Rail Review: The McNulty Report looms large

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Ooking at our end of year accounts I am pleased to tell you once again ASLEF is well on course to remain an independent and professional trade union for the foreseeable future. When I came to head office in 2004 we were in a critical financial state. There was talk of merger. Nobody I know would want that to happen. One of my main concerns was to return the union to financial stability and, due to careful management of your money I believe we have achieved that.

In 2010 our union returned an operating surplus for the fourth consecutive year. However the warning signs remain. When expenditure increases and income remains static it is only a matter of time before deficit returns. We have achieved a surplus of 382k – a real achievement bearing in mind we have not increased subscriptions. Costs have risen, AAD costs, increases in district council expenses and branch secretary expenses especially when there are substantial surpluses in the accounts of both district councils and branches.

The additional payments to District Councils- four times per year- and increases in branch secretary payments have contributed to an overall increase in expenditure of 157k per year.

Our investments have held up well. Our members still continue to receive the best of benefits provided by our union. A point often forgotten is that we are also an employer. We employ people who are loyal to this union and who expect to be treated with respect. This means increasing their pay as we would train drivers. We will shortly be moving to a new location which is long overdue but is necessary to take ASLEF into the future.

The message is; if you want your union to remain strong, powerful, influential and independent then you must be prepared to pay for it. If you don’t want this ASLEF will pass into history.

Keith Norman
General Secretary
Solid strike stops ATW

ASLEF members working for Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) went on strike on the last day of February in an action that district organiser Stan Moran described as ‘100% solid’. None of the company’s timetabled 950 services ran. The previous day, a Sunday, saw considerable disruption as drivers rejected calls to work it on voluntary overtime.

The strike was about strings attached to an unacceptable pay offer and resentment that Welsh drivers are paid less than their English counterparts working for the same firm. ATW operates in north and south Wales as well as into England including on the Cambrian Line and services to Manchester.

The company claimed that 8 out of 620 drivers reported for duty on Sunday, members of either a different, or no, union. On Monday no drivers turned up so it ran no services. No alternative transport was provided and Stan said, ‘We regret the disruption to the service and to our passengers but we would not have staged the strike if there had been any alternative.’

Stan added that although the offer appeared to be a 12% increase, this year’s offer was 4%, and a lot of this was made up of productivity. ‘The other part of the offer is dependent on a commitment to drivers working on Sundays. ‘If they want that, they’ll have to pay the price to get it.’

Stan said the public showed no animosity to the pickets or the strikers and he called the 100% backing for the dispute ‘a clear vindication of the union’s position and a magnificent tribute to our members’ sense of loyalty and self-respect. I applaud every one of them.’

During the day he put the union’s case on most national TV and radio channels and a considerable number of local radio stations and regional newspapers.

‘Now we want to sit down with management and work out an agreement that will get our members and their passengers back to work,’ he said. A further day of action has been announced for 12 March.

‘Milk Float’ gibe fans flames of ATW dispute

The Operations Director of Arriva Trains Wales stoked the flames of the dispute between ASLEF and the company when he suggested in a BBC Radio Wales interview that our members were engaged in driving ‘milk floats’

Peter Leppard was being interviewed about the disruption when he was pressed as to why train drivers in Wales should be paid less than train drivers in other parts of the UK. Remarkably, he said there was a great difference between driving high-speed trains and local ones. ‘It’s the difference between driving a jumbo jet and a milk float,’ he declared.

Stan Moran, the union’s officer in Wales, was incensed at the remark. ‘Trains in Wales do not go over 100mph,’ he said, ‘but all drivers reach the same standard of competence regardless of what company they work for, or where they drive,’ he said. ‘This is the sort of ill-informed nonsense that has led to the current dispute.’

The remark certainly did nothing to minimise drivers’ resolve to fight for an acceptable solution.
ASLEF organises a better way in Scotland!

A COURSE developed by ASLEF member John Slaven is being rolled out across Scotland to trade unions, trades union councils, political groups, voluntary groups and other interested parties. It is part of the STUC’s ‘There is a Better Way’ campaign which aims to equip people to resist the Conservative-led government’s reckless cuts agenda.

A group of ASLEF activists recently attended a pilot one-day course at the STUC’s Head Office in Glasgow. The session was started by ASLEF Education project manager Jim Baxter who gave an overview of the course and an outline of how the cuts would affect train drivers and their families. Scotland’s national officer Kevin Lindsay and its EC member Hugh Bradley joined other activists assessing the impact the economic down turn has had, and will have, on our members and the railway industry.

John Slaven then started on the course work, debunking the government myth that the only way out of this current crisis is to cut spending. If fact, John explained, the last time a government went down this route public spending actually went up! John’s method of delivery was light hearted and fun - no mean feat given the seriousness down this route public spending actually went up! John’s method of delivery was light hearted and fun - no mean feat given the seriousness of the subject. Just before lunch he ran through some of the terminology used by economists to try to baffle people. The session delivery was light hearted and fun - no mean feat given the seriousness of the subject.

After lunch STUC assistant secretary Stephen Boyd addressed the members and this was followed by more sessions giving activists the knowledge and confidence to go out and argue against the cuts.

Kevin Lindsay thanked John for delivering the courses and all the ASLEF members for coming along. ‘Now our job is to use this information by going out into our communities and getting involved in the campaign,’ he said.

MISSING CABLE SQUAD
A police task force has been launched to tackle the growing problem of cable theft from railway and electricity networks. The crime is being linked to a rise in the price of copper as metal thefts are costing the UK around £770m a year.

Network Rail is coding its cable to make it harder to steal and the British Transport Police wants to see cashless transactions at scrap metal dealers.

Each time the price of copper increases, so too does cable theft - the metal sold for £6,200 a tonne in January, a month that saw a doubling in rail cable theft compared to January last year. Network Rail estimates it has cost it £35m in the past four years.

DELEGATION BACKS TRANSPORT MOTION
ASLEF’s delegation to the Yorkshire and Humber TUC at Wortley Hall in March consisted of EC Member for District 4 Tosh McDonald, District Organiser for District 4 Nick Whitehead and Kevin Beresford (Doncaster). Tosh McDonald seconded a motion on transport and spoke in favour of a motion against the Coalition’s cuts agenda while the union also backed an NUM motion calling for a repeal of the anti-trade union laws.

FINE IN FIRST CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER TRIAL
Last month saw the first trial and conviction under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act (2007). Cotswold Geotechnical Holdings were fined £385,000.00 following the death of 27-year-old employee Alexander Wright. The Hazards Campaign, to which ASLEF is affiliated, said the case showed ‘a fundamental flaw’ with the legislation because it appears that no one can be jailed even when there is clear responsibility on the part of an employer. The Health and Safety Executive says over 70% of deaths and major injuries are caused by management failings, not freak accidents.

‘The new law holds the company responsible, not the individual directors who make the decisions which lead to these disasters. This means no-one can be jailed, which is surely the appropriate sentence for taking a life by gross negligence,’ Hazards says. ‘The only way to make individual employers take protecting workers’ safety and health seriously is to implement a law making them legally responsible for the health and safety of their organisations.’
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General Secretary Keith Norman said that the government’s electrification plans had ‘gone west’ – by failing to go far enough in that direction. ‘By stopping electrification at Cardiff they have spurned a golden opportunity for the railways and for Wales,’ Keith said. ‘It is a severe setback to the development of Welsh commerce and industry.’

Keith said the opportunity to take electrification of rail further into Wales ‘will not present itself again for a generation’.

ASLEF joined the Welsh Assembly in urging the Department for Transport to reconsider the decision it made last month not to electrify the line as least as far as Swansea. The coalition government announced that the £1bn electrification of the Great Western line from London would halt at Cardiff. ‘They gave west Wales a poke in the eye to mark St David’s Day 2011,’ Keith declared.

The union says the move will benefit south east Wales at the expense of developing the south west. The government, however, says there is ‘no demand’ and intends to leave trains to switch to diesel power to the west of Cardiff from 2017.

Philip Hammond Transport Secretary said, ‘I regret to say that there is not, at present, a viable business case for electrification of the main line between Cardiff and Swansea’ – but Keith Norman says this is irrelevant. ‘The point is to encourage and build up business in the west. Instead, it has been abandoned.’

‘If it’s good for Cardiff, then it’s good for Swansea. I don’t understand their logic – probably because there is none. There is just a balance sheet.’

