We've all got a lot of thinking to do ...

In this issue
- Europe
- Freight
- Wales
- Fares
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
New rail jobs – writing pointless reports!

Have you noticed that the rail industry is active in job creation? Unfortunately the extra employment is for people already in over-paid jobs to carry out meaningless tasks. The work in question is writing reports about the railway.

After the fracas of the West Coast mainline franchise, not one, but two bodies were created to examine franchising. Their conclusions were predictable beyond belief. Eurostar chairman Richard Brown’s outfit found that no member of the government could possibly be criticised for the West Coast debacle; while Centrica boss Sam Laidlaw’s committee decided that no part of the government’s rail franchising policy could be censured to any degree.

Equally remarkable is the government’s Rail Delivery Group (RDG). It is made up of the very people who are the heads of the franchise firms, charged with examining how they’ve been getting on. They can either conclude that the system that gives them untold wealth is a good one and that no changes are needed – or that they are vultures living off a wasteful franchise system. I wonder which they’ll opt for?

It’s also interesting that neither Laidlaw nor Brown nor the RDG have mentioned director’s salaries or associated remuneration packages. In fact McNulty, the instigator of the RDG, told the Commons select committee he did not consider them a factor - but everyone else apparently has had ‘wages drift’!

The RDG ‘brings together the owners of Britain’s train operating companies, Freight operating companies and Network Rail to provide leadership to Britain’s rail industry’. They are charged with considering reducing costs, improving efficiency and improving services.

I’d be happy to see them skip these tasks and instead answer two straightforward questions. One, what on earth have they been paid for in the rest of their careers?

And two, is it sensible to appoint foxes to head up the chicken coop’s security operation?

Mick Whelan, General Secretary
Rail fares rocket as ...

- UNION CALLS FOR CAP ON PROFITS
- TOP MANAGERS’ WAGES SPIRAL; AND
- RAIL MINISTER TAKES THE LIMO

CAP RAIL PROFITS: ‘NO TO BULLINGDON RAIL!’
Research published last month by the TUC’s ‘Action for Rail’ campaign shows that average train fares have risen nearly three times faster than average wages since the beginning of the recession in 2008. ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan says there is only one way to bring a halt to the spiral of mounting fare rises that ‘threatens to price ordinary working people off the railways’ – and that is to put a cap on the profits of private rail companies.

‘This government backs the rich investor and ignores the average passenger,’ Mick insists. ‘Every year it has been in office, rail fares have risen above inflation while investors’ dividends have been well above inflation. The railways are being run for the benefit of private capitalists to the detriment of working commuters and ordinary passengers.’

He was speaking as a House of Commons Transport Committee report demanded that the government rules out plans to introduce hugely expensive ‘super-peak time’ fares for passengers travelling in the rush hour. Committee Chair Louise Ellman says this ignores the fact that many lower-paid workers ‘have no choice’ but to travel at those times. ‘That is when they have to be at work,’ she points out.

Government ministers believe hugely increased fares in rush hours would drive people off trains at this time and thus prevent over-crowding. ‘It just shows how out of touch these people are,’ says Mick Whelan. ‘They want to shove working people off the trains so their rich chums can have a comfy seat. They want to create Bullingdon Railways.’

The Commons committee warned about the effects of cuts of £3.5 billion by 2018/19 that were proposed in the McNulty Report and have been enthusiastically backed by the government. It says cuts of this magnitude raise serious concerns about ‘safety, staffing and the protection of passengers’. It was similar fears over plans to give private rail companies control of track and signal maintenance.

Louise Ellman’s committee also called for ‘a strong, single economic regulator for the rail industry’ and she says, ‘It is vital we know far more about how public money is spent so that there is confidence it does not leak out of the system in the form of unjustified profits.

The government should publish and consult on a clear statement of what the subsidy is for and where it should be targeted.’

Mick Whelan agrees – but says its tasks must be clearly defined and explained to taxpayers and passengers. And he insists that a cap on private rail profits must be central to its work.

- Between 2008 and 2012 average rail fares increased by 26.6%, with stock worth more than £910,000 in 2013.

David Brown, chief executive of Go-Ahead, took home a £906,000 pay-and-bonus package in 2012, as well as £116,000 of shares.

Serco chief executive Christopher Hyman has a pay-and-bonus deal worth £1.9million, while share windfalls payable this year are worth another £2million.

Arriva UK is owned by Germany’s Deutsche Bahn, whose boss Dr Rudiger Grube was paid £2million including bonuses and benefits in 2011, as well as a pension contribution worth £780,000.

‘Even the Daily Mail is outraged by these figures,’ says Mick Whelan. ‘It must be the first time I’ve agreed with anything I’ve read in that particular paper!’

FARES UP - BUT NOT AS MUCH AS BONUSES!
Fares aren’t the only things to be rocketing in 2013. They are mirrored by huge increases in the take-home pay of senior rail managers. ‘If they have any conscience, we’ll hear nothing about the need for cost cutting in our industry in the coming twelve-months,’ says ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan.

And while overcrowding is the order of the day for passengers, company cars are in vogue for rail bosses. Tim O’Toole of First Group picks up £12,000 for his company car – and that’s on top of a £846,000 basic salary, share awards next year of almost £1 million, a ‘loyalty bonus’ – for staying in the job for two whole years! – of shares worth £451,000, a £134,000 top-up instead of a pension contribution and ‘allowances’ worth £75,000 which include £15,555 worth of private medical insurance. Not to mention £47,000 tab for Mr O’Toole to receive advice on his tax affairs after moving to the UK!

Dean Finch of National Express, which runs the c2c franchise, will get a reward package of £2.65million, picking up 454,000 shares worth £953,000 in March. And that’s on top of a basic salary of £550,000, a cash-and-shares bonus of £687,000 and a cash top-up instead of pension contribution worth £192,000. Mr Finch’s ‘benefits’, worth £250,000, also include a company car.

Stagecoach chief Brian Souter trousered basic pay and bonuses worth £853,000 in 2012 and this year share awards from previous years’ bonus schemes will net him Edinburgh station pollution ‘seven times over limit’
A study for Network Rail last month reported that air pollution at Waverley station in Edinburgh is seven times higher than public safety limits.

Network Rail commissioned consultants to monitor the station for three weeks in October and November and it concluded that exhaust fumes from trains and taxis, coupled with toxic dust kicked up by construction works, could be endangering the health of commuters, tourists and workers.

Network Rail says it is doing what it can to cut the pollution that is affecting the 25 million people who use the station each year.

Waverley is the only UK mainline railway station that still allows vehicles, including taxis, private cars and delivery trucks, to drive right inside it. It is also three-quarters of the way through a four-year, £100 million revamp, which means almost constant cutting, drilling and pounding, confining passengers under scaffolding and awnings.
FARES MINISTER OFF THE RAILS

It emerged last month that Simon Burns, the government minister responsible for rail fares, doesn’t care to take the train from his home in Chelmsford, Essex for the 35-mile journey to his London office. Instead, he uses a chauffeur-driven car.

Mick Whelan called this the last straw of a month-long daily diet of bad news about UK rail that is enough to drive passengers, staff and taxpayers to despair. ‘What sort of message is it from the government when its fares minister doesn’t care to take the train?’

Mr Burns refuses to take the train to his Essex home and instead it costs the taxpayer £80,000 a year for him to be chauffeured to and from work. His lame excuse was that he ‘carries classified papers’ - but the Cabinet Office confirmed that there are no restrictions on ministers taking the ‘red boxes’ that contain their government papers on public transport.

The cost to the taxpayer of Mr Burns’ motor is over £300 a day. A season ticket on the train would cost £10 a day.

The shadow transport secretary, Labour’s Maria Eagle, said, ‘no minister responsible for rail fares, doesn’t care to take the train’.

The spokeswoman at the Department for Transport said, ‘there are good reasons he uses the car and I suspect that won’t change.’ such as, Mick Whelan suggests, his overwhelming unpopularity with voters!

mcLoughlin has put the entire disaster down to a few ‘unacceptable mistakes’ by a handful of civil servants.

If anyone thinks the problems of franchising have gone away because a couple of public servants have been given the shoe, they are desperately wrong,’ Mick says.

‘It’s like putting a sticking plaster on a broken leg.

‘The problem is not a few incompetent civil servants. It is that franchising is expensive, wasteful, complex, unwieldy and universally discredited.’

NEW INDIAN TUNNEL IS SEVEN MILES LONG

A new rail tunnel has opened in India through the Pir Panjal mountain range, connecting the Kashmir Valley to Banihal town. At 11.2 km (6 miles and 1688.5 yards), it is the longest in the country.

More than 1,300 workers and 150 engineers were involved in the seven-year construction project.

The Eurotunnel still dwarfs the new Indian project, with its 50.5 kilometres (31.4 miles) of double track.

West Coast – scapegoats found

Ever since the financial and public relations disaster of the West Coast franchise, the government has been desperate to find someone to blame. The choice was either to accept that there is something fatally flawed about the franchising process – or find a few civil servants to hang out to dry.

