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A tale from Tolpuddle

The sun rose on 24 February 1834, George Loveless, a farm labourer in Dorset, kissed his wife Betsy and his three kids goodbye and set off to work. He didn’t see them again for three years. Because as George left his cottage in the village of Tolpuddle he was served with a warrant for his arrest.

George was one of six agricultural labourers – with his brother James Loveless; James Hammet; James Brine; Thomas Standfield and his son John – charged with making an illegal oath. But their real crime was forming a trade union to protest about their pay of six shillings a week.

The Tolpuddle Martyrs were sentenced to seven years’ transportation for standing up for themselves – and for standing together – to fight poverty and austerity and to argue for better terms and conditions of employment.

That, of course, is what trades unions have been doing for the best part of two hundred years.

The other weekend I went with thousands of other union members, grassroots campaigners and labour movement activists down to Dorset to listen to Frances O’Grady, Tony Benn, and Billy Bragg at the Tolpuddle Festival.

The week before that, I went up to the Big Meeting, the Durham Miners’ Gala, to hear Len McCluskey, Bob Crow, Kevin Maguire, Owen Jones, and Ricky Tomlinson.

It was brilliant to see so many people turn out – to show solidarity, and have a good time – so don’t let anyone tell you that people don’t care. They do.

The boss class – those who own the land, the factories, and the big companies in this country – don’t want us to stand together. They never have. That’s why unions are, once again, under attack.

We need strong trade unions as much today as we did in 1834. As George Loveless said when he was sentenced: “We raise the watchword, Liberty. We will, we will, we will be free!”

Mick Whelan, General Secretary
The Eagle has landed – Maria plans a better British railway

ARIA EAGLE, the Shadow Transport Secretary, gave her most forthright pledge yet about the future of Britain’s railways under a future Labour government when she addressed a joint meeting of Districts 5 and 7 at Westminster.

She told a packed committee room overlooking the Thames: ‘We need new thinking because the Tory privatisation of this industry has been a disastrous failure. There has been a doubling of operating costs. A trebling of taxpayers’ subsidy. And a once a decade scrap for a franchise. Taxpayers have delivered the investment for the transformation of our railways. Labour is standing shoulder to shoulder with passengers, staff, and trade unions, to tell people the truth. We need to reform the way our railways are run.’

Ms Eagle described Rebuilding Rail as an ‘excellent report’ and cited Deutsche Bahn in Germany and SNCF in France as two successful state-owned railways.

She said the collapse of the West Coast main line exposes the flaws in the franchise system – ‘That’s why we oppose the costly and unnecessary privatisation of the East Coast which will have given

Boxing clever

FINN BRENNAN reports on a possible resolution to the long-running Boxing Day dispute with London Underground

In 2010, without any consultation with ASLEF, London Underground decided to operate a full Sunday service on Boxing Day. This meant it was impossible to book off anyone rostered to work and broke long-standing agreements that rotated depot closures. We were left with no option except to ballot our members for industrial action. Rather then negotiate, the company went to the High Court to seek an injunction by challenging the accuracy of our membership records. They lost, and our strike on 26 December shut the entire Underground network.

LU squandered the opportunity to resolve the dispute. With no progress, we balloted again in 2011; again they tried, unsuccessfully, to use the courts to overturn a huge ‘Yes’ vote. Tired of the courts, but unwilling to negotiate seriously, in 2012 they resorted to sending threatening letters to our drivers. It was a futile tactic; ASLEF members are not easily bullied and we struck once again.

Finally, it now seems there is a realistic prospect of settlement. Supported by EC member Terry Wilkinson, the Trains Council has negotiated a payment of £350 for those volunteering to work on Boxing Day. A trebling of operating costs. A trebling of taxpayers’ subsidy. And a once a decade scrap for a franchise. Taxpayers have delivered the investment for the transformation of our railways. Labour is standing shoulder to shoulder with passengers, staff, and trade unions, to tell people the truth. We need to reform the way our railways are run.’

Clustered Rail

Les Muir listens attentively as Maria Eagle lates out Labour’s plans for Britain’s railways

£800m back to the Treasury by the end of this financial year – and said it was time to stop closing ticket offices, adding that passengers should have the legal right to the cheapest ticket when they travel.

Mick Whelan condemned the privatisers: ‘They spend an awful lot of money bidding for the franchises and a lot of money rebranding the trains. But they don’t spend a penny on the infrastructure.’

Byron Taylor, national officer of TULO, made a passionate plea for more ASLEF members to get more involved in the Labour Party: ‘Because we’re really keen to get real people into Parliament. People who know what real life is really like.’

And John Cryer, Labour MP for Leyton & Wanstead, said the next Labour government would have to reverse a lot of the coalition’s anti-union policies. ‘If we’re not going to do that, what’s the point?’

NETWORK RAIL FINED FOR LEVEL CROSSING COLLISION

Network Rail has been fined £500,000 for a breach of health and safety laws which led to a ten-year-old boy suffering serious injuries at a level crossing in Beccles, Suffolk, in 2010. An investigation by the Office of Rail Regulation found that Network Rail had failed to act on information from employees – over a ten-year period – that the crossing was unsafe.

AFFRONT TO SOCIETY

CHLOE BOTHAM went to Somerset House in London to learn about the living wage

The Archbishop of York, speaking at the launch of a new Living Wage Commission, condemned the inequality of incomes in this country as an affront to a modern civilized society. Dr John Sentamu said that while the idea of a living wage has moved into the political mainstream, and thousands have benefited, for the majority of low paid workers in Britain a living wage is still a concept, not the reality.

He said: ‘Introducing a living wage – £8.55 an hour in the capital, £7.45 in the rest of the country – recognizes that people should be paid a fair wage for a fair day’s work. We need to value each and every person, rather than cutting adrift those unfortunate enough to find themselves at the bottom.

‘Paying a decent wage for our workers is a sign that as a nation – publicly, privately, corporately, and individually – we recognize the unique contribution of others to the common good.’ Paying a living wage was not, he added, a question of charity or generosity but of fairness and justice. ‘Until we have a proper living wage we will always have the problem of poverty, and of some people being unable to provide for their families.’

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High speed too in Japan

A prototype of Japan’s new super-fast maglev bullet train, designed to travel at speeds of 310mph, has been successfully tested at Tsuru in Yamanashi. The train, with its long, distinctive, aerodynamic nose, uses hi-tech magnetic levitation technology, which gives a smoother ride than traditional wheels. The absence of friction between wheel and rail means acceleration and deceleration are faster and unaffected by the weather.

The train, which consists of 16 carriages carrying 1,000 passengers, is scheduled to enter service on the Tokyo-Nagara line in 2027. It will cut the journey time from the capital from 90 to 40 minutes, and eventually run the length of the Chuo Shinkansen line that links Tokyo with Osaka.

The first commercial maglev service was launched in China in 2004. The Shanghai maglev can travel at speeds of up to 264mph though its average is 150mph.

Japan established a reputation for high-speed rail in 1964 with the launch of its first bullet train on the eve of the Olympic Games in Tokyo. The central line in Japan – the Tokaido Shinkansen – is the world’s busiest high-speed rail, carrying 151 million passengers each year.

Off the rails

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER, with his songwriting partner Richard Stilgoe, went out of his way in his hit musical Starlight Express to heap praise on rail freight. His roller skating trains sing: ‘We carry weight ‘cos we are freight / And freight is great. / We never sulk. We hulk the bulk. / ‘Cos freight is great. / We never make a fuss. We got the goods on us. / We take the loads from off the roads / And freight is great.’ Longer, heavier vehicles – a curious and environmentally-unfriendly initiative from the road lobby and the DfT to move freight from rail to road – have proved unpopular with haulage firms – they’re very expensive and too big to fit most depots. But cyclists beware. When asked, at a recent health and safety test of LHV blind spots – there are lots of them around these enormous vehicles – what about cyclists, the man from the DfT muttered: ‘Well, they’ll just have to look out, won’t they?’ Whatever will Prime Minister David Cameron and London Mayor Boris Johnson make of such a cavalier attitude to the lives of their fellow cyclists?

FIRST FRANGLAIS, now Denglisch. Passengers on Deutsche Bahn, Germany’s state-owned railway, have always been encouraged to splash out on things such as Neue Snackbox für Kids. But disapproving managers have now issued staff with a list of 2,200 Anglo-German phrases they are no longer to use. ‘Bonus’, ‘business class’, ‘lifestyle’, ‘non-stop’, and ‘package deal’ are to be replaced, according to Transport Minister Peter Ramsauer, by more thoroughly Teutonic and pure-bred Aryan phrases although some words – such as ‘brunch’, ‘container’, ‘sandwich’, and ‘VIP’ – are deemed by the German shepherd of the language of the Prussian empire to be sufficiently ‘absorbed’ to be allowed.