The union also stressed the environmental advantages that have been lost by the decision. ‘It is desperately disappointing to see how far down the government’s priority list climate change comes,’ Keith said.

Andrew Davies, Labour Assembly Member for Swansea West, said that Swansea will start to be perceived as ‘somewhere beyond the end of the line’. He said the decision was ‘a kick in the teeth’ and ‘another broken promise’ by the government.

Keith pledged that ASLEF will campaign with transport groups and the Welsh Assembly to urge the government to extend electrification of the network to the west.

Author seeks help with Moorgate crash book

AUTHOR Richard Jones who recently wrote a book about, and led a campaign for a memorial for, victims of the July 1986 Lockington rail crash, has now been asked to do the same thing for people involved in the 1975 Moorgate tube station crash in which 43 people died.

‘It is my intention to campaign for a permanent memorial with the blessing of the relatives of those who died and to also write a book telling the full story of what happened that day,’ he says.

He is appealing for anyone who knows anything about the events of that day or would like to help with his efforts to raise a memorial to contact him at info@atlantisexploration.com or by telephone on 02392 520795.

Morton on Lugg investigation exonerates driver

LOUISE ELLMAN MP last month accused ministers of driving people off rail by their fare policy during a Parliamentary debate on the railways. Rail minister Theresa Villiers admitted the Government had to make ‘difficult decisions’ on fare rises to fund improvements while also cutting the deficit.

Louise, the Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside also complained about the ‘little real progress’ made on promises to provide 1,300 new carriages by 2014. Indeed, she went on, ‘We recently received another announcement by the Department that 2,100 new carriages would be delivered by 2019, of which 1,850 will be net additional vehicles. Many of these are for the Crossrail and Thameslink projects, which will then lead to electric carriages on the network being cascaded to other parts of the country, including the north. If and when that happens, I hope that it will not be a matter of the north getting the cast-offs from the south’.

Theresa Villiers said, ‘The Government expect an additional 650 carriages in several of our major cities by 2014 – a figure which is half the previous undertaking.

Government ‘driving people off rail’ says Ellman

THE RAIB inquiry into the Moreton-on-Lugg level crossing tragedy stated categorically that ‘the driving of the train was neither a causal nor a contributory factor’ as it identifies the immediate cause as ‘the signaler raising the barriers when train 1V75 was approaching and too close to be able to stop before reaching either the protecting signal, or the crossing. This permitted the waiting cars to move onto the railway and into the path of the train’.

It recommended that Network Rail should identify level crossings operated by railway staff where a single human error could result in the road being opened to the railway when a train is approaching and, should consider additional reminder appliances, alarms to warn of the approach of trains, approach locking, locking of the route, run-by controls, and local interlocking of train detection and signalling systems with level crossing controls.

STEAM ON STAMPS

Royal Mail has paid tribute to the ‘workhorses’ of the railways in ‘Classic Locomotives of England’, the first of a new series of miniature sheets.

Last month the first of four issues was released. The series will look at the vital role played by steam engines in UK industry in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Thor, the Peckett 1689 locomotive which features on the 60p stamp was built in 1925 for the Tunnel Cement Company of Purfleet, Essex, and spent its entire life there before being scrapped in 1965.

The rest of the series will highlight other locomotives which operated in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.
Inquest shows need for action on line fatalities

A RECENT case of a line fatality inquest in the north-east has underlined the need to highlight the effects on members having to attend a Coroner’s court following a fatality. ASLEF aims to reduce the need for a driver having to attend an inquest, and it is the union’s policy that members should be given the option by the Coroner to submit a written statement, rather than have to attend in person.

At the same time, we want to ensure that drivers should be informed as soon as possible whether or not they are due to attend a coroner’s court. We know of cases where drivers have been unaware that they were not being called to give evidence and had worried unnecessarily about having to attend, re-live the experience and possibly facing the deceased person’s family - not to mention having their name all over the local press.

We advise reps to obtain a commitment from the British Transport Police, the employer and the Coroner’s Court that any member who has asked to make a statement in writing is kept fully informed of whether they will have to attend or not. If not, then they should still be informed of the date of the hearing, and the outcome.

The recent case in the north-east also strengthens the union’s call for in-cab technology to relay images of the track ahead.

The specific case involved one of our health and safety reps in a case fully covered by the local paper. He gave his evidence about a harrowing incident where he saw someone with a bicycle, inside the closed barriers. The driver saw him place his bicycle on the tracks and then lay down across them. Although he applied the brakes and sounded the horn, he was unable to stop.

Remembering Great Heck - a decade on

On the morning of 28 February, family, friends and colleagues met by the plaque on platform 12 of Newcastle Central Station for a Remembrance Service honouring the tenth anniversary of the Great Heck train crash.

Led by the railway chaplain, floral tributes were laid and candles lit to remember ASLEF members John Weddle and Steve Dunn who, with eight others, were killed in the crash. Members of Gateshead and Newcastle branch then travelled to the memorial garden at Heck to lay floral tributes both from the branch and from John’s Newcastle friends – many of whom had been on the MP12 course with him in the late ‘70s.

A wreath was then laid on behalf of the union’s General Secretary, EC and lead officers in honour of John and Steve.

It was an emotional day for everyone involved as we recalled a devastating event in our depot’s history - one we will never forget to remember.

Rob Porter, Secretary, Gateshead and Newcastle branch

ASLEF ‘takes step for industrial freedom’

KEITH NORMAN, ASLEF’s general secretary, greeted last month’s Court of Appeal decision about the right to strike as ‘a major step for industrial freedom’. He said the judgement meant, ‘Trade unionists once again have the same human rights as any other citizen.’

The legal decision – made on appeal and therefore creating precedent – was the result of ASLEF contesting last December’s High Court decision to give London Midland an injunction to prevent industrial action. That was based on ‘defective’ notices given by the union and ‘inadequate’ explanations we had offered to describe the steps we had taken.

The Court of Appeal today agreed with the union and discharged the injunction which prevented our members taking lawful strike action. ASLEF, and other unions, have argued that the law permitting legal strikes is over-technical and that courts have often declared strikes illegal on minor technicalities and the smallest of errors.

This was shown quite clearly when the High Court last December prevented action in London Midland because we had accidentally given voting papers to two (of over 600) members who we were not intending to call out on strike. The High Court said that was sufficient to grant an injunction. That has been reversed, with the Court of Appeal saying the law should have applied the ‘small accidental failures’ provisions.

The ruling also made clear that while unions must keep a register of members’ names and addresses it cannot always be expected to have an up-to-date record of workplaces or job categories. It also confirmed that the information given by ASLEF in the ballot notification was ‘as accurate as was reasonably practicable’.

‘Before today’s ruling it was effectively impossible to take legal strike action in this country,’ said Keith Norman. ‘If the employer could find the tiniest discrepancy, the courts would find in the employer’s favour. Thanks to today’s decision, a sense of justice and balance has been returned to industrial relations in this country.’
The Government recently gave Sir Roy McNulty the task of finding out why the subsidies received by Britain’s railways are 35% higher than those paid to state-owned railways across Europe and why subsidy levels have more than doubled in real terms between 1997 and now. Simply, why are Britain’s privatised railways costing the taxpayer so much?

McNulty is due to publish his final report in April but he chaired one final meeting this March with senior members of the industry where the discussion centred on the findings and proposed solutions. I attended this meeting and sat through a full day of presentations with a mounting sense of disbelief and anger.

He has identified fragmentation of the industry as the cause of increased costs. Private companies using contracts and a ‘blame game’ to screw down every last penny, building in tiers of inefficient duplication – each level siphoning profits from the industry into the pockets of holding companies.

The solutions to reducing subsidies are surprise, surprise, cuts, more privatisation and further fragmentation.

Any doubt as to where the axe will fall was erased by a shameless statement that “Changes in terms and conditions, especially drivers, will reduce costs”.

Our hard won final salary pension scheme was also buried in among other costs they would like rid of. In the next breath they said changes would only work if they had “staff buy-in”.

Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Transport had the brass neck to claim that the solutions he wants are not ideological but focussed on delivering for passengers. (A plan for freight was noticeable only by its absence.)

One of McNulty’s twelve “barriers to efficiency” was unproductive relationships. Prominent among these being railway trade unions. Who exactly is the unproductive partner in the relationship?

Philip Hammond’s declared a change in government and subsequent change in management of the not-for-profit Network Rail signified ‘fortuitous circumstances’ for the railway.

