railway enginemen’s saver plans

tax free savings plans for less than a cuppa...

invest in one of our policies for just 71 pence a day

for further information call us on freephone 0800 328 9140

visit our website at www.enginemens.co.uk

or write to us at Railway Enginemen's Assurance Society Limited, 727 Washwood Heath Road, Birmingham, B8 2LE
HEN the Tories privatised the railways they said it was to introduce competition which would drive costs and fares down. Eighteen years down the line Sir Roy McNulty’s ‘Rail Value for Money’ report is the proof it didn’t happen. They are still rearranging seats on the Titanic.

Next month will see the government’s response to the McNulty report. It was heralded as being ‘independent’ - but consultants tend to write what the person with the pay cheque wants.

Theresa Villiers made the government’s priority clear in the Commons a couple of weeks ago when she said, ‘It is vital to get the cost of running the railways down.’ Anyone truly concerned with the railways would say, rather, ‘It is vital to get the standard of the rail service up.’ That’s the difference between Tory ministers and the union.

Our two immediate priorities are to defend train drivers’ wages and conditions and to protect the industry from any more fragmentation. Even the most casual observer must see that to be truly efficient, the UK’s railway must be a single interlinked network. If Network Rail is broken up and the track is given to the operating companies, all kinds of problems are raised. Perhaps the most obvious are that high-level maintenance would not be cost-effective as franchises come to an end; and freight traffic would increasingly be side-lined at the expense of the track’s ‘owners’.

So what is motivating the government? It’s the Coalition’s ‘smoke and mirror’ approach to economics. If they shunt the track into the private sector, they can claim they have saved public money. In fact, the reverse is the case. The private sector adds its profits to the rail bill – so the passenger and tax payer pay more.

That’s why we’ll be doing our best to build alliances with both these groups. All our interests are served if we keep the network as a single entity and if profits go back into the industry rather than lining the pockets of shareholders. That’s the message we need to get across.

Mick Whelan General Secretary
Union welcomes HS2 announcement – and seeks extension to Government plans

ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan was one of the co-signatories of a letter in the Guardian last month which urged government approval for the High Speed Two (HS2) link between London and Birmingham and eventually Leeds and Manchester. Along with other union leaders, Mick argued that rising unemployment the country urgently needs to invest in the country’s infrastructure – and the social and business advantages of HS2 make it an obvious project to back.

In the subsequent government announcement, transport minister Justine Greening gave the green light to the first part of the £32bn scheme. The London to Birmingham stage has government approval, although with a changed route after fierce opposition from Conservative-voting constituencies in the Chiltern Hills. The launch date for this stage is likely to be 2026, ten years after building begins, with a possible second phase linking Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds following six years later.

As well as Mick, other union leaders signing the Guardian letter were Bob Crow (RMT), Manuel Cortes (TSSA), Len McCluskey (Unite) and Frances O’Grady (TUC). The letter includes, ‘As representatives of workers across the rail industries, we welcome the thousands of construction and engineering jobs that HS2 will immediately bring to the UK economy, as well as the jobs it will create in the long-term within the rail industry.’

Mick says the ‘green option’ alone makes a challenging case for High Speed Two – quite apart from its boosting the economy, offering business advantages and having innate social benefits.

‘Expanding and speeding our railway network offers immediate reductions to polluting road and internal air traffic. That is why I urge the government not only to confirm the High Speed link to the Midlands, but to consider the obvious advantages of extending the high-speed track to Scotland.’

Union condemns PM ‘health and safety’ remarks

MICK WHELAN, general secretary of ASLEF the train drivers’ union, today condemned disparaging remarks made by the Prime Minister about health and safety at work.

David Cameron used his first public engagement of the year to tell business owners in Berkshire that he was declaring ‘war’ on what he described as the ‘excessive health and safety culture that has become an albatross around the neck of British businesses.’

The government plans to halve the number of existing health and safety regulations by the end of the year and to impose a cap on legal fees that can be charged to an employer.

‘It is a sad reflection on our society that the words ‘health’ and ‘safety’ can be mocked by our Prime Minister, Mick said. ‘These are not dirty words. It is the basic mark of a civilized society that people should be protected from death and injury – and this must apply equally to the work environment as anywhere else.’

Mick insisted that his union would continue to do everything in its power to ensure safe conditions for everyone on the railway – both staff and passengers.

Memory loss raises retirement questions

An article published last month in the British Medical Journal raised questions about the age that memory facilities, mental dexterity and brain power can begin to fail. ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan says this could have implications for the age of retirement.

The article argued that memory loss can begin from the age of 45, much lower than previously thought. The ten-year study found that there was a 3.6% decline in men and women aged 45 to 49. Men aged 65 to 70 showed a decline of 9.6%, and women 7.4%.

‘Following on from this article, we have raised the issue with the Rail Safety and Standards Board, Mick says. ‘At this stage we are asking questions rather than specifying problems. But we have asked for the RSSB’s view about such issues as the implications for the recruitment of staff in their 40s and what the implications might be for the retention of train drivers over the age of 65.’

NO DRIVERS BY 2020s SAYS LUL

If you write to Boris Johnson complaining about talk of driverless tube trains, you get a reply from Transport for London (TfL).

It goes on about London Underground’s track record as an innovator and explains that it is currently running three out of its eleven lines with automatic signaling. It says that 70% of the network will be automatic by 2018 and ‘potentially new trains could be operated without the need for traditional drivers from the 2020s.’

NORTHERN PROFITS UP BY A THIRD

Northern Rail saw its annual profits surge by 34% last year. The TOC’s holding company recorded a pre-tax profit of £40.1m in the year ending January 2011, up from £29.9m the previous period. A spokeswoman for the company would not disclose how its directors would be paid, nor would she respond to questions about the £22.5m paid in dividends.
Arrest after Wales sees another crossing crash

The driver of a hay lorry hit by a train on a level crossing near Whitland in Carmarthenshire was arrested after the incident at the end of last year. The 48-year-old local man was held on suspicion of endangering safety.

The driver of the train only transferred from Cardiff to Carmarthen six months before the incident, and the union were in immediate contact to offer assistance.

Seven people on the Milford Haven to Manchester service, which did not derail, suffered minor injuries just before ten in the morning. Ironically the crossing was featured in a TV safety campaign earlier last year. A more serious accident was prevented by the swift reactions and sharp braking of the train driver. In fact, when he returned from the hospital where he was treated for shock, he asked that a meeting with the British Transport Police went ahead that same afternoon as he didn’t want to delay the investigation.

John Boreham, the secretary of ASLEF’s Arriva Trains Wales company council, said the BT P showed great concern for the driver’s welfare during the meeting. ‘They were full of praise for his actions. In fact, it seems that ASLEF’s role in improving BT P’s attitude toward our members after an incident has fallen on fertile ground at last.’

ATW described the driver’s professionalism as ‘exemplary’.

The union made no official comment prior to a full investigation, but urged all people using crossings to exercise caution and diligence especially during the winter months of poor light and inclement weather.

Fare rises mean ‘rail for the rich’

ASLEF’s general secretary Mick Whelan says the January rail fares increases - an average of 5.9% - reflect the disaster that is rail privatisation.

‘When Major’s Tory government privatised the railways it was, they said, to bring in competition. That never happened. If you want to go by train from London to Liverpool, you go by Virgin or not at all.

‘The Cameron government’s approach to rail was summed up by the then transport minister Philip Hammond when in September he described the network to the House of Commons select committee as ‘a rich man’s toy’.

‘These fare rises are clear evidence that we need a new approach to rail and that means stopping treating it like a business and transforming it into a genuine service that will benefit passengers, the environment, the economy and the country.’

In Scotland the union demanded that First Minister Alex Salmond should intervene to stop our railways ‘transforming from public transport to carriages for the elite’.

Scottish officer Kevin Lindsay says the rises will mean travelling on the Glasgow to Edinburgh by rail will cost 40p a minute. ‘That’s more than an Edinburgh taxi,’ he said.