Unsurprisingly, the government has chosen the latter route.

It has sacked the head of major projects at the Department for Transport, Peter Strachan, and ‘restructured’ another official, Kate Mingay. Transport Secretary Patrick

McLoughlin has put the entire disaster down to a few ‘unacceptable mistakes’ by a handful of civil servants.

If anyone thinks the problems of franchising have gone away because a couple of public servants have been given the shoe, they are desperately wrong,’ Mick says.

‘It’s like putting a sticking plaster on a broken leg.

‘The problem is not a few incompetent civil servants. It is that franchising is expensive, wasteful, complex, unwieldy and universally discredited.’

SLIGHT FALL IN WORKPLACE INJURIES

Recent statistics published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) show slight falls in a number of key areas of UK workplace ill-health and injury – but they still make chilling reading.

Between April 2011 and March 2012 workplace incidents caused:

- 22,433 major injuries such as amputations, fractures and burns
- 88,731 injuries serious enough to keep people off work for four or more days
- over a million people reporting suffering from an illness caused or made worse by their work
- 173 workers fatally injured

CALL FOR ORGREAVE ENQUIRY

The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign wants ASLEF members to back their call for a public inquiry into police action at Orgreave cokeworks during the 1984/85 miners’ strike. An e-petition calling for a full investigation ‘into the policing and subsequent statements recorded by the police at the time’ is at https://submissions.epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/41844/signature/new

On 18 June 1984 the National Union of Mineworkers organised a mass picket at the British Steel coking plant at Orgreave. Between 5,000 and 6,000 pickets arrived to find the police had deployed between 4,000 and 8,000 officers to the area, including mounted police.

Ninety-five picketers were charged with riot, unlawful assembly and similar offences and charges of assault, unlawful arrest and malicious prosecution led to South Yorkshire Police paying out half a million pounds to 39 miners who were arrested in the confrontation.

Nevertheless, no officers were disciplined for misconduct.

The OTJC wants to use the petition to expose the culture of fabricating evidence which existed at the time - and was still not corrected by the time of the Hillsborough disaster.
London Tube Boxing Day dispute: Part three

OR the third year running ASLEF’s London Underground members overwhelmingly refused to work on Boxing Day because management insist it is ‘just another working day’. After a 90% ‘yes’ vote for strike action, LU could only run a minimal and intermittent service on a few branch lines.

Having promised to address this issue ‘as a matter of urgency’ a year ago, LU failed to table a meeting before late September. Its woefully inadequate proposals were provided only a week before the strike was due to take place, so there would have been no time to consult members anyway.

Management seemed determined to prevent any resolution. They posted details of discussions on social networking sites, failed to attend arbitration meetings at ACAS and went over the union’s head to appeal to individual members to sell leave at flat rate for the privilege of working on Boxing Day.

Then, while negotiations were still allegedly taking place, LUL Managing Director Mike Brown sent a letter to each of our members listing the meetings before late September. Its woefully inadequate proposals were provided only a week before the strike was due to take place, so there would have been no time to consult members anyway.

Management seemed determined to prevent any resolution. They posted details of discussions on social networking sites, failed to attend arbitration meetings at ACAS and went over the union’s head to appeal to individual members to sell leave at flat rate for the privilege of working on Boxing Day.

Then, while negotiations were still allegedly taking place, LUL Managing Director Mike Brown sent a letter to each of our members attempting to bully them into working. It made untrue allegations about the ASLEF negotiating team, threatened to tear up all our pay and conditions, and even threatened that we would lose our jobs if we carried out our democratic right to withdraw our labour.

ASLEF members ignored the provocation.

We want Boxing Day recognised as a special day that attracts an additional payment to incentivise those who want to work whilst allowing others to take quality time off. We will be on strike on 26 December next year if they fail to sit down and resolve this dispute.

150 years of the Tube

Last month saw the 150th anniversary of the first journey of the world’s first underground train, the Metropolitan line steam loco that ran along the seven-station stretch from Paddington to Farringdon, where ASLEF’s head office is now situated.

A contemporary image of the world’s first underground train, the Metropolitan line steam loco that ran along the seven-station stretch from Paddington to Farringdon, where ASLEF’s head office is now situated.

A commemorative service held to mark the anniversary was pulled by an engine known as Met Locomotive No 1. Built in 1898, it was sold for scrap after featuring in the Tube centenary celebrations in 1963. It was restored by members of the Quainton Railway Society.

The price of Tube managers’ failure to come to the table with anything of a positive nature.

Pickets were out at Stratford Depot on 26 December.

Martin Allard, Jim Roy, Steve Crowley and Jason Wyatt at Elephant and Castle depot on the picket line on Boxing Day morning.

Engineering draftsman Henry Charles (‘Harry’) Beck, designed the current London Tube map in 1931.

2003: Oyster cards are introduced and busking in Tube stations is made legal.

2005: The terrorist attacks on 7 July leads to the deaths of 39 people near Liverpool Street, Edgware Road and King’s Cross stations.
Whatever life throws at you
ASLEF will help to protect you.

We offer a range of services to ASLEF members
including legal advice and representation on:*  
• Personal injury at work
• 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

We offer a range of services to ASLEF members and their families,
including 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.

www.thompsons.law.co.uk
Leaving Europe would weaken the UK ...  


There is a real risk that David Cameron is leading us towards a British exit from the European Union (EU), as he seeks to appease the Eurosceptics both inside and outside his party. His ‘pick-and-mix’ approach to the single market is just not an option. And the continuing uncertainty over a future referendum about Britain’s membership of the EU is bad for business and workers. Britain is stronger in Europe.

A part of the EU of 27 countries, Britain is part of the world’s biggest trading block – a single market of 500 million people. Access to this market is worth around £3,500 a year per UK household and leaving the EU would cost many British jobs. Nearly 3.5 million jobs currently rely on EU membership, accounting for 10% of the workforce.

Standing alone would also weaken Britain’s voice and limit its influence. Norway is not an EU member and has no seat at the table when the laws for the single market are made. But it still has to comply with those laws in order to trade and has to pay almost 80% of the UK contribution to the EU (per head of population). Senior US State Department official Phillip Gordon recently made clear that America wants to see a “strong British voice within the EU”.

Many employment rights, including the right to guaranteed paid annual leave and strong maternity and paternity rights emanate from Europe, as do many safety rules. Make no mistake that when David Cameron talks about ‘repatriating powers’; he means taking rights away from working people. Just look at how the coalition government is already attacking workers’ rights and health and safety.

And pollution doesn’t stop at our borders. Britain’s ability to protect our environment and tackle climate change depends on our ability to cooperate with allies in Europe to set common standards and targets to reduce carbon emissions.

**NOT A ONE-WAY TICKET**

Eurosceptics are fond of telling us how much Europe costs us. But the UK doesn’t just throw money at Europe never to be seen again, we also get a lot back. The EU allocated around €10.6 billion in structural funds for economic and social development between 2007 and 2013.

And the UK is set to benefit to the tune of over €16 million in transport grants after a number of schemes successfully applied for funding from the Trans European Transport Network Fund. These include €5 million for the electrification of the Liverpool to Manchester rail link; €4 million for the building of two loop lines east of Ely to facilitate easier rail freight movement, and £6 million for linking the Port of Southampton to the West Coast Mainline. In addition, £2,875,000 has been allocated to Northern Ireland to help replace track on the Belfast to Derry line and to improve connections to the port of Belfast.

Of course we recognise the need for reform. For example, agriculture makes up only 1.5% of production, yet 40% of the EU budget is spent on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

And with the right in ascendency across Europe, with a right-wing Parliament and right-wing governments appointing right-wing commissioners, it is no surprise that we see the same dogmatic policies in response to the economic crisis as we see here in the UK. Austerity is the only game in town. Public services and investment cut, workers’ rights reined back under the guise of cutting red tape, and people thrown out of work in the name of reducing the deficit. Across Europe, 26 million people are without jobs, including almost six million young people. In the UK almost a million young people are unemployed.

**WORK FOR A BETTER UNION**

No wonder Euroscepticism is riding high. But the Europe we have is not the Europe we want and we can change it. There are just 189 MEPs in the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) Group, which includes Labour MEPs, out of a total of 754. And just 13 out of 73 UK representatives in the Parliament are Labour; partly as a result of protest votes at the 2009 European elections which saw 13 UKIP and two BNP MEPs elected.

If we want Labour MEPs who will invest in jobs and growth and a green economy, who will work alongside trade unions to defend workers’ rights and who will fight back against austerity, we need to work together to get them elected in the 2014 Euro elections.
Retired, maybe – but active, definitely!

ASLEF’s Retired Members Section held its Annual General Meeting at the National Railway Museum in York last November – and the stereotype of ‘slippers in front of the fire’ was definitely laid to rest! BILL DALE from Chingford reports...