Under new CEO David Higgins NR has already begun the process of “horizontal separation”. Devolving control from central Network Rail to Regional Infrastructure Managers with separate accounting and a focus on efficiency - in effect creating nine mini-Railtracks.

For McNulty this doesn’t go far enough and he recommends Vertical Integration: handing over control of infrastructure, track and signalling to TOCs. This removes maintenance and renewals from a not-for-profit organisation and gifts them to private companies whose primary purpose is to maximise profit and pay dividends.

TOCs initially proposed as suitable for vertical integration are Scotrail, Southeastern, Southern, South West Trains, First Great Western, a merged Northern/TPE and the Greater Anglia franchises. With the Greater Anglia franchise described as the “first cab off the rank” and currently due for renewal these are not vague plans for a far away future.

This is a hugely regressive step, chilling for those of us who recall Railtrack’s disastrous period of ownership where they presided over loss of life at Ladbroke Grove, Hatfield and Potters Bar. All these disasters had Railtrack’s cost cutting and profiteering at their heart. However, this time it’ll be with “light touch” regulation - we can all guess what this will mean to a safety critical industry when coupled to the profit motive.

Another area of concern is the approach to rural lines, derisively described as “sucking in taxpayer’s money”. Following thinly veiled threats of line closures the proposed solution was “doing things differently”. In the manner of the St Albans-Watford Abbey line, by downgrading lines to light rail or tram with “staff multitasking”. Again, we can guess what this will mean for us.

Philip Hammond and the Tory government’s desire to offload local services to local bodies and volunteer groups is clear – where the local bodies will get funding is less so.

While the McNulty recommendations are just that, recommendations, it is obvious that the railway industry is as much a target for this government’s ideologically driven cuts as the public sector. We may have felt isolated, even protected, from this onslaught because we were already in the private sector but this is patently not the case.

Attacks on us are coming from a multitude of sources, some direct, some less so. Either way these may be the most significant changes we have faced since the destructive Railways Act of 1993. We must be prepared, informed and ready to fight these cuts and the threat they pose to our railway.

Simon Weller, National Organiser
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Every member has a voice - that is true democracy

A S I write this article for this year’s Scottish journal I find myself reflecting back over the last ten years of being the District Organiser for District 2.

Many of you will recall the ferocious battle we had with National Express in 2002 over Scotrail’s attitude towards driver salaries. We fought long and hard during the 6 months of the dispute which ended when salaries were increased from £23000 to £28000. We have just concluded this year’s talks with an offer of a minimum of 8.1% over two years.

Things have changed, the railway and salaries have moved on but what we have achieved was not given to us by any management or government. It was achieved by dedicated reps across the country fighting for our terms and conditions.

It is members of the union who dictate policy and the decisions of the leadership. This is something which I often think we take for granted.

Fights for democracy are breaking out all over the world. While we may not be dying on the streets our union remains truly unique in that policy is set by lay members. It takes just one member to attend a branch meeting and move a motion that starts the wheels of democracy rolling. If the motion is adopted at that branch it goes forward to the AAD or Executive Committee for adoption into society policy.

This allows every member a voice, something which cannot be said of the voting system in the UK. At present we have a coalition government which no one voted for or wanted.

First Past the Post voting usually gives a party an overall majority but on this occasion it failed to do so. But it generally elects a government that has not commanded overall support of the nation.

I believe that the present debate on the alternative vote will enable us all to look at the alternatives.

In Scotland we have a bastardised system with 73 MSP’s elected by FPTP and a top up of an additional 56 MSPs elected from a regional party list. ASLEF uses a form of alternative voting to elect our leadership. One member one vote but to win you must have 50% plus 1. A voting system must accurately reflect the will of the voters. Again ASLEF leads the way.

Scotland will be given the chance to use its vote in May’s Scottish parliamentary elections. It is vital that we as a union are politically active. As many of you know, I am a member of the Executive of the Scottish Labour party and as such will be campaigning hard to secure a Labour victory.

I believe only Labour will protect the people of Scotland from the savage and brutal ideological attacks on our public services from the Tories and Lib Dems in Westminster.

Kevin Lindsay

—

Progress and rambling up north …

THERE are a few things to welcome in Scotland when it comes to rail, and I’m delighted that our union continues to be at the forefront of those arguing for improvements.

It was good to see that the Airdrie-Bathgate line linking Glasgow and Edinburgh has been electrified. To my mind this is £300 million not spent, but invested in Scotland’s transport infrastructure.

The situation in freight is proving manageable at present, with the reinstatement of the freight facilities grant a real boost. Kevin Lindsay is very positive about the pay offer the Union has secured from Scotrail and we have raised our concerns about the ‘Look Back’ situation with Driver Only Operations with the Scottish Transport minister.

But there is one cloud on the horizon, and that is my disappointment at finding Scotland’s ramblers complaining about the closure of level crossings north of the border. The director of Ramblers Scotland said ‘swathes’ of Scotland are being cut off by ‘steel barriers’ so that walkers face lengthy detours.

I understand the pleasures of walking in this beautiful country – but I also remember the three people who died at an open level crossing at Halkirk two years ago. It’s a question of priorities – and mine is safety on the railway. Personally, I’d walk a few extra miles in your wonderful countryside to save a life.

Keith Norman, General Secretary

—

The Airdrie-Bathgate Rail Link opened to passengers on 12 December 2010

Track laying machine working on Airdrie-Bathgate line

The Airdrie-Bathgate Rail Link exhibition

The crowds gather to celebrate the opening
One simple reason why Labour can win

THERE is one simple reason why Labour can win the election on May 5 and that is because Scots recognise we are the party to stand up to the Tory-led government.

The cuts we face are the most savage in living memory and Scotland has been left in a particularly vulnerable position by the SNP government. We had the lowest unemployment rate in the UK in 2007, now under the SNP, it is the highest.

But Labour values and all that we stand for are more important than ever. We are the party for ordinary working people, not the SNP.

Scotland needs a government focused on the things that really matter. In this time of anxiety, it is people’s jobs, the future of their children and protecting frontline services.

Now is not the time for Scotland to be distracted by the SNP obsession with independence and breaking up Britain.

We learned lessons from the defeat in 2007. Under my leadership the party has pulled together and regained our position at the forefront of Scottish politics. We won the trust of over one million Scots at the general election and we must not let them down.

What has particular resonance is the increase in youth unemployment in Scotland by more than 350 per cent in the last two years. This is why a Labour government would set up a Scottish Future Jobs Fund in our first 100 days to create 10,000 new jobs. The jobs fund set up by the previous UK Labour government was highly successful and it was a huge mistake for the Tories and Lib Dems to cut it. Labour will also guarantee an apprenticeship for all those young people who are suitably qualified.

The party’s greatest legacy to the nation is the NHS and we know people look to us to protect it while David Cameron cuts the NHS down south. We will also bring in the most radical development since the NHS was set up in Scotland by introducing a National Care Service. The NCS will merge health service and care for the elderly and disabled people to ensure it is much more efficient and effective. We will also introduce a two week waiting-time guarantee for cancer patients.

Social justice, as always, is at the core of Labour’s campaign and we have led the way in Scotland with our campaign for a Living Wage which we would introduce in the public sector and campaign to roll it out across the private sector.

Scottish TUC celebrates 10 years of learning

VER the past year the Scottish TUC has been celebrating 10 years of the Scottish Union Learning Fund (SULF). ASLEF has played a pivotal role in the lifelong learning agenda in Scotland during this period. This was recognised with ASLEF playing a key role in the celebrations. At the STUC’s learning conference in November I represented the trade unions on a panel reviewing the workplace learning agenda and Kevin Lindsay, District No.2 Organiser, chaired an event at the Scottish Parliamentary to mark the anniversary.

ASLEF’s Scottish Union Learning Fund project, ASLEF Education, is managed by me with the support of Andrew Gardner of Inverness Branch who coordinates learning in the Highlands and Brian Clark of Millhill Branch who is responsible for learning in the freight sector. All three of us are on secondment from our companies.

Over the past year the three of us have been organising and coordinating learning the length and breadth of Scotland, courses have been run as far north as Wick and as far south as Dumfries and from Edinburgh in the east through to Ayr in the west. We have run courses on literacy, numeracy, understanding pensions, computing, Spanish, Italian, sign language, DIY skills and Photoshop & web design.