RAIL CHIEFS, pilloried in the past for blaming ‘leaves on the line’ for delays, have a new excuse in their armoury. Network Rail bosses in Scotland blamed ‘sunshine on the line’ as temperatures hit 43ºC. ‘Our rapid response teams put precautionary speed restrictions in place,’ said a spokesman, amid reports that signalling equipment had been badly affected by high summer temperatures and fears that steel tracks could buckle in the heat.

ROY LUXFORD, Southern company council secretary, was being rather droll when talking to a delegation from the Norwegian train drivers’ union at Westminster (see centre pages). Reflecting on the way that rail company executives come and go with bewilderment, he mused: ‘I have my fifteenth chairman sitting across the desk from me negotiating. I am their corporate memory!’

KEVIN LINDSAY, ASLEF’s organiser in Scotland, was also on sparkling form, fielding one enquiry from our Norwegian friends about politics north of the border by scoffing: ‘The SNP? They’re just tartan Tories!’

PAUL McMAHON, an economist who spent eight years at the Office of Rail Regulation, has been appointed director of freight at Network Rail.

On the level

Patrick McLoughlin, the Secretary of State for Transport, told the House of Commons he is talking to Network Rail about level crossings and how ‘to get things put right’. He was answering a question from Lilian Greenwood, Shadow Transport Minister and Labour MP for Nottingham South, who wanted to know whether he will introduce new legislation to improve safety at level crossings before the end of this Parliament.

Green light for tram-trains

Norman Baker, the junior Transport Minister, has given the green light for Britain’s first train-tram service. The £60m project, from Rotherham Parkgate to Sheffield city centre, will start in 2016 using dual voltage tram-trains made by Vossloh in Germany.

HELLO, BANQUO: Paul Prentice, in a recent issue of Rail magazine, examined the phenomenon of ghost (or Parliamentary) trains, which run once a week, aren’t advertised, and rarely carry passengers. They do a job, though, running over sections of track which would be closed were it not for a bare minimum service level provided by these trains, now a YouTube phenomenon.

500 CLUB: The winning number in June was 157 and C. Cooper scooped the prize of £316, reports Alan Taylor of the RMS committee. The winner of the July draw was Janet Cribb who picked up the prize of £318 with number 79.
Pride in the union

**DAVID JONES, LGBT rep District 7, reports from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender TUC conference**

ASLEF was represented by four delegates – Sean Lambert and Darran Brown, chair and secretary of the ASLEF LGBT Representatives Committee, Jackie Lee, LGBT rep District 5, and me.

Darran proposed a motion on same sex domestic violence. His speech included a moving personal story, and he wouldn’t forgive me if I failed to mention it provoked the only standing ovation of conference. The motion, calling for the LGBT TUC committee to establish links with the LGBT domestic violence organisation Broken Rainbow, and to support their work, was carried unanimously.

Sean spoke in favour of a motion proposed by USDAW in support of the disproportionate number of LGBT members with mental health problems, which also included a moving personal story about a family member, and was well received.

I addressed conference in support of an ATL motion backing positive LGBT role models in education. I was able to call on my experiences as an undergraduate studying to be a primary school teacher.

On behalf of the LGBT representative committee I opposed a motion proposed by Community on improved access to HIV testing. While we support the principle of encouraging more people to be tested, we have concerns about home testing kits. We believe tests should be carried out by health care professionals and, if it produces a positive result, counselling and advice on managing the condition and controlling the spread of HIV and AIDS should be immediately available. The motion was carried despite our objection, but gave rise to a healthy debate and a flurry of Twitter comments.

My third visit to the podium was to second an FBU motion challenging homophobia in the wake of the Arab Spring. This motion caused a lot of debate, with the UCU trying to impose an amendment, but the motion was carried in its original form.

Other motions carried covered such subjects as the coalition government’s austerity cuts, the equal marriage campaign, homophobia in sport, and justice for Steven Simpson, a gay autistic student who was brutally murdered in an horrific sexuality and disability hate crime while the perpetrator was given a three and a half year prison sentence for what the judge described as ‘good natured horseplay gone too far’.

ASLEF, one of the smaller unions, with only four delegates, made a valuable contribution to an excellent conference, keeping up the profile of our union with the bigger players, and demonstrating our ability to drive debate in the trade union movement, as well as on the wider political stage.

(from left) David, Darran, Sean and Jackie on the podium at Congress House

Flying blind

ASLEF is backing BALPA in its bid to get laser pens classified as an offensive weapon in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill.

The Executive Committee acted after David Reynolds of the airline pilots’ union explained how laser pens being pointed at aircraft and helicopters is a persistent problem for pilots, with potentially disastrous results if the laser light blinds the man or woman at the controls.

**FREIGHT IS GROWING ON US**

Rail freight is the key to this country’s economic recovery. That’s the message from the rail industry to the Conservative-led coalition.

Robin Gisby, managing director, network operations, at Network Rail, says: ‘Rail freight is vital to Britain’s economic success. It contributes £870 million to the economy and plays a big part in reducing congestion and carbon emissions.’

‘Over the next decade, we expect freight demand to grow by at least 30%, the equivalent of 240 additional freight trains a day, and by as much as 140% over the next 30 years.

‘To cater for this growth Network Rail, in partnership with the rest of the rail industry, will continue to work with business and government to move more freight off Britain’s roads, improving our quality of life and substantially reducing carbon emissions.’

Write to know

Coroners’ rules regarding the use of written evidence at inquests have been changed after pressure from ASLEF. The move, which should help drivers involved in a fatality who do not wish to attend in person, comes after the union made submissions to a government consultation on the process.

While the change in the rules does not deliver the right for drivers who are victims of a suicide to submit written evidence rather than turn up in person – which is what the union asked for – it gives much more room to coroners to make a decision in the driver’s favour. And the indication is that many will now allow drivers to submit evidence in writing.

The Ministry of Justice announced: ‘ASLEF commented that in cases of suicide involving a train or the rail network, they would like it to become standard practice for a coroner to accept a written statement from any train driver involved to be read out in court as evidence and not require them to attend the inquest.

‘We have amended the rule so that written evidence will be permissible when it concerns who the deceased was, as well as how, when and where the deceased came by his or her death.’

The MoJ says it may be a while before a revised guide for coroners is published, and until then ASLEF officers and members can use the stated intention above to put the case for non-attendance at an inquest.
They got him on milk and alcohol

DAVE BENNETT reports on proposed changes to the Transport and Works Act on drugs and alcohol testing...

OU may have seen in the news that the government has issued a draft deregulation bill. The media has focused on changes to the law in regard to health and safety at work. But this hotchpotch of a bill makes major changes to the Transport and Works Act 1992 on drugs and alcohol testing.

The first proposal is the removal of the statutory option to have breath specimens replaced, for both road and rail transport. It removes the option for drivers to ask for a replacement blood or urine specimen and means the evidential breath test is now the primary means of testing unless there are particular (medical) reasons why a breath specimen cannot be obtained.

Second, it removes the restriction that evidential breath tests must be taken at a police station for rail transport. Under the current regime for railways evidential tests can only be taken at a police station. A constable can now require a person to provide a blood specimen at a police station platform, a hospital or, if the officer is in uniform, anywhere else.

Third, Section 31 of the TWA enables an officer to require a person to provide a blood or urine test when investigating a suspected offence relating to drugs under the railways regime. Section 31(4)(c) provides that a specimen may be taken if the suspected offence is one under section 27(1) of the TWA and the constable making the requirement has been advised by a medical practitioner that the condition of the person required to provide the specimen may be due to some drug. Paragraph 6 amends the TWA to provide that in addition to a medical practitioner, a registered healthcare professional may make the assessment of the suspect’s condition in these circumstances.

Fourth, it extends the role of healthcare professionals for both road and rail transport. These proposals come just after the recent changes to the Railway Group Standard GE/RT8070 on testing railway workers for drugs and alcohol. The guidance that all accidents and incidents requiring formal investigation, as specified in GO/RT3119, should be regarded as reasonable grounds for 'for cause' testing was deleted.

Companies should have reasonable grounds to suspect that a person carrying out safety critical tasks may have contributed to an accident or incident or is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

Bizarrely, the industry has decided it should test less, but the government wants to allow nurses to carry out blood tests!

ASLEF is totally against the extension of the powers to take blood tests for drugs and alcohol to healthcare professionals.