UR general secretary Mick Whelan opened the event, speaking about key issues facing the industry, and the struggles ahead. His central theme was the folly of private franchises, with companies paying billions to shareholders while they snatch up government subsidies. ‘Meanwhile, the East Coast mainline is publicly-run as the franchise was handed back. And in 2010 to 2012 it made profits of £310million. Why can’t this model be repeated on the rest of the railway network?’ he demanded.

He was concerned that cuts in finance to Network Rail track will result in delays - or worse - and condemned the recommendation in the McNulty Report that the industry should shed some 20,000 jobs. ‘We must build alliances to persuade government that returning rail to the public sector is rational and logical,’ he said. ‘We must not be afraid to use the ‘N-word’.

Mick stressed the important role played by the Retired Members Section (RMs) and pledged his personal support for its activities. After a question-and-answer session, the meeting gave Mick a unanimous vote of thanks in appreciation of his giving up his time to attend.

PENSION PARTICULARS

Dave Tyson, our Trustee on the Railways Pensions Committee, gave an in-depth report about how the three-yearly actuary works, and the mechanics of investment especially at a time of volatile markets. He detailed the state of our pension funds and discussed threats to the final salary scheme.

While the drop in returns from financial markets was concerning, he assured us there was no cause for alarm especially as the Pension Protection Scheme protects benefits. He was confident that the Scheme’s current investments are producing reasonable returns, and suggested possible investment in ‘Battery Technology’.

Dave and his colleagues are carefully monitoring government and company hostility to final pension salaries in favour of career pensions. ‘Any attack on final salary pensions would be met with strong opposition from this union,’ he declared – and, with 94.8% of all train drivers in membership, ASLEF is well positioned to resist any such move.

With a final word of caution on McNulty’s proposals for pensions and after responding to questions, Dave was given an enthusiastic vote of thanks.

MINER POLITICIAN

Ian Lavery is a former President of the National Union of Mineworkers, and now MP for Wansbeck. He spoke of the ‘unbreakable bond’ that was forged with ASLEF’s unyielding support for the miners’ strikes against pit closures.

Ian condemned the government’s attacks on health and safety provisions and vicious cuts in public services – at a time it was quite prepared to spend £100 million on the pointless election of Police and Crime Commissioners.

The NHS is constantly attacked, and now there were plans for a ‘bedroom tax’ which could mean to keep benefits, people could have to leave their homes. ‘This government works on the basis of one taxation method for the rich and another for the poor.’

Ian argued that the country today resembled that in 1903 when the Labour Party was formed – and he was welcomed as an MP with a union background with a vision of values that the Labour Party should stand for. The clear consensus was that we need more MPs like Ian to prevent disillusion with Labour.

There wasn’t a spare seat at this year’s annual meeting

A top-class threesome: Chair Ray, Secretary Tony and Spirit Proof!

General Secretary Mick Whelan wanted to know why the East Coast model cannot be repeated

AN APOLOGY FROM DOT!

Dot Gibson, General Secretary of the National Pensioners Convention, said that while she was pleased that people were living longer, we had to realise that this was upsetting the Treasury’s balance sheets! The cuts they wanted to introduce would affect the most vulnerable in our society.

She explained a new NPC initiative called ‘Generations Unite’ which includes people of all ages because ‘we all share the same concerns over benefits and cuts’. Dot argued that while the government spend on older people was £136 billion a year, it collects more than £175 billion annually from these same people.

Condemning the ‘crime of fuel poverty’, she said 25,000 pensioners die each year from cold-related illnesses and estimated that three million live below the poverty line. The UK state pension is the lowest in Europe bar Estonia and is currently £35 a week below that needed to meet a minimum living standard, even with a £35 pension credit

HOUSEKEEPING

Alan Taylor, the Section Treasurer, urged people to join the 500 Club but reported that generally the finances could support current activities. Chairman Ray Jackson thanked his committee for its sterling work before Secretary Tony West summed up a fruitful and interesting event. The officers were re-elected and three motions were adopted to go to this year’s AAD.

Thanks to Peter (P.J.) Smith for the photographs
Snappy shooting at Lincoln

IN this age of modern digital cameras it is so easy just to choose the ‘automatic’ setting, but with some imagination and a little creativity your pictures can become forms of artwork. So says MARK REYNOLDS, the union learning rep at Lincoln who recently organised an ASLEF Education photography course ...

We also learned the benefits of using either shutter or aperture priority depending on a scene, and the creativity of fully manual operation. With this you are in total control of the picture from colour, contrast, shadows, speed - the list of opportunities is endless to create the perfect picture. The course was delivered on-site at Lincoln station by the Lincoln School of Photography, who can also provide an on-line ‘mentor based’ course, which is ideal for anyone working in the railway industry. As the course is on-line it can be done from anywhere in the UK. For more information on the on-line courses please contact Mark Reynolds on 07799775549, or e-mail mark.reynolds2003@virgin.net

EVEN members of staff at Lincoln attended a very informative beginner’s course to digital photography. The 3-hour course covered how a camera actually works, camera handling, and the use of filters, such as ultraviolet and polarising, to help create better effects.

Back in July 2011, twenty-six learners from four of the UK’s leading train operating companies - East Coast, Eurostar, East Midlands, and First Capital Connect - enrolled on the ‘IT Users’ qualification at Kings Cross. They came from a section of grades, from drivers and Train Managers to RPOs, travel centre and admin staff – but they had one thing in common. Each wanted to improve their computer and Information Technology skills either to be more proficient at work, to make more use of their home computer at home, or to gain a new qualification for their CV.

The course they chose – IT Users – is versatile enough to cater for a whole range of grades, requirements and ambitions.

The Kings Cross course was organised and run by local union learning reps (ULRs) Jim Peters, Mick O’Shea (both of East Coast) and Chris Street who drives for Eurostar. As the ‘IT User’ qualification is at level 2, learners must already have a basic knowledge of using Word, surfing the internet, and have used a computer at home. Otherwise, there are no pre-course requirements.

The three mandatory units of the course concern
- understanding
- using; and
- improving productivity with IT.

Units are available to offer help with emailing, word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, imaging, internet, desk top publishing and databases for the learner to choose from, to make up the qualification.

The more technically minded can choose units on setting up an IT system or optimising IT System Performance – and the course is free for those who meet the funding criteria, who make up over 80% of applicants. As it is funded under the ‘apprenticeship framework’ all learners must also complete a short basic English and Maths course as part of the qualification.

One of the Kings Cross learners, who is now an IT User course advocate, is East Coast Driver, Jason Cooper-Sutton. He finds he can now help friends and family with their IT systems and software - and the course enabled him to become the newsletter editor of the Thurrock and Basildon branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

‘It’s also meant I can get involved with local schools, helping to produce newsletters and posters for events,’ he says. ‘I’ve even been asked to come up with ideas for a new school logo for a local school.

‘The IT User course gives you skills and confidence so you can get more out of your computer.

‘It also helps that the course is delivered to a personal learning plan, so you can work at your own speed. You meet your tutor every two or three weeks when it suits you – so shift workers can fit the course around their work.’

Tutor meetings go through work you’ve done and set your next assignments and you can contact tutors between meetings by phone or email.

As a level 2 course, it does need some time commitment, but this is all discussed before you enrol.

The course is still available at Kings Cross/St Pancras, and it’s open to all ASLEF members. It is also available at Manchester Victoria, Manchester Piccadilly, and Derby and can be delivered anywhere, subject to numbers.

To enrol or for further information, please contact the ASLEF Education Team, your local ULR, or check the ASLEF Education website at www.aslef.org.uk.

ASLEF Education project worker CHRIS NUTTY reflects on the IT course that is running at Kings Cross and St Pancras. It’s well worth thinking about joining, he says ...

An Information Technology course for all grades!

East Coast Driver Jason Cooper-Sutton says the course has allowed him to get a lot more out of owning a computer.
Mega trucks – Road lobby keeps chipping away

While we have convinced the UK government that mega trucks are not the right approach for UK freight distribution, the European campaign does not look promising. Philippa Edmunds, the manager of Freight on Rail, reports ...

While the UK government has categorically rejected the idea, the road freight industry continues to promote mega trucks. They claim huge economic and environmental benefits if these US-style ‘road trains’ are allowed on British roads. The latest attempt comes from Kimberly Clark, who commissioned a study from Huddersfield University which is timed to coincide with an EU review of the HGV weights and dimensions legislation which will come before the European Parliament early this year.

The bureaucrats of the European Commission either don’t recognise the serious implications of mega trucks or - more likely - don’t want to get involved in this controversial topic. So it is prepared for mega trucks to be introduced gradually across member states, claiming that the decision is up to individual member states.

Last March the Commission reinterpreted the existing legislation to say that cross traffic between consenting member states is legal. This has made it increasingly difficult to halt the gradual spread of mega trucks. Countries like the Netherlands now allow 25 metre 60 tonne trucks for national transport. Over time more and more countries will feel obliged to allow them, because the road haulage industry across Europe will claim without them it is disadvantaged.