We continue to have a very strong partnership with the Trade Union Education Department at Stow College in Glasgow, home to one of nine Rail Union Learning Centres, the others being in Ayr Station, Dumfries Station, Dundee Station, Edinburgh Waverley, Inverness Station, Shields Depot, Stirling Station and Yoker Depot. The college delivers most of our courses and has worked with us on developing courses specific to our members needs.

ASLEF are represented on the STUC’s Scottish Union Learning Board and the Union Advisory Group to the Board meaning that we are represented at the highest level on the union learning agenda. We also have a position on the GoSkills Scotland Nations Board. GoSkills is the sector skill council with responsibility for the transport industry. This gives us the opportunity to influence the skills agenda within the railway. On the skills agenda we have been working with Caledonian University on a paper that will put the case for the level for train driver’s vocational qualification to be raised from level 2 to level 3. We have also been working with ScotRail on the introduction of a new rail apprenticeship. This has seen twelve school leavers join the company on an eighteen month apprenticeship based on customer care.

ASLEF in Scotland continues to go from strength to strength and continues to lead the way in workplace learning, delivering free shift friendly learning for our members.

Jim Baxter
ASLEF Education
SULF Project Manager

We will also not step back from public sector reform and bring in a single police force and cut the number of health boards. We also believe pay restraint must start at the top of the wage scale and, if elected, Labour ministers will take a pay cut of 5 per cent.

The quality of everyday life in every community in Scotland is also a priority which is why we will turn our knife crime campaign into direct action to make our streets safer and use our literary campaign to eradicate illiteracy and innumeracy in Scotland.

A new agency: Energy Scotland will drive Scotland forward as a world leader in the renewable energy sector and spearhead our green revolution in housing where our long term ambition is that by 2020 household and community renewables will be standard in new and existing houses.

Labour is ready to take our message to the people in the doorstep election. We are ready to serve.

Iain Gray MSP
**Difficult times for the freight industry**

As well as being the Executive Committee member for District 2 I also sit on the Business Council for both Freightliner Intermodal and Freightliner Heavy Haul. These have been difficult times for the freight industry and Freightliner Companies are no exceptions. However, a small success was the Scottish Government’s decision to keep the Freight Facilities Grant, although at a reduced level, which assists with the start up costs for new freight business. This after our sponsored MSPs debated the issue in the Scottish Parliament.

Freightliner Intermodal has been offered a 3.6% one year no strings pay deal. This against a backdrop of the company making losses for the previous two years along with a reduction in Government grants. Although volumes continue to hold up well the company is receiving up to a 20% reduction in rates for the movement of containers.

On Freightliner Heavy Haul our Reps are experiencing difficulties in reaching agreement with links and rosters after the resolution to a dispute last year made changes to terms & conditions. Meetings are taking place and hopefully these issues will be resolved.

The relocation of Troon to Killoch has taken place which shows a commitment from HH to Scottish Coal. Hopefully this will result in increased manpower in the future.

The good news story we have as a Union is that we have benefitted from an increase in membership of 85 to 16,646. In District 2 our membership has increased by 11 to 1,477. This against an economic downturn and rising unemployment.

We are pushing ahead with a ‘Best Practise’ Managing for Attendance to be adopted within the rail companies and our Travel Facilities campaign is still ongoing.

However we are beginning to see the impact of the Con/Dem government cuts both in and outside the railway industry.

The 2010 Pension valuation is now close at hand and difficult decisions will have to be taken. The Government’s decision to use the CPI against the higher RPI will have an impact on member’s future benefits.

We are also seeing an increase in the retirement age from 1st October 2011. We are studying the Hutton Report on Public Sector Pensions and the McNulty Report which is a ‘Rail Value for Money Report’. I can assure you that ASLEF will do all in its power to look after the best interests of our members.

We are also seeing changes to Employment Law and a ‘review’ of Health & Safety legislation. All of these are attacks on workers rights and the working class. That’s why it’s important for us to ‘March for the Alternative’ in London on the 26th March.

**Hugh Bradley**

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**Labour has delivered on Scotland’s rail services**

EVERY government should be judged on its record in office. Has it left the country in a healthier state than when it took power? Has it invested in public services? Has it made improvements in the key areas of education, health, crime, and transport?

As we draw nearer to end of this parliament we should assess the record of the outgoing SNP Government, and compare it to that of its Labour predecessor.

The truth is that the SNP has fallen far short of the bold aims set out in its 2007 manifesto.

Perhaps because of this, the SNP Government has a habit of claiming credit for the achievements of others.

In the immediate aftermath of the transport chaos resulting from last December’s severe weather, which saw the resignation of Stewart Stevenson as Transport Minister, the SNP busily claimed credit for the new Airdrie-Bathgate rail link.

However, beyond happening to be in office when the work was completed, the SNP contributed nothing to the project. From the initial feasibility reports in 2004 to the passing of the Airdrie-Bathgate Act in March 2007, the work was carried out under a Labour administration.

I have been closely involved with the project throughout and am therefore delighted that the new line is now open.

For the first time in 50 years, residents of North Lanarkshire have a direct link to both Glasgow and Edinburgh, giving them access to new employment and educational opportunities. By linking Scotland’s major commercial centres, I hope the new line will attract further investment to the area.

However, whilst completing the line on time and on budget was a great achievement, this is no time to rest on our laurels. We must continue working towards a more integrated transport system that serves the needs of people throughout Scotland, in rural as well as urban areas.

There has been some progress towards achieving this. As well as the new Airdrie- Bathgate line, the expansion of park and ride schemes has helped consolidate local services and enabled people to travel more efficiently, discouraging over-reliance on their cars, easing congestion, and benefiting the environment and the economy.

However, in order for such schemes to work it is essential that we improve bus services, especially in rural areas.

For years now a deregulated bus industry has allowed companies to focus on lucrative urban routes at the expense of rural areas. This is patently unfair, and short-changes those who are most reliant on buses.

I have become increasingly aware of this problem over the last year or so, as ever greater numbers of my constituents have contacted me to complain about vital services being reduced or withdrawn altogether.

Excessive deregulation has had a detrimental impact on Scotland’s transport infrastructure. The untrammelled free market has not, as some would have us believe, lead to more choice and better customer service, but resulted in the relentless drive to maximise profits.

That is why I began my campaign calling for greater regulation of the bus industry. It has already proved popular, and I hope and expect that it will gain greater traction if Labour returns to office.

Scottish Labour is committed to providing everyone with access to reasonably priced and reliable public transport.

**Karen Whitefield MSP**
CrossCountry
The CrossCountry franchise has been subject to further remapping, involving additional work to extend the South West England to Scotland services from Edinburgh through to Glasgow. Additional Drivers have been recruited at Edinburgh and Newcastle depots. Drivers have been recruited elsewhere following agreement for an additional 12 Drivers. The 3 year CrossCountry harmonisation pay deal has ended and negotiations will take place this year for the first time since 2008. As ever the negotiating team will seek to deliver the best possible package. Negotiations seeking revised procedures in areas such as discipline and grievance have proved to be extremely protracted, and attempts to achieve a union learning agreement have not yet been concluded.

John Hay, Cross Country Company Council, Edinburgh No2

DBS
DBS has seen a very slow recovery. While we have picked up work, contracts tend to be regionalised or seasonally dependent. However we have seen some of our members moving onto train operating companies which offer more job security; this has lead to a small recruitment drive which nobody could have forecast a year ago. Freight remains volatile, where lost contracts can mean redundancies.

We recently resolved most pay issues from 2009 and are due to negotiate on this year’s deal. We have the opportunity to completely re-furbish terms and conditions. We have not gained significant ground regarding staff travel but hope ASLEF’s campaign secures agreement.

The new class 380 from Siemens

The recovery at DRS is tempered by the knowledge that colleagues elsewhere within the sector are finding it very difficult. Our hope is that workloads and contracts pick up for all freight train crew.

Tam McKendrick, Secretary, DRS Company Council, Grangemouth

VWC
The Council has been putting together a comprehensive Fault Code document, which will assist drivers in determining what action should be taken when a fault occurs, how long a train can remain in service and which faults/defects prevent a train entering service. Kevin Lindsay and the Council achieved a reduction in the qualifying period for drivers to receive first class travel, down from fifteen years to ten years, which benefits an extra 120 drivers.

I am presently three quarters of the way through a TUC course, the third course I have studied in Scotland. I am following an advanced course for union reps at the Adam Smith College in Kirkcaldy. The knowledge I have gained will help me in my duties as a Council Rep and I would encourage all Reps to support the Scottish Educational Program.