Keeping the East Coast on track

MICK WHELAN, general secretary of ASLEF, joined Shadow Transport Secretary Maria Eagle and Manuel Cortes, general secretary of the TSSA, to leaflet rush hour passengers at King’s Cross urging them to help the unions, and the Labour Party, persuade the Conservative-led coalition to keep the East Coast main line in public hands.

The move is in response to the government’s bizarre decision to sell off a line – it runs from Aberdeen to London – which has returned more than £600 million to the Treasury since being renationalised in 2009.

‘National Express, when it handed back the keys in 2009, left the East Coast franchise in chaos,’ said Mick. ‘It has since been successfully run in the public sector. The East Coast main line delivers a better deal to the public purse – to each and every taxpayer in Britain – and is a key tool against which we can measure the success or failure of the privatised train operating companies.

‘It’s shameful that a government which fears it will lose the next election is tripping over itself in its rush to reprivatise a successful public service. Passengers, staff, and the taxpayer are all set to lose out.’

Maria said: ‘Despite the East Coast being recognised as the most cost-effective franchise by the independent rail regulator ORR, David Cameron wants to sell it off before the next election. It is a public sector success story which he does not want voters to know about. We do and need their help to keep it in public hands.’

Patrick seals the deal with Siemens

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin has sealed a £1.4 billion deal to design, build, finance and maintain a fleet of 1,140 carriages for the cross-capital Thameslink route with Siemens of Germany and Cross London Trains, a consortium comprising Siemens Project Ventures, the financial services unit of Siemens, Innisfree, an investment group specialising in public-private partnerships, and 3i Infrastructure, registered in Jersey. Confirmation of the decision, which was not unexpected, is a further blow to the Bombardier factory in Derby, Britain’s last remaining train manufacturing facility.

Mr McLoughlin said the project would create up to 2,000 jobs ‘across the UK supply chain’ in component manufacturing, constructing two new depots and maintenance. It was, he said, ‘good for transport, good for the economy, and good for growth’.

The first new model 12-carriage Desiro City trains should, he said, be running on the network at the start of 2016 and the introduction of the full fleet by the end of 2018 will enable a ‘24 trains per hour service’ to operate through the capital in the rush hour while a new interchange at Farrington will give passengers access to Crossrail for east-west journeys across the capital.
The fight against Fascism still resonates today

HEN, during the Spanish Civil War, the Falangist forces of General Franco were marching on Madrid. Isidora Dolores Ibárruri, a communist, Republican, and friend of the poet and playwright Federico García Lorca, made her famous radio broadcast in which she called on her comrades to stand firm: ‘No pasarán!’ With the help of Nazi Germany – Adolf Hitler regarded the war in Spain as a dummy run for World War II – the fascists did eventually pass and did overthrow the democratically-elected left-wing government.

‘But the sacrifices of the Spanish people – and the sacrifices of the International Brigades which went to their aid – will never, and should never, be forgotten,’ Mick Whelan told old friends and comrades who gathered at the Memorial Trust annual commemoration at Jubilee Gardens on the South Bank in London. ‘The selfless sacrifice demonstrated by all nationalities in the fight against fascism resonates to this day as, once more, we see, post-recession, the far-right trying to rise again.’

After laying wreaths to mark the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Ebro, many activists went to watch Brave in Freedom’s Cause, a centenary tribute to Jack and Evelyn Jones and Michael Foot, performed by Marlene Sidaway, Evelyn Jones and Michael Foot.

Brussels sprouts

PHILIPPA EDMUNDS, manager of Freight on Rail, which promotes the economic, safety and environmental benefits of rail freight, reports from the heart of Europe on the menace of mega trucks...

Following publication by the European Commission of the revision to the weights and measures legislation – which includes the deadly clause allowing cross-border traffic of mega trucks between consenting countries – I have been to Brussels twice to lobby MEPs, their assistants and, crucially, had an excellent meeting with the Austrian MEP, a Social Democrat, who is the rapporteur on the file. He writes the report and suggests amendments for consideration by the European Parliament. Each of the other political groups appoints shadow rapporteurs who are also important in the process so I also met with the British Liberal Democrat MEP who is shadow rapporteur for the ALDE group and followed that up by meeting his assistant.

The Greens are opposed to mega trucks, as are UKIP. However, the largest group in the Parliament, the European People’s Party, is likely to support the measure, as are other right-wing groupings. So while we welcome the fact that the British government has said it will not allow mega trucks to come to the UK we believe it will be impossible for them to resist pressure for mega trucks from the road haulage industry on competition grounds. They would reduce road freight costs by 20 per cent which would result in break even distances for road increasing to around 400 miles – and wipe out consumer rail freight in Britain.

There is still a long way to go and I am working closely with European colleagues to cover all the angles. The Council of Ministers will get involved in the autumn so that opens up a new stage, lobbying the Department for Transport and the permanent representatives of member states. Working with colleagues under the No Mega Trucks banner, which represents 230 organisations from 25 countries, more than 13 million members, adds power and diversity to my lobbying.

But please keep up the great work contacting your MEPs and broaden it to your MPs, especially Conservatives, telling them that as they say they do not want mega trucks on Britain’s roads, they must oppose cross border traffic now as this bilateral agreement would pave the way for mega trucks right across the European Union.

NETWORK RAIL’S GRAVY TRAIN

Five rail bosses are on track to receive a staggering £11 million over three years in an extraordinary ‘double your money’ deal that critics have condemned as ‘a gravy train for directors’ which ‘rewards failure’. The Network Rail executives are set to share bonuses of £5 million – on top of their six-figure salaries – despite the publicly-owned firm facing a £75 million fine for missing all its punctuality targets in 2012-13.

Marching in memory

On Saturday 17 August activists in south Wales will march to mark the anniversary of the Llanelli railway strike. Two unarmed men, Jack John, 21, who worked at Morewood Tinplate Works, and Leonard Worsell, 19, a labourer from London, were shot dead during the dispute by troops of the Worcestershire regiment under the command of Major Brownlow Stuart on Saturday 17 August 1911.

Two years ago, to mark the centenary, the Llanelli Railway Strike Committee commissioned a bilingual publication telling the story of the dispute, over low wages when the railway companies were making record profits, and the deaths and injuries after troops opened fire on strikers and protesters.

Copies of The Llanelli Railway Strike and Uprising, 1911 are available for £17.50 (including postage and packing) by visiting www.1911llanelirailwaystrike.org.uk
Whatever life throws at you
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Many adults, when asked about their schooldays, say Maths and English were among their least favourite subjects. Yet these are the cornerstones of our education system and, when we leave school, the two subjects we use every day. Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, introduced new qualifications – called Functional Skills – in Maths and English last year in a bid to improve numeracy and literacy. They were designed to be more practical and relevant than the Key Skills they replaced. English now contains sections on speaking and listening, as well as reading and writing, and Maths requires you to show the method you used to reach your answer. (Sorry, no calculators!) But why would anyone want to study these subjects again? That’s just one of the questions Chris Nutty, ASLEF’s education project worker for members working for East Midlands Trains, Northern Rail, c2c, and Greater Anglia, asked Mark Walker, our Maths and English tutor...

WHY DO ADULTS ENROL IN CLASSES?
There are numerous reasons, the most common of which are:
• Self-achievement – learners challenging themselves on subjects they previously avoided through lack of self-confidence.
• Children – as parents we understand how difficult our children’s homework can be. Maths and English are the most important subjects in a child’s education. Learners often feel a parental responsibility to help with the development of their own children.
• Career progression – many learners enrol as a result of company internal assessments for specific jobs for which they have applied.
• Qualifications – many learners wish to improve the qualifications they obtained from school.
• And enjoyment – yes, really! Adults returning to education often express a feeling of enrichment and satisfaction. Our experience of workplace employees is that a great number enrol for one subject, then go on to study another.

DO SOME ADULTS FEAR RETURNING TO EDUCATION?
Yes, many learners express apprehension at returning to a classroom. Their anxiety usually stems from bad experiences during their schooldays. But the difference is immense. Our classes are small – average numbers are six to ten – and are held in a very informal, adult atmosphere. Each learner has their own independent learning programme. They work at their own pace to achieve their level of learning. The union learning programme of a drop-in learning centre has benefited employees as one-to-one sessions can also be arranged. We encourage a jovial and enjoyable atmosphere!

MANY COLLEAGUES CITE FAMILY OR WORK COMMITMENTS PREVENTING THEM ENROLLING. HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM?
Flexibility is a feature of a programme adapted specifically to the needs of rail staff. I deliver a full day’s learning approximately every three weeks and learners attend according to their availability. Home study is provided on a continual basis and I remain in contact with learners, in between visits, via e-mail.