The Commission is likely to propose a revision of the legislation governing HGV dimensions later this month. This will be followed by decisions within the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. It is important to contact MEPs now to ensure they are alert to this threat, and to lobby MPs to insist that the UK government maintains its current policy. Freight on Rail will be monitoring the situation closely, so please visit our website for developments.

BIASED RESEARCH BACKS ROAD MONSTERS

It is desperately frustrating for our campaign to know that we have the arguments – but the opposition continues to make advances. We reject all the arguments presented in the road-lobby-backed Huddersfield Report. For example:

- It repeats the stale argument that there would be fewer but bigger trucks on the roads and this would lead to an overall reduction in vehicle kilometres. But government figures show that almost half current-sized lorries are driving around partially full and over a quarter entirely empty. So why would even bigger lorries be better utilised?
- Mega trucks 50% longer than the existing industry standard HGV are likely to lead to more collisions because of the increased length/blind spot and overtaking and stability problems. European Commission research confirms that mega trucks are individually more dangerous than standard HGVs.
- The Dutch mega trucks trial analysis states that mega trucks should only be allowed on roads with separate infrastructure for bikes - which don’t exist in most of Europe.
- The Huddersfield University report claims mega trucks would lead to a 4% reduction in congestion. In fact, it will increase once allowances are made for mega trucks’ need for extra road space and slower negotiation of junctions.
- The report does not address the fact that there is a see-saw effect with volume-constrained loads wanting length increases, as described in the Huddersfield report, which are then imperfect for weight constrained product suppliers who then lobby for weight increases which leads to leapfrogging of HGV weights and dimensions. We all know the weight limit will not stay at 44 tonnes.
- The promoters claim that these vehicles will be restricted to motorways, dual carriageways and major roads. This is false, because they will need local road access to distribution hubs. The reality is the UK does not have enforceable mechanisms to restrict access for existing HGVs or mega trucks and the industry strenuously restricts any restrictions, in practice.

TRAIN OF THOUGHT

Mega trucks would result in the transfer of thousands of trainloads of freight back onto the road network. Rail freight is safer and cleaner; it has grown 61% over the past eight years and now represents around a third of the traffic; without mega trucks it is forecast to grow fourfold by 2030.

Yet the Huddersfield research estimates that rail freight volumes would decrease by 20% but this neither acknowledges the real impacts on consumer rail freight traffic nor evaluates the overall impact on rail freight operations if one major market sector is adversely affected (for example in shared resources, equipment, facilities etc).

Please contact your MEP and MP over the issue. It is well worth the fight – and the stark truth is that if we do nothing, despite the power of our arguments, we will lose.
At last year’s Welsh Labour Party conference, ASLEF put the case for a ‘not-for-dividend’ franchise. This has now become part of the programme for government of the Party in Wales.

ASLEF pointed out that the Welsh rail franchise is the most heavily subsidised passenger rail operation in the UK per passenger mile. It will receive £170 million of public money over the term of its 15-year contract between 2003 and 2018.

The union believes a not-for-dividend structure can deliver genuine improvements to services by retaining profits and surpluses and investing them in Wales and Welsh railways. We called on Labour to work closely with unions and other key stakeholders on the strategic development of this policy and to learn lessons from other not-for-dividend organisations such as Welsh Water.

As a result of these initiatives, the Co-operative Party, backed by ASLEF, commissioned Professor Paul Salveson to write a report he has called ‘Rail Cymru – a people’s railway for Wales’. In this article, he outlines his main conclusions.

Paul is a freelance writer and lecturer, a visiting professor at University of Huddersfield and General Secretary of the Hannah Mitchell Foundation. He is also vice-chair of the Colne Valley Constituency Labour Party and a Labour councillor for Golcar ward in Kirklees.

Wales is different. It is a nation with a strong identity, its own Labour-controlled Government and its own language. It also has its own railway, with the ‘Wales and Borders’ franchise which extends into parts of the West Midlands and North of England. Although the Welsh Government does not have the sort of powers enjoyed by the Scots, it has a growing input to the franchising process. Politicians, as well as community activists and trades unionists, want to see greater devolution from London. Last year ASLEF put forward a successful motion to the Welsh Labour Party conference calling for a ‘not for profit’ train operating company; this demand now forms part of Welsh Labour’s manifesto.

The timing is perfect. The turmoil within the railway industry following the suspension of the West Coast franchise in October 2012 has caused many professional railway people to question the assumptions that have underpinned privatisation and in particular the model that has been imposed on Britain’s railways. Neither short franchises, nor longer contracts, provide a sensible way to develop the UK rail network; both have inherent contradictions that have been exposed over the last couple of years, on both East and West Coast franchises. Yet the big problem for opponents of privatisation and in particular the model that has been imposed on Britain’s railways is that the main objective is to make money for its parent company whilst keeping performance under the same overall control, but with separate accounting for infrastructure to keep performance well but other ‘regional’ operators but the reality is that the main objective is to make money for its parent company whilst keeping performance well within the standards laid down by the franchise agreement, which is currently held by the Department for Transport in London.

If devolution is to mean anything, full responsibility for domestic rail services (i.e. other than InterCity) should lie with the Welsh Government. The model for ‘Rail Cymru’ owes much to the approach adopted by the devolved Welsh Government in Spain which owns and operates its own regional rail network called ‘Euskotren’ (ET). The company also runs a network of feeder bus services. The company operates on an arms-length basis with day to day responsibilities lying with the company itself. The Basque Government has funded a number of major improvements projects including track doubling, new, locally built, rolling stock and improved station facilities. In addition, the ET network is vertically integrated, with infrastructure as well as operations coming under the same overall control, but with separate accounting for infrastructure to keep within EU law.

The author, Paul Salveson, tries his hand on the form of archetypal British Alpine huts.

**SAME OBJECTIVES, NEW IDEAS**

This presents some exciting opportunities for trades unionists if we are willing to think beyond the old mind-set of central state control and ownership. My report ‘Rail Cymru – a people’s railway for Wales’, launched in December, was commissioned by the Co-operative Party and sponsored by ASLEF. It explores ways in which a not-for-profit ‘mutually-owned’ railway could work and offers up a number of ideas for further debate. I hope ASLEF members will play a leading part in the discussion.

What is the report saying? Firstly, that franchising is not an appropriate way to run a railway and the end of the current ‘Wales and Borders’ franchise in 2018 offers the right sort of timescale for the Labour-controlled Welsh Government to prepare for something much more suitable to the needs of the people of Wales and neighbouring parts of England. Ironically, the current franchise is run by a state-owned operator – German-owned Arriva Trains Wales! In many ways its performance compares well with other ‘regional’ operators but the reality is that the main objective is to make money for its parent company whilst keeping performance well within the standards laid down by the franchise agreement, which is currently held by the Department for Transport in London.

If devolution is to mean anything, full responsibility for domestic rail services (i.e. other than InterCity) should lie with the Welsh Government. The model for ‘Rail Cymru’ owes much to the approach adopted by the devolved Welsh Government in Spain which owns and operates its own regional rail network called ‘Euskotren’ (ET). The company also runs a network of feeder bus services. The company operates on an arms-length basis with day to day responsibilities lying with the company itself. The Basque Government has funded a number of major improvements projects including track doubling, new, locally built, rolling stock and improved station facilities. In addition, the ET network is vertically integrated, with infrastructure as well as operations coming under the same overall control, but with separate accounting for infrastructure to keep within EU law.

**INVOLVING USERS AND STAFF**

In Wales, a not-for-profit train company could be established by the Welsh Government which ensures public accountability but also allows scope for employee and passenger involvement.
say in service delivery in its area but also look at opportunities for widening Rail Cymru’s profile in the local community. It would ensure that Rail Cymru delivers on its obligations and also help ensure that as much procurement of goods and services is as local as possible.

The ‘national’ stakeholder forum would cover the entire Wales and Borders network and include representation for employees. There might also be representation from the Welsh Government itself as main paymaster, Network Rail, local authorities (including neighbouring English shires), passengers (via Passenger Focus), community rail partnerships, the business community and individual experts nominated by the Welsh Government.

The national stakeholder forum would be empowered to discuss issues of strategic importance to the company and from its number it would appoint members (‘non-executive directors’) to the Rail Cymru board. This would have day-to-day responsibility for the running of the business and be chaired by the managing director. Its members would include executive directors and non-executive directors nominated by the national stakeholder board.

This structure would seem to offer the best balance between the interests of the Welsh Government which would be the primary funder, and ultimate licensee, of the train company, the interests of employees and those of passengers and the wider community. It would not be a full co-operative but enshrine many if not all of the ethical values which distinguish co-operatives from most ‘for profit’ companies owned by shareholders.