Mark Frend, Virgin West Coast Company Council, Edinburgh No2

ASLEF was the driving force behind improvements to new seats for class 334 units. We met LLC reps in Jan/Feb. A number of issues have arisen. Council and Kevin held a Q&A session after each course and management should be aware that we now have fully qualified reps that are more aware of procedure agreements!

Ian Smith, Chairman, Scotrail Company Council

Scotrail
The Full Time Officer and Company Council has recommended a pay package we believe meets our members’ aspirations. Several offers were considered before we decided on the final offer. In the last year we have seen the introduction of the new class 380 fleet from Siemens. There have been many teething problems including a computer error which led to a temporary brake fault.

Each train was double manned until tests in Germany rectified the problem. Training was agreed and Company Council rep A.McCallum -AYR depot -attended the 1st Course.

Support for drivers who hadn’t driven units for weeks is ongoing.

The new depot at Bathgate opened with a major training programme. We would like to thank Health and Safety reps from Bathgate and Motherwell for their help in the SOM107 process.

New PNBs guidelines were implemented in Dec 2010. A long overdue victory.

The Adam Smith College in Kirkcaldy. The knowledge I have gained will help me in my duties as a Council Rep and I would encourage all Reps to support the Scottish Educational Program.

Mark Frend, Virgin West Coast Company Council, Edinburgh No2

DBS
Things have picked-up recently in DBS, but not at all depots. Hopefully this signifies we are emerging from recession and not just a temporary improvement.

We have submitted our pay claim to management and talks are scheduled to start on March 14. Council has asked for an urgent meeting on rostering and diagrams. Sufficient training at all depots would go some way to resolving most rostering problems.

We have lost the Stobart train North of Mossend to a competitor. For whatever reason it’s bad news. Management is coming down hard on sickness and has changed policy (one never agreed by ASLEF) to 2 instances over a 52 week period, when previously it was 3 before any question of discipline were looked at. I have arranged a meeting to discuss this unacceptable change.

Our pension scheme is in deficit and difficult decisions lie ahead on how best we deal with this, but ASLEF will make any decisions with driver’s best interests uppermost.

John Gahagan, DB Company Council Chairman, Motherwell

East Coast
The East Coast Company Council has been working on several issues. The Safety Monitoring of Drivers (SMD) replaced by the Competence Development Programme (CDP) was signed off in March and all drivers on East Coast trains will be transferred to the CDP by April/May 2011.

This policy removes the A,B,C categorisation of drivers and also the draconian measures for drivers who have safety of line issues on their records. E.G., 8 years monitoring for a SPAD.

Drivers will be able to sit down with their DTM to see their reassessment and address their new categorisation included in the CDP.

The 2010 2 year pay deal included moving towards a 4 day week. We have discussed the issue and agreed an increase of the weekly rest day ration from 2.67 days per week to 2.75. Also included is a 0.5% increase on the RPI (based on February 2011 figures). We will know soon exactly what this increase will mean for wages.

Rab Wickstead, East Coast Company Council rep, Edinburgh No2
Farewell to the gaffer

Leamington Spa Driver Manager Dave Beech has finally pinned up his last Late Notice, retiring after 49 years on the railway!

Dave’s career started in 1962 at Stourbridge, where he stayed for six years, moving from Engine Cleaner to Fireman. A slight career change then beckoned when he became a Lorry Driver, still for British Rail though, so still ‘keeping his hand in!’

After moving to Saltley in 1970 to become a Secondman, he finally got his driver’s job at Birmingham New Street in 1977. He became an Instructor Driver in 1990.

The rest of his career was in management - as Traincrew Leader and Chief Traincrew Leader before becoming Driver Standards Manager in Stanier House for Regional Railways Central (as it was then) from 1996-98.

However this final job wasn’t totally to his liking. He missed the camaraderie of the men and his love of driving trains. So when he had the opportunity to ‘come back down the ladder’ in 1998 he took a post as Driver Manager at Leamington Spa. He retired on 17 February.

Dave passed his love of the railway onto his son Richard, who is a Driver for Cross Country at New Street. It’s a shame he didn’t succeed his dad as the Driver Manager!

Dave has always been a respected manager at Leamington, and on behalf of all the traincrew and staff he dealt with over the years, I’d like to thank him for his advice, kind words and professionalism. We wish him and his wife Olivia a very long and well-earned retirement.

Cheers Gaffer!

Nick Walker, Reporter, Leamington Spa branch

Upcoming events

NORWICH RETIRED MEMBERS REUNION
The Annual get-together for retired members in Norwich will be held on 8 April at the Arkwright Club in the city’s Hall Road from 1945. All ex-members of the Norwich Depot who left for whatever reason are welcome, as are those from neighbouring branches. For details please contact John Pipe.

Final look at Arkwright Road

A final look around No 9. Left to right are Andy Wakefield, John Cruxon, Dave Vernon, Colin Mitchell, Andy Jones, Dave Norman, Darren Dilks, Phil Taylor, Ian Widdison, Malc Goulding

ON 13 January the Nottingham Branch made what will be its final visit to Head Office at Arkwright Road.

We would like to thank our tour guide Dave Calfe, the EC and all at Head Office for their time.

We would also like to thank the General Secretary for his hospitality on what was an informative and enjoyable day.

Andy Jones, Branch Secretary

Honours for Sean

I had the pleasure of accompanying retired driver and former EC member Sean Madden to Arkwright Road as he received honorary lifetime membership of ASLEF.

Also present were my colleagues Stuart Richardson and Bob Peach. Unfortunately Peter Mee was unable to attend. Sean was welcomed by union president Alan Donnelly who thanked Sean for his outstanding union service. General Secretary Keith Norman presented Sean with his Honorary Membership and a commemorative plate.

For his part, Sean thanked the GS and the EC and also the Toton branch, whose members had assisted during his difficult health issues over the last 18 months.

Many thanks to ASLEF and its officers for giving this recognition to Sean, and for the welcome extended to us.

Jim Canning, Retired driver
Anne Jones spent thirty years working as a medical scientist at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) before, two years ago, she began driving trains for National Express at Bishop’s Stortford. Chris Proctor went to meet her to find out what prompted such a radical career move ...

Anne Jones is a splendid mixture of mild contradictions. She’s very smartly-turned-out, but has a teddy-bear poking out of her ruck-sack. She’s very easy-going and mild-mannered, but she has very strong opinions and a fund of self-respect. And while she appears very self-assured, she puts in extra hours at home going over routes and rules. All in all, it makes for a very interesting woman.

So what makes someone with a successful career in the scientific surrounds of a pharmaceutical laboratory swap it for the hurly-burly of the footplate?

‘There were two main reasons. Firstly, I was fed up and disillusioned with the antics of a ‘corporate world’ that had no sense of loyalty towards its workforce and I wanted to work in the ‘real world’ for a change.

‘And secondly, when I was offered redundancy I had the money to afford to take a chance with something different. So I slipped GSK’s ‘golden handcuffs’ and started looking for something new.’

She wasn’t sure what that next step would be when she stepped out of her laboratory for the last time just over two years ago. ‘I’ve never really planned things. I tend to put myself somewhere and see what happens! I thought vaguely about the post, or maybe park keeping, but one day standing on a station, I hit on the idea of driving trains.’

She applied to National Express and six weeks after she’d worked her notice at GSK, she was a trainee driver. ‘My writing skills were good and I spent some time finding about the company and its recruitment processes so that nothing came as a surprise. I knew there is less mechanical testing now, but I got a GCSE Physics book and brushed up on wheels and cogs and things just in case.’

Of the twenty who went for tests with her, just three got through. ‘I think they were looking for people who could be trusted not to take risks, which fitted in with my background. I was used to a regulated environment with rules, regulations and evidence-based standards.

‘As you’d expect, my lab work was very stringent. After all my work at Stevenage was in early drug discovery and development, looking at how new drugs are transformed by the body. A lot of what I did was test-tube work, putting drugs into liver cells and seeing what chemical changes occurred, ensuring they weren’t toxic. By the end of my time there I was also responsible for an equipment budget of up to a half a million pounds a year.

‘I had to prove my data was sound at all stages. It certainly made me acutely aware of the vital importance of health and safety.’

Anne started work for Wellcome Research Labs in Kent and says there seemed to be as many mergers and rounds of redundancies as there were drugs! ‘I left school in ’78 and picked up most of my qualifications, like a degree in Biochemistry, while I was working. That is all changed now. They recruit graduates rather than paying for part-time study and day-release for staff.

