3,000 people on our roads every year and asked to watch with open mouths as government considers road widening costs of £1,000 an inch?

Key to turning things around is the improvement of our rail network for passengers and for freight, which is no small task given dwindling government investment in the rail network.

Ahead of us lies a future where passengers are expected to pay more for travelling by rail while government invests less. Partnerships between organisations such as Campaign for Better Transport and ASLEF are key to driving change and pushing solutions.

IT’S ALL IN THE MONEY

The major factor affecting travel in Britain is the rising cost. As many drivers bemoan the reality of high pump prices, a leading motoring organisation has a different story to tell which places current petrol prices in a longer perspective.

Research by the RAC in its ‘20 Years of Motoring 1998/2008’ report has revealed that ‘The real cost of motoring has fallen significantly over 20 years with it being 18% cheaper to buy and run a car, including fuel costs, in 2008 than it was in 1988.’

Rail travel has increased by 5% in the same period.

New research by Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) reveals that our rail fares are around 20% higher than the European average, and this has priced people off trains and buses. If bus and train fares were reduced by 20% today, rail travel would increase by 17% and bus travel by 13% by 2015. And if the Government introduced a package of measures - reducing fares and increasing motoring and aviation taxes - carbon emissions could be cut by 19% by 2025.

CAMPAIGN SUCCESSES:

- Sustainable transport initiatives by helping businesses set up initiatives to minimise car based travel to and from the work place leading to the setting up of a National Business Travel Network – funded by the Department for Transport and hosted by Campaign for Better Transport.
- Rail stations as transport hubs, with station travel plans, called for by Campaign for Better Transport, being developed for 24 pilot schemes covering 31 stations across the country – making it easier for people to access rail stations.
- An expanding railway, with plans detailed in new government policy lobbied for by a 21 strong coalition of groups, ‘Growing the Railways’ led by Campaign for Better Transport.
- A rejection of longer HGV’s and an increase in rail freight, with plans scrapped to allow 60-tonne, 25-metre ‘super lorries’ on Britain’s roads, while an extra £61 million was allocated to new rail freight grants.
- An end to large scale road building, with the collapse of the Conservative government’s 1990’s £23bn road building programme, and a move away from motorway expansion to the use of hard shoulders – resulting in high level lobbying from Campaign for Better Transport together with support of some 80 community groups campaigning against damaging road schemes.

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

Working together is key to success and as ASLEF members you’re already a part of the solution. Here’s a transport ‘to do’ list you might consider:

- Write to your local MP to call for cheaper walk on rail fares. Walk-on single rail fares are up to seven times more expensive than advance fares. www.bettertransport.org.uk
- Join the campaign to stop European plans to introduce longer and heavier HGV’s visit the freight on Rail website http://www.freightonrail.org.uk/
- and of course join Campaign for Better Transport.

Passengers are being priced off our railways. Photo: Sara Hannant | Campaign for Better Transport
UNION HELPS SPONSOR KINDERTRANSPORT EVENT

Seventy years ago – on 2 December 1938 – 200 children stepped from a train at Liverpool Street station. They were the first of 10,000 mainly Jewish children to arrive in this country fleeing the Nazis. Last month ASLEF helped to sponsor a moving theatre event at the station to commemorate the anniversary.

Back in the 30s the British government would not accept their parents - so the refugee children stood at the train station, confused and lost, waiting to be led away to foster homes, hostels or camps. They were the lucky ones. By the end of the war over a million and a half children left behind were dead.

Throughout the day of the anniversary, Suitcase Productions, with drama students from John Moores University, re-enacted these heart-rending scenes, not only for the benefit of those with tickets, but also helping to enlighten thousands of commuters passing through the station. More information about Kindertransport is available at www.ajr.org.uk/kindertransport

CRISIS TALKS AT EWS

EWS management have been engaging ASLEF in urgent talks as they prepare their proposals to deal with the current economic downturn.

Senior EWS managers explained to union company council, officers and EC members how the economic crisis in the UK has greatly impacted on EWS because of the company’s major role in the UK supply chain as a whole.

The projected outlook for tonnage moved and revenues is significantly down and the demand for steel, scrap, cars, petroleum, minerals, coal and intermodal will be considerably lower over the coming 12-18 months.

The union is actively seeking to minimise the effect on ASLEF-represented grades. More information will be available in the news section of the company council website www.aslef.org.uk/ews/ or by contacting local reps or company council members.

‘CONFLICT OF INTEREST’ IN SCOTRAIL FRANCHISE

An Audit Scotland report on the First ScotRail passenger rail franchise last month led to the resignation of Transport Scotland’s finance director Guy Houston. This was because Mr Houston, who holds £70,000 of shares in First Group shares, was involved in the extension of the franchise awarded to – First ScotRail.

ASLEF immediately called for a halt to the ScotRail franchise extension before a full enquiry has been undertaken by the Scottish Parliament, and for an emergency statement about the situation to be made to Parliament by transport minister Stewart Stevenson.

‘This is vital so that politicians and the public know exactly how their rail services are allocated,’ says ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman. ‘Even the suggestion of malpractice brings the whole franchising system into disrepute. The obvious way to avoid conflicting interests is to take franchises back into public hands when they expire.’
I HAVE been a driver with Northern Rail since 1988, and I am here to talk to you about what happened to me at work at 16.04 on the dull cold afternoon of 21 June 2003. It affected my life in a way I will never forget as long as I live.

I was travelling at 60mph, which means having about 15 seconds reaction time. I recall what happened next in vivid detail. A woman with messy blonde hair wearing a blue denim top, blue denim jeans and white sand shoes walked out of some bushes onto the track in front of my train. She turned her back to me and began to walk away. I never saw her face.