The proposals for what is essentially a ‘social enterprise’ train company in which any surplus (profits) are re-invested into the railway are not very difficult to implement. It requires political will, which is there on the part of the Labour-controlled National Assembly for Wales. However, it also requires a sympathetic response from the Government at Westminster, on a number of levels. Firstly, to give the Welsh Government the same control over the Wales and Borders franchise as those currently exercised by the Scottish Government over ScotRail. In addition however it should be able to decide not to go through a franchising process to set up ‘Rail Cymru’ as the operator of passenger services in Wales and the Borders. This cuts across the Tories’ 1993 Railways Act and may require either derogation or amendment to the Act. It most certainly needs a sympathetic approach by the UK secretary of state for transport and that is only likely to happen if we have a Labour Government in power at Westminster as well as in Cardiff.

Getting the structure right is crucial but the success of a ‘mutual’ Rail Cymru will be judged on how it delivers. The report suggests that Rail Cymru should aim to expand its services, improve quality and ensure much better integration with bus services across Wales – including operating its own feeder services to towns which lost their rail services in the 1960s.
Teaching kids, flogging cars, managing sales, driving trains

The varied career of FGW
Swansea driver DAVID JONES ...

AVID JONES greets you with a hearty handshake and an open smile that makes the bright sunny Swansea day feel even warmer. Within minutes you think you've known him for years. His pleasure in life is contagious.

He lives in Swansea but he's originally from Porthcawl, a small seaside town down the coast where he developed a life-long affinity with the sea, a passion for music and drama and a realisation of the things that make life enjoyable.

'I'm proud of my Welsh heritage,' he says. 'My father was a Welsh-speaker and I can get by in the language. It was taught and encouraged in school. I was lucky with my schooling. I had enthusiastic teachers and enthusiasm is a great motivator.'

His mother is a singer and encouraged his interest in music - something for which he is very grateful. 'I first played the French horn, largely because my mother was a friend of the man who taught brass instruments in school. Once I had the basics, I taught myself to play the piano.

'I mainly play for my own enjoyment, but I get called up to play the organ in church if they're stuck, often for something like a Wednesday morning funeral. Looking back, music helped me to develop confidence and social skills. While I was at school I went away on orchestra courses and a tour of Germany. It gave me a sense of independence and helped me become more articulate.'

And how did he get interested in drama? David smiles. 'Oh, that was because I was a show-off!'

If he was, he wasn't alone. Other people participating in his 'tremendous' school productions included Ruth Jones and Rob Brydon (who was Rob Jones at the time).

The sea is another constant in his life. He still lives a short stroll from it, and he was a sea-cadet as a youngster. 'I've given up sailing now - although when my partner and I were in the Caribbean last year I took a boat out. It's a bit calmer in Aruba than Swansea Bay!'

David had no idea what he wanted to do when he left school after taking his A levels in 1985 and says he 'drifted' into a Bachelor of Education teaching degree from Cardiff University.

'I learned a lot from my teaching practice and working a probationary year - mainly that I couldn't possibly teach for the next 40 years! I just didn't have enough patience with the children and with the introduction of the national curriculum, teachers were expected to be business-orientated budget managers and sales people as well as doing their job. I've got a huge amount of respect for teachers.'

So aged 24, David found himself back at home, where his mother said, 'I don't care what you do - so long as you've got a job!'

'It was to get her off my back that I went into sales!' he chuckles.

He spent the next four years selling insurance in a succession of offices, commuting to Cardiff and working long hours. Then an old friend said he was making a fortune selling used cars. 'It doesn't sound much of a job, but I enjoyed it,' he smiles. 'Touch wood, I can honestly say I've not done much in my life I've not got pleasure from.'

He'd also met his first partner by this time, a man who was training to be a chef. Ever energetic, David took up cookery himself and ended up with a distinction in a City and Guilds qualification. 'The good news is that I love cooking. The family come over to me at Christmas now! The bad news is that I also love eating! One thing's sure - I'll never be thin.'

It was David's experience in sales that took him to the railway. 'I'd sold enough used cars, so I applied for a job as a 'Sales Office Manager'. It was a splendid – and totally misleading! – title! I was a booking office supervisor.

'But I was a railway worker. I'd been bitten by the bug. The railway sucks you in. I know it's an old cliché, but I'd joined the family.'

David was soon a regional manager, overseeing a patch from London to the Cotswolds. This ended, rather to David's relief, with an inevitable 'reorganisation' that left him without a job. By now he was hooked on the railways and to the surprise of many of his former colleagues and the shock of some, he took up a train manager job based in Cardiff where he did rather well, winning a Gold Award and a National Rail award for his 'outstanding personal contribution'.

About this time - eight years ago - David first thought of becoming a driver. 'I'd never had any particular desire to drive trains, but it seemed to be what you did if you were a guard. So I thought I'd apply, see what happened and take it from there.'

He was accepted, and a new career opened for him. 'The best I've had,' he says simply. 'I do a responsible job that I like. I'm kept on my toes all the time I'm driving and I do something different every day. I don't mind shift working, and I even enjoy some of the night work. I get paid well enough, and by working long hours, I get time off. What's not
PRICES UP AGAIN
Travellers in Wales have seen train prices increase for the tenth year in succession – this year by an average 4.2%, which is 1% higher than the Retail Price Index (RPI).

A 12 month season ticket from Bangor to Llandudno rose by £56 from £1,084 to £1,140, or 5.16%; while Llandudno Junction to Liverpool rose by £168 to £3364 some 5.25%; and Wrexham General to Cardiff increased by £348 to £7,060 or 5.18%.

THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE LOOKS FOR CASH
One of Wales' oldest steam railways has appealed for help from volunteers because of a drop in funds caused by falling passenger numbers. Talyllyn Railway in Gwynedd, which inspired the 'Thomas the Tank Engine' author, the Reverend W Awdry, was the world's first to be saved from closure by enthusiasts.

The railway has operated since the 1860s out of Tywyn and was saved from closure by volunteers in 1951.

500 CLUB DRAW
The winner of January 500 Club draw was TMiles who scooped £294 with number 105, reports Alan Taylor of the Retired Members committee.

CARDIFF CROSSRAIL
Last month the report by Cardiff South and Penarth AM Vaughan Gething and transport consultant Mark Barry (first aired in the August 2012 ASLEF Journal) was formally launched, suggested the development of a £200m 'Cardiff Crossrail' featuring new or enhanced stations at places like Ely Bridge, St Mellons, Wedal Road (for Heath Hospital) and Rover Way could be a solution to the capital's traffic gridlock woes.

With 45,500 new homes planned by 2026 in the Local Development Plan, the report argues that Cardiff needs to develop a transport network that can support a city with more than 400,000 people.

Network Rail said it is an idea that could merit examination in the future.

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

I DON'T INTRODUCE MYSELF AS GAY, BUT EQUALLY I WOULDN'T THINK OF HIDING OR DENYING IT

am confident about who I am and it rubs off. 'People make assumptions from what they know about you. Hopefully they see me as a professional team player, and that's the end of it.'

When he first worked at Swansea there were four 'David Jones' and he knows he was identified as 'the gay one'. 'But that's all right,' he says. 'It never worried me.'

Indeed, worry isn't big in David's life. He likes his job, he's got a happy home life, he enjoys his free travel and while he and Glenn don't have an extravagant lifestyle, it does include some very exotic holidays. The Cape Verde Islands to Mexico via the Caribbean isn't bad!

'I've had a varied working life, and there's been something enjoyable in all of them,' he tells me as we part. 'But now I find myself somewhere special. I've taken a few branch lines to get here, but in the end I've found the job for me.'

David's only question about driving trains is 'What is there not to like?'
16

Obituaries

NORMAN (‘LOU’) LAWSON A FIRST-CLASS CHARACTER

It was a sad December for Manchester train crew with the loss, on the first day of the month, of ‘Lou’ Lawson. He enrolled at the ‘Trafford Park School of Fine Engineering’ on 2 May 1956 and was to become the depot’s Poet Laureate and Honorary thespian.

Working a ballast turn with Norman was like entering the kingdom of Narnia, so rich were his stories. A strong man, he didn’t suffer fools gladly. Anyone attempting to refer to Stanier’s Green 4-6-0s as ‘Jubilees’ was quickly corrected. ‘They are SXSs, son!’

A confrontation with an inspector on a preserved railway produced, ‘I was hustling a pair of 28s through here whilst he was having Noddy read to him!’

His career took him to Longsight, via Newton Heath and Guide Bridge.

CHRIS O’BRIEN GREATLY RESPECTED

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of retired driver Chris O’Brien. Chris was 68.

Born in Birmingham in 1944, Chris grew up in Ireland and Smethwick. At the age of 16, he enrolled at a technical college but left before completing his course in order to join the railway where, initially, he had a clerical role. Chris then began his footplate career by becoming a Fireman.

Dissatisfied with the conversion to diesel in the mid-60s, Chris had stints in both the Royal and Merchant Navies. He left the sea and married in 1973.

Chris spent much of his working life as a driver at Waterloo, but also worked at Stonebridge and Bletchley. He was caring, generous, quick-witted and had a great sense of humour. He was always willing to share his railway experience to help others.