‘I think that system had advantages, even if I did miss out on university life.’

Ann modestly describes herself as ‘more of a plodder than an academic,’ saying she has to apply knowledge before she fully understands it. But she undoubtedly had a successful career at GSK.

‘I dropped a lot of money when I first joined the railways but once you’re qualified you can earn reasonable amounts. The real advantages are that I can work a four-day week – and there’s obviously no work to take home in the evening!’

Anne says, though, that train driving is no push-over. ‘It’s a challenging and pressurised job. It’s a case of being easy until something goes wrong, which is why we are in the cab.’

She still meets former colleagues from time to time. ‘They thought I was doing something a bit eccentric, in that I was expected to apply for similar kinds of jobs. But they were very supportive on the whole – and I think a few were secretly rather jealous of my change in direction.’

Anne took to her new career like a duck to water. She loved it. ‘Of course, it’s not perfect. Nothing is. But there are so many good aspects to the job. First, the people here are marvellous. Train drivers may not have lots of academic qualifications, but there are some sharp cookies. These are clever people as the banter shows. They can run rings around me. We’re getting used to each other. The only change is that I do swear a lot more now! And some of them, I have to say, could moan for England!’

Adapting to shift work was a challenge at the beginning, and although she worked long hours at her old job, there was no question of working nights. Anne prefers lates, and she tries, usually successfully, to swap her nights. ‘I did them at first so I knew about the tasks like train prep and sidings work, but I’m happy to swap them now if I can.’

Away from work Anne says she spends a lot of time ‘pottering, going to the gym and watching crap telly’, although she and her partner, a social worker in London, keep pet chickens and enjoy days out. ‘It’s funny but after a long weekend, I find I actually miss driving trains.

‘There is a mix of work at Bishop’s Stortford – Stanstead Express and inner suburban with the odd Cambridge – and I hope it stays that way.’

I wonder how Anne took to science in the
first place, like the footplate, another traditional bastion of the male. She thinks she may have been influenced by her mother who was German and whose own medical studies were stopped in the War. She met Anne’s father when she worked as an interpreter. Rather sadly she didn’t teach Anne to speak fluent German, although Anne says she can understand a lot.

She’s not a great crusader, she says but feels she should be taking a more positive role in the equalities area, especially to push things like flexible working or job shares. ‘There are seven or eight women at the depot now and two or three at Chingford. Half a dozen of us are going for a break to Majorca at the start of May. We all went last year. It was good fun, but socialising is one of the real benefits of working on the railway.’

Anne says she thinks it’s healthy to have at least one change of work direction in your life. ‘I was 48 before I managed it, but it makes sure you’re not blinkered and that you see things from different perspectives.

‘I realised when I left the lab that I was cash rich and time poor. Driving has given me a new view of what is important in life; and a conviction that there is more to life than money.”

Anne’s swapped her lab coat for an NX uniform

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

‘Nota Bene’ in a ‘General Gossip’ feature in the April 1911 ASLEF Locomotive Journal pondered on reports of corporal punishment in Reformatory Schools ...

“It is impossible to avoid a feeling of indignation and dissatisfaction at Mr. Masterman’s report in the Heswall Reformatory School case. Generally speaking, Mr. Masterman finds the charges made against the administration of the school to be unfounded, or at any rate, unsustained. At the same time, he is compelled to admit that cases of improper and grossly excessive punishments have occurred... It can be readily understood that, after the inquiry had been instituted, Mr. Masterman found the boys happy and proud of their school. What other result could have been expected?

Speaking in the House, Mr. Masterman referred to the case in which a lad had “some 15 buckets” of cold water thrown over him. He did not, he said, defend that, and the superintendent himself admitted the folly (!) of the punishment, which had not been repeated. “It was a reprehensible act, deserving of censure, though it might not have been more cruel than to have given the boy 16 or 18 strokes with the birch.” Are we then to conclude that the latter punishment would be condoned, too? The report shows that the medical officer of Wormwood Scrubs prison had examined 88 of the boys, and that he had found no less than 27 of them had been caned in such a way as to leave scars of a permanent character.”

The above canings had taken place during the last 12 months. And blankets were held over the boys’ mouths to deaden their cries. As Mr. Atherley-Jones (R) said: “that permanent wounds should have been left on 33 per cent. of the boys was monstrous, outrageous, and unjustifiable.” Yet, in spite of the admitted facts, the charges of cruelty against the superintendent are held to have been unsubstantiated. One good result of the publicity given to this affair is that the Government will appoint a strong Departmental Committee to investigate the whole question as to the administration of reformatory schools. It is to be hoped that another result may even accrue. Every right-minded man is looking for it.”

Jane Pimlott has selected and edited this feature for the past six years and as she is retiring, this is the last time she will write for us. The column will go on, but we’d like to pay tribute to her, and offer our thanks for the splendid job she has done. Happy retirement, Jane!

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott
A decade of ASLEF at Croydon Trams

MEMBERS past and present joined guests on 20 February at Croydon Trams and Light Rail No 1’s 119th branch meeting and the subsequent celebration at Jury’s Inn of the 10th anniversary of the branch’s founding.

At the branch meeting Acting General Secretary Mick Whelan assisted our District Organiser Steve Grant and EC member Terry Wilkinson in handing out certificates and Long Service awards. Special mention must go to our dedicated Branch Secretary Robert Sambridge (109 meetings attended) Konrad Turner (10 year award) and Andy Duncan (5 year award). Mick Whelan gave a broad-ranging speech before answering questions from the floor.

ASLEF was first introduced to Tram Link by Scott Nichols and we became a sub depot of West Brompton branch where we were assisted by Bros Feldwick, Bacon and Tasker. Those years saw us fighting for union recognition and members faced barren times with unfair disciplinary procedures and poor working conditions. Led by such dedicated members as Brothers Todd, Turner, Morris, Bailey, Ashby, Bishop, Dobson, Hogben, Herring and Sisters Wilkinson in handing out certificates and Long Service awards. Special mention must go to our dedicated Branch Secretary Robert Sambridge (109 meetings attended) Konrad Turner (10 year award) and Andy Duncan (5 year award). Mick Whelan gave a broad-ranging speech before answering questions from the floor.

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OPINION ON OPINION

Nigel Gibson, our EC member for District 5, wrote an opinion piece about Flexible Working in last November’s Journal. It was a fruitful exercise and began some useful debate. We published articles with other points of view in the January and March editions. Now, in the interests of fairness, we invited Nigel to review those responses ...

I’m grateful for the opportunity to respond to those colleagues who took the time to reply to the ‘Opinion’ piece I wrote in the November 2010 Journal. When I wrote the article originally, I was well aware that it would create some debate - but I think it is important that we can express ourselves irrespective of whether it is the popular view or not.

The most recent letter, in the March edition, came from a colleague in Marylebone and appears to have the underlying concern that Flexible Working simply equates to a request to work between the hours of 9 am and 5pm on a Monday-to-Friday basis. While there may be some cases of that nature I would suggest this not necessarily the norm. Currently, within our grade, there are drivers working ‘Part Time’ and ‘Job Sharing’ rotating through all three shifts, being paid the pro rata rate of pay etc for the hours they work. We should also remember that weekends for ‘Primary Carers’ can be the best time to work because Childcare is often more readily available. There are those who need to care for elderly relatives and I am aware of a case where a member worked regular ‘Lates’ to achieve their responsibilities in this respect.

I think the other element of Ken Goldsmith’s letter suggests that if an individual does not work their roster in its entirety, they shouldn’t get the same money. Let’s be honest, a very high percentage of our membership would rightly be in uproar if the management ever made such a suggestion as we all know the reality is very different with many choosing to work regular shifts albeit by exchange.

In terms of the comments made by my colleague from Euston (January Edition), I simply disagree that the answer to this issue is to force his daughter, or anyone else out of the wage job if they are unable to continue to work full time, alternating shifts through a relatively short period in what should be a lifetime continuous career as a Train Driver.

The point I was trying to make is that, as a union, with our skilled negotiators, we should seek to achieve agreements that allow members with ‘caring’ responsibilities to remain in the industry using and improving upon the Flexible Working legislation. This can be achieved without detriment to fellow workers and there are practical examples of this so long as the employer is responsible and reasonable.
Leaving, but grateful
MAY I through the journal express my thanks to Garry Heath, company council and Stan Moran, district organiser for their professionalism in negotiating with management on my behalf.