Lord Berkeley, chairman of the Rail Freight Group, has called on Network Rail (NR) executives to ‘renounce any bonus entitlement for this year in view of the economic situation’.

He said in a letter to NR that as the company cannot go into liquidation its executives have job security and so they should not claim bonuses this year.

Ian Coucher who stepped down as NR chief executive in October 2010, was the highest-paid civil servant in the country and was paid a £1million pay off when he left.

China launched a test of a super-rapid train in the last week of 2011 which experts claim is capable of travelling at 500 kilometers per hour.

The buckles in the roof tell their own story (photo credit: ATW)

A close call in a foolish incident. Had it not been for sharp reactions from the train driver, it could have been much worse.

The cab after the crash (photo credit: ATW)
TUC says booking office cuts will affect disabled

THE TUC has registered its concern that cuts to booking office staff will mean a further barrier to travel for disabled people.

TUC chief Brendan Barber says that the absence of accessible transport has long affected many disabled people being able to travel, including sometimes proving an insuperable obstacle to being able to get a job.

‘Steady improvements have been taking place with more accessible trains, buses and taxis, but reductions in ticket office staff (and therefore opening hours and having staff assistance available) such as the cuts being implement by Transport for London and London Midland trains will reverse this progress,’ he says.

Unity to fight McNulty proposals

The rail unions have acted in unprecedented unity to oppose the proposals in the McNulty Review on the future of the railways. On 15 December Mick Whelan (centre) and Simon Weller stood shoulder to shoulder with RMT general secretary Bob Crow at protests outside Kings Cross station in London where union members handed out campaign postcards to early morning commuters.

Clarkson to be investigated by Ofcom

Ofcom, the regulator for the UK communications industries, is to investigate the remarks made by Jeremy Clarkson on the One Show last year, including his view that trains should not be held up to remove suicide victims from railway lines.

The union made a formal complaint about the remarks, and we were not alone. The BBC received over 21,000 similar complaints. The BCC response to the union was, according to general secretary Mick Whelan ‘remarkable only for its banality’.

New cabs for DRS

Rail freight operator Direct Rail Services has ordered a fleet of newly designed mixed traffic diesel locomotives for use in its intermodal and passenger train operations. The union has been consulted throughout and has input into the design and something of the cabs.

The Vossloh Espana Eurolight UK locomotives are a derivative of the Eurolight locomotive which are already used in Germany. They have been developed for the UK in conjunction with Beacon Rail Leasing and DRS. They are due to arrive in the UK in late 2013.

Scots fare rises mean ‘rail for the rich’

Rail fares in Scotland increased in the New Year by almost 6% - and the union has called on First Minister Alex Salmond to intervene to stop our railways ‘transforming from public transport to carriages for the elite’.

The union’s Scottish officer Kevin Lindsay says the rises will mean travelling on the Glasgow to Edinburgh by rail will cost 40p a minute. ‘That’s more than an Edinburgh taxi,’ he says.

The union’s general secretary Mick Whelan said, ‘These fare rises are clear evidence that we need a new approach to rail: and that means stopping treating it like a business and transforming it into a genuine service that will benefit passengers, the environment, the economy and the country.’

Union helps Labour Feltham victory

Members of Feltham Electric Branch, led by outgoing branch Secretary Jamal Ajjane, were out leafleting and door-knocking in force during the December by-election in Feltham and Heston.

Labour held the seat with a majority of 6,203 - a net swing of 8.6% from the Conservatives.

500 Club

The results of recent 500 Club Draws are as follows:

- September Draw winner P Cribb, who won £136
- October Draw winner B Tagg, who won £142
- November Draw winner W Dale, who won £156; and
- December Draw winner K Beresford, who won £178

Mick pointed out that playing the game is much more important than who won. So. Not us, then!
Whatever life throws at you
ASLEF will help to protect you.

As a ASLEF member you’re covered for:†

Free legal advice and representation on:
• Personal injury at work (including assaults)
• Personal injury away from work
• Road traffic accident injury
• Industrial disease or illness
• Criminal law representation (for work-related matters)

• Free will writing service
• 30 minutes free telephone advice for any non-work issues such as landlord disputes, neighbourhood disputes, matrimonial and consumer issues
• Employment law accessed through your ASLEF district organiser

ASLEF members and their families are covered for:†

Free legal advice and representation on:
• Personal injury away from work
• Road traffic accident injury

• Special terms for clinical negligence cases
• Reduced rates for conveyancing and family member wills

For more information call ASLEF on 0808 100 8009

† Exclusions apply. Thompsons Solicitors is a trading name of Thompsons Solicitors LLP and is regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority.
Should we be Twittering during industrial action?

asks the union’s National Organiser Simon Weller ...
New trams for the new year

a report by Ian Exall, of the union’s Croydon Tram/Light Rail No 1 branch ...

The union has been closely involved in discussions about new trams which are to be introduced in Croydon this Spring after testing and commissioning. It’s a welcome development for both drivers and passengers as the new model comes complete with air conditioning and should offer a smoother and more comfortable ride. Being longer than the existing traction, they will increase capacity and ease overcrowding especially in the morning and evening peak periods. To some extent London Tramlink has become a victim of its own success as it has proved so popular. Passenger journeys have increased by 45% in ten years. The 18.6 million journeys made in 2001/02 increased to 27.8 million per year by the end of the March 2011 – and this has continued to grow.

WELCOMED BY UNION

The process began last summer when our health and safety rep, David Brinkworth, went with a team from First Tram Operations - which runs the tramlink system on behalf of Transport for London – to visit the Stadler works in Berlin to appraise the Variobahn Tram. Dave was impressed, and says the new trams will be ‘a welcome addition to our current fleet’.

At 32 metres, the air-conditioned Stadler models are 2.5 metres longer than the current trams and are low-floor to provide better accessibility. Each is made up of five sections with wide gangways between each. The Variobahn model is based on vehicles currently in use in Bergen, Norway.

The cost of the contract, which includes spare parts, is £16.3m, with Croydon Council contributing £3 million. When the new trams are in service, more frequent services will run on the busiest parts of the network between Therapia Lane, central Croydon and Elmers End.

EC member Dave Calfe sent us this photo of the Mayor of Barnet’s official car demonstrating concern for the disadvantaged of the borough – by parking up in a disabled space!

‘I don’t believe the Mayor – Ms Rutter - suffers from any disability - apart from her politics!’ Dave says. By contrast, Barnet’s Conservative council has shown great concern for the advantaged in the area in recent times. Last year its councillors awarded themselves pay rises of up to 58% regardless of deep cuts to public services.

From August borough Cabinet members’ allowances rocketed from £17,454 to £27,580 - an instant pay hike of £10,126 apiece.

Boxing Day dispute – what really happened ...

Action by ASLEF members working on the Tube caused disruption on Boxing Day, exactly as it had the previous year. Here we explain the background to a long-running, and still unsolved argument …

Part of LUL’s 1992 Company Plan negotiated a ‘clean’ salary for Train Operators terms which meant overtime or bank holiday working was at flat time with no day in lieu. A driver booked off on a bank holiday is deducted a day’s annual leave.

Since 1992 the level of services – and passenger usage - on Boxing Day has steadily increased, something not anticipated in the original Company Plan. So it has now become more common for drivers to be rostered to work.

In early 2010 LUL sparked the dispute by dramatically increasing Boxing Day services and unilaterally ending agreements where depots would be booked off ‘not required’ on a rotational basis. This led to the strike on Boxing Day that year. ASLEF has been seeking a negotiated solution since.

We wanted a system based on volunteers. LUL feared that not enough would be forthcoming. In discussions about incentives, the myth of the ‘triple time’ claim crept in.

As part of fully funding the cost of the incentive pay, ASLEF proposed a cost neutral/self-funding solution. Self-funding would come from savings made in agreed changes to rostering and transfer of staff arrangements. This would give LUL greater year round flexibility.

The actual cost of the incentive would not be greatly significant, as it would only apply to about 800 drivers and only for one day’s work (26th December); easily covered by the proposed savings.