WHICH TOPICS ARE COVERED?
Functional Skills does what it says on the tin. In English, the content includes speaking and listening, reading, comprehension and writing. In addition to the obvious content of spelling, punctuation and grammar, key areas of structure, layout, purpose of text, audience and formal letter writing are comprehensively covered. Maths focuses on practical application in areas relating to real life. Topics include ratio, decimals, fractions and percentages in addition to averages, charts and graphs. Area, perimeter and volume involve metric measurement which is often a foreign language to learners of my age bracket.

WHY DO WE NEED TO STUDY THESE WHEN WE HAVE CALCULATORS AND SPELLCHECKERS?
Those devices are useful, but have their limitations. Spellcheckers fail to recognise the misuse of many words and while a calculator answers a direct question, it cannot pinpoint what method of mathematics to use in order to calculate many real life scenarios. It certainly cannot help with a child’s written mathematical homework, as working methods need to be shown and understood.

WHAT RELEVANCE DO THESE SUBJECTS HAVE TO OUR WORKPLACE, AND HOME LIFE?
English and Maths are essential to working roles, many of which require written tasks on paper or computer, so the ability to spell, punctuate and use correct grammar is essential. Rail employees, holding a variety of positions, often tell me how areas of our Maths curriculum map against actual workplace scenarios. At home these skills help us to write letters, understand interest rates and phone tariffs, measure carpets… the list is endless!

YOU MENTIONED QUALIFICATIONS, DOES THAT MEAN TAKING AN EXAM?
Sorry! Yes, it does. However, these exams are learner friendly and far less stressful than exams at school. Exams are completed online and we distribute mock exams to ensure every learner is prepared for the sort of questions they will be asked.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS THAT CAN BE ACHIEVED?
Functional Skills are now commonplace in UK business and education, a mandatory element of apprenticeships and a gateway to further progression. Functional Skills English and Maths courses are available for free, and you can’t get better value than that!

For more information about English and Maths courses in your area check out the Education pages on the ASLEF website
Why more ASLEF activists should stand for political office

Glenis has been an MEP since 2006 and leader of the European Parliamentary Labour Party since 2009

GLENIS WILLMOTT is Labour’s leader in the European Parliament and MEP for the East Midlands. She’s also a member of the party’s National Executive Committee and attends Shadow Cabinet. Here Glenis, a former union rep and county councillor, explains why the Labour Party needs more ASLEF activists standing for political office – and sets out the support available when you do...

OLITICAL institutions work best when they reflect the communities they serve and when politicians are drawn from all walks of life. But our current crop of elected representatives do not represent the diversity of our communities and ordinary working people are outnumbered by those drawn from the worlds of business, politics, and the law.

Our local councillors do not reflect the demographic make-up of the communities they serve. According to the National Census of Local Authority Councillors in 2010, their average age increased from 55 in 1997 to 60 in 2010, 96% are white and only 31% are women.

And our Parliament is also far from representative. The average age of an MP is now 50, only 22% are women and only 4% are from non-white backgrounds (compared with 8% of the UK population as a whole). A quarter of local Authority councillors in 2010, their demographic make-up of the communities they serve. According to the National Census of Local Authority Councillors in 2010, their average age increased from 55 in 1997 to 60 in 2010, 96% are white and only 31% are women.

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Railways – public service for all or private profit for a few?

The big question in Brussels this autumn – privatisation of Europe’s railways – was top of the agenda at an ASLEF briefing at the Palace of Westminster for a delegation of drivers from Norsk Lokomotivmannsforbund, the Norwegian train drivers’ union, in Committee Room 18, overlooking the Thames.

Norway isn’t a member of the European Union, but it is a member of the European Economic Area. This gives Norway access to the EU’s single market in exchange for Norway adopting most EU legislation relating to the single European market.

The drivers – on a week-long fact-finding visit – wanted to know what privatisation had meant for passengers and employees in this country.

‘The privatisation of Britain’s publicly-owned railways is portrayed – by the privatised rail companies – as a success,’ said Mick Whelan, ASLEF’s general secretary. ‘But it was dogma; even Margaret Thatcher admitted it was a privatisation too far.

‘Privatisation didn’t create competition; it didn’t drive down prices; it didn’t mean the end of public subsidies. It created lots of geographical monopolies; fares have risen sharply; and taxpayer subsidies are higher than they were. So privatisation, on its own terms, has failed.

‘Yes, there’s been investment – by the taxpayer – but none by the privateers, who spend all their money winning the franchise. The cash for the trains, and the infrastructure, has all come from the public purse.

‘And, yes, there are more people travelling on trains. But that’s not because of privatisation. It’s because of increases in petrol prices and a growing population.

‘In this country we know that privatisation – or flogging off our national assets, as I call it – doesn’t work. It’s not the right model for Britain. It’s not the right model for Europe. And it’s not the right model for Europe.’

John Monks, who sits as a Labour peer in the House of Lords, was general secretary of the Trades Union Congress from 1993 to 2003, and ran the European Trade Union Confederation from 2003 to 2011, asked a rhetorical question. ‘Who can be against a European rail system?’

He recalled Ernest Bevin, leader of the Transport & General Workers’ Union and, later, Foreign Secretary, saying ‘he wanted to get on a train at Victoria station and go anywhere in Europe he damned well pleased.’

The point, said Lord Monks, is what kind of railway system do we want in Europe? A European rail system?

‘I’m a supporter of Europe but I fear deregulation and what we’ve worked for over the years. A lot of people will lose their jobs if Europe goes down this road…’

Kevin Lindsay, district organiser in Scotland, ridiculed the way that privatisation works in practice. Scottish railways, he said, can be run by the French, or the Germans, or by other European countries, but not by a Scottish company.

Rosie Winterton, Labour MP for Doncaster Central, and Opposition Chief Whip, said the reason the last Labour government didn’t renationalise the railways was that, in 1997, it was born of the political reaction to privatisation with contracts awarded after the deregulation. That pretty much sums up the aims of the whole package. Easier access for the private sector to the European rail market for new RUs and a 20% reduction in the cost and time taken to authorise rolling stock. This should lead to €500 million savings over five years.

It is often said that Britain, as the great inventor and innovator of railways, has ended up with a poorer infrastructure than our immediate neighbours. Other countries, we think, could learn from our mistakes.

But as well as our formative role in the creation of rail travel, we also have the dubious privilege of a franchised rail network, which has meant higher fares and bigger taxpayer subsidies as well as huge sums of money leaving the industry in dividends to shareholders, often moved off-shore.

The European Commission doesn’t want to learn from our mistakes but, rather, to make ‘the British model’ the rule for the rest of Europe through the Fourth Railway Package.

The Commission plans to introduce a mandatory tendering of public service contracts in December 2019 with contracts awarded after the adoption of the package not able to continue beyond 31 December 2022. It believes the cost of tendering will be covered by savings in subsidies due to competition.

Other proposals centre on ensuring an even more stringent separation of infrastructure managers, who own the network, and railway undertakings, which run the service. This, it is claimed, will ensure equal treatment for all train operators, whether private. The Commission wants to ensure any advantage a state company has in running the tracks and maintaining trains that run on those tracks are wiped out.

On issues of safety, the proposal seeks to ensure that in order to ‘realise the potential of the single market’ under the single market level of harmonisation is needed at the EU level. Powers to issue vehicle authorisations and safety certificates for train operators will be transferred to the European Railway Agency.

The Fourth Railway Package

What is the Fourth Railway Package? And what will it really mean for the railways in continental Europe? DAVE GOULD examines the European Commission’s proposals for a ‘single European railway area to foster European competitiveness and growth’…

Fourth Railway Package.

At the core of the proposals is a desire to create an open market, across the European rail system, open to companies throughout the world. The Commission acknowledges that to ensure high quality and integrated services it will be necessary to ‘continue to require a large proportion of rail services… to be provided under public service contracts, specified and subsidised by member states.’

So they do not suggest allowing only open access operations. But they propose two levels of competition with ‘those services that can be provided through open access and competition for the market to allow the transparent and cost-efficient award of public service contracts, as experienced today in some member states.’

In other words, the same system we have in Britain with franchises supplemented by the odd open access operator.

The transparent and cost-efficient award of public service contracts, as experienced today in some member states.'
Common challenges

When a delegation of drivers from Norsk Lokomotivmannsforbund came to London SIMON WELLER caught up with a couple of Norwegian drivers to find out what it’s like for women on the other side of the North Sea

While the delegation from the Norwegian train drivers’ union was in London I took the opportunity to discuss an issue common between our countries and respective rail industries; that of the challenges facing women in the driving grade.