I have just finished on health grounds with Arriva Trains Wales, and their skill has made my transition into retirement worry free.

I have been on the railway for 32 years, (as guard then driver) much of that time as an LDC rep- both with the NUR and the last 19 years 10 months with ASLEF. I have seen many ups and downs, but knowing that I chose the right union made my work place experience one of joy.

I will miss my colleagues as I have made many friends over the years, but I will still attend my local branch meetings as a retired member.

Thank you all
Carl Nowell, (Ex ATW Driver)

Those mechanical aptitude tests
I WISH to respond to the Star Letter about the ending of the mechanical section. I assure readers from the start that no hurtful sexist comment is intended.

Some 15 years ago the industry faced the same question it does today: how to recruit train drivers from a wider background including females. I believe the sexes attitude to life is genetically disposed and many females find difficulties with the lineal thinking mechanical questions. Therefore when I, as a Minder Driver, was asked by my traction inspector what could be done to enable more females to pass the drivers’ aptitude test, I suggested removing the mechanical sections and replacing them by others reflecting more creative and social concepts.

The TI drew back in horror and asked if this would produce better train drivers? I replied that I was solving the first problem and that it would produce a different sort of driver.

Work might produce an enabling part of their wider lives rather than a complex encyclopaedia. Our remuneration depends on many factors apart from technical knowledge but chiefly the efforts of ASLEF to fight our corner.

We need to recognise the era we live in whilst keeping the flame lit.

R W McMillan, Stoke on Trent

Staff travel not so cheap
A recent visit to Scotland recently, using my ATOC card, cost me £76.50. For sure, that’s a huge saving on the full price ticket – but I still feel slightly ripped off. Why? Because when I got to Scotland and my cousin told me that she and her family have booked tickets to London and the total cost for all four of them from Dundee is £76 return!

Whilst newer staff would be overjoyed to get ‘boxes’ and free travel, surely consideration could also be given to changing some arrangements for those who have the concession. What about giving ATOC card holders 75% off standard fares – or alternatively offering 10%- 25% reductions on the cheapest ticket available for the journey?

Another suggestion would be a Flat Fare of perhaps £10 single and seats having to be booked with the ticket. After all, the children of staff who travel are charged £2 for any journey and they take up one seat, just the same as the rest of us.

I’d like to see a response to these ideas from the union and I’d welcome an update on what’s been happening and what progress has been made recently.

K Campbell, Driver, Ramsgate

ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL – WELCOME BACK ANDY

BACK in April 2009, the Newton Heath branch launched an appeal on behalf of our colleague, Andy Loates, who was suffering from an autoimmune disease for which the only cure was a liver transplant, for which Andy was having to endure an agonising wait. ASLEF branches responded in a fashion which should make us all proud. When I acknowledged these, I promised that I would provide an update through the Loco Journal and, at long last, I can.

The following December, we were able to give Andy a cheque to help him through the very lean months of surviving on statutory sick pay. We thought this would be the best Christmas present he could get, but fate decided that, literally, the next day he was called to hospital for the critical operation that would save his life.

But the support Andy needed didn’t stop there. Complications and a further operation left Andy unable to manipulate his fingers, and as a result unable to return to work throughout 2010. So you can imagine how important it has been for us that this month Andy has returned to work, not driving trains yet, but working towards that next important day. Credit is due to Andy for his patience and perseverance for the last two years and more.

Credit is due to Claire, who became Mrs Loates at the start of Andy’s ordeal, and who has barely left his side all that time. But credit, too, to our branches who have supported this and other appeals over the years. When these come up at branch meetings, it’s worth knowing that they really do make a difference. It’s not just the money; it’s knowing that your colleagues in the grade and in the union are there for you. Welcome back, Andy.

Dave Vaughan, Secretary, Newton Heath Branch

Although Dave sent this letter to the Journal, he asked if he won the Star Letter, the prize be sent to Andy. We’ll happily do as he suggests.
TFC explains overtime restrictions

The London Trains Functional Council (TFC) would like to respond to the letter from Driver Darren Powers of the District Line in the January Journal. Darren asked why he is not allowed to work voluntary overtime. We’d just like to point out a few relevant issues. Some of us have worked on the Underground long enough to remember ‘voluntary’ overtime working. Our experience was that it became institutionalised and had the effect of depressing wages. This resulted in the situation that is common on bus companies, where you need to do overtime just to earn a living wage.

Also make no mistake, if overtime was sanctioned in these ‘business focussed’ days it would not be long before management took the opportunity to slash the number of spares we currently employ and cut back on our realistic levels of leave coverage. Whilst this would be bad news for those no longer in a job and those waiting to take up positions, it would also have an impact on everyone else. We can’t see the Company granting special restrictions such as working voluntary overtime would also have an impact on everyone else.

We therefore question whether it would be bad news for those no longer in a job. Our experience was that it became institutionalised and had the effect of depressing wages. This resulted in the situation that is common on bus companies, where you need to do overtime just to earn a living wage.

Need to protect family friendly gains

In the January edition of the Journal, Euston driver Mick Humphrys put forward the argument that we shouldn’t go round seeking ‘absurd work-life balance’ by ‘choosing shifts and turns’ and that we should be happy to ‘all work to a roster compiled by our ASLEF representatives’.

I have to challenge Mick’s ideas. I have a fair amount of experience of dealing with members who seek flexible working. These requests are never made lightly nor hurriedly. This is only right because the individual is actually changing his or her contract of employment - with no guarantee that this can reversed should circumstance return to normal. Also, it is not a right. The company can – and do – refuse requests.

But what really disappointed me was the isolationism that Mick’s letter shows. The ‘flexible working’ legislation was introduced by the last Labour government in an attempt to offer some improvement to the lot of workers who found themselves in especially trying circumstances. So while it may rancour some in our industry, we also need to look at the bigger picture and think of the benefits to other people in different industries who don’t have our industrial muscle.

The employers have been complaining about legislation like this, and the rest of the raft of ‘family friendly’ and health and safety legislation that Labour introduced. It is exactly what this government is setting about trying to dismantle.

So, far from saying, ‘We don’t need this sort of agreement on the railway’, we should be out there campaigning along with our brothers and sisters from other industries to ensure that legislation to protect workers and their families is not repealed in favour of the bosses.

Roy Luxford, Secretary, Southern Company Council

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EDDIE FLATTERY A PART OF RAILWAY HISTORY

Eddie Patrick Flattery was born in Dungarvan in Ireland, but his family emigrated first to Australia and then to London, where Eddie began his railway career at Camden Depot in 1962. At that time where you lived dictated the depot you worked at, and Eddie, at 16, found himself at one of the British Isles' highest-mileage depots.

Eddie was committed to the union as the great changes in fortune of Camden and Euston depots took place. Steadfast in his belief in financial fairness, Eddie was a staunch defender of agreements - even those he didn't like. After Camden closed on 1 Jan 1966, apart from a short spell at Crickewold, Eddie never left Euston.

He secured the Branch Secretary's post before he'd even gained his drivers job! At various times he served as a local rep, Sectional/Company Council rep and District Council Chairman. He oversaw every possible 'isolation' within this industry, and his historical knowledge alone could have swelled 'The Lighted Flame' by another few chapters.

Eddie was a tough negotiator, a pragmatic thinker and a hard man to do business with. He was blessed with a memory for detail like a Swiss clock and this, backed by a true locomotive man's dialogue, made him respected by both those he negotiated with, and those he negotiated for. The esteem in which this influential and uncompromising representative was held was reflected by the number of people who attended his memorial service.

Eddie's home life had its demands and he cared for his wife throughout her serious illness. In addition, the hard-living nature of Camden took its toll and his own health problems led him to accept early retirement in 2000.

Here was an ASLEF rep who cut his teeth in the transition from steam to electrification and went on to include the first modernisation of the West Coast Line, the effects of the Beeching cuts, the trials of the first Advanced Passenger Train, sectorisation, privatisation and the negotiation of footplate terms and conditions for the modern trains we drive on the West Coast today.

Eddie died at the young age of 64. In an age when the story of the railway is meticulously preserved, the history of the generations of men who made it begins to fade. Eddie was a big part of his generation.

Along with his son James and his brother Anthony and the rest of his family, Eddie will be missed by all who knew him.

Cliff Holloway, Secretary, Euston Branch

BATTERSEA LOSE ROY LOVELL AND BOB TAYLOR

It is with regret that I have to announce the passing of two retired Battersea branch drivers, Roy Lovell and Bob Taylor, both of Victoria South Eastern.