Talks have now recommenced.
Working for Ken’s campaign

We asked Jack Smith, the Trade Union Officer of the ‘Ken Livingstone for London’ Campaign, about his experiences working for Ken’s campaign to be returned as London’s Mayor in the 3 May election. This is what he told us …

I joined the Ken Livingstone campaign in October 2011 from the National Trade Union Labour Party Liaison Organisation (TULO) where I had been working on NHS campaigning. As a trade unionist, working for Ken and with the team is a real honour. Everyday, I see Ken and the rest of the campaign putting the labour movement’s values at the heart of what we do. Earlier this year ASLEF members campaigned against Conservative Mayor Boris Johnson’s New Year fare increases which are making life harder for ordinary Londoners all over the city. If Ken is elected on 3 May, he will cut fares by 7%, freeze them for the whole of 2013 and not raise them above inflation for the rest of his Mayoralty. This will mean the average Londoner will save £1,000 over four years.

The Tory Mayor’s policies are also making Londoners less safe, as well as less well off. Robbery, burglary and knife crime are rising, but police numbers have been cut. Ken pledges to restore the numbers of officers and to get them working better to combat crime. If necessary, he will not fight shy of a battle with the government in order to get the resources to fund policing that London needs.

 CAPITAL NEEDS HOUSING

As a young person in London, I know there is a crisis of housing, with now more than a quarter of all households in private rented accommodation. Of these, 4 in 10 fail to meet the standard of a decent home. Tenants are subject to some landlords ripping them off and are often forced to take a short-term tenancy when they need the security of a longer-term let. In addition, because of the housing shortage, people are paying extortionate rents, with the majority of rents set at more than 50% of average incomes. Ken will tackle the abuses in private rented housing by introducing a non-profit lettings agency to put good landlords in contact with tenants, landlords who won’t rip them off and who will offer longer-term lets. He has also launched the London Living Rent campaign – similar to the London Living Wage which he shall continue to campaign for as he has done for years - to highlight the rip-off of rents in London and to argue that no Londoners should have to pay more than a third of their incomes in rent. He will also bring forward plans for housing association and would-be homebuyers.

Boris Johnson has also failed on an industrial level with train and tube drivers in London. There have been more strikes in 4 years of Boris Johnson than in 8 years under Ken. With Ken as Mayor again, we would get back to a sensible situation where mature industrial relations take precedence over 1980s-style macho management.

THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE

In coming weeks, Ken will be publicising new policies and promoting policies to boost the economy, tackle environmental problems and address some of the major inequalities in London. The Mayoral campaign is the biggest single election this side of the general election. Our aim is to show that Ken, not Boris Johnson, is most on the side of ordinary Londoners. Boris Johnson is a part-time mayor who earns a second salary of £250,000 from the Daily Telegraph whilst putting up fares, and cutting police. As the price of travel rises the number of staff on six figure salaries at TfL and City Hall has shot up. Tory Prime Minister David Cameron has told Conservative back bench MPs that getting Boris Johnson elected is his priority for this year.

Ken’s election would send a clear signal that there is an alternative - based on defending the interests of the majority of Londoners, not the tiny privileged minority of bankers and others who bankroll the Tory mayor’s campaign and the Tory Party.
ASLEF backs ‘Fares Fair’ campaign

ASLEF activists were out in strength on the first working day of the New Year backing the Fares Fair campaign that is led by the Campaign for Better Transport. Central to the message was that the government must be made to keep their promises on train fares.

- **Promise 1:**
  Fair pricing for rail travel. The Coalition promised us fair fares when it came to power. Do eye-watering fare hikes and ever more crowded trains sound fair to you?

- **Promise 2:**
  Greenest government ever. Doesn’t forcing people off public transport and into cars and planes make David Cameron’s pledge ring a little hollow?

- **Promise 3:**
  Cut train fares below inflation. The Lib Dems said they would reduce train fares by 1% below inflation each year. They need to stick to their commitment, not do the opposite and raise fares. The FF campaign argues that train travellers should be able to expect a fair deal for the price of their ticket – and this means:
  - Affordable prices, including peak times and turn-up-and-go tickets
  - Reliable services that aren’t overcrowded
  - Straightforward tickets that make train travel simple

ASLEF’s Mick Whelan said, ‘I am pleased that Ed Miliband has pledged to tackle the scandal of rail fare increases. This news will be welcomed by thousands of workers and communities throughout the country.’

Endorsing Ed’s statement, ASLEF’s Mick Whelan said, ‘I am confident that with our new general secretary Mick Whelan, we can now restore ASLEF’s credibility in the trade union and labour movement. We have an opportunity to play a full part in rebuilding and transforming the Labour party based on its socialist values. Only then, will Labour be fit to form a government of the people.

OPINION

Release reps – and liberate Labour

**urges Bryan Davies, Chairman of the Newport Branch and a member of the Labour Party ...**

The report in the December journal by John Healy MP highlighted a recent all-out attack on trade union representatives by the Conservatives in Parliament. This means that the Tories are continuing to do what they have always done. Therefore, it is not surprising that they will attempt to prevent or restrict release for representatives in future, in order to enforce managerial dominance at the workplace. I fully agree with Mr Healy’s assertion that workplace reps need wider public recognition, not political condemnation.

However, we should examine both the Labour and Conservative government’s record. The Conservative’s Trade Dispute Act 1927 and the Industrial Relations Act 1971 were repealed by later Labour governments - in 1946 and 1974 respectively. The neo-liberalist Thatcher and Major governments embarked on a relentless campaign of anti-union legislation by enforcing six Acts of Parliament between 1980 and 1993 which was intended to restrict the power and effectiveness of the trade union movement, if not to destroy it as a social force completely.

The Labour government’s Employment Relations Act 1999 was seen by unions as a first step to redressing the balance. However, following this legislation Tony Blair seemed pleased to say that ‘the UK still has the most restrictive labour laws in the western world’. Several years later the neo-liberalist Labour government failed to support the Trade Union Freedom Bill proposed in 2006, which would have made some modest improvements for workers.

This means that the last Labour governments (and John Healy was part of them for nine years) are responsible for an astonishing betrayal of the trade union and labour movement. The most damning indictment of ‘New Labour’ is that collective bargaining across British industry and trade union membership throughout the country actually declined during their time in office.

The focus for ASLEF and other unions must be to win back the Labour Party from the right wing that has sabotaged the party over the last 20 years. Many Labour MP’s are so indoctrinated with the ideas of the free market and deregulation that they are incapable of articulating a radical alternative ideological argument to the neo-liberal consensus. Neo-liberal policies have shattered the UK economy, raised unemployment, frozen pay and damaged the social fabric.

I am confident that with our new general secretary Mick Whelan, we can now restore ASLEF’s credibility in the trade union and labour movement. We have an opportunity to play a full part in rebuilding and transforming the Labour party based on its socialist values. Only then, will Labour be fit to form a government of the people.

In the meantime, irrespective of the law, we must strengthen agreements and ensure that ASLEF reps are released adequately to provide a service for our members in the workplace.
There is a notion that the government’s cuts in public services aren’t our concern. They will matter to people working in the civil service and teaching, local government and social services, but we’re in the private sector, so we’re out of it.

Besides, it was all inevitable because the Labour government had been spending money irresponsibly and got us into debt. As a country, we now need to pay it back. Yes, people out of work will find it difficult to find employment, but we’ve all got jobs, so cuts in public spending won’t affect our standard of living. We’re OK.

All this leads to our thinking, ‘ASLEF doesn’t need to get involved in campaigns against cuts. It’s someone else’s problem.’ But it’s not. And we do. And this is why …

GOVERNMENT CUTS AREN’T OUR CONCERN
Well, yes, they are – no matter where you work. And you don’t need a ‘lefty’ think-tank to back this up. A report by the accountancy firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) last year said that almost a million jobs will be lost in the UK as a result of cuts in public spending – and half will be in the private sector due to the impact on firms supplying the public sector.

The PwC report put the total number of job losses arising from public sector spending cuts - including knock-on effects in the private sector - at about 943,000.