I spoke with Rita Jørgensen, a driver with 27 years’ experience, first with the Danish State Railway and now with a private freight operator in Norway, and Grethe Thorsen, who has driven passenger trains for 11 years with Norges Statsbaner, the Norwegian state railway.

The number of women drivers in Norway is similar to that in Britain; 4.9% (80 drivers) on passenger trains and a similar percentage on freight (three!)

Although Norwegian law requires employers to seek to recruit women and people from ethnic minorities the problem appears similar, with women not seeing driving trains as the job for them. This is compounded by technical qualification requirements more stringent than over here.

What is in stark contrast is the legal right to flexible working for men and women – in the UK the employer must only give consideration to an application and is under no obligation to grant it; the Norwegians can reduce their hours by up to 80% for up to 10 years.

Maternity leave is another difference; pregnant women in Norway can determine when they wish to begin maternity leave; the only stipulation is they must start their leave at least three weeks before the due date.

Rita and Grethe said toilets and uniforms are not a problem in Norway – a clear departure from matters here in the UK for our women members!

Their union, Norsk Lokomotivmannsforbund, benefits from their activity as a high proportion of women members, nearly 50%, hold positions as reps in one form or another.

My conclusion? The challenges from the European Union, and privatisation, and encouraging women to consider driving trains as a career, are common for both NLF in Norway and ASLEF in Britain.
Activism out of anger

In May TOM CORBIN was elected to the city council in Salisbury, where he has lived and worked for 35 years. Here he explains what made him finally join a political party and put his name down on the ballot paper.

My activism was born out of anger at the way management in the railway industry treats its staff. My previous occupation, in the aircraft industry, had been in a blame free culture which worked really well and where there was a great deal of respect between all levels of staff. My perception of the railways is, shall we say, a little different.

I became secretary of Salisbury branch in 2005 and started to attend district council meetings – a forum where a lot of very useful information is dished out to branch secretaries or designated delegates to be passed on to members. As a new activist I was on a huge learning curve with information coming at me by the bucket load. At this time Simon Weller, now national organiser, was executive committee member for District 1 and he preached the need for members. As a new activist I was concerned I would be unable to properly fulfil the role due to work commitments – most unitary councillors are either retired or run their own businesses. That is not to say that the unpaid role of city councillor is not a busy one! Salisbury city, by parish standards, is big with 100 staff and an annual turnover of £4 million.

In the run up to the local elections on 2 May I asked for donations from my branch and district council for Salisbury Labour Party. Every little helps but the £250 received gave a great boost to our campaign. Thank you!

STEEP LEARNING CURVE

I say ‘our’ as I am part of a team of four in my ward. The unitary candidate, Unite activist Ricky Rogers, has been a councillor for many years and took great pride when, as mayor, rather than support the local Boxing Day hunt – Tony Salisbury remember – he was present in his civvies protesting loudly against fox hunting! Alongside me as city councillors I have two Unison members – Mike Osment, who has also served before as a councillor, and my wife Caroline, who was asked at short notice to stand because it was rightly felt that a woman’s touch was needed. For Caroline and me this was our first ‘big’ campaign, but the steep learning curve and experience was massively helped by ASlef.

Mick Whelan, Simon Weller and the EC agreed to fund a very intensive political course in February. There can be no doubt that the lessons learned did not stop with me. When it came to the election results we polled between 50 and 58% of the vote with Caroline proving the woman’s touch on the ballot by securing the most votes. If further proof were needed of the impact the course had, we were the only ward in Salisbury to have a clean sweep of Labour candidates. Salisbury still has a Tory majority but Labour has come from the very poor election results of 2009 to a strong second place.

Many members moan about Labour, about ASlef and about the political levy but I am proud of what ASlef has done and I am grateful to all who pay the political levy for helping give me the chance to better represent the communities of Salisbury and also of ASlef. Thank you!
It never felt like my party

People are disenchanted with the political class – with professional politicians who have no experience of real life – which is why COLLETTE GIBSON thinks it’s time for more working-class men and women in Parliament

At every election I have voted for the Labour Party. Not because I agreed with everything in the party’s manifesto, but because it was the party closest to my politics that had a realistic chance of winning. At times Labour has done some good things, but a lot of the time I could have cried in frustration at the policy opportunities the party has missed, watered down or, worse, when it has backed big business over ordinary working men and women.

I first became interested in politics when studying O-level sociology. I had always been interested in inequalities – in the treatment of animals by humans, and was active in the local anti-vivisection scene – but studying sociology opened my eyes to the inequalities in human society. I began to understand the dangers of a capitalist society for those who do not own the means of production and strongly sympathised with the ideas of Karl Marx. Of course, a Marxist society is neither achievable nor, arguably, desirable but it led me to explore the theories and solutions offered by the left and that is where my politics remain.

FOUNDED BY TRADE UNIONS

I never joined the Labour Party because it never felt like my party, a party founded by trade unions and acting on behalf of working-class men and women. But four years ago, attending an ITF conference, I spent time discussing politics with other delegates. I explained my frustration with the Labour Party, and my anger at its betrayal of working-class people. I was not alone; others shared my anger and frustration. But Simon Weller, my EC member, made a powerful argument for joining the party and changing it from within.

So powerful, in fact, that I joined the Labour Party four weeks later. I started going to local branch meetings, getting involved and, within 18 months, was elected as a district councillor – a position I have held for two years.

Now I am in the party I can see and feel the frustration of so many members at the swing to the right that happened under Tony Blair, and there is a genuine desire to change that. There is a real battle over who controls the party, left or right.

For me the real issue is the political class or professional politician – those who study Philosophy, Politics & Economics at Oxford and go straight into the political world after graduation, working for MPs as researchers or SPAds, before pursuing a seat regardless of any passion for the area or connections to the constituency. How can they possibly understand how you and I live? Or the single parent reliant on benefits? Or the person with disabilities who has lost their job since the Tories closed Remploy? Do they understand what it is to try and make ends meet on DLA? To fear the loss of their home because they have ‘too many bedrooms’? To feed and support a family on the minimum wage?

PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS

These professional politicians cannot – and do not – understand the struggle of so many ordinary working-class people day after day.

As a councillor, in opposition, I have very little influence over how the council administers its policies but the Labour group collectively scrutinises and questions decisions which affect working-class people in our district. As an individual I have dealt with the fall-out of some of the draconian policies that the Tories are inflicting upon vulnerable people.

I do understand what it is like to be unemployed and to survive on benefits. I do understand the threat of homelessness. I have lived these experiences and can empathise with my constituents when they come to me. And that is what is missing from so many in the Labour Party – an empathy with struggle.

WORKING-CLASS COMMITMENT

We need to reclaim the party for working people and get policies in place that genuinely help and support people when they need it. Ed Miliband has given a commitment to increase the number of working-class MPs but, ever the cynic, I’ll believe it when I see it! In the meantime, the trade union movement and the Labour Party have started a training programme to help encourage and support working people to stand for selection, from parish councils to parliament. ASLEF is playing its part and has just run its first political course for potential candidates.

There are still times I question my membership of the Labour Party. There is a lot wrong with the party and many of the decisions made at parliamentary level would have Keir Hardie spinning in his grave. But I can see that change is taking place – albeit slowly. We need more working-class people to get involved, become active and make their voices heard. Because we need MPs who understand our lives and our struggles, and policies that reflect that. Then the Labour Party really will be our party.
Freight is great
Nigel Gibson, District 5 organiser, and Dick Fisher, District 6 organiser, invite all members to a freight weekend at the Park Inn by Radisson, Peterborough, on 12 and 13 October.

Speakers on Saturday include general secretary Mick Whelan; Kelvin Hopkins, Labour MP for Luton South and co-ordinator of the ASLEF Parliamentary group; Ian Bertram, Inspector of Railways at the Office of Rail Regulation; and Stewart Langridge, operations director of Freightliner Heavy Haul.

On Sunday, Howard Kaye, EC member for District 5, chairs a panel – including Simon Weller, national organiser and lead officer for DB Schenker; Barry Hare, company council secretary; GB Railfreight; Nigel Roe buck, company council chair; DB Schenker; Phil Devonport, infrastructure monitoring company council; Nigel Gibson, District 5 organiser and lead officer for Freightliner Intermodal; Freightliner Heavy Haul and GB Railfreight; and vice-president Tosh McDonald – on the challenges facing freight today.

‘The invitation is not restricted to freight members or reps,’ says Nigel. ‘And is open to all ASLEF members.’

A significantly subsidised price of £50 includes Saturday buffet lunch, afternoon tea, evening meal, Saturday night bed and Sunday morning breakfast.