I placed the train brake into emergency and blew the horn. She never moved. I was too scared to look. I got out of the seat, covered my ears and closed my eyes. I hit her full on at 55mph. The sound and sensation of hitting her at that speed will go with me to my grave. The train rocked violently from side to side so much so I thought it was going to derail.

She never crouched. She just stood there. Her body went under a gap of between 2 and 3 feet. I heard her bones and body crash against the under-frame of the train.

Train drivers are issued with HIV gloves as part of PPE and as the train was coming to a stand I got these out of my bag, but I was shaking so much I ripped them trying to put them on.

The major thing we are trained to do as Train Drivers is to protect trains in the event of an emergency. It is drilled into us and it becomes second nature. It involves using track circuit clips which turn oncoming signals to red, detonators which are explosives to give other drivers an audible warning and red flags as a visual warning.

I put my high visibility vest on and ran up the track to warn on-coming trains. I ran so far and so fast I swear I was floating. I’d been running for 300/400 yards before I realised that in my panic I’d forgotten everything - clips, flags and detonators. I snatched my mobile phone from my pocket and rang my control and informed them. They told me they were aware and I should return to my train.

There is an old saying on the railway that ‘you can’t think when you panic’. I was in a state of shock - and I was panicking. To this day I still can’t believe I forgot to protect my train or the on-coming train. I can only put it down to the trauma I had just witnessed.

Back in my cab I decided I wasn’t going to go back to the body. I knew the impact had killed her – but I still felt bad about my decision, asking myself, ‘What if she is still alive? What if there was anything we could do to make her feel better?’

I still wonder - and still feel guilt to this day - about my decision not to go back.

When the emergency services turned up everything improved for me. The treatment I received from everyone - managers, police, workmates - was first class.

JUST THE BEGINNING

I was escorted home at about 8 o’clock, but I never slept that night. I could feel...
my wife was awake, too, worrying about me. I felt I was disturbing her. When I got up I could only think about what had happened. What was that woman’s name? What did she look like? How old was she? Why my train?

I’m not sure why I cried.

The following day I went sick and had all day to think about it alone in the house while my wife was at work and the kids at school. Members of my family kept asking me if I was OK, but everyone skirted around the issue. I guess they were concerned and afraid to upset me. I started to smoke again despite stopping for two years, and I definitely drank too much for while.

Work wanted me to attend psychotherapy treatment with a nurse in York, but I couldn’t face going on the train to see him. I was too scared of hearing that noise again.

How daft is that? A train driver who’s scared to travel on a train?

I started to think I’d never drive one again.

A PERIOD OF THERAPY
After a few weeks I built up courage and went to see him. I received cognitive eye therapy that involved confronting my trauma over a period of time. It uses flashing lights but the worse part of the treatment was getting to the sound of the impact. It is difficult to say how it affected me, but I did it and I guess that’s why I can talk about it now, hopefully without showing emotion.

But it was tough.

I just wanted to block it out and try not to think or mention it. The therapy worked for me and I still recommend it to my colleagues.

I returned to work in November, initially on a gradual program to get me back to driving. At the end of the month I drove on my own again. It was nerve- wracking. I thought everyone close to the rail was about to commit suicide. They weren’t, of course. But I couldn’t help thinking they were.

THE ORDEAL OF THE CORONER’S COURT
On 7 December 2003 I received a summons to attend the Coroner’s Court. I was dreading it and it upset me that I had to attend. Four days later I found myself attending the court, shaking and scared of meeting that woman’s family. In fact, I was terrified.

My ASLEF colleagues were brilliant to me and my managers were always sympathetic. But when I met members of her family, I felt so disrespectful, I couldn’t look them in the eye – never mind talk to them. They kept telling me they didn’t blame me but if I’d spoken to them I know I would have broke down. I was having trouble holding myself together.

To this day I still don’t know the coroner’s verdict.

I couldn’t wait to get out of the court. I felt I was choking and only when I was outside I felt I could breathe again. I just wanted to get away from there.

I often think that it was disrespectful to her family.

SOME SORT OF CLOSURE
After the coroner’s court I realised it was over for me and I could begin to put some closure of a very traumatic experience. I had always been active in the union and around this time I became the health and safety rep for my depot. I wanted to use my experience to help other train drivers.

As a train driving fraternity, we help and support each other. Suicide brings us closer together. I give advice, listen, show compassion and do anything else which helps colleagues cope, pass on the experience of attending a coroner’s court and tell them what to expect.

Later I found out about the woman who had committed suicide that day and knowing about her troubled life gave me some comfort. I don’t know why, but it does. But still, even now, every time I drive pass the location where I hit her, I think of her still. I wonder if her children are OK. Experienced drivers say I always will.

These memories are still fresh in my mind to this day, but I’m glad to have been able to return to my driving job and for the help and support I received to achieve this. I know some drivers never return to the job after this experience.

So I guess I’m very lucky.

Thank you very much for listening to my story.'
The volume of freight on Britain’s railways has increased in recent years – but rail still carries only a small proportion of total freight in Britain and could carry much more. It cannot do so, however, without a step change in track capacity involving a substantial expansion of rail infrastructure dedicated to freight.

Rail passenger traffic has vastly increased too and the existing main line routes, especially to the Midlands and the North, are under increasing capacity pressures. It is also the case that passenger and freight traffic do not mix easily, with different operating speeds among other things. It is inevitable that passengers will take priority and freight will continue to have to fit round passenger services on these routes. It is obvious therefore that a segregation of passenger and freight with dedicated lines must be considered for the future.

Time to Split
Some have suggested that new passenger lines could be constructed and free up the older routes for freight. This is not the answer however because there are gauge limitations for freight traffic on existing main lines which would be prohibitively expensive to correct. It is also the case that the existing routes are not capable of accommodating continental rail wagons, especially through platforms, which again severely restricts freight capacity.