That is bad enough: but PwC’s chief economist John Hawksworth added that a solution to minimising job losses could be people working fewer hours or for lower wages. That’s us he’s talking about!

Then again the distinctly non-lefty Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors warns that ‘the property and construction sectors’ will feel most of the pain, adding that ‘when the property sector hurts, the whole economy hurts more’.

So there is general agreement among business people that public service cuts affect everyone. Now trade unionists must realise the same thing.

The TUC report ‘Where The Money Goes’ showed that the poorest 10% will be hit 13 times harder by spending cuts than the richest 10%. The bottom 10% will suffer reductions in services equivalent to 20% of their household income, while the richest 10% will lose the equivalent of just 1.5%. So the richer you are, the richer you’re going to stay; and the poorer you are, the more you will lose.

When you take £6.2 billion out of the economy, no one is going to be untouched – whether you work in the public or the private sector.

And this is before we start to think about the effect that worse hospital and other social services are going to have on our lives.

LABOUR GOT US INTO THIS MESS
It’s become almost an ‘accepted fact’ that the country is in a terrible financial mess because Labour overspent on public services and ran up a huge bill that the country couldn’t afford to pay. Bankers didn’t help, the argument goes - but the real damage was an irresponsible government spending too much money.

This is a myth.

When Labour was elected in 1997, it inherited a debt of 42.5% of national income (GDP) from the previous Conservative government. The deficit was 36.5% of GDP on the eve of the financial crisis in 2007. In other words, Labour had reduced the debts it had inherited by just shy of 15%.

UK debt is now 62.8% of GDP. To put this in context, Britain’s deficit at no point fell below this figure for the 50 years between 1920 and 1970. In fact UK national debt averaged 112% between 1688 - 2010! The deficit has gone up - but remains historically low.

So what caused this upsurge in national debt? According to the IMF, British taxpayers have directly shelled out £289bn to prop up the banks since 2008. Add to this government loans and underwriting, and taxpayers are on the hook for £1.19tn. This, combined with lower tax returns due to unemployment, has created a perfect storm. (One incidentally, which will only be weathered by creating jobs - not cutting them).

Labour’s spending on education, hospitals and infrastructure didn’t create the position we’re in. Bailing out irresponsible banks motivated by greed rather than prudence did.

Not that Labour is entirely innocent – it failed to re-introduce the regulation of the City that the previous Tory administrations ripped apart.

But blaming public spending is both disingenuous and politically motivated.

UNEMPLOYMENT DOESN’T MATTER IF YOU’VE GOT A JOB
Well, yes it does.

Cuts in public services mean fewer jobs across the whole economy. As the public sector spends less, demand for the private sector declines, so it too loses work and jobs. This domino effect ripples out. Because there is less cash to spend, shops are affected, so more jobs are lost in retail …

The Office for National Statistics reported last month that 8.3% of the population was unemployed. UK unemployment stood at 2.64 million - the highest level since 1994. Youth unemployment stood at 1.027 million, the highest since records began. Add public spending cuts to an existing recession and you
have a formula for disaster for working people. In direct terms, it costs the country money to support people who are out of work, but it can also affect wage levels. When there are many people looking for work, employers can reduce wages. Where there is no trade union organisation, they frequently do. Last year, the first in which the cuts began to bite, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) said that 45% of workers received no pay rise at all.

Cuts in the public sector drive up unemployment. Unemployment drives down wages - for all of us, unless we are collectively strong enough to resist.

THERE WILL BE NO EFFECT ON THE RAILWAYS

Well, yes there will - as the recent McNulty recommendations make clear. They are part of the Government’s ideological austerity measures.

We all know the problems with the railways are the fragmented structure, a lack of long term cohesive direction and a distorted competitive market. McNulty’s answer was to identify these flaws – but then recommend solutions mirroring government policy. This should not come as a complete surprise; the Government did pay him £217,000 to come up with it.

Their solution is to introduce further fragmentation by breaking up Network Rail and passing the sections onto individual train operators through ‘Vertical Integration’ - reintroducing the profit motive to track and signalling maintenance and renewals. Have they not learned the lessons of Railtrack, Hatfield, Potters Bar and Paddington?

To solve the leadership question they pile on yet another layer of bureaucracy with no identifiable leadership in the Rail Delivery Group. The same old pigs, the same old trough.

They further skew the transport market where spending on road is seen as ‘investment’ and rail as ‘subsidy’. Rail investment costs are passed to the end users (both freight and passengers) in fare and access charge increases – while the Treasury’s subsidy of the true cost of road continues.

Under the cover of McNulty’s cost cutting review they highlight drivers’ salaries and pensions, claiming our pay is excessive and we impose restrictive practices.

They conveniently forget we paid for our salaries by negotiating flexibility and increasing productivity. We saw in recent disputes how their pernicious ‘we’re all in it together’ rhetoric has sown division amongst normal working people when we’re accused of being ‘unpatriotic’ for defending those conditions and salaries.

Under the guise of reducing the deficit caused by the bank bailout the Cameron-led government is pursuing a policy of further privatisation, attacking workers’ rights and empowering employers to change conditions far beyond anything we saw in the 1980s, in both the public and private sectors.

THE SOCIAL COST – THE UK OF THE FUTURE

Well, yes there will be huge and damaging changes. Using the smokescreen of the deficit Cameron has embarked on a huge program of change to social provision in the UK.

Whilst many equate social provision to ‘subsidising the feckless’ the reality is different. The cuts hit low- and middle- earners far, far more than those at the top. The cuts are in services – like the DVLA, Citizens Advice, Social Services and police support personnel – and not simply cuts in benefits.

No front line services will be affected’ is the oft-repeated mantra, suggesting that the voluntary ‘Big Society’ will step in to take up the slack. It is a foolish dream that can easily become a nightmare.

The cuts we see are coming from the budgets for our hospitals, local government, care, support and social services. They are part of a doctrine to pursue an ideological agenda of a smaller state – which is a simply coded way of saying greater and deeper privatisation.

To solve the undoubted problems in areas of health, care and social provision the answer is not ‘the market’ or privatisation. They pretend to be working for better, fairer and more efficient services – but the real result will be the City increasing their profits at our expense.

Report compiled by Simon Weller, David Gould and Chris Proctor
Ayelet Davies is an Instructor at London Underground’s Wembley Park depot. She is marginally unusual because she is a woman, but highly uncommon in that before joining the industry she had been a primary school teacher – and a conscripted member of the Israeli army. Chris Proctor went to meet her …

YELET DAVIES bursts down the steps of Wembley Park depot like a minor – and very benevolent – hurricane, a mass of goodwill and smiles. I think if anyone wanted an image of an enthusiastic and motivated instructor, this would be it. LUL are lucky to have someone whose love of the job is infectious, and who has unquestionable skills to pass on knowledge.

Well, she should have - because Ayelet qualified as a teacher in 1994, taking a degree in Education. ‘I thought it was a really good course, better than doing a degree and then adding on a year to learn how to teach,’ she says. ‘But they have stopped doing them now. They said the intake was low, but I suspect it was to do with cost.’

She says she loved teaching – but over the six years she worked in schools around London it changed radically. ‘I became dismayed with the whole process,’ she says. ‘I loved being around children and it was very satisfactory to see them develop and improve. That part of the job was brilliant.

‘But the amount of time I was expected to spend writing reports and checking key stages and setting attainment targets – mostly unnecessary bureaucracy as far as I was concerned – made me completely disillusioned. I had become a teacher to devote my time to children, not forms.’

A TINY AD AND A MAJOR CHANGE

‘It was a hard decision to make, but I thought it was time to stop teaching and move on. I wanted a change, but I had no idea what I did want to do. One thing that didn’t cross my mind for a moment was – the railway industry!’

Ayelet’s husband drew her attention to a tiny ad in the Evening Standard saying that LUL was striving to recruit women drivers. ‘What do you think?’ he asked me.

‘I think not!’ she replied.

But the idea wouldn’t quite go away, and in the end she applied.