To book your place please send a cheque made payable to ASLEF District Secretary No 5 Organising Account to: Nigel Gibson, 5 Thomas Way, Braintree, Essex, CM7 3AJ.

Upcoming events

- **CAMBRIDGE – 5 AUGUST**
  Our branch meetings are now held at the Fountain Inn, 12 Regent Street, Cambridge. The next one is on Monday 5 August at 18:30.

- **RIPPLE LANE SWANSONG – 24 AUGUST**
  The Ripple Lane farewell bash will be held on Saturday 24 August from 19:00 at the LT Club at Hornchurch (District line station). Buffet provided. Tickets are £10 from Steve Wilson on 01708 445000.

- **STRATFORD – 24 AUGUST**
  Stratford branch looks forward to another get together on Saturday 24 August at the Railway Tavern from 13:00 for our retiring member, Alan Williamson, who has achieved 49 years’ service to the railway industry. Alan will be missed and we look forward to raising a glass or two to say farewell.

- **THREE BRIDGES CENTENARY – 20 OCTOBER**
  Three Bridges is celebrating its 100th year as an ASLEF branch and all present and past ASLEF members associated with the branch are invited to an informal afternoon on Sunday 20 October to celebrate this achievement. Guests include Mick Whelan, Simon Weller, Marz Colombini, Graham Morris and Southern company council. Buffet and bar from 1pm at Three Bridges Football Club, Jubilee Walk, Three Bridges, RH10 1XL. Further information from Paul Eden on 07952 482443 or paul@homerdaz.com or Roy Luxford on 07778 870937 or roy@royluxford.org.uk

- **FRATTON TRAIN CREW – 21 OCTOBER**
  There will be a reunion of retired Fratton train crew members from 12:00-15:00 on Monday 21 October at Fratton Rail & Social Club, Selbourne Terrace. All retired and serving train crew are welcome. Contact Gary White on 07798 706204 for further details.

- **Please send your Branch news to journal@aslef.org.uk**

Long service celebrated at East Ham
Terry Wilkinson, our EC member, presented Brother Keith Lloyd, a train operator at Upminster on the London Underground, with an engraved badge for his 40 years as an ASLEF member, and Annie Rutter, branch secretary, Salisbury

Reports and badges
At our branch meeting at the Railway Tavern in Stratford, we received a cheque made payable to ASLEF District Secretary No 5 Organising Account to: Nigel Gibson, 5 Thomas Way, Braintree, Essex, CM7 3AJ.

Long service (from left) Peter Webb (45 years), Ian Drake (20), Alan Hill (40), Pam Walton (15), with branch secretary P. Dodgson

Mick Whelan, accompanied by Marz Colombini, our EC member, presented badges to a number of our members (the longest serving was 45 years) and certificates to our colleague support members who recently received Samaritans’ trauma training. RMS members joined us for an enjoyable evening, as drivers, past and present, swapped stories over drinks and a buffet. A good time was had by all!

Annie Rutter, branch secretary, Salisbury
Mick Holder turns back the clock, and the pages of The Locomotive Journal, to August 1913 and a report from our Lowestoft branch...

REASONABLE WAGE FOR RISK
The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen’s branch in Lowestoft, Suffolk, reported a meeting at which the chairman ‘called upon Mr Warwick, our esteemed organising secretary, to address us. The meeting enjoyed an hour and a half’s straight talk from him on the benefits to be gained by us as enginemen and firemen by the provision of an Eight Hour Day, combined with a reasonable wage, for the risk and responsibility of our calling.

‘We were shown very plainly that the present system of ten to twelve hours was a bar to promotion; that the overtime was a curse, because it sapped our vitality and deprived us of the pleasure and personal profit of a social life with our fellows; in fact, that our lives were hardly worth living without more leisure; and that our inability to think and reason on this matter was the result of the curse of overtime.’

RESOLUTION FOR EIGHT HOUR DAY
The following resolution was passed: ‘That this body of locomotive men is in favour of an eight hour day, combined with a higher rate of pay for our skill and responsibility.’

This was backed by Dai Pilot, who said: ‘As far as locomotive men are concerned, the Eight Hour Day is now long overdue. The eight hour day question, as time goes on, will become a great national one. It now seems that those who are strongest in unity and in the power of the strike, viz cotton operatives, engineers, railwaymen, have Bills deposited in the Commons.

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A VAST ARMY OF WORKERS
‘Here you have a vast army of workers, probably about two millions, pledged to obtain the Eight Hour Day through legislation, but it remains to be seen whether this great number will wait long for legislation, taking into consideration that the coal miners took about thirty years getting theirs through the House.

‘The case of the shunting engineman should be taken up direct, for I do not know anyone who would oppose him having an Eight Hour Day. Nothing attempted – nothing done.’
Have we got your number?

Do we have your up-to-date contact details?

- Mobile phone number
- Current email address

Providing this information will allow us to send you targeted and timely information, particularly in times of dispute or unrest.

There are a number of ways to get this information to us:
- Update your details via the ASLEF website www.aslef.org.uk and log into the member area.
- Email info@aslef.org.uk include your full name, branch, mobile number and email address in the body of the email.
- Give your name, mobile number and email address to your branch secretary, to post on to head office. Your details will not be handed on to third parties.
WILLIE O’BRIEN EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT

Willie O’Brien, a member of the Executive Committee from 1989 to 1994, and president from 1990 to 1994, started his career as an engine cleaner at Polmadie in 1953 at the age of 16. Eventually he achieved his ambition to become a driver and was on the high speed train on its promotional run when, filled with dignitaries, politicians and press, it broke down at Beattick; an event Willie was never allowed to forget!

Willie was an activist for ASLEF, with LDC membership and Scottish sectional council representation. He was one of the leading delegates from Scotland representing ASLEF on marches in London and Liverpool in the 1960s, ’70s and ’80s. He arrived on the EC from Scotland representing ASLEF in March 1980, unseating a sitting councillor and helping Labour gain control.

He worked the EC during one of the most difficult periods in ASLEF’s history. The Conservative government was preparing the railway industry for privatisation and made a determined effort to break the union. Splintering depots, freight from passenger, regional rail from intercity, hoping to sub-divide the union into smaller groups with decisions being made at local level on wages and conditions without a national executive.

Willie served the union well as the Tories brought in the Transport Act to privatise Britain’s railways. He was president of an executive that ensured ASLEF remained a strong trade union which today has the respect of the wider trade union and labour movement.

To Mary, Willie’s wife, and family, we say thank you for your support, without which Willie’s work for ASLEF would have been that much harder. Willie O’Brien, we salute you.

Lew Adams, former general secretary

NEWTOWN HEATH SAD LOSS OF FIVE RETIRED DRIVERS

As local and council reps, these five retired drivers, who all worked at Newton Heath, were solid supporters of depot and branch. All five were loyal and supportive through the rough times and will be greatly missed.

ROLAND BARRETT, 90, started his footplate career at Oldham Lees in 1940; when it closed he moved to Newton Heath until he retired in 1985.

WALTER JOHNSON, 86, started on the loco at Patricroft depot when he was 29. He remained there until it closed, transferring to Newton Heath and then Manchester Victoria until his retirement.

KEN PHYTHIAN, 83, began his railway career as a 16-year-old cleaner at Agecroft in 1946, with subsequent moves to Patricroft, Newton Heath, and Manchester Victoria.

JIMMY SAVILLE, 74, began his footplate service at Newton Heath shed in 1954 at the age of 15. When it closed he made the move to Manchester Victoria until retirement.

JIMMY SAVILLE, 74, began his footplate career at Newton Heath in 1955 and worked here until his retirement.

J.M. Black, RMS, Newton Heath

JOHN RELF TOP MAN

It is with great sorrow that I write to inform you of the death of a very popular train driver. John Relf passed away, after a short illness, on 14 May. He was 52.

John joined the Underground in 1980 as a guard on the Metropolitan line at Neasden before moving to Baker Street, and then on to the Central line, where he passed out driver, before returning to Baker Street on the Jubilee line in 1987. When Baker Street closed John moved to Wembley Park before completing the cycle by returning to Neasden and the Metropolitan line in 2001.

His popularity was down to his easy going nature. He always had time for everyone, whether they be new and alone in the mess room or among the banter of the smokers, more recently outside. John always took a genuine interest in everything anyone said, especially if it involved cars, rock music or his beloved Aston Villa. This was borne out by the massive attendance at his funeral of colleagues, past and present, from all his depots and across all the grades.

John leaves behind Carmel, his wife of 25 years, and our thoughts are with her and their families. We remember with great affection the time we were privileged to be in John’s company.