The real solution is a new dedicated freight network built to super-gauge proportions and capable of accommodating full sized lorry trailers, full sized (9ft 6ins) containers and indeed double stacked full sized containers if required.

The Eurorail Freight Route (EFR) scheme overcomes all these problems and has many additional advantages. EFR would link the Channel Tunnel to Glasgow – a 400 mile route linking all the main economic regions and population centres up the backbone of Britain. It has been carefully designed and very precisely planned making use of old rail track bed and under-utilised lines linked together to form a continuous route. It requires only 14 miles of new line, 9.5 miles of which will be in tunnels.

Minimal Engineering, Planning – and Even Cash
Indeed, the whole route presents no engineering difficulty at all and minimal planning requirements. It will therefore be astonishingly cheap to build, our estimate being less than £4 billion, using costings derived from CTRL. (£4 billion is a quarter of what is planned to be spent on Crossrail, and half of what has been spent on the West Coast Mainline modernisation).

Another advantage of the scheme is that it will be built in phases, starting with a road/rail terminal on the North Thames link to CTRL. That terminal is already available, so that all that is required to begin running trains from North Thames through the Channel Tunnel is to negotiate access to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) for the necessary freight movements.

A second phase, and crucial to the scheme, is to secure the required route around the east and north of London to a second terminal close to the M25 and M40 and thus accessible to the M3, M4 and M1. The line will then track northwards to the East Midlands, with a link to another terminal serving Birmingham and the West Midlands. The route will continue to the South Yorkshire terminal at Tinsley between Sheffield and Rotherham and then across the Pennines by way of the Woodhead Tunnel which has recently been protected for future rail use by the intervention of former Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly MP.

Next comes a terminal close to the M6/M62 intersection from where the line will travel northwards again to the Settle Carlisle line and then on through Scotland to its final terminal in Glasgow. There will be a terminal serving the conurbations of the North East through to Carlisle, and possibly another link through to the Southwest and South Wales from Birmingham.

A final section of the route will be a dedicated line from the North Thames through to the Channel Tunnel so that use of CTRL will be a temporary arrangement until the full EFR scheme is completed.

Working with the Industry
The essence of the scheme is that it will work in cooperation with the road freight industry who will have the option of delivering their road trailers to nearby rail terminals for delivery to terminals close to final destinations for local delivery by road. Traffic will be both international and domestic, so that Scottish hauliers, for example, will be able to deliver their lorry trailers to the Midlands and to London and vice versa quickly and reliably.

Some modification of the catenary wires through the Channel Tunnel will be necessary to accommodate double-stacked containers but the dimensions of the tunnel are sufficient to allow this to happen.

Advantages for Passengers, Too
The scheme will take over five million lorry journeys off the roads each year, thus substantially reducing congestion, CO2 emissions and road wear.
Finally, a major advantage is that north-south freight traffic from the East Coast and (especially) the West Coast Mainlines will in future use EFR, freeing up those other routes for faster and more frequent passenger trains.

In 1993 a test run with a passenger train was undertaken from Kings Cross to Edinburgh. The route was cleared to enable the train to travel at 140mph with a brief stop at Newcastle and the journey was completed in just three and a half hours.

With freight traffic removed and modifications to the East Coast Mainline, quadrupling the line north of Welwyn and passing loops further north, such journey times could be achieved daily.

With similar modifications and freight traffic removed from the West Coast Mainline, 135mph non-stop services from Euston to Glasgow would also be possible.

To make all this a reality simply requires the government to be persuaded that the EFR scheme is feasible and economic, which we are absolutely convinced is the case.

In our team we have one of Scotland’s largest freight haulier and two expert railway engineers as well as myself. We believe our scheme is vital for Britain’s railways and vital for Britain’s future economic success.

We hope very much that ASLEF members are persuaded by the idea too.
January 2009

Retired Members AGM

RETIRED SECTION AGM

‘POSITIVE AND SUCCESSFUL’

reports Tony West, the National Secretary of ASLEF’s Retired Members Section

DESPITE major problems on some rail links to London, just under 100 retired members managed to make it to head office on 20 November to deal with the packed agenda of the Retired Members Section (RMS) annual general meeting.

Section Chair Ray Jackson called for a minute’s silence for those retired members who had passed on over the last year.

The General Secretary’s report to the meeting looked back at the problems the union has had to face over the last four years, none more than financial. We are now fortunately back in the black, and Keith congratulated the membership, EC and officers for their work in turning this situation round. Keith then presented a 50 year medallion to Bro J. McNally of the Saltley branch.

The first guest speaker was Dot Gibson, the vice-president of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) who took us through the background of the state pension, explained the current position and expanded on the work of the NPC.

John McDonnell MP was in his usual constructive form, covering the whole political arena. He dealt with subjects ranging from pensions, child poverty, the current state of the banks, bonuses, the unfairness of the tax regime and the widening gap between the rich and poor.

Mary Turner, the president of the GMB and a member of the Labour Party’s National Executive, outlined her support for the pensioners’ movement. She spoke about how we can best represent our members, retired or otherwise, in our respective trade unions. Mary called for more activity from trade unionists in our constituencies, where we have the opportunity to select the people we want in Parliament. She also warned of the threat from the BNP.

Last but not least of our speakers, the AGM welcomed Peter Rayner, the NPC EC member of the Transport Committee. Peter outlined the NPC’s view on more electrification of our railways and the efforts being made on free and reduced travel facilities for pensioners.

All our guests received a 50 year medallion to Jacko with a bunch of flowers!

Some of the 90-odd retired members at the head office meeting

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Mary Turner, the president of the GMB and a member of the Labour Party’s National Executive, outlined her support for the pensioners’ movement. She spoke about how we can best represent the profits going into RMS’s continuing campaigning on behalf of pensioners and contributing towards a weekend forum in 2009.