What did her fellow teachers think of the move? ‘Mostly, they weren’t impressed! They seemed to think of it as a step down,’ she says. ‘And my dad was quite shocked! It’s not what you are supposed to do.’ But that attitude clearly cuts no ice with Ayelet. ‘You have to do what makes you happy – and this job really suits me. It was a breath of fresh air. I love it.’

NO PLACE FOR SNOBBERY

She puts some of the surprise her career change caused down to a sort of class snobbery that still exists to some degree in this country, where everyone is supposed to ‘know their place’. ‘It’s daft,’ she says. ‘And actually I met quite a few academics when I first started working on the Underground.’

Besides, she says she likes the people she works with. ‘I did right from the start. I was a bit of a novelty as a woman, but I never felt any prejudice. People were really helpful from day one. And I needed it, I can tell you! I had no idea what a lot of the jargon was about.’

She also found that the job had flexibility so she could spend more time with her own three children, one of whom is at university herself now. ‘And apart from the first couple of months I’ve been on ‘earlies’, so I haven’t had to work evening or night shifts.

‘Being an instructor really suits me, too. It enables me to use my teaching skills; more than ever now as new recruits are coming in because of the Olympics.

‘And the other real benefit is that, unlike teaching where I was always bothered by some fresh deadline or report, when I leave work, that’s it: I’m finished. I do the job and go home. It’s something I appreciate.’
I ask what she did before she became a teacher, and hardly expected the reply. ‘I was in the Israeli army!’

THREE YEARS IN UNIFORM
Ayelet was born in Tel Aviv and came to the UK with her husband who she met when he was visiting relatives in Israel. ‘He works in IT and after we were married we decided to live in the UK for two or three years and then go to Israel. That was 22 years ago!’ She laughs and says she’s given up making plans. ‘It’s really not worth the trouble. Life is unpredictable. I go up every day and something happens. That’s as far as it goes!’

She was in her early 20s when she came to the UK and she’d just finished a three-year stint in the Israeli army. ‘Everyone is conscripted there: you are called up on your 18th birthday. It’s all very daunting at the start, all about discipline. But it taught me independence and gave me self-confidence and reliance. I can’t go into detail because of the confidentiality oath we take, but it was an experience. In the end, I enjoyed it.’

THE MYTH OF THE MIDDLE EAST
Ayelet says the image of Israelis and Arabs at each other’s throats all the time is a myth. ‘It’s not like that at all. The region couldn’t exist if that was true. There was no anti-Arab feeling or inclination in the army, and it is Israeli, not Jewish. You don’t get any picture of the real situation from the media in this country. ‘You’d think Jews never spoke to Arabs and the place was constantly in turmoil. It’s not true at all. I think my children are safer in Tel Aviv than in many parts of London. ‘Eventually I’d like to retire back there. I have a big family in Israel. But what was that about planning?!’

As Ayelet sees me off with her customary gusto, I asked where she gets her energy from! ‘I like to be involved,’ she says. ‘I’m involved with my son’s school and I’m part of a group that raises funds for a medical charity in Israel. And I get along to union meetings when I can.’ Her final message, and indeed her presence on the railway is witness to it, is that you shouldn’t let other people set your barriers for you, and you mustn’t exclude yourself from anything. ‘Try as much as you can,’ she says. ‘It’s your life. Be comfortable with it. Live it to the full!’

A hundred years of union
The February 1912 ASLEF Locomotive Journal included a plea to ‘raise the status, raise the pay, we demand ten bob a day!’ Although 100 years ago, F. W. Brewer expressed the idea in more sophisticated tones …

BACKING FROM CAPITALISTS!
“As the Railway Engineer (a capitalist paper) says, "The train men have earned more money, and have not received proportionately higher wages. “When, further, the same journal contends that the status of the engine driver ought to be raised, and that the great mistake since 1907 was in allowing him to be discontented, we have the whole case for the betterment of the locomotive-man put in the clearest possible language by a publication which, as Mr J Drummond aptly remarks, is run in the interest of the companies themselves. The companies have, seemingly, yet to learn that their best interest would be served, not by forcing the driver to work for what is, after all is said and done, a miserable pittance, but by raising his status and his pay at the same time.

FIFTY PENCE OR BUST!
“As a matter of fact, his status, except for first class work – which represents the smallest proportion of the different classes of duties - has been lowered. The changes in his position and wages have come about so gradually as it has been almost unnoticed, and the fact is that a firm stand against these changes ought to have been made many years back; perhaps as long ago as the early Seventies.

“With all his training, experience and responsibility, the driver ought not to get a penny less than 10/- a day.”

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN or journal@aslef.org.uk

Extracts selected and edited by Dave Bennett
The 500 Club

Join the RMS’s new and exciting fundraising scheme

Pay a £4 stake each month and be entered into a monthly draw to be in with a chance of winning a cash prize!

Of the total monies collected 50% will help fund RMS activities and half will go back to club members as prizes.

The more members in the club, the bigger the prize!

The 500 Club is open to individuals, branches and district councils.

If you would like to join the club please contact Lee James at Head Office at ljames@aslef.org.uk or on 020 7324 2400.

NOW OPEN JOIN TODAY!

Railway Employees’ Privilege Ticket Association
Working for railway people

Run for railway people by railway people, REPTA helps bring the industry closer together.

REPTA members benefit from: 2012 MEMBERSHIP AVAILABLE NOW!!!

* Over 120 years’ experience
* Protected travel
* Network support
* New for 2012 discount cinema tickets - Solicitors offer
* Major discounts from leading high street names
* Free Yearbook packed with special deals

Join today for just £3.00 and protect yourself from travel card loss charges, enjoy free insurance, save money with wide-ranging members’ discounts and benefit from being in a major rail network. Just send details of your name, address, date of birth and email together with your cheque or postal order made payable to REPTA.

For one membership card and yearbook inc. P&P send £4.50. Extra cards for family members £3.00. NEW for 2012 family membership two adults and all children up to age 18 for £9.00 inc P&P.

Please send to: REPTA, 4 Brackmills Close, Forest Town, Mansfield, Notts NG19 0PB. Tel: 01623 646789

OR you can also see us on Facebook: Now join on line @ www.repta.co.uk

WANTED

Women members interested in being sponsored to attend conferences as visitors

GET MORE INVOLVED learn more about the union and see how conferences work

UPCOMING CONFERENCES INCLUDE
the unions annual conference, TUC womens conference, labour party and TUC congress

CONTACT Wendy Hurst, Secretary of ASLEF’s women’s committee
Tel: 07788 153 932 or email wendy.hurst3@ntlworld.com
GRAHAM (‘BERT’) PATON – PASSED AWAY IN MALAGA

IT IS with great sadness that I have to inform you of the sad news that Graham (‘ Bert’) Paton passed away on 30 December. He died peacefully at home with his wife Millie by his side after a long brave battle against cancer. Bert leaves two sons - Nigel and Stephen - and two loving daughters-in-law, Tina and Lizzy.

Bert started on the railway in 1952 at Basingstoke as a cleaner, progressed to fireman and was promoted to driver in the early ’60s. In 1990 he transferred to Weymouth and with his family moved to a village called Chickereill. From there, Bert cycled three miles to and back every day. Bert retired in 1998 and moved to Spain on 28 December 1998.

Graham (‘ Bert’) to his railway friends never had a day off work sick and he really enjoyed working with all his mates on the railway. He was a skilled first aider and entered many competitions. He had the opportunity to talk about his steam driver days at his grandchildren’s school in Twyning. He was nervous before he began, but the kids loved hearing about the days of steam.

Bert and Millie were married in 1958 in Basingstoke. In November last year they celebrated their 53rd wedding anniversary. He was proud of his family, including his grandchildren Harri, Ella, Abi and Zara.

Bert enjoyed his retirement in Spain and had many visitors over the years. Over there, he continued his passion for gardening. The trees in his garden included lemon, orange and grapefruit – and even a banana plant which he brought from England.

Bert’s funeral was held on 2 January in Velez Malaga. Many friends and family were in attendance. 

Rick Patterson, Driver, Weymouth

JOSEPH PADGETT, BEM – A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

Driver Joseph Padgett passed away peacefully at Grimsby’s Diana, Princess Of Wales Hospital on 15 December after suffering a stroke. He was 85 years old.