Paul West, Neasden branch secretary

JOE McGILVRAY

On behalf of our chairman Alistair Nixon, and all our colleagues at Yoker, I would like to convey our condolences at the sad passing of Joe to Linda and his family. We were only too glad to have Joe on our LLC when he arrived at Yoker, bringing with him a wealth of union experience. We greatly appreciate everything Joe did for the drivers at Yoker, his hard work on the diagrams and rosters and in dealing with local issues. A true ASLEF man who will be sadly missed by all.

Mick Kane, LLC secretary, Yoker

STRATFORD FINAL DEPARTURES

June was a very sad month for Stratford, the depot that was once the biggest in Europe, with the final departure of several old loco guys, who will all be greatly missed by their former workmates.

BILL STEVENS, 85, was a well-liked man who, in his own time, used to ferry handicapped people to and from appointments.

ERIC GLADSTONE did many years on the committee of the B.R.S.A. club.

BILL MEAD, 80, a good old fashioned Cockney boy, was always good for a laugh and a wind-up. His son Christopher was also at Stratford.

JOHN BELL, 73, had a full railway life, ending up as one of the foremen, when Stratford finally shut. He had three sons at Stratford: John junior, Andy and Nick.

JOE PIPER, 58, was liked by all; his brother wrote an obituary last month.

Dave Pizzie, Stratford branch

PHIL FARRER MAN WITH BEARD

Brother Phil Farrer, a driver at St Pancras for East Midlands Trains, passed away on 7 June after a long fight with cancer. He was 58.

Phil began his railway career as a guard at Southend before becoming a driver at Gidea Park. He moved on to Euston, Virgin Trains, before joining Midland Mainline in 2000. He was well-liked and respected by all his colleagues, perhaps best summed up by the phrase ‘a gentle man and a gentleman’. Known affectionately as ‘man with beard’, he was quiet and calm and did not have a bad word for anyone.

The service at Macclesfield crematorium was packed with his colleagues, as was the laying of his ashes in Essex, where he rejoined his wife Hazel who passed away from cancer in 2010. We will miss you, Phil.

Rebekah Price, company council rep, St Pancras, East Midlands Trains
I was involved in a SPAD in September 2012. The company council believed, and had been informed, that I was to be treated under the newly agreed disciplinary procedures. I resumed driving again on 7 January four months to the day after my SPAD. On 15 March I was issued with a form 1. On 24 April I had a meeting with the head of drivers and production director. The outcome was that my form 1 was withdrawn. I have no doubt that without the hard work of the company council and Mick Whelan, general secretary, I would still be facing a form 1 charge.

I have written to thank all branches on CrossCountry for the support they have shown in sending resolutions to head office for action. Thank you; it just goes to show why ASLEF is so important to us all!

Simon Black, driver, Birmingham

Debate, not rabble-rousing
ASLEF has done a great job raising living standards for drivers, and is a necessary bulwark in today’s railway, but the article from AAD headlined ‘The Tories, New Labour and class war’ in the July Journal left a lot to be desired.

Does ASLEF really believe that abhorrent statements such as ‘We have people living too long’ and ‘If there are too many people to draw a pension then let some of them die’ were made by any mainstream member of the Tory party? If they do, then please provide details so the source can be rightly vilified. It is not tenable to believe that neither the Daily Mail nor the Guardian would fail to pick up such crass comments; and I hope the right-wing press doesn’t get to see a copy of the AAD article.

By printing such unverifiable statements that can now be attributable to our vice-president, ASLEF is handing an enormous gift to people who wish to dismiss all trade unions as a bunch of left-wing loonies. Informed political debate is welcome, but such inflamatory rabble-rousing could bring the name of ASLEF into disrepute. Informed political debate is welcome, but such inflamatory rabble-rousing could bring the name of ASLEF into disrepute.

Richard Butler, East Midlands Trains driver, Derby

I remember Maggie, too…
Re the letter ‘Remembering Maggie’ in the July Journal. I, too, remember Mrs Thatcher and her government’s attack on the working conditions of ASLEF members during the 1982 flexible rostering dispute. Only one group of workers was looked after and that was the police, who were used to weaken trade unions, like the miners, trying to protect their jobs.

P. Begley, retired driver, Bedford

…and the Falklands War
I have no admiration for Margaret Thatcher and respectfully suggest to Reginald Sargeant (Letters, July Journal) that before he sings her praises he carries out a little research into her administration. The Falklands War came about due to the policies of the British government. Thatcher was in danger of being ousted as Prime Minister and the Argentine junta invading a virtually undefended island gave her the chance to restore her popularity.

That many people would lose their lives fighting this war had no bearing on her decision. Her only concern was retaining political power, conveniently forgetting that her administration had caused the crisis in the first place.

If Reginald Sargeant took the trouble to read My Falkland Days by Sir Rex Hunt he might agree this was not a justifiable war, as he suggests, but megalomania.

Ray Young, ex-Salop/Three Bridges

A proud railwayman…
Joe McGilvray’s sudden and untimely passing has shocked us all. He joined ASLEF in 1977 and was in the Polmadie branch until 2011 when he transferred to Yoker branch. While at Polmadie he held the positions of branch chair and branch secretary and was also a local health and safety rep, secretary of the local level committee and, of course, executive committee member for District 2.

Joe did not agree with others for agreement’s sake; he would challenge and question but, regardless which side of the argument won the day, he would ultimately be the advocate championing that position because he believed in collective responsibility, a principle which has helped ASLEF through some of its darkest days. On the EC, Joe quickly dismissed negative suggestions, made it clear he was no one’s fool, and established his own constructive style. He maintained an honourable and pragmatic outlook in pursuing the union’s aspirations.

Joe was an ASLEF team player. A proud railwayman, a proud train driver and ASLEF through and through. Our deepest sympathies are with Linda, Joe’s family, and his friends.

Alan Moir, Polmadie branch

…and true gentleman
Joe McGilvray, who died in May at the age of 54, would always put others before himself. He was happiest in the company of his four grandchildren because he was still a big kid at heart and, whether it was playing football or teaching them to ride their bikes, or, for the two girls, playing with Barbies, he enjoyed every second.

Joe’s funeral took place on 7 June and I tried to prepare his children, Kellyann, Annmarie and Ian, but even I was overwhelmed by the number of people who turned up to pay their respects to Joe and support us at this terribly sad time.

Joe's
memory will live on in me and his family for ever but we are not the only ones who will never forget this true gentleman. He was my life, my future, while to others he was a true friend, brother and respected colleague.

Linda Ferguson, Retired member, Glasgow branch

Tower of strength

My late husband John, an Underground driver on the Metropolitan line and ASLEF member for 33 years, sadly passed away in May. I would like to thank Jim McManus (Neasden rep, Metropolitan LUL) who was a tower of strength when John became ill and also helped me since John passed away. Thanks to Jim, John’s last few months were stress-free regarding work and, afterwards, Jim took time to help me with all the final paperwork, etc.

I would also like to thank all of John’s colleagues and friends for their kind words and support, and the wonderful donation of £1,310 which, with other monies collected, will be going to the cancer charity at University College London Hospitals. This meant so much not only to me but to his family, especially his father, who was so proud of him.

Carmel Relf, Stevenage, Hertfordshire

An honour and a pleasure

It is with regret that, due to continuing illness, I have to relinquish my position as District 8 organiser, a position I have held for the last twelve years. My wife and I would like to thank Mick Whelan, the general secretary, Keith Norman, the previous GS, and the Executive Committee for their kind support over the last year. Unfortunately, after I got over the cancer, my lungs decided to pack up on me. I thank everyone for their thoughts, letters, emails and phone calls during the past year – they were a comfort to us both.

It has been an honour and a pleasure to serve the union and membership in various positions over the last 35 years from branch up to and including acting as general secretary. Thanks go to Ray Buckton, Don Pullen, and Ted Miles for their encouragement and education to me in the early days. Also to living legends Tony West, Jeff Craig, Dave Feldwick, and John Robson for their wise counsel.

I would like to thank all the HO staff who have assisted me, the Trains Functional Committee, the unsung heroes of the H&S council, and Thompsons solicitors. Also all the branches, including Tube Lines and Croydon Light Railway, representatives and individuals who put their faith in me by electing me. Also to comrades no longer with us – Andy Viner and Mick Turrell.

When I started in this role twelve years ago salaries on LUL were £24,000; they are now £48,000 with, still, a 100% defined benefit pension scheme. This has only been achieved with the support and unity of the membership. With many issues – like driverless trains – to fight I hope my successor is given the same support.