The Chair, Ray Jackson, gave a report of the Section’s activities over the previous 12 months and called on RMS members to visit their branches where they could pass on their experience to today’s members. All District Councils had been visited last year and he asked for invitations to branches and social functions in order to enable closer contact with the RMS membership – which stands at 1,851.

JOIN THE SECTION AND KEEP ACTIVE!

A personal view of the AGM by BILL DALE, a member of the RMS from the Chingford Branch.

When I took early retirement at the beginning of 2008, I decided to continue my membership into the Retired Members Section. I was delighted to secure a place at the AGM because with a hundred retired members attending I knew I was bound to meet active colleagues from the past - and I wasn’t disappointed. I was particularly pleased to see that stalwart of our union, Bill Ronksley.

One of the main goals of the RMS is to secure decent pensions and adequate welfare state conditions, not only for our retired members but for the population in general. We argue for pensions to be linked to earnings or prices, whichever is the greater.

It is a disgrace that any government, particularly a Labour one, can allow 2.5 million pensioners to live in poverty - and 1 in 4 suffer the indignity of means testing – the same figure as 1997/8. Like all those present, I enjoyed and appreciated the thoughtful and fruitful contributions made by the guest speakers.

My first AGM was very useful, very informative and at times entertaining. It was rewarding to be amongst a fraternity that could only be found in a union like ours. I urge any retired ASLEF member to join the RMS and actively support its aspirations. Whatever you do in your retirement - keep active!
AMNESTY FOCUS ON ‘AT RISK’ TRADE UNIONISTS

- a survey of Amnesty International’s work with trade unions across the world, by SHANE ENRIGHT, the movement’s Trade Union Campaigner

Miguel has a routine in the mornings. Before he leaves home, he puts on a bullet-proof jacket. During the journey to the factory where he works, he checks regularly to see that he’s not being followed. And he varies his route every day to throw assassins off the scent. One thing he doesn’t have to remember is to kiss his wife and children goodbye. They no longer live with him, as it’s far too risky.

Miguel has to follow his elaborate safety routine because he’s a trade union activist in Colombia. And for people like him, Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world. Over 2,000 trade union members have been killed here in the last 20 years. And so far in 2008, there have been over 40 more killings.

As well as these brutal assassinations, trade unionists and their families are subjected to many other forms of intimidation - like death threats, violent assaults and abductions.

Throughout Colombia’s 40 year armed conflict, trade unionists have been in the firing line. Union members, both men and women, are often accused of collaboration with guerrilla groups by the security forces or paramilitary organisations.

This puts union members at huge risk whenever they try to defend basic human rights - like decent pay and working conditions - or seek to organise legitimate workers’ meetings or demonstrations. A small number have been killed by guerrillas. But it is the paramilitary death squads who most frequently target union members.

Government claims that trade unionists are collateral victims of the insurgency are rebutted by Amnesty International, which has shown that the times of greatest danger often coincide with labour disputes or organising efforts.

The right to form and join a trade union is a basic human right - and one that ASLEF members exercise week in and week out. Amnesty International has been working side by side with trade unions in Colombia for many years. As well as campaigning at national and international levels, we also provide practical support – such as our sponsorship of a workers co-operative legal rights centre in Bogotá.

And our solidarity spreads far beyond Colombia. In countries as diverse as Iran, Cambodia and Zimbabwe we’re supporting trade unionists in standing up for human rights.

And we are working more widely wherever justice and freedom are denied, including campaigns against the Guantanamo Bay detention centre, against the death penalty and for fundamental civil, political, economic and social rights. Our work to stop violence against women is having an impact, and we campaign here in the UK against 42-day detention proposals, and in support of the rights of asylum seekers.

Our human rights partnership with unions is rooted in a deep commitment to solidarity and the recognition that rights are rarely conceded and once won, have to be defended with vigilance. Here in the UK Section that relationship has flourished and we are appreciative of ASLEF’s long-term national affiliation but we are keen to grow our shared activism through increasing branch affiliations and by reaching out to individual trade unionists to become individual members of Amnesty.

Throughout this year, Amnesty International will be celebrating the 30th Anniversary of our Trade Union Network. There can be no better time to get involved. Please join us on our anniversary year and help us make a difference for Colombian trade unionists and for all those whose rights and liberties are being abused.

Affiliate and find out more at www.amnesty.org.uk/tradeunions
Join Amnesty as an individual for just £3 a month at: www.amnesty.org.uk/join
Sign up for our Trade Union Network e-magazine: www.amnesty.org.uk/register
The ASLEF Journal January 2009

Key Worker

One thing you learn very quickly about Darren Clegg is that he’s not a man for sitting still. He’s very much Manchester-based, but every job he’s ever done has involved travel – from buses to trains, from offices to cabs and from the north of Scotland to the mountains of Bosnia.

Darren says that ‘like everyone else’, he didn’t know what he wanted to do when he left school. Now, after six years of working for Virgin, he says he’s finally found out - but the route he took to driving trains was unusual to say the least.

‘I actually applied to be a senior conductor – but I didn’t pass the selection!’ he says. ‘It was a strange process with charades and things I didn’t take to. But I asked if they’d let me know if anything else came up, and a year later they suggested I apply to be a driver. I could hardly believe my luck.’

He’d always had an interest in trains – as a small boy he used to go to Crewe, watching trains with his uncle – and after school he got a job working for Victoria Travel, who chartered trains from Manchester. ‘I used to help out with the practical side at weekends, but a lot of the time I was hanging around an office with not much to do. It didn’t suit me at all.’

So Darren was soon on the move again. ‘I got a job as a steward on National Express coaches,’ he says. ‘We went all over the place – from Aberdeen to Gatwick. In fact, I might have been there still but for the fact that I was so tall I kept banging my head on the roof!’