Joseph was an ASLEF activist, former magistrate, Labour Party member of 69 years’ standing and holder of the British Empire Medal. He was also, according to Dorothy, his wife of 65 years, ‘the most amazing father and husband’.

He served as a magistrate in Grimsby and Cleethorpes for 20 years and apart from his ASLEF activity he was heavily involved in the Railway Club, now the Carr Lane Social Club. He ran their football team and was active, collected money for the welfare of railway workers and their families who had fallen on hard times.

Joseph began his railway career in Bradford as a cleaner aged 16, before moving to Grimsby to take up a driving post. It was here he became active as a union representative. He also took a great interest in the turf, frequently remarking that he was ‘going to see a race’.

His funeral took place on 5 January at the St Peter’s Church in Grimsby. Joseph and Dorothy had three children, Mary, Joan and Joseph and he will also be mourned by his grandchildren.

He was a skilled first aider and entered many competitions. He had the opportunity to talk about his steam driver days at his grandchildren’s school in Twyning. He was nervous before he began, but the kids loved hearing about the days of steam.

J. G. Davies, retired member

BILL GOLIGHER A GREAT CHARACTER LOST

It is with great sadness and regret that Waterfoot Nine Elms lost William Goligher to lung cancer. Bill’s passing came suddenly and shocked us all.

Bill was one of the last men of steam still on the footplate, starting at Bournemouth in 1963 and then moving to Waterloo. After 48 years’ service he was a railway man through and through, driving right through adulthood to the very moment of his passing.

Bill will not be forgotten as he was a man of great character. The railway has always had great characters, and Bill was certainly one of those. He had a quite remarkable vocabulary - which I couldn’t write here! He was a man who always told you what he thought of you, whether good or bad. As a staff rep if he believed you weren’t doing a good job he’d tell you, in his distinct accent which was a bit of Ulster mixed with a hint of the west country.

No branch meeting will be the same again. Bill’s input cannot be replaced. Waterloo would like to thank the many words of support we have received from well-wishers in other branches. On behalf of Waterloo Nine Elms and all the other branches on SWT we pass on our deepest regrets and best wishes to Bill’s family at this very difficult time.

Mark Prenter, Waterloo and Nine Elms

RUSSELL COFFIN DIED ON CHRISTMAS DAY

My dear uncle, Driver Russell Coffin, passed away peacefully on Christmas Day in Mayday Hospital, after a gallant seven week fight involving three bouts of pneumonia and numerous other problems.

His funeral took place at the Crematorium East Chapel in Croydon on 12 January 2012. Russell was anything but ostentatious during his lifetime but felt that he should go out in style. So, as a fervent animal lover, he stipulated that his hearse be horse-drawn and met by mourners outside the chapel.

The reception was held at the Sutton Model Engineering Club, of which he was a lifetime member, as indeed he was of ASLEF. We had recently celebrated Russell’s 90th birthday.

Iain Gordon, nephew

JOHN HITCHCOX A HEREFORD MAN

It is with great sadness that I inform you of the death, at the age of 67, of retired driver John Hitchcox of Hereford branch.

John spent most of his career at Hereford. He moved away on two occasions, both caused by redundancy. First he went to Bromsgrove and later he worked at Aberystwyth, but eventually he returned to Hereford.

John was very active within ASLEF and held a number of positions within the union. At various times he was secretary and chairman of the branch, as well as serving as a delegate to the AAD and the District Council and acting as secretary of the LCD.

When he retired, John became secretary of our Retired Members’ Section, a position he also held for the local cardiac rehab club.

Walter Dannys A TRUE RAILWAYMAN, ONLY 54

IT IS with deep sadness that I write of the death of our colleague Walter Dannys in December. Walter was only 54 years old.

Walter started his railway career at Holbeck depot in Leeds in engineering and he progressed in that role over many years at Neville Hill. He then moved to Gateshead TMD, Blyth TME and Thornaby TMBN as an engineering supervisor. Walter eventually realised his dream and became a driver at Tyne Yard in 2002. He then took VRS and moved to Carlisle with DRS.

Walter would always be the first to help anyone he could - no matter what that entailed. He will be sorely missed by his many friends and colleagues throughout the railway industry.

Our thoughts are with his beloved wife Sally and all the Walters family at this sad time, especially as he died over the festive period.

Malcolm Maguire, Secretary, Tyne Yard branch
Handing over the torch at East Ham

A large number of members gathered on 8 December at the East Ham (LUL) branch at Hornchurch to mark the last branch meeting to be conducted by its long-standing chairman Danny O’Brien.

We were particularly pleased to see that our new general secretary Mick Whelan had come along to mark Danny’s contribution to the branch – over 20 years as its chairman and over twice that in ASLEF membership. Danny has worked on London Underground’s District line for over 40 years both as a driver and an instructor/operator.

Danny was presented with an engraved plaque and tankard – which I’m sure he will put to good use at future branch meetings! Although no longer a branch officer Danny will doubtlessly continue to take a keen interest in union matters. I’m sure we’ll see him at branch meetings where he will no doubt ask awkward questions both of his successor branch officials, and of visiting head office figures.

Danny deserves particular credit for the success of the East Ham branch, making it (in our humble view) the best-attended branch with the liveliest debates on the London Underground. Before Danny took over the branch was at a low ebb, with a lack of direction and a constant change of officials.

I’m the new chairman-elect of East Ham branch, and I’ve been Danny’s vice-chair for the past seven years. I know that I inherit a much stronger and more vibrant branch than the one Danny took over two decades ago. And I also know that I am speaking for all past, present and indeed future members when I wish him a long and happy retirement from LUL in January.

We will lose a good friend, an intelligent debater and a great humourist, who showed his unionism in its best light by leading by example. All the best, mate.

Dan Daly, Chairman-elect, East Ham branch

The General goes over the border

On 9 December I accompanied new General Secretary Mick Whelan to Edinburgh where we had received an invitation to the Edinburgh No 2 branch reunion – or the ‘Old Boy’s Do’ as they term it! It was Mick’s first official visit to Scotland.

We received a warm Scottish welcome from the 50 retired members who turned out to enjoy the evening. Once again we were provided with a grand meal.

Once we had been fed and watered, branch Chairman Chris Barry introduced the top table which consisted of Scottish Officer Kevin Lindsay, EC members Hugh Bradley, a new company councillor, the General Secretary, branch secretary Rab Wickstead and myself representing the Retired Members’ Section.

When the general secretary was invited to address the meeting he thanked all present for their warm welcome and gave a short but in-depth presentation as to the way he hoped to see ASLEF going forward into the future. Hugh gave up to date information on what the EC was doing for the membership and I was invited to say a few words on the activities of the RMS. I thanked everyone who had supported us in raising funds so we are able to run our weekend schools and invited those who would like to support us in the future to join our 500 club.

Kevin Lindsay gave an overview of matters Scottish and ASLEF’s dealings with Scotrail and the other companies operating north of the border.

Mick Whelan then presented a framed ASLEF retirement certificate and a gift from the branch to Norman Clark.

This was followed by the Secretary and Chairman running a free raffle where they dispensed ‘medicine’ to the winners to keep out the cold; the remedies had names like Grouse, Booths, Morgan and Smirnoff!!

In closing all I can say is ‘Thanks Edinburgh No 2 – and especially Rab Wicksted - for another good one!’

Peter Smith, Reporter, Retired Members Section

A merry gathering at Hither Green

Awards at Hither Green reunion

I had the pleasure of attending Hither Green (HG) branch Reunion on 4 November where I was pleased to meet a good gathering of old and new members.

EC member Marz Colombini represented Head Office and gave an up to date account of what the EC was doing on behalf of its members and spoke about the on-going problems with DB Schenker (DB).