Away from work, he volunteered with Boys’ and Girls’ Brigade Summer camps and was a proud supporter of West Bromwich Albion. Always the gentleman, Chris will be sadly missed. Our thoughts are with his wife Sue, son Robert, daughter Samantha, his son and daughter-in-law Nigel and Helen and his much loved grandson, Callum.

Steve Richardson, Secretary, Waterloo Nine Elms branch

‘Out of the shops in ’39, He came bright and new. Got Christened ‘Norman’, But to us he was ‘Loopy Lou’!

Mel Thorley, retired driver, Longsight

TONY AMOS ONE OF THE LADS

It’s sad to report the passing of Tony Amos, who was born on 26 October 1936 and started his railway career on the steam at Plaistow. He moved on to Ripple Lane and finally to East Ham C2C depot where he retired.

Tony had a 357 unit named after him and it always brings a smile to my face when passing it on the section. He was a family-orientated man who enjoyed loud music and his own creature comforts – beer, backy, fishing and the monthly retired members get-together at the LT Club in Hornchurch. He was an avid West Ham supporter.

In his early days on the railway he had a bit of First Aid training which enabled him to save the life of his 10-year-old daughter when she stopped breathing after an asthma attack. In her own words she ‘owes her life to Tony and the railway’.

Tony died on 19 September and his well-attended funeral service took place at Corbett Tey in Upminster on the first day of October. Our condolences go to his wife June and all his family, friends and work colleagues.

Cliff Blackwell, Reporter, Tilbury

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

100 years ago the ASLEF Loco Journal warned about possible nationalisation of the railways and considered rich railway owners and climate change ...

NATIONALISATION WARNING

“It is quite certain that if the railways of this country are nationalised, we shall have to be very careful indeed that the employees aren’t ‘diddled’. At present, in some ways at any rate, the State is far from being a model employer. The Post Office, which is frequently pointed out as a fine example of what the State can do for people, is, so far as is the general body of its workers is concerned, a wretchedly-paid concern.” (Nota Bene)

RICH RAIL OWNERS

“It is reported that (American rail magnate) Mr. E. H. Harriman’s estate will be finally valued at £26,400,000. Mr. Harriman, who began life as an office boy, is believed to have made all his fortune in ten years. He broke down under the strain and did not live to enjoy his millions. I don’t envy him. No man, I contend, can amass such an amount honestly, not if he tries for 110 years.” (Nota Bene)

CLIMATE CHANGE?

“We have had a phenomenal snowstorm, of which the above-mentioned accident is a result. In many parts of Scotland, roads, railways and rivers have all been stopped, and the anxieties of our footplatemen have been greatly increased.

“Round the Glasgow district there has been a very heavy fall of snow; and in many parts of the country roads and railways have been blocked. It makes one come to the conclusion the seasons are changing, for I have noticed a difference during my time.” (Organising Secretary J Drummond)

Extracts selected and edited by Mick Holder
50-year rail journey celebrated at District 3

I was fortunate at the December meeting of District 3 to be able to listen with pride as former colleague Mark Dowd OBE outlined his ASLEF journey. Mark began work as an engine cleaner at Bank Hall Motive Power Depot aged 17 before working at Willesden, Garston, Birkenhead and Liverpool Exchange before he retired from Kirkdale in 1998.

Whilst working for Merseytravel Mark was able to use his railway knowledge to determine the best way forward for local transport – including his opposition for plans to privatise track and signal maintenance (‘vertical integration’). He stressed his belief that the McNulty track and signal plans to privatise transport – including ‘vertical integration’. He stressed his belief that the McNulty transport – including ‘vertical integration’.

He was a member of the Passenger Transport Authority from 1986 until last year, and for many years chaired the Association of Metropolitan Authorities Transport Committee. In 2001 he was presented with the OBE for services to public transport. On the international stage, Mark served as President of the Confederation of European Municipalities and Regions for five years. My colleagues at Kirkdale Depot, District 3 and throughout ASLEF count ourselves fortunate to have worked, campaigned and socialised – with Mark over the years. He has led a very active life, sharing his knowledge in the support of others, something recognised at last year’s AAD when he was presented with his 50-year medallion. We wish him all the best.

Liz Moran, Secretary, Kirkdale branch

Upcoming events

- **WEEKEND SCHOOL DISTRICT 5 – 23/24 FEBRUARY**
  District 5 is holding a Weekend School on 23 and 24 February at the Arundel House Hotel in Cambridge. The subsidised price of £75 includes buffet lunch, evening meal and bed and breakfast. Speakers will include general secretary Mick Whelan, ASLEF General Secretary and top-level speakers from Thompsons solicitors, Justice for Colombia, the Labour Party and the TUC with others still to be confirmed. For details please contact Nigel Gibson at ngibson@aslef.org.uk or by phone on 0788 675 4069.

- **CRICKLEWOOD REUNION – 8 MARCH**
  The next Cricklewood reunion will be held on Friday 8 March at the RAFA club at Ashburnham Road Bedford from 12:00 onwards. For further details contact G Nash at Bristol or R Hodson at Wolverhampton.

- **EASTLEIGH REUNION – 9 MARCH**
  The Eastleigh Reunion will be held at the old BRSA club on 9 March from noon until 18:00. All welcome. Free buffet.

- **BRIGHTON & SUSSEX REUNION FOR 2013 – 7 MAY**
  An informal open afternoon will be held for all retired and working members with a connection to Brighton and Sussex Motive Power Depots in the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont (off Dyke Road) from 14:00 on Tuesday 7 May 2013. Further details from Paul Edwards (07402 478 2780 or Paul Horan (07868 757 492).

- **RIPPLE LANE SWANSONG – AUGUST**
  It will be 20 years in August since Ripple Lane closed its doors and we are planning to hold a final farewell ticketed function at the LT Club in Hornchurch to mark the anniversary. Watch this space for further announcements. The gatherings at noon on the first Friday of the month continue. Enquiries to Cliff Blackwell.

Ipswich dinner: what a night it was!

The annual dinner for Ipswich’s retired drivers took place before Christmas - and what a night it was!

Nostalgia was definitely the order of the night with special guests in abundance. I began proceedings on a sombre note by reminding everyone of those who had passed away during the previous year. Not a pleasant task but very necessary. They will not be forgotten. The reading of the ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ in their memory set the tone. Our main guest of honour was none other than Mr Richard Hardy. Unbelievably, Mr Hardy was depot master in 1950, when he was in charge of 400 Ipswich men and 90 locos. What a reception he got!

Eric Wilkinson - 92 years old and sharp as a tack - made us all laugh with his memories. Eric was a regional traction inspector, a man held in high regard by Ipswich men. Also present was the depot master from 1968, Mr Gordon McIntosh who actually gave this reporter his job. Good move Mr McIntosh!!

Other ‘blasts from the past’ included Graham Isom, who is now in charge of the Weardale Railway, and Ray Brooks, foreman at Liverpool Street and Iford Car Sheds.

The senior retired driver in attendance this year was Reg Richardson, whose seniority date is 28 December 1937. A fantastic night was had by all. I’m sorry to end with a sad postscript, but since the dinner we have lost two friends, Kenny Allison and our good friend from Norwich, Johnny Pipe. Both seemed in good health at the dinner. They will be sadly missed. Kenny was the nicest man you could meet and John was the Canary much respected by us Tractor Boys and always a popular guest at the Ipswich reunion.

Richard Hardy is seen here with Kelvy Higgins

Kelvy Higgins, Ipswich branch
The union is organising an

OPEN FREIGHT FORUM

On Wednesday 3 April
From 11:00

At the Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU (nearest tube station: Farringdon).

The event is open to all members but as it will concentrate on informing ASLEF’s freight strategy, it will obviously be of more direct relevance to members working in the freight sector.

Numbers will be limited, so if you would like to attend, please contact Dave Gould at head office by email dgould@aslef.org.uk or by phoning 020 73242400.
Annesley drivers still meeting - 47 years after depot closure!

HE 2012 annual Annesley (Great Central) Christmas party and re-union was held at the Broomhill Inn in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire on 13 December. Annesley was a locomotive depot ten miles north of Nottingham, a mile and a half to the west of Newstead Abbey (the ancestral home and estate of Lord Byron.) The Great Central ran between Manchester, Sheffield, Nottingham, Leicester, Aylesbury and London Marylebone – until the Beeching cuts announced by the Tory government in 1965 decimated this high speed route between London and the Midlands.

Annesley (footplate) was a staunch ASLEF shed with 95%-plus membership that carried out all of the Society’s instructions. The majority of the complement of Annesley accepted the resettlement and left the industry under redundancy in 1965. A small percentage transferred away under the PTR arrangements, continuing careers at other depots, including, Nottingham, Toton, Colwick, Saltley, Wolverhampton, Derby, and Bescot.

Our Christmas re-union is planned and organised each year along with other get-togethers by Chris Ward, a former Annesley fireman through his website: www.annesleyfireman.com (which is well worth a visit).