I missed Roy's funeral as the usual means of communication had broken down, but I did manage to get to the service for Bob. Despite the freezing cold and damp, so many people turned out that there was standing room only. A fellow member of the Korean Veterans Association revealed that Bob had been in a Chinese POW camp for two years and four months in - to say the least - very harsh conditions. Bob, being Bob, never mentioned this.

May they both rest in peace.

Jeff Veale, Retired Members’ Section

Dave Weddle, reporter at the Retired Members’ Section at Tonbridge, adds:

It was a shock to hear of Bob Taylor’s death at Ashford Old Boys get-together in January. Bob was an unassuming and very fit man, even at 79! He died of pneumonia having had leukaemia - and none of us knew.

Many of us at the funeral heard for the first time that while on National Service with the Glistter Regiment he and several of his Regiment were imprisoned in Korea for two years and four months. We only discovered this when members of his regiment who were in prison with him turned up for Bob's funeral.

Many of his driver workmates also attended to salute him. Bob's railway career started at Gloucester. After the army he worked at Maidstone Barracks Depot until it closed in 1985 when he went to York South Eastern. He stayed there until he retired.

He will be sadly missed. Our thoughts are with his wife and family at this sad time. RIP, Bob.

ANITA GILBERT A TRAGIC LOSS

It is with the deepest regret that I have to inform you of the passing away of one of our women drivers at Reading, Anita Gilbert.

Anita was not just a colleague. She has also been a personal friend ever since we started on the railway together at Reading in May 1991. She seemed so shy in those days that none of us, myself included, ever thought she'd make a career on the footplate. How wrong we were! Anita went from strength to strength, eventually becoming an instructor driver.

She proved that beneath that shy exterior she was a strong woman, who, in June 2010, featured in the Journal to share with other members the effect of hearing the terrible news that she had been diagnosed with an incurable tum our on the brain.

All our hearts go out to Anita’s devoted husband Chris and to her three children. They, and all her family, have known and loved a very special person who sent out a special glow. I am proud to have gone through part of my life knowing Anita and her family.

Rest in peace Anita. The world is a sorrier place without you.

Stan Moran, Organiser, District 7

KENNY SELLER ‘SMILER’

It is with much sadness that I have to report the sudden death of retired York driver Kenny Sellers. Ken had been known as ‘Smiler’ ever since his school days and this nickname stayed with him all his life. Ken worked throughout his career at York Depot, starting as an Engine Cleaner with BR in 1961 until he took early retirement through ill health from Northern Rail.

Ken was an ASLEF member throughout his railway career. He was a great socialiser and as the ale flowed ‘Smiler’ would often become the life and soul of a gathering.

Sadly he did not have a long retirement as he was only 64 years old when he passed away. He leaves behind a daughter and two grandchildren and our thoughts are with them at this very sad time. It is very sad personally for me having to write this as I went to school with Smiler and worked alongside him at York Depot.

Rest in Peace, Kenny. If there’s a pub up there, I am sure you’ll find it.

A.B. Penn, retired former branch secretary, York

ERNEST BELTON AN ACTIVE LIFE

It is with sad regret that the Peterborough Branch has to report the passing of Bro Ernest Belton who passed away at his home in Bourne, Lincolnshire, at the age of 74. During his eventful life he served his National Service in Malaya where, as he once remarked to me, ‘I enjoyed the scenery and most of the people - but not those who were shooting at me!’ On his return to the UK, and looking for something a little less hazardous than Army life, he joined British Rail and spent the next 42 years at depots in the Peterborough area.

Never one to be inactive in retirement Ernest pursued his interest in local wildlife and the historical aircraft and airfields of Lincolnshire. In this time of sadness we send our condolences to his loving wife Hazel and his sister Margaret.

Simon Bell, Secretary, Peterborough Branch

April 2011 Obituaries

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**BEN TAYLOR** **DERBY’S ‘RED BEN’**

I recently attended the cremation of Bro Taylor - known to most people who knew him by the self-explanatory nick-name of ‘Red Ben’. We will sorely miss this dear colleague and close friend, who sadly didn’t enjoy the best of health in recent years.

Ben commenced his railway service in 1942 at Derby No 4 shed as a cleaner before going through the line of promotion: fireman, passed fireman and, after 19 years in the grade, Driver.

He was a strong family man and he and his dear wife raised two boys, Eddie and Trevor. Ben spent as much time with them as he could, given the many awkward shifts the job demanded. He and the boys had a great interest in sea fishing.

Ben earned the respect of many as he held various offices representing the Derby men. This included the management with whom he dealt. Along with his fellow staff representatives, Ben negotiated with principled arguments and ideas, all focussed on seeking resolutions rather than causing disputes. Along with other Derby members, he fully supported the miners during the 1984 strike.

Although an active Labour Party supporter, he lost some interest with the emergence of ‘New Labour’, spending more time with his family and his role as Chair of his British Legion branch. He was also involved in ASLEF’s Retired Members’ Section, attending both the Forum and the AGM. However, it is a mark of his political involvement that the Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP attended Ben’s funeral, along with many friends and colleagues. It was a nice touch to see the Derby ASLEF banner held aloft by branch officers and former EC member Ted Cartwright.

**JOHN GOODWIN**

**LONGSIGHT MAN FOR 49 YEARS**

It is with deep regret that I have to announce the passing away of my father, John Goodwin. He died at Wythenshawe Hospital on 24 January aged 77 following a short illness.

He started his 49-year railway career at the age of 16 as an Engine Cleaner. He then worked slowly through the grades to Driver. His whole career was spent at Longsight M.P.D 9A where over the years he made many friends.

John leaves a loving wife and family, and we would like to thank all those friends who attended the service.

David Goodwin, retired ex-Plymouth Driver

**NORMAN HARRIS**

**SWINDON DRIVER**

It is with great regret that I have to inform the membership of the passing of retired Swindon driver Brother Norman Harris. Norman was an enthusiastic member of our Branch and he and his now-deceased wife Evelyn were both very active on the social side, spending many long hours on our annual reunions. He will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues.

Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

D.J. Manners, retired former Chairman, Swindon

**J. R. CARTER**

**FOOTPLATE CAMERAMAN**

With sadness I report the death of ‘Jimmy’ Carter – a true man of the footplate who died on 14 February at the age of 74.

Jimmy started his career at his local depot – Sutton Oak - in 1952 when he was just 15 years old. Then, following a pattern of closures he worked at Widnes, Paticroft and then to Newton Heath, where he soon became a depot character. He was always friendly with everyone he met and involved himself in all depot activities.

His camera was always with him, a legacy of his father’s hobby. His eye for an image could only have been seen through the eyes of a footplate man. Jimmy’s books of photographs became best-sellers and are often seen on bookshop shelves. His best-known is ‘Footplate Cameraman’, a view of the dying years of steam on Britain’s railways. He produced pictures from the cab and some remarkable on-shed night shots.

Jimmy’s images of steam play a big part in the preservation and history of the strength, camaraderie and fraternity of the footplate grades that built our union.

He retired under ill-health arrangements in the 1970 depot closure, but good health was never kind to Jimmy in his retirement.

Our sincere condolences go to the family and friends of the footplate cameraman.

S. M. Black, retired members section, Newton Heath

**ANTHONY BARNES**

It is with deep regret that I have to report the death of Anthony Barnes, retired Ashford driver who passed away in the Dominican Republic whilst on holiday in December last. Tony started at Devons Road then on to Stratford followed by a move to Faversham then Ashford where he got his 40 year ASLEF badge.

Unfortunately he retired early due to ill health. He was a very popular driver and lived life to the full and will be sadly missed by all.

Rob Kilkie, Branch Reporter

Ashford
Prize Crossword No. 60 set by TLC

Solution to Crossword No 59 which appeared in the March edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to Robin Steer from Morden, Surrey

ACROSS 3 Sleaford 8 Shoe 9 Pancake Day 10 Anna 11 Rail 13 Elemi 17 Tariff 18 Vanish 19 Largo 22 Undo 24 Near 25 Trowbridge 26 Riot 27 Coasting

DOWN 1 Shunt 2 Departing 4 Local 5 Ankle 6 Oddie 7 Daylight 12 Info 14 Londoners 15 Athletic 16 Even 20 Rioja 21 Orbit 22 Union 23 Wagon

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