Besides, he’d decided now that his place was behind the wheel. ‘I passed my Public Service Vehicles (PSV) test and got a job as a bus driver with First Manchester. I liked the driving, but it was local work and the hours were long. It could send you up the wall. I remember one turn where I drove a mini-bus for a 12-hour shift and never went further than 15 miles from where I started!’

At the back of his mind, too, the thought was always nagging that he’d ‘like to be doing something, playing my part’. The RAF seemed the most obvious to him as two of his grandparents had been in the service, and his mother was born in an RAF hospital near Wolverhampton. However, by the time he’d taken the exams he’d met Tina, who is now his wife and mother to their four children. So he opted for a compromise. ‘I joined the Territorial Army. That way I could stay close to Tina - who was working in the bus company’s accounts office - and I could do my bit.’

Inevitably he was soon on the move again. The army was short of specialist drivers for its operations in Bosnia. ‘I said I was willing to go, of course, but although I had a PSV licence, I didn’t have an HGV for heavy goods. ‘That’s OK,’ they told me – and within a week and a half at Grantham I’d passed class one and class two!’

The fighting had stopped by the time Darren arrived, but there was plenty of evidence of the war that had taken place. The sight of bombed out villages, the evidence of mass graves and the constant danger of land-mines were always evident as he drove equipment the length and breadth of this mountainous country. ‘It was often quite beautiful. It seemed incredible that people had been killing each other just months before.’

And as an extra concern, during a Christmas-time two-week break from his six-month tour in Bosnia, Tina had Courtney, their second child. On top of which Darren discovered that – despite his clean record - First Manchester had sacked him! They said he should have worked for them during the one week break he had during army training. It says a lot about Darren that he can say without rancour, ‘I was pretty annoyed about it at the time, but life’s too short for grudges. Anyway, it’s water under the bridge now - and in the long run they did me a favour.’

Back home from his tour of duty, he began driving HGV lorries on an agency basis. ‘I dropped off fried chicken at Alton Towers,’ he recalls with a smile. ‘Quite a change from Bosnia!’ At this time he was working 12-hour night shifts. ‘I got home at half-four and Tina was doing extra work so she was leaving at six. So I slept for a couple of hours and then took the children to school. By then it was practically time to start thinking of work again.’

The Cleggs are clearly not a family who are frightened of work.

All this time, Darren had kept thinking of working on the railways – so he was delighted...
when Virgin got in touch again, inviting him for interviews for driving. ‘I had to go for two interviews in Liverpool at nine in the morning. The problem was that I was only getting home from work at half four, so I was worried I might not be on top form!’ And just before he was due to go to Crewe for the psychometric tests, tragedy struck the family. Darren’s dad, a local councillor and a postman, was knocked off his bike at work. ‘He was desperately ill and I just didn’t feel motivated to go anywhere. But my mother said it’s what my dad would have wanted. She was right, and I went.’

So Darren went for the tests and was accepted for driving – meaning that he was soon on the move again – this time to Virgin’s training centre at Polmadie. ‘I lodged up there for six months, coming home at weekends,’ he says. ‘When I think about it, Tina’s been a very tolerant woman!’

He says driver training was like a big jigsaw: lots of different aspects like routes and traction all coming together to form a whole.

Darren wonders sometimes if it was the accident that led to his father’s death that made him very aware of health and safety at work. ‘I always keep my eyes open and fill in reports,’ he says. ‘It’s not much effort and it can make a real difference. If my dad had been issued with a cycling helmet he might not have died.’

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He says driver training was like a big jigsaw: lots of different aspects like routes and traction all coming together to form a whole.

‘I really took to it,’ he says. ‘I’m a practical sort of person and I get real satisfaction from the job. I take pride from the fact that I’ve driven 500 people from Manchester to London or Holyhead at 125 miles per hour, safely and on time.’

Darren is content with his own company, as you need to be as a modern train driver. ‘You don’t tend to meet other train staff as much as you used to while you’re working,’ he says. ‘The breaks are shorter so there’s not much time in the mess rooms to meet up.’ But the railway is a social place and Darren enjoys the days out that are arranged at his Manchester Piccadilly base.

‘We had an outing to Wigan the other week,’ he confides.

‘Wigan?’

‘Plenty of pubs.’

Darren’s a laid back and contented character, which makes him relaxed and pleasant company. It’s good to meet someone who’s seen several sides of the tracks and appreciates and enjoys where he is. As we part he tells me, ‘In this day and age I’m very lucky and privileged to be in this profession. It’s the best job I’ll ever have and I’m eternally grateful for the opportunity.’

**WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO**

The Journal of 1909 gives us a marvellous insight into the sharp minds and selfless efforts of our forefathers seeking to organise our union, while the 1959 edition demonstrated that arguments about Rest Day Working are by no means a new development ….

**100 YEARS AGO**

The January 1909 edition describes the thoughts of Organising Secretary W. WarwicK as he prepares the city of Oxford for an ASLEF open meeting ….

“I had been in correspondence with Oxford and Trowbridge for open meetings, and ultimately arranged for the same to be held at Oxford on the 15th and Trowbridge on the 22nd… Oxford, as most of your readers will know, is a great seat of learning, and when I called forth on the few days at my disposal for the purpose of doing a little canvassing and distributing the bills announcing our open meeting, I was somewhat appalled at what may be termed the streets and streets of colleges in this old and famous city, which has had, and still has, the honour of assisting to educate men from almost every part of the world. Among other things, I was shown the rooms in Christ Church College where Royalty for some generations have had their education attended to. Whilst strolling round the quadrangle I saw several of the stern visaged, grey bearded, hat and gowned professors crossing and recrossing, and I found my mind and memory reverting back to the little dame’s school situated on the village green where your humble passed through the forms, or what was better known as classes, before the elementary education in this country had been divided into standards, and whilst I mediated those words, “Knowledge is power”, seemed to come back to me with a twofold significance, and I thought what a pity that all the knowledge gained in these places at a tremendous cost to the toilers of this and other countries is not put to a better use; if instead of being used to put nation against nation, class against class, and even worker against worker, it was only used to uplift humanity.”