The first party Chris organised, in 2006, was a very emotional affair with comrades meeting up again for the first time in 45 years. The catchment area for Annesley shed was far-flung between Mansfield and Nottingham and points east and west, so after the closure many of the former staff lost all contact with their friends and work mates. The 2006 event was enjoyed by all, even if there were some quite understandable embarrassments caused by old friends having to enquire after the names of former colleagues after more than four decades!

Although our ranks have been reduced by the ravages of time there were still 76 attendees at the first party, mainly footplate but including, guards, maintenance staff, and estate of lord Byron. The grand central north of Nottingham, a mile and a half to the south. Annesley was a locomotive depot ten miles east and west, so after the closure many of the former staff lost all contact with their friends and work mates. The 2012 party carried on the successful traditions of the previous six, with nostalgia, steam, smoke and ashes flying in all directions, wrong line orders issued, detonators placed, rule 55 etc.

Happily the names-to-faces situation is now all sorted out. I found it very moving to meet up with former brothers-in-arms and witness the displays of true friendship and affections between my old colleagues. Thank you, Chris, and the staff and management of the Broomhill for a very memorable afternoon of reminiscences and comradeship.

Denis Parker, Retired Member, Nottingham

Southampton’s ‘Fast Al’ reaches 50!

The Southampton Northam branch had the privilege of welcoming the General Secretary Mick Whelan, National Organiser Simon Weller, EC Member Marz Colombini, District Organiser Graham Morris and Company Council rep Nigel Cummins to our 50-year Medallion and ASLEF long service badge presentation event on Sunday 2 December.

The General Secretary gave a report on current issues facing the union, including McNulty, rail franchising, relations with other trade unions and improvements being made to the ASLEF website. Long service badges were then presented by Mick to K. Leach (5 years), M. Driscoll (15 years), D. Eagle and I. Jolly (20 years) and M.

General Secretary Mick Whelan applauds the remarkable railway career of Allen Taylor Cole (25 years).

The General Secretary then invited retired member, Allen Taylor, to receive his 50 year medallion.

Allen started his railway career at Eastleigh Depot in 1962 as an engine cleaner and after progressing through the driving line of promotion, he eventually got his drivers position in 1986 - after 24 years’ service. How times have changed!

Allen served as our first branch chairman on the opening of the Northam 160 Branch in July 2003.

A poem written by branch member Malcolm Snelgar cataloguing Allen’s career was then read by Mick. More than half the Northam branch was in attendance to celebrate Allen’s achievement.

After the presentations were completed the branch retired to the local hostelry for further refreshments and reminiscing.

We would like to express our thanks for the attendance of Mick, Simon, Marz, Graham and Nigel in what might possibly be the only time we will see ‘the full set’ at our branch.

A. Loughlin, Secretary, Southampton Northam Branch

EX-SHED MASTER AT BATTERSEA RETIRED MEETING

The Stewarts Lane retired drivers were kind enough to invite Alan Taylor and myself from the RMS committee to one of their recent meetings. A fellow guest was ex-Shed Master Dick Hardy, a man who, by common consent, was ‘one of the few managers who understood railway men’. He continues to be held in high regard by those who had the pleasure of working at a depot where he was ‘the gaffer’, never asking anyone to do something he couldn’t do himself. Dick has recently released a book called ‘A Life on the Lines’ which charts his career from starting till his retirement and beyond.

It’s well worth a read.

The Battersea Boys meet regularly at the Selhurst Railway Club.

Peter Smith, Reporter, Retired Members Section

Grand Central, great memories

(fitters, and boilermasters) and PW maintenance staff. The 2012 party carried on the successful traditions of the previous six, with nostalgia, steam, smoke and ashes flying in all directions, wrong line orders issued, detonators placed, rule 55 etc.

Happily the names-to-faces situation is now all sorted out. I found it very moving to meet up with former brothers-in-arms and witness the displays of true friendship and affections between my old colleagues. Thank you, Chris, and the staff and management of the Broomhill for a very memorable afternoon of reminiscences and comradeship.

Denis Parker, Retired Member, Nottingham
Funding disputes

Should we be shocked and angered because brother Calfe, using the Freedom of Information Act, uncovered that TOCs are financially compensated by the government if they suffer losses due to industrial action? Perhaps, especially as this has not only happened with the Coalition government, but also under the last government of New Labour, even though they were partly financed and backed by us trade union members! One good idea deserves another. Let’s fund our own brothers and sisters during the next dispute. £1 from each member not involved soon stacks up.

Tony Dobson, Longsight

Retired AGM was a success

I recently attended the most informative annual general meeting of the retired members’ section at the National Rail Museum in York. It was a pleasure to hear from Ian Lavery, the MP for Wansbeck, who used to be President of the NUM, Dot Gibson, the General Secretary of the national pensioners convention, Dave Tyson, a Trustee of Railway Pension Scheme and General Secretary Mick Whelan.

Some of the items discussed included heating allowance, drivers working past 65 and pensions. We also agreed motions to go to the 2013 AAD.

Many thanks to all those involved in making this an enjoyable and successful day which was finished off in the nearest ‘watering hole’. If you have never attended the AGM before, I’d strongly recommend you make an effort to go to the next one.

G Kerwin, Retired Member, Plymouth branch

Thanks to Head Office staff

I am writing to say thank you to all the staff at Head Office for all the help, support, advice and information which they’ve given to me during my time as Secretary of the Plymouth branch.

I’ve held this position for 25 years and decided to stand down from the start of this year. I just wanted to say thank you to everyone for your much-appreciated assistance over the last quarter of a century.

Mark Fitchett, former Secretary, Plymouth branch

I back your Boxing Day action

I’m a Londoner and I suppose I will be inconvenienced by the ASLEF strike scheduled for Boxing Day. But I want you to know that I fully support you standing up for your members’ rights.

Media reports say you want £250 plus a day in lieu for attending on 26 December. Well, that sounds eminently reasonable to me bearing in mind the importance and value of the job on the day – that is, bringing thousands of shoppers to the West End to spend money in hard pressed retail outlets. It doesn’t make you ‘greedy’.

To call out a London plumber on the 26 December will cost you £220 + VAT per hour (not per day!) according to www.pimlicoplumbers.com/company-charges.

So doesn’t a fully trained and qualified train driver who is responsible for the lives of hundreds of passengers worth something along the same lines? And what about the £13 billion paid in bankers’ bonuses this Christmas?

Good luck to you, I say.

Tom Burns, Perth

SPECIALISED CRAFT UNION IS A WINNER

You receive many letters from colleagues praising Thompsons solicitors for pursuing claims on their behalf. Whilst I concur - and would expressly wish to thank Tracy McCartney at Thompsons Edinburgh - I would like to make a slightly different point.

Having recently settled a claim - after the customary frustrating three years - it occurred to me that having come to the railway from outside, some readers might not be aware how different it is to be backed by a strong craft trade union, rather than one that is oversized and generalised.

I found that thanks to the industry-specific briefings, the reports provided to the Court by various specialists were significantly more telling than would otherwise have been the case. This, together with a keen and continuing interest from my District Organiser (Kevin Lindsay) put Thompsons in a much better position to negotiate successfully on my behalf.

It is easy to focus on those aspects of union policy and practices with which we disagree and I am always quick to criticize. However it is also valuable to recognise the things we do well and to celebrate the benefits this brings.

So for once let’s say thank you to ASLEF too.

Vas Piccou, MA, MBA

I don’t pretend this letter expressed the majority view of the often-obscene misses our head office staff received on the issue – but I included it because it makes a couple of very good points.

MW

Swines of the times

I was incensed at an article by Christian Wolmar in the Times about our Tube members taking industrial action on Boxing Day. I wrote to the paper, but (surprise, surprise) it didn’t appear.

Wolmar began with gratuitous insults about ‘the brothers and sisters of ASLEF, who, for the third year running, have decided that they are not getting enough extra money to shake off their hangovers and drive Tube trains on Boxing Day.’

It was an offensive and short sighted statement. Train drivers accept responsibility
for the safety of the travelling public and their colleagues, and given such a role we always report for duty in a fit state.

The industrial action centres around drivers wanting to work on a volunteer basis on Boxing Day. Those with families may well wish to spend it at home. We work around-the-clock shifts and it isn't always possible to spend quality time with friends and family. We don't often complain about that because that's what we sign up for.

Wolmar's comments can give the wrong impression to members of the public who expect safety on trains as a given, and more importantly it undermines the diligence and professionalism of ASLEF members every time they book on duty. I would not get in a taxi if the driver told me he had a hangover and if the pilot of my plane told me he had a hangover I'd be back down the steps sharpish.

In light of his disparaging comments, should Mr Wolmar ever be travelling on a train that I am driving I will politely ask him to alight as taking him to his destination after these snide comments would leave a sour taste in my mouth and would also be against my principles.

Alan Moss, National Secretary, Virgin Trains Safety Advisory Committee

Top marks for trustees

I'd like to offer my congratulations to Mark Daniels, who was successful in the Trustee election in which I stood recently. All the nominees fought a fair campaign.