The reunion was also an opportunity to make presentations to various branch members. These were

- a 45-year badge to Don Clark, an ex-Nine Elms, Waterloo and Red Hill driver - one of DB’s steam driver or fireman as required.
- a 30-year badge to Andy Eggeden who has spent most of his service at HG apart from a couple of years at Slade Green. Andy is also a LDC rep.
- a 25-year badge to Chris Cockburn who started at HG, went to Charing Cross and then returned to HG. Chris is also the Assistant Branch Secretary.

My thanks on behalf of everyone who attended to Chairman Andy Flett, Secretary John Stagg and all the branch offices who made the event happen.

Peter Smith, Reporter, Retired Members’ Section
Branch News

Upcoming events

- **PERTH**
  Perth branch will be holding an open branch meeting for all ASLEF members on Sunday 4 March at Perth City Sports & Social Club, 18 Leonard St, Perth, PH2 8ES (a five minute walk from Perth Station). Speakers will include general secretary Mick Whelan, district organiser Kevin Lindsay, EC member Hugh Bradley and ASLEF Trustee and First Scotrail Company Council rep Ian Smith.
  Members outside District 2 planning to attend, please contact Perth branch secretary Grant Murchie by phone or text on 07412453454, so we know how many we are catering for.

- **STRATFORD**
  The Stratford depot reunion will be held on Saturday 4 February 2012 in the Railway Tavern, Angel Lane, Stratford from 19:00 until late. A buffet will be supplied and all are welcome. For further information please contact Barry Moore on 07900 132192 or by email at Barry.Moore@dbschenker.com
  Anyone wishing to reserve a room at the venue (discounts are available for anyone attending the reunion) should email info@railwaytavernhotel.co.uk or phone 020 8534 3123

- **EASTLEIGH**
  The next Eastleigh reunion will be held in the Old BRSA Club at Eastleigh from noon until 18:00 on 10 March. Everyone welcome. Free buffet laid on.

- **CRICKLEWOOD**
  There will be a reunion on Friday 16 March at the RAFA Club in Ashburnham Road, Bedford from noon onwards. For further information contact Grahame Nash in Bristol or Bob Hodson in Wolverhampton.

- **BRIGHTON**
  The Brighton Motive Power and Sussex Motive Power depots will be holding an informal open afternoon for all active and retired ASLEF members who have been connected to Brighton and Sussex Motive Power Depots in the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont (off Dyke Road) from 14:00 on Tuesday 8 May. A buffet will be provided.
  Any ASLEF member who has had a connection with Brighton or Sussex Motive Power Depots (Ore, Eastbourne, Seaford, Newhaven, Brighton, West Worthing, Littlehampton, Barnham, Bognor Regis, Horsham, Three Bridges and Tunbridge Wells West) is welcome to come along and meet with their old footplate colleagues.
  For further information phone Ivan Wilson (07949862393) or Paul Edwards (07894602991)

Many thanks to Cambridge Andy

KEV FACER, the chairman of the Cambridge branch, says that on behalf of all his members he would like to thank Andy Dawson for his dedicated work as secretary of the branch over the past five years. ‘It was a period that saw the branch flourish to become a vibrant forum,’ Kev says.

Andy unfortunately had to relinquish his position for family reasons, but intends to remain active and expressed his full support to Martin Haylett who has taken over the role of branch secretary.

Lincoln welcomes new GS

The branch meeting and AGM of the Lincoln depot was held on 11 December and we were honoured to welcome the union’s new general secretary Mick Whelan along with our EC member Nigel Gibson and East Midlands Trains DFC reps Andy Botham and Pete Coles.

Mick gave us a talk on the problems we will be facing and how he saw the challenges ahead for our proud union.

He paid tribute to the work undertaken by our previous general secretary Keith Norman and his achievements during his seven years in office and praised the National Organiser, Simon Weller, and the EC for their work.

Nigel then gave an EC report and it was heartening for our Branch to realise that the union continues to go from strength to strength, keeping up its work and efforts to do what is right and best for the membership.

**Richy Doran, Secretary, Lincoln branch**

Les’ 40 years marked in Gloucester

Last month I had the great pleasure of presenting Les Boskett of the Gloucester branch with his 40-year membership badge. Sadly Les has had to retire early due to medical reasons. District Organiser Stan Moran handed Les a belated retirement gift of an ASLEF tankard (a very appropriate present!).

Les was joined by a number of former work colleagues not only from Gloucester but also old mates from his time at Stratford depot. We all enjoyed a good chat and a few pints, and Les wanted us to record his gratitude to all those who came along to mark the occasion.

**Brian Corbett, Executive Committee Members, District 7**

Les Boskett’s contribution is celebrated by his ASLEF colleagues
Fond farewell for Southport’s last steam driver

SOUTHPORT marked the end of an era as its last steam driver finally retired after 49 years and 49 weeks service.

Melvin Rigby started in 1962 at Lostock Hall and when the depot shut and he was made redundant he moved to Preston. A few years later he was on the move again, this time to Kirkdale. Some years after he agreed to a mutual exchange with a driver called Alan Downie and ended up at Southport - where he remained till his retirement in December last year.

Melvin enjoyed a variety of jobs on the railway from firing steam engines to being an instructor on the diesels and electrics. I can personally vouch for the last two, as he trained me on both.

He was an excellent instructor and certain things he told me still stick in the memory - like we had to empty the bin when we first got in the cab end. Melvin was a stickler for tidiness and a militant non-smoker, but all in all he was a very good instructor.

So all the members from Southport traincrew and all the staff at the station would like to wish Melvin a long and happy retirement. He certainly deserves it.

All the best for the future Melvin - from myself and all the many friends you made on the railway.

Bill Baxter, Southport

I am a rolling stock technician working for Alstom Metro and as such I’m an ASLEF member in the Morden branch.

I am writing because I would like to use the pages of the Journal to thank the driver of the train that was involved in the incident at the crossing at Henllan Amgoed on Monday 19 December.

I had the misfortune to be travelling on the train going home to London from Milford Haven.

I’m convinced that the driver’s prompt reaction to the pending accident prevented serious injury and possibly worse that day. He couldn’t have done anymore to protect his passengers, I was sitting in the first two seats in the saloon behind the cab and besides the shock of what happened, I fortunately emerged unscathed.

In the aftermath of the crash all the staff on the train behaved with great credit to their profession. The guard, although suffering an injury to his arm and in visible pain, continued to keep us informed of events and made sure we were all as comfortable as we could be under the circumstances. The staff also went on serving refreshments despite suffering from personal traumas, and dealt with passengers who had been injured without much care to their own circumstance.

It was truly superb to witness and made everyone feel much safer knowing they were still there to help us.

Finally, I would like to comment on the construction of the train. Besides the almost destruction of the leading cab it came out virtually unscathed. It was, I think, a credit to modern design. There was no flying glass or metal which would have indeed caused major injuries and possibly fatalities.

To the driver and the train crew - thank you for all you did that day.

David Wayman, Rolling Stock Technician

Family Union

I would like to thank all concerned who helped my son and I with the claim for his injuries and compensation after his car accident. He is now fully recovered and the claim has been settled.

Particular thanks are due to John Boreham (ASLEF) and Ian Griffiths (Thompsons) for all their efforts throughout.

Thanks again.

Haydn Williams, Driver, Carmarthen branch

Union help after the riots

I lost my flat in the recent London riots and I am writing to you to thank you and your representatives at branch level at Kings Cross for all their help and support during these stressful times.

Thanks to the hard work and generosity of the union and my friends at work, I am slowly managing to get my life back to normal.

This would not have been possible without the money given to me out of the local and head office hardship funds as well as the collection that was made at Kings Cross by the friends I work with.

I cannot express how much this has meant to me and how thankful I am to you all for coming to my assistance in my hour of need.

Mark Rees-Dawson, Kings Cross

More protection needed

Two years ago - after 23 years as a mainline driver and 33 years in the railway industry - I had to be accommodated as a depot driver on medical grounds. The agreement we have with the TOC I work for means that I will eventually end up with a shortfall of £7,000 a year compared with my mainline colleagues.

I have noticed that some drivers working for other TOCs are protected and keep their drivers rate. This is what happened under BR.

Thank you for all you did that day.