**50 YEARS AGO**

The January 1959 magazine carried this opinion about Rest Day Working on its page called ‘On the Surface - A Page for Motormen’ …

“Having just passed the season when expressions of friendship and goodwill are the order of the day, it will appear most inconconsiderate to mention such a vexatious subject as Rest Day Working.

Nothing is more certain to cause hard feelings among Motormen just now than to criticise the recent local agreements whereby men are booked to work on their day of rest.

At a time when modernisation - the introduction of new forms of motive power, new Manning arrangements, service cuts, etc, - is causing us some real headaches up and down the country, it is obviously wrong for anyone to think about working rest days, much less queue up for them.”

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott
WILLESDEN PRESENTS ROLL OF HONOUR TO HEAD OFFICE

WILLESDEN Branch paid a long overdue visit to Arkwright Road on Tuesday 21 October – and took the opportunity to present the Union head office with a roll of honour displaying the names of Willesden men who served their country in the First and Second World Wars. This historic document had been displayed at the entrance to the Wembley Train Crew Depot but, following the move to Portakabins, we felt that Arkwright Road would be a more fitting place for it to be displayed.

Mick Whelan, a fellow Willesden man and District Organiser, gave us a well-informed tour of the building. Even though the building is perhaps a little antiquated, it remains very impressive. Joining Mick on the tour was the EC member for District Six, Dave Calfe, who is a former Willesden Branch Secretary.

While we were at Arkwright Road the General Secretary presented three members with long service badges. These were Keith Roberts (35 years), Kevin Lawless (30 years) and Tony Wells (25 years).

Following a few words from Keith Norman we adjourned for lunch – and more serious business! We’d like to thank all those involved for a most enjoyable day, and for the general secretary’s subsequent letter thanking us for presenting the roll of honour which he described as ‘a wonderful piece of history which gives cause for reflection on the struggles for justice fought by ASLEF members in the past’

Eddie Cunniffe – Chairman – Willesden Branch

THE latest Longsight ‘9A’ reunion took place recently at the Navigation Road Staff Club in Altringham. Many former ‘Longsight men’ attended, along with colleagues from other Manchester area Steam Depots.

One notable retiring brother was Mike Hart (pictured) who began his career as a cleaner at Longsight in May 1960 and, by finishing this autumn as the very last original ‘9A’ steam man, brings to an end a 166 year history.

Sadly Walter Wood, one of our traction inspectors from the ‘Manchester pool’ who looked after us, died on 16 November shortly after attending the reunion. Walter began his career at the nearby Belle Vue shed.

Peterborough’s ‘BOOZE ‘N’ CHAT’

ON 10 October Peterborough held its second 2008 get together - now known as a Booze’n’Chat! It was held at the Peterborough Parkway Club and once again a good crowd turned out to enjoy the day. For all those of you who didn’t make this one, make sure you’re at the next. Anyone who has had an association with the lads from Peterborough will be welcome to come along and enjoy yourself.

It will be held on 22 May at noon at a cost of £5 – so put it in your ASLEF diary now! For more information, contact Malcolm Bell on 07818420179.

At this gathering we had a good contingent that at some time or another were resident in the Peterborough Midland Road or Mayors Walk Hostels which housed those displaced men by Dr Beeching. I am informed that these hostels closed in 2002 – but I’m willing to be corrected.

Peter Smith – Reporter - RMS

Peterborough (front row) Reg Feetham, Donald Leary, Peter Ayre, Michael Woods, Norman Andrews, Wally Christoff, Derek Overton, Barry Carter (back row) Bryan Boltons, John Harmston, Brian Coats, John Tutty and Norman Sprigen. Others not in the photo were Tony Greensmith, George (‘Swafam’) Ward, Fred Tee, Eddie Hannent and Don Browett - to name but a few. Photo: Michael Fosker
Branch News

THE Selhurst branch was proud to present a retirement certificate and 50 year medallion to Peter Timms on 11 November. The awards were made by Alex Holness (Branch Chairman, on the left of the picture) and local staff rep Ray D'Souza.

Peter was a ‘drivers’ driver’ to the extent that he wanted his driver colleagues - people that he’d worked with for so many years - to present him with his record of achievement. We found two ‘old boys’ who were happy to do the honours!

Peter started on the railway in 1947 at Norwood Loco Depot as a cleaner. He rose through the ranks before passing out as a driver in October 1963 and in 1964 he transferred to Selhurst where he spent the last 42 years of his career as a driver.

I would like to say a big ‘thank you’ to Grace Fox for laying on another fabulous hot and cold buffet for all the members and guests at the Selhurst BRSA.

Andrew Cook – Secretary – Selhurst Branch

OBITUARY

RON BARNETT – A WONDERFUL MAN

IT IS my sad duty to report the passing of retired member Ron Barnett. He was know to many of us as ‘Rocket Ron’ - because he was always ‘cutting it fine’ as he always had time to chat to everyone he met!

I have been wondering how I can do justice to Ron in just a few short words. Well – I’m not sure I can because he was an absolute diamond.

A few years ago at the Ramsgate RMS reunion – which Ron and his wife Brenda organised so well – he told me that he and Brenda were starting a club for all the retired railwaymen at Ramsgate. He had seen the wife of a retired colleague and asked after his old workmate. ‘How is he getting on?’ ‘Just sitting round waiting to die!’ she told him.