The number of genuine and capable candidates shows the importance that the role of union Trustee deserves. It is a position that hasn't always been given the recognition it deserves. However, the financial position we found ourselves in only a few years ago means the Trustee position is one of the most important within ASLEF.

Good luck to Mark in his new role.

Mark Prenter, Nominee, ASLEF Trustee Election

Wolmar's comments can give the wrong impression to members of the public who expect safety on trains as a given, and more importantly it undermines the diligence and professionalism of ASLEF members every time they book on duty. I would not get in a taxi if the driver told me he had a hangover and if the pilot of my plane told me he had a hangover I’d be back down the steps sharpish.

In light of his disparaging comments, should Mr Wolmar ever be travelling on a train that I am driving I will politely ask him to alight as taking him to his destination after these snide comments would leave a sour taste in my mouth and would also be against my principles.

Alan Moss, National Secretary, Virgin Trains Safety Advisory Committee

Top marks for trustees

I’d like to offer my congratulations to Mark Daniels, who was successful in the Trustee election in which I stood recently. All the nominees fought a fair campaign.

The number of genuine and capable candidates shows the importance that the role of union Trustee deserves. It is a position that hasn’t always been given the recognition it deserves. However, the financial position we found ourselves in only a few years ago means the Trustee position is one of the most important within ASLEF.

Good luck to Mark in his new role.

Mark Prenter, Nominee, ASLEF Trustee Election

Wolmar's comments can give the wrong impression to members of the public who expect safety on trains as a given, and more importantly it undermines the diligence and professionalism of ASLEF members every time they book on duty. I would not get in a taxi if the driver told me he had a hangover and if the pilot of my plane told me he had a hangover I’d be back down the steps sharpish.

In light of his disparaging comments, should Mr Wolmar ever be travelling on a train that I am driving I will politely ask him to alight as taking him to his destination after these snide comments would leave a sour taste in my mouth and would also be against my principles.

Alan Moss, National Secretary, Virgin Trains Safety Advisory Committee

Top marks for trustees

I’d like to offer my congratulations to Mark Daniels, who was successful in the Trustee election in which I stood recently. All the nominees fought a fair campaign.

The number of genuine and capable candidates shows the importance that the role of union Trustee deserves. It is a position that hasn’t always been given the recognition it deserves. However, the financial position we found ourselves in only a few years ago means the Trustee position is one of the most important within ASLEF.

Good luck to Mark in his new role.

Mark Prenter, Nominee, ASLEF Trustee Election
A changing vision of ‘jobs for the boys’ ...

Leonora Saunders and Deirdre Claffey are collaborating on a new project celebrating women working in male dominated industries. The venture, entitled ‘When I grow up I want to be a train driver’, interviews and photographs women who work as a minority in their profession and celebrates people they believe are ‘hidden role models’. We asked them to explain …

Karen Harrison – the first female train driver in Britain who took to the footplate in 1978 – once said, ‘To a lot of men I was the proverbial turd in the swimming pool.’ Attitudes in your industry may have changed considerably from those encountered by the late Ms Harrison, there are still instances whereby women are met with a raised eyebrow when they tell people what they do for a living.

According to the Home Office, the UK labour market is failing to make the best use of people’s talents. The pay gap between men and women in work is 20.2%. Research into the causes of the gender pay difference found that one of the main reasons for this was due to the different industries and occupations in which women work.

To give a brief snapshot, women represent over 90% of secretaries, receptionists and telephonists. Men make up 82.9% of chefs, gardeners, electrical and construction trades, mechanical fitters and printers.

Images with attitudes

By presenting inspiring portraits (a photograph and profile) of women working in male-dominated professions, our project aims to challenge ideas on gender and encourage more women to look at these male-dominated pursuits as a good career option.

We began the project in July 2012 and it’s gaining momentum with a list of interviews that is growing by the day. Its subjects are women in occupations where they make up less than 10% of the workforce.

So far, we’ve met up with a HGV driver, a film production grip, a consultant surgeon, two micro-electronic design engineers, a butcher and a train driver. Each participant is photographed in their work environment, and then asked questions about how they got into their respective careers and why they think there are so few women in their industry.

In the pipeline for the coming year we have a female space lawyer, a fire fighter, a lifeboat crew member from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a pilot, a stonemason, a coastguard and a tube driver.

A problem of perception

Interestingly, all of the women they have interviewed to date have cited ‘perception’ as one of the main barriers preventing women into their industry.

To use the rail industry as an example, ASLEF’s ‘On Track with Diversity’ 2012 said, ‘It is clear that women are not attracted to the rail sector. Why? We believe it is due to the traditional image of the train driver, an image reinforced from childhood.’

One of the people who participated in our photo project last year was Alison Miller, who is a far cry from the traditional image of a train driver. Alison has been driving trains out of Glasgow Central since 2007 and has never felt out of place in her predominantly male occupation.

However, she does have one quibble: ‘The uniform is horrendous! You wear men’s steel capped shoes. And the drivers’ jacket is supposedly ‘unisex’, but really you go out looking like you are wearing your partner’s clothes!’

Alison believes that the number of women train drivers in Britain (4.2%) is so low because women associate the profession with men. ‘Women have a perception that careers like engineering and train driving is not for them.’

ASLEF’s general secretary Mick Whelan, confirms this. ‘When we raise the diversity issue with employers, we are often told that women are not recruited because they do not apply. This is probably true. But if it is, perceptions need to change. That’s why I welcome projects like this one from Leonora and Deirdre. It’s art and entertainment with a message.’

If you would like to be involved in the project please contact Leonora or Deirdre on leonora@leonorasanders.co.uk or dececlaffey@gmail.com. When the project is finished the portraits will be exhibited and published.

Leonora and Deirdre’s work have appeared in publications including the Guardian, the Sunday Times and the Royal Photographic Society magazine.
Prize Crossword No. 82 set by Zebedee

Across
7 A ribbed fabric used in clothing and upholstery (6)
8 Bad tempered - like an apple? (6)
9 Jewish calendar month (4)
10 Hidden motive for doing something (8)
11 Any dramatic scene (7)
13 An important question (5)
15 A stupid foolish person (5)
17 An adhesive label (7)
20 Hanged (6,2)
21 Advanced in years (4)
23 A loose robe (6)
24 Made a strenuous or laboured effort (6)

Down
1 A small lake (4)
2 Relating to or associated with flowers (6)
3 Narrowly restricted in outlook (7)
4 Of an angle, less than 90 degrees (5)
5 Large northern marine animal (6)
6 Without conditions or limitations (8)

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

Solution to prize crossword No 81 which appeared in the January 2013 edition of the ASLEF Journal

Congratulations to Carl Bennett, from Northwich in Cheshire

Down: 1 Safe 2 A capella 3 Profits 4 Marry 5 Knew 6 Syllable 12 Bedrooms 14 Ale house 15 Plateau 18 Eight 20 Food 22 Tire.

Thanks for all your responses to the 81st ASLEF crossword in the January edition. If you complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 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. Over the past three years ASLEF recovered £7,969,622.96 in damages for all types of cases.

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
**Don’t stay silent, talk to CIRAS**

The rail industry’s confidential reporting system

**WHAT IS CIRAS?**

CIRAS is an alternative way for rail industry staff to report safety concerns confidentially. If you’ve tried company channels, or don’t feel that you can, CIRAS offers another way of reporting.

**WHO CAN REPORT?**

CIRAS is available to anyone who works in the rail industry, whether you’re operational staff, office based, on-site, trackside, overground or underground.

“Confidentiality has never been compromised”

Freephone 0800 4 101 101 Freepost CIRAS Text 07507 285887 www.ciras.org.uk

---

**Why choose the AA?**

- More dedicated Patrols than any other UK Breakdown Service
- Or average, the AA complete roadside repairs in less than 30 minutes
- Save up to 45% on AA Membership at enrolment and 10% at renewal *
- Affinity customers can also save 23% off European Breakdown Cover

*£30 is equivalent to 45% off and is based on Roadside cover for a vehicle only. Other levels of cover are available. This offer is only available to Aslef employees only by calling the number given, quoting the related reference and paying annually by direct debit. Not applicable to recurring transaction arrangements. The enrolment offer is available to new members for the first 12 months of Membership only. The renewal offer is available to Aslef employees who are existing AA members or who join under the enrolment offer and will be available at each renewal date until further notice. The offer is not available in conjunction with any other offer or discount not a applicable to prices on theAA.com. This offer does not apply to Breakdown Repair Cover, any other AA products or services. At the discretion of the Aslef employees, full details to be advised. This offer may be amended or withdrawn at any time.

*AA Affinity Members are eligible for a 25% discount on European Breakdown Cover by calling 0800 316 9969 and quoting reference 'AM08'.


Breakdown Cover

**To join, call**

0800 048 0075

Quoting reference ‘ASLEF 751’

**Prices from £30**