David Wayman, Rolling Stock Technician

I lost my flat in the recent London riots and I am writing to you to thank you and your representatives at branch level at Kings Cross for all their help and support during these stressful times.

Thanks to the hard work and generosity of the union and my friends at work, I am slowly managing to get my life back to normal.

This would not have been possible without the money given to me out of the local and head office hardship funds as well as the collection that was made at Kings Cross by the friends I work with.

I cannot express how much this has meant to me and how thankful I am to you all for coming to my assistance in my hour of need.

Mark Rees-Dawson, Kings Cross

More protection needed

Two years ago - after 23 years as a mainline driver and 33 years in the railway industry - I had to be accommodated as a depot driver on medical grounds. The agreement we have with the TOC I work for means that I will eventually end up with a shortfall of £7,000 a year compared with my mainline colleagues.

I have noticed that some drivers working for other TOCs are protected and keep their drivers rate. This is what happened under BR.
NEGATIVE VIEW OF THATCHER FILM

Margaret Thatcher is one of the most divisive and controversial characters in British political history. She is the woman who took on the steel workers of Sheffield and Rotherham, the woman whose militarised police force fought pitched battles against striking miners in coal’s South Yorkshire heartland. She took us into a war over the Falklands, survived an IRA bomb, told Europe ‘No, no, no’ and oversaw the Tories ‘managed decline’ of the North of England.

Margaret Hilda Thatcher, daughter of a Grantham grocer and three times Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990, is now in her twilight years and suffering the torments of dementia.

But her fame, and infamy, have long been assured.

Last month the film ‘The Iron Lady’ opened in cinemas and a performance by Oscar-winning actress Meryl Streep as the former Prime Minister captures her driven political will and charts the immensity of her so-called ‘achievement’.

No one who lived through those times, particularly in the Sheffield area where I live, could watch the film dispassionately.

The effect her Conservative government’s policies had on the industries and economy of South Yorkshire in the 1980s will never be forgotten or forgiven.

Bill Ronksley, Retired Members Section

I firmly believe that in this day and age all drivers with more than 20 years’ service should be protected. This can be justified on the basis that studies have shown the detrimental effects on drivers’ long term health of the shift patterns that we work.

Even if this had to be paid for by a self-financing insurance scheme, it would be a way forward. After all we’ve just entered 2012 - not 1912.

M Somerville, Depot Driver, Corkerhill

Thanks, Paul!

Following the recent LLC election, Paul Stannard was not returned to the LLC at Virgin Trains in Liverpool although we understand he will remain as the union’s health and safety representative.

A number of us drivers at Liverpool (and Paul will know who we are) would like to thank Paul for all the support he has given to members in issues such as discipline, health and safety and rostering.

Paul has always shown a professional approach and considerable expertise as he has served drivers’ interests as a local level union representative.

Thank you Paul.

Chris Todd, Liverpool
AZI Germany’s propaganda machine has been examined and dissected regularly over the decades, but the small exhibition in London’s Wiener Library is particularly chilling as it shows the efforts that were made to plant bigotry and prejudice in young German children. It is evidence of the most crude and raw attempts at brain-washing, hiding evil messages in bright and colourful images.

The process began even before children could read, with innocent colouring books and simple tales disguising malicious intentions. Children were invited to colour-in images of sandcastles and cartoon animals, just like any other young person: except in each was the image of the swastika. The intention was, in these formative years, to implant these symbols as part of their German education: to have them grow used to it: to make it part of their culture.

The Nazi symbol was introduced in story books and images side by side with old German traditions, to make it appear that it had somehow always been part of their history – which of course it never had been.

PLAYING WITH HATE

Then there were games, like the one that took shapes cut from the name ‘Hitler’ and could be rearranged to make up the form of the swastika. The logo was everywhere, and its associations with militarism and a bizarre spiritualism became part of young people’s environment. One of the most disturbing exhibits forms a centre-piece of the one-room exhibition. It is a child’s play-thing with a hateful intention: a game rather like Ludo, except that throws of the dice move figures around the board collecting Jews from their shops and synagogues.

But for all their apparent sophistication, Nazi propaganda was often very crude. One book peddled by the fascists featured a mongrel dog, clearly supposed to represent so-called ‘ethnic degeneration’. Children may have sympathised with this lonely being, driven from its home and its friends, but this was clearly not the author’s intention.

Older children were given school exercises to test ‘Jewishness’ according to the Nazi’s Nuremberg Laws. It is shocking to see children working on templates to calculate whether they (or their classmates) could be classified as German or Jewish. This was no empty exercise: sex was banned between Jews and Germans, and Jews were banned from civic life.

TARNISHED YOUTH

Sport was equally tainted by the Nazi propagandists: facilities were exclusively for children who joined the Hitler Youth, a measure introduced to associate Nazis with entertainment and healthy pursuits. This fascist organisation then reached back into the schools: its members were allowed to wear their uniforms in class, which in turn intimidated those paid to teach them. Young Germans were taught about power – and militarism.

The exhibition is only part of what the Library has to offer. It conducts tours of its three floors on week-days and has late opening on Tuesdays, and will happily lead groups around its collections. It has a magnificent library that is open to everyone to use, with most of its books in English; and houses personal material, mostly donated by the generation that lived through the Nazi years. My generous host opened one box to reveal the concentration camp diaries of one Philipp Manes. He died in Auschwitz, but as we are able to behold the account he wrote today, it somehow ensures he remains a witness to both human dignity - and depravity.

That is what the Wiener Library does, too. So if you are around Euston with half an hour to spare, why not call in and pay them a visit - or think about organising a visit as a branch event. Whatever you want, the helpful staff will be only too pleased to help.

Despite the tragic reasons for its existence, it is a place of deep enlightenment.

The exhibition shows how Nazi propaganda touched every level of German society

The chilling game of rounding up Jews that was given to children. Above: Cards like this made a link between Nazis and play

Childish innocence with an evil touch. Left: The Russell Square offices of the Wiener Library

The Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust & Genocide is the world’s oldest Holocaust memorial institution, tracing its history back to 1933.

The registered charity is located at 29 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DP. It can be contacted by phone at 020 7636 7247 or via its website at www.wienerlibrary.co.uk
Crossword 23

Prize Crossword No. 70 set by Zebedee

Across
7 Chinese people in American state or part of Africa (5)
8 see 26
9 Monastery superior (5)
10 Former lead singer of 'The Smiths' (9)
12 Benjamin _____ author of 'Sybil' and 'Tancred' (8)
14 Exceedingly pleasant to drop a line where the canals are! (6)
15 Act of betrayal (7)
20 A capital songwriter (6)
21 Official home of the British Prime Minister (8)
22 Actor whose middle names are Columcille Gerard (3,6)
24 Any of a number of small seed-eating songbirds (5)
25 Chinese as spoken in Hong Kong (9)
26 Actress whose films include 'Jerry Maguire' (5,9)

Down
1 Dry white table wine of France (7)
2 Small republic in the eastern Pyrenees (7)
3 Gambling city and the right one to back (4)
4 2006 film starring Milla Jovovich (11)
5 Greek wine flavoured with resin (7)
6 2006 musical based on Daphne du Maurier's book (7)
11 Woven pattern may stick in the throat (7-4)
13 One son, Abe's first (5)
16 Country girl seen moving ahead (7)
17 Soldier slang for England (9)
18 A cigarette-lighter? The devil it is! (7)
19 Important part of the respiratory system (7)
23 Russian city is all right - you need papers to enter it? (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 69th ASLEF crossword in the January edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

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. During 2009 ASLEF recovered £1,946,190.45 in damages for all types of cases. 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 7324 2400) or email info@aslef.org.uk

More than just a union
Spending more than you earn? Debt worries? We can help - **for free.**

With a Payplan debt solution we charge you no monthly fees, and you could be totally free from debt in just 5 years. As one of the UK’s leading debt solutions providers, we’re here to offer you free advice, free debt solutions and peace of mind.

Call Payplan **free** on 0800 716239 or visit www.payplan.com (quoting ASLEF)

We can help to take away the stress of debt.