Ron said, ‘That ain’t no good. We can’t have that. After all those years on the footplate he should be enjoying his retirement.’ And so it was that the Dinosaur Club was born, organising bingo nights and many holidays throughout the year.

One of the last activities was a sponsored walk in aid of the Thanet Hospice which over the years has cared for many of our members, and indeed Ron himself. Over £2,000 was raised – a magnificent achievement.

At Ron’s funeral I heard someone sum him up perfectly. ‘He was a wonderful man who just wanted to make people happy.’

Dave Bull – Secretary – Ramsgate Branch

GILLINGHAM HONOURS FORMER COLLEAGUES

THE latest Gillingham Train Crew Social Club annual Dinner and Dance was held on Saturday 1 November at the Upchurch River Valley Golf Club.

As well as being an enjoyable social event, it is also an opportunity to celebrate the careers of those members who have retired during the previous twelve months.

This year we have said goodbye to Brothers Laurie Turner, Tony Midwinter and Nigel Loft, who between them have in excess of a hundred years membership of ASLEF!

We were very proud to welcome our General Secretary Keith Norman to the evening, and he presented our retiring members with beautiful ASLEF certificates.

Keith even did a bit of recruitment for us, enjoying his time at the microphone and reminding all the people present that all train drivers should be in ASLEF.

Through the pages of the Journal, I would like to thank Laurie, Tony and Nigel for their years of dedication to ASLEF and to wish them well in their retirement. Also, of course, I’d like to thank Keith for making the evening even more special by coming down to make the presentations.

Dave Piggott – Secretary - Gillingham Branch

Keith with all the retirees and wives and Andy Tyrell

Nigel Loft Tony Midwinter Keith Norman Laurie Turner

PETER TIMMS RECEIVED HIS RETIREMENT CERTIFICATE AND 50 YEAR MEDALLION

This page features a photo of Keith with all the retirees and wives and Andy Tyrell. A photo of Nigel Loft, Tony Midwinter, Keith Norman, and Laurie Turner. A photo of Peter Timms with his retirement certificate and 50 year medallion.
IS REST DAY WORKING BAN A PIPE-DREAM?

I FEEL I must write in response to brother Roy Luxford’s letter on how it saddens him to see drivers writing to the Journal on issues such as rest day working. I admire Roy’s ideals on how if drivers did not work rest days then TOCs would be forced to employ more drivers. Unfortunately because of my experience at Northern Rail over the last four years, I feel his ideology is a pipe dream.

The average working person always has and will always welcome overtime as a means of improving his/her family’s standard of living. As long as the overtime is not enforced, I see nothing to be saddened about.

I am also puzzled when Roy says he’s been on the footplate for 34 years, and he hasn’t worked rest days for the last 11 years. Does this mean 11 years ago Roy reached a stage in his life when he no longer needed to work overtime – a position I’m sure we’d all like to be in?

The letter also seemed to imply that any driver working overtime is somehow selfish. I find this insulting and baffling. Brother Luxford may not be aware that drivers at Northern Rail are the second-lowest paid drivers in the UK and that working rest days is the only way we can earn a wage that compares with drivers’ salaries in other TOCs.

In an ideal world all drivers would be on a good salary with no need for overtime and with no driver vacancies at any depot – but to be realistic, I simply can’t afford to adopt Brother Luxford’s idealistic stance.

END OF THE LINE FOR MIKE

I’m writing to offer my thanks to Bro Nigel Roeback of Rotherham branch for his assistance during my recent retirement from EWS.

Nigel kept me fully informed of the situation regarding my future employment prospects during the nine months I was off sick. He attended the offices of the solicitors when I had to sign legal documents to terminate my employment. Without his help, the process of retirement would have been fraught with ignorance on my part and I am sure mistakes would have been made.

Nigel also acted as a go-between as EWS seemed slow to make the decision to retire me, especially as there were redundant drivers at Cornforth due to a depot closure.

I’ve enjoyed almost all of the 46 years that I have served both as man and boy – and I’m sorry to leave. Indeed that was not my decision. It was made by the company’s medical officer. My official retirement was 8/11/08. During my railway career I have enjoyed and
relished my involvement as an ASLEF rep at a variety of levels. The pinnacle was my time as a Company Council rep, which began with Transrail, then EWS. It was during this period that restructuring took place, and the base built upon which our present conditions were created. Like it or not, the way was found to raise our standard of living. Our rates of pay gradually made ours a better-paid rather than poorly-paid profession – even if the hours we did were still long, especially in the freight sector.

My worst experience was the closure of Ellesmere Port. It could be said that this was a success from a union point of view, as no one lost their job. The regret lay in the extra miles people were forced to travel to and from the new Warrington depot.

I wish you all well for the future as I sail off into history, soon to be forgotten.

Mike Peebles - Derbyshire

WELL DONE WORKSOP

I would like to take this opportunity to thank ASLEF for the marvellous way in which they represented me during my unfair disciplinary procedure. With their expert assistance my disciplinary record has been wiped clean.

Particular thanks must go to district secretary Nicky Whitehead, to Nigel Roebeuck from the EWS company council and to our Worksop branch secretary Keith Gillett. They kept my case in motion and kept me informed about proceedings throughout this traumatic period.

Without the help of these people, I would be in a very sticky situation and I would like to impress upon colleagues the importance of having such devoted experts to fight our needs and causes.

Again many thanks to the above-mentioned friends

Dale Shipley - Driver – Worksop

MARCH MUSEUM HAS OTHER ASLEF HERITAGE

I SAW the story about ASLEF’s March branch banner in the December issue of the Journal. Quite rightly you say it is now on display at the March museum. Readers might like to know that the museum also displays the George Cross awarded to our late brother Ben Gimbert, an engine driver with the LNER. He received the honour for saving an ammunition train from a fire during the Second World War after the Soham disaster.