We have many badges and awards for loyalty, but the one I would like to give is to the best executive member in the country, Terry Wilkinson, for being a loyal friend and colleague. The times over these last years working together when his humour and quick insight into issues helped us resolve many problems and overturn ridiculous management proposals were many. District 8 is lucky to have him. I wish all I have worked with and the friends I have made the best for the future.

Steve Grant, District No 8 organiser

Up to the individual driver

The union is campaigning to remove the need for drivers to attend inquests following fatalities in which they are involved. While this is a commendable aim, might it not be better to campaign to let the individual driver concerned have the option?

I was involved in a fatality in April 2008, the train I was driving killing a member of the public. My experience of the subsequent inquest was not traumatic – it was, in fact, very positive; only by hearing the victim’s family telling me face to face that it wasn’t my fault did I really believe that was the case. Had I not been there, then, obviously, I wouldn’t have got that first-hand closure.

It was useful to hear first-hand the opinion of the police and the Home Office pathologist. I’m aware that I speak only for myself and from my own case, but insisting that we shouldn’t attend strikes me as potentially counter-productive. Let’s present a case for drivers having a choice on a case-by-case basis.

Dan Clarke, driver, TransPennine Express, Newcastle

Hook & Parrot here I come

It was nice to read about a couple of old pals from the past: Jack Housley, from Carr Loco, who took my place in the top link at Donny when I was passed for driving in 1965, and Vic Raskin, an old mate from my ten happy years at London Vic E. I’d not seen or heard anything about them until the June issue of Journal. I shall make a point of visiting the Hook & Parrot in Seaton when next down that way…

Bob Bradley, Brentwood, Essex

To advertise please phone 020 7324 2400 or send an email to journal@aslef.org.uk

FAVERSHAM branch is selling mugs and tee-shirts ‘devoted’ to Mrs Thatcher! Both are £10 and illustrate the branch view of her vicious right-wing policies. They can be obtained from the branch website www.aslef-favershambranch.co.uk or from Andy Cooke at andycooke69@hotmail.com or (mobile) 07771 923831.

THAMESLINK 25 YEAR SPECIAL EDITION MUGS: Double sided with 319 one side and route branding the other. £5 plus £3 p+p payable to Network Southeast Railway Society. Orders to NSERS, 100 Whitley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 8ND. For further information visit www.network.southeast.net

MOTHERWELL 100 REGALIA: To celebrate its centenary, Motherwell branch has produced commemorative badges (£5), ties (£7 for blue, blue clip-on or maroon) and brochures (£2.50). Cheques to ‘ASLEF Motherwell Branch Centenary Fund’ and further information from Andy Jones on 07767 077907 or motherwellbs@aslef.org.uk

THREE BRIDGES branch commemorative centenary badges, limited numbers available, in red and gold or black and gold for £5, cheques payable to ASLEF Three Bridges Branch 213. Further info from Paul Eden (07952 482443) paul@homerdaz.com or Dave Mansfield (07816 960331) david.mansfield14@btinternet.com

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ENGRAVING: ASLEF driver based in Sunderland branch offers professional engraving at reasonable prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on a pint tankard which is pictured. For further details contact Paul Potts by email at ppotts1969@hotmail.co.uk

DENNIS BOSTOCK’S UNGROUND MEMOIRS 1968-2008 at £15 on a CD with free Ongar line and engineers DVD. Text details to 07599 018271. Pay by cheque or postal order only on receipt of disc. In ASLEF, and you, I trust.
William Morris

Socialist by design

The William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow has reopened after a £5m refit. KEITH RICHMOND went along to see what it reveals about the man and his magic.

William Morris is one of those figures who have, in recent years, been pushed to the periphery of history. His name is familiar, still, but many people would now struggle to say why he was once so well known.

The William Morris Gallery, open again after a £5 million refit, seeks to offer answers for an audience in the 21st century. Morris was, it says in the first room of the gallery which was his home as a teenager, a ‘designer, craftsman, poet, and social activist’. And more besides. Arguably the single most influential British designer of the 19th century, Morris was also a manufacturer, retailer, novelist, translator, editor, publisher, painter, political radical, social theorist, and environmental campaigner. A polymath in an age of polymaths.

With the arrogance of youth, I determined to do no less than to transform the world with beauty

William Morris was born at Elm House ‘in Walthamstow, a suburban village on the edge of Epping Forest, in Essex, in 1834’; twelve years later the family moved to Water House – now the William Morris Gallery – which was their home until 1856. He went up to Exeter College, Oxford, with the intention of taking holy orders, but fell in with the Pre-Raphaelites – Morris, with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Edward Burne-Jones, painted frescoes for the Oxford Union – and decided to become an architect instead. It was at Oxford, in 1859, that he married Jane Burden, a stunningly beautiful Pre-Raphaelite model and muse, who broke his tender heart by enjoying a long, tangled, and torrid affair with Rossetti.

I have never been in any rich man’s house which would not have looked the better for having a bonfire made of nine-tenths of all that it held

In 1861 he set up Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co – later Morris & Company – a decorative arts firm whose textiles, tapestries, furniture, wallpaper, and stained glass brought about a revolution in public taste; in 1877 he helped found the Kelmscott Press which became as famous for the typefaces – such as Chaucer, Golden, and Troy – that he designed as for its beautifully-printed books.

What I mean by socialism is a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master’s man, neither idle nor overworked… in which all men would be living in equal condition, and would manage their affairs unwastefully

Morris stood down as treasurer of the National Liberal League to join the Social Democratic Federation but, after falling out with H.H. Hyndman, left the party with Walter Crane, Edward Aveling, and Karl Marx’s daughter Eleanor to set up the Socialist League. He gave speeches, wrote pamphlets – such as Monopoly: How Labour is Robbed – and edited The Commonweal newspaper.

I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few

The William Morris Gallery, as befits a museum dedicated to a leading light of the Arts & Crafts movement, is beautifully restored and cleanly and imaginatively laid out. On display are chairs, ceramics, tapestries, stained glass windows, lots of pictures – including Burne-Jones’s watercolour of St George slaying the Dragon – Morris’s piano, copies of his political pamphlets and his utopian socialist fantasy News from Nowhere, as well as a replica of the artist’s smock he wore and a reconstruction of his shop at 449 Oxford Street.

The house, which is owned and run by Waltham Forest Council, is on the edge of Lloyd Park, a short walk from Walthamstow Central on the Victoria line. If you want an insight into the mind – as well as the life, the times, and the work – of one of the 19th century’s most original thinkers, this is the place to start.

The William Morris Gallery in Forest Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 4PP is open from Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm. Admission is free.
Prize Crossword No. 88 set by Zebedee

Across
1 Treat badly (5)
4 A military trainee (5)
10 The members of a religious community living together (5)
11 Country boy hugged by his mother (7)
12 Not settled, so not given support (8)
13 A vertical spar for supporting sails (4)
15 A blanket-like cloak with a hole in the centre for the head (6)
17 The West Wind personified (6)
19 Fraught with extreme danger (4)
20 One kind of tube fare in Rome (8)
23 A wrench (7)
24 Note for a pick-me-up (5)
25 Hot meals supplied in early stages of competition (5)
26 Cornwall’s administrative centre (5)

Down
2 A state of depression (5)
3 Unobtrusive hat sported with style (8)
5 …. Rocco (with Peter O’Toole in 1980 film Stuntman) (4)
6 Grave words (7)
7 A specialist in care for the feet (11)
8 Left part of church in fall from the faith (5)
9 The most outstanding work of a creative artist (11)
14 A bottle with a stopper; for serving wine or water (8)
16 Ran up with speed to recount what happened (7)
18 A small being, human in form, playful and having magical powers (5)
21 Possessor (5)
22 Tie or link together (4)

Solution to prize crossword No 87 which appeared in the July 2013 edition of the ASLEF Journal

Congratulations to Ken Tarleton of Guildford, Surrey, who was last month’s winner

Across
1 Of the Night 8 Arizona 9 Milan 10 Swim
11 Jean 12 Nor 14 Uneven 15 Anyhow 18 Car 20 Aqua
21 Lima 23 Amigo 24 Harlech 25 Dambusters

Down
1 Oxidise 2 Troy 3 Enamel 4 Imminent 5 Helen
6 Cassius Clay 7 Andrew Sachs 13 Hecatomb 16 Heiress
17 Hughes 19 Raisa 22 Free

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

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More than just a union
Freightliner Heavy Haul

Freight Train Drivers

If you’re an experienced freight train driver, if you’re enthusiastic about your job, and you’d like to be part of the team that makes us the UK’s leading rail freight operator, then we’d like to hear from you. With competitive pay and an opportunity to join a final salary pension scheme, email your CV to guttenl@freightliner.co.uk