Dennis Bell - Retired Members Section – March

APPRECIATING ROBERT I thought members might like to know that General Secretary Keith Norman presented Robert Sambridge, Secretary of the Croydon Tram/Light Rail branch, with a richly deserved Appreciation Award at a branch meeting at the end of November. (Robert is wearing the purple ASLEF tee-shirt).

I know readers will be devastated not to see me in the picture - but I was taking the photo!

Steve Grant – Organiser – District 8
LONDON’S RADICAL HOME CELEBRATES 75 YEARS

This year sees the 75th anniversary of the Marx Memorial Library in Clerkenwell, London. It houses over 65,000 volumes covering all aspects of socialism and the British Labour Movement. An independent organisation and a registered charity, it is unattached to any one political party or interest group. It is open to the public, but survives due to the generosity and dedication of its members and affiliates. John Callow explains some of its history.

THE Library was founded by the British Labour Movement in 1933 as a response to Nazi book burnings in Germany. Indeed, Jack Tyrell – the library’s longest serving member, now in his late 90s – witnessed the destruction during a cycling trip through Europe, on his university ‘gap’ year. On his return he joined the library, convinced that Nazism had to be confronted and combated intellectually and culturally, as well as by physical means.

Union journals, books and pamphlets jostle for space on shelves down in cellars dating from the fourteenth century. The meeting hall is framed by the banner of the British volunteers of the Spanish International Brigades. The battalion archives donated by the veterans are one of the Library’s proudest possessions.

AREA OF REBELLION
Clerkenwell has a long history of radicalism. Wat Tyler addressed his peasant army here in 1381, after they had burned adjacent compound of the Knights of St. John. John Ball, the egalitarian priest, who was among their number, encouraged men and women, unaccustomed to open debate, to press their demands on the boy king. During the Civil War one of Charles I’s judges lived in the area and the name of neighbouring Turnmill Street recalls the windmills that ground corn for the Parliamentarian armies who drilled on the surrounding fields proclaiming ‘London and Liberty’. In the nineteenth century the construction of the court house for the Essex Assizes, facing the open green, provided both a focus for protest and a suitable space for crowds to gather.

The rabbit-warrens of tenements, swept away by the coming of the railway in the second half of the nineteenth century, housed the artisans – watch and cabinet makers – who formed the core of the Chartist Movement. They turned out here in their thousands to welcome the Tolpuddle Martyrs back from Australia in 1836, and to hear George Loveless’ speech about the need for representative, and industrial, democracy. This tradition continues to the present day, as the TUC May Day March always assembles on the Green before moving off towards Trafalgar Square.

BEHIND THE FACADE
The building was originally the Welsh Charity School, providing education for poor boys (and later girls) in the years before the welfare state. So at its beginning, just as now, the house on Clerkenwell Green existed as a progressive educational resource. However, its elegant Georgian façade hides an altogether more interesting and adventurous story within.

From the late nineteenth to the early years of the twentieth century, a radical printing house occupied the site and William Morris, H.G. Wells, Eleanor Marx and Tom Mann numbered among its many visitors and authors. A young, and virtually unknown, Lenin was invited to work at the building by Harry Quelch, a British socialist, in 1902. The office the two men shared is preserved, as part of the library, in all its glory. Outside, an etched portrait of a much older Lenin records the visit of a group of British railwaymen to the Soviet Union in 1924. They met their counterparts on the Russian railways, travelling thousands of miles from Leningrad to Lake Baikal.

Though much has changed since those optimistic days, a sense of internationalism, of class solidarity, and of the vitality of the union movement remains at the core of the MML’s ethos. The Library has remained true to the vision of those men and women, drawn from many disparate traditions within the Movement, who came together 75 years ago to make common cause for the development and propagation of socialist education and theory in this country. It is a tribute to all those who have worked for the Library, over seven decades, that when much around us has been allowed to wither or to die, Marx House still stands and continues to develop and grow.

More information visit the Library’s website: www.marx-memorial-library.org

The Library is open to researchers from Monday to Thursday, 1-6pm.

Visiting times for the public are Monday to Thursday 1-2pm, though tours (including visits tailored for trade unionist!) can be organised at different times if booked ahead. Ring 0207 253 1485 for details.

The nearest tube station is Farringdon.

Karl Marx: The philosopher, social scientist, historian and revolutionary
ASLEF’S legal services - your rights for their wrongs!

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 0800 587 7530.

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. 33
set by TLC


SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD No 32 in the December Edition

ACROSS
1 Where to eat lunch on the train (6,3)
8 U.S. departure platform for a rocket (4,9)
10 Obtain the best ones from a Bookie (4)
12 Municipal palindrome (5)
13 Biting insect (4)
16 It can be found in a Bowling Alley (7)
17 Set free (7)
18 He fights for his country (7)
20 Mind the children (4-3)
21 Musical instrument (4)
22 Traveller, often with a colourful caravan (5)
23 Heavenly Garden (4)
26 Sounds like the AGM (6,7)
27 Inexpensive (4,5)

DOWN
2 Brainwave (4)
3 One who hails from Teheran perhaps (7)
4 Block of ice, liable to slip! (7)
5 Sir —— Guinness, actor (4)
6 One of the four principal directions on a compass (8,5)
7 Short opening off the track, used for shunting rolling stock (7,6)
9 Taking their time (5,4)
10 Country of the Middle East (9)
14 Holiday country (5)
15 Good excuse! (5)
19 The Monarchy (7)
20 Plead (7)
24 Underground station, in brief (4)
25 Famous volcano (4)

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

Name............................................................................
Address..........................................................................
......................................................................................
............................................Postcode...........................

Thanks for all your responses to the 32nd ASLEF crossword in the December 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.
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