Down in the tube station at midnight: Train operators going underground

FINN BRENNAN: Lessons of the wildcat strikes of 1989
TOSH McDONALD: What has the political fund done for us?
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Taxpayers fork out twice to travel in cattle class

The ORR report for 2012-13 is out and we are not surprised by its contents; once more the taxpayer has had to stump up £4 billion to subsidise the flawed model that generated over £700 million in surplus with £204 million going in shareholder dividends. When passengers are expected to pay more to be treated worse than cattle in certain circumstances.

The media coverage did not focus on this but the disparity per passenger journey across the UK – £2.19 in England, £7.60 in Wales and £9.33 in Scotland – and this concerns me for two reasons. The first is that, given the high level of cost for most turn up and go fares, no one sees it as ironic that you can pay hundreds of pounds to travel and still be subsidised for each journey. The second is that those of us in the industry recognise the figures will be skewed by population density and volume, especially in and around London, but the subsidy figures do not reflect any comparative investment figures for the UK because we know that the north-west and north-east of England, Scotland and Wales have had nowhere near the money that is disproportionately invested in the south-east, both in infrastructure and rolling stock.

We are seeking, with our sister trade unions, a judicial review of the proposed East Coast franchising process; after the West Coast debacle we need to ensure the rights and needs of employees are given due consideration. The review also raises issues around the new trend for direct award which causes concern for our members’ futures and the shape of the industry.

This union evolves and, with that in mind, we wish DO7 Stan Moran a long and happy retirement and thank him for all he did for us in all his roles. Brian Corbett takes over and we wish him every success. I also congratulate DO1 Graham Morris and Tosh McDonald, EC member for District 4, on their re-election.

Mick Whelan, general secretary, ASLEF
The train drivers’ union
I am woman, hear me roar in numbers too big to ignore

**SUE HOWE reports on International Women’s Day**

I attended District 8’s International Women’s Day celebration upstairs at the Yorkshire Grey in Theobald’s Road, central London. It was a well attended get together with as many men as women there; a good start!

Deborah Reay welcomed everyone and introduced a fistful of speakers, the first of which was London Assembly Member Val Shawcross who said it was sad that so many women are still being discriminated against but it takes women drive and commitment to change things. She said transport needs women’s voices to be heard regarding proposals for changes on the tube. Boris Johnson, she said, has wasted opportunities to involve all sections of society in the capital. Val finished by saying ASLEF women are a great asset and support.

Adeline Ginn, founder and chair of Women in Rail, said rail customers are split 50-50 between men and women, but only 15% of rail employees are female. Productivity, she said, goes up when both sexes are evenly represented. Women, she said, can make a difference.

Annie Rutter, the first female train driver, was to have been our last speaker but, unfortunately, was unable to attend due to an accident. Debbie Reay read out a piece she had written, detailing the ups and downs of forging a way forward for women in the rail industry. Times have changed, and for the better, but even now, fewer than 1 in 20 train drivers is a woman.

But I would walk 500 miles... and I would walk 500 more

Colm Farrell, who trades under the WWF monicker of Hazard, is walking 5,000 miles through every county in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales in aid of the suicide prevention and bereavement service Console. He hopes to raise £5,000. ‘Colm, who comes from County Galway, relies on the goodwill of people he meets on the road to give him a plank, as he calls it, or bed, for the night,’ says Jim Teague of Shrewsbury branch, whose son Jac met him on the way to Haverfordwest. ‘Given the sadly regular dealings ASLEF members have to cope with, relating to suicides, I thought we might be able to look out for him en route.’
Back to boot camp

ROB SMITH, DRS business council, reports back from Unions Together’s political school

ASLEF is committed to raising its political profile and its ability to influence policy making. Part of this ongoing commitment is the provision of training to enable members to become local or national policy makers.

With the relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party under scrutiny, Andy Botham, Howard Kaye and I went to a political boot camp run by Unions Together, the campaigning voice of the 15 trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party.

The programme included seminars on the economy, housing, the welfare state, public speaking, and the workings of parliament. Guest speakers included London Assembly Member Tom Copley and Matthew Pennycook, prospective parliamentary candidate for Greenwich & Woolwich.

Faiza Shaheen, of the New Economics Foundation, a centre-left think tank, dispelled many of George Osborne’s economic myths. Since 2010 real earnings have fallen by 5.5% and, although retail sales are rising, so are levels of unsecured borrowing! She suggested alternatives to promote a balanced economic recovery, such as the introduction of a living wage, and encouraging banks to invest in job creation, rather than the controversial help to buy scheme.

There was a lively debate about the welfare state, with delegates disagreeing about a welfare cap. Matt Pennycook explained that the current welfare budget is around £159 billion, with £1 billion lost through fraud or error, compared to around £70 billion lost in tax avoidance!

Delegates practiced writing and presenting speeches with coaching provided by political journalist Joy Johnson, Ken Livingstone’s spin doctor when he was Mayor of London, and now a columnist for Tribune.

We may not all be content with the current state of parliament, or the Labour Party, but I believe trade unions are at the heart of the labour movement and will be instrumental in shaping the future policy of the party.

ASLEF’s political fund has allowed our union to campaign on a range of issues (see page 11) from rail fares to keeping the East Coast in public hands. The fund also allows ASLEF to organise and send members to training courses such as this political boot camp.

ROCK’N’ROLL TOSH Tosh McDonald has been re-elected, unopposed, for a third term as executive committee member for District 4. Tosh was first elected to the post in 2004.

500 CLUB: F Gates, with number 22, won the April draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £372.

Jon Trickett, deputy chair of the Labour Party and Shadow Minister with Responsibility for Procurement Policy, has blown away the myth of private good, public bad. He cites the private banks, too big to fail, that needed a public bailout; the tragedy of Southern Cross, the biggest provider of health and social care in Britain; and the failure of G4S at the London Olympics to recruit enough staff so the army had to be brought in at the last moment. Jon points out that inefficiency is built into the system. The £50 billion contract for the West Coast main line was managed by three civil servants and we were left with a bill for litigation, picked up the taxpayer, of £50 million. Under this Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, says Jon, we have seen the ‘socialisation of risk and the privatisation of reward.’

People went to prison – and died – to win the right to universal suffrage in this country. That’s one of the reasons it’s important to get out and vote this month.

The other is to keep out far-right parties such as UKIP and its saloon bar bore of a leader, Nigel Farage. But democracy can be a curious concept and The Economist was spectacularly dry about events in Ukraine. ‘Those living in dictatorships,’ it pondered, ‘often harbour the delusion that the point of democracy is that you get the government you want. Those living in democracies soon realize that is not the system’s most salient feature: rather, it is that a large number of voters get the government they do not want and are expected to put up with it until the next election.’

Simon Heffer wasn’t pulling punches in the Daily Mail when he described Boris Johnson, London Mayor, as ‘an irrelevance with little appeal beyond the M25’ who ‘does not connect with the serious issues affecting voters.’ The Heff added, for good measure: ‘Boris was unimpressive as an MP, lousy as a shadow minister, and his reputation as mayor is as a comedy turn. If he’s the Tories’ main hope, God help them.’

Claudio Abbado, conductor at La Scala, the LSO, and the Berlin Philharmonic, who died earlier this year, was as passionate about his politics as he was about his music. He voted communist all his life because, he said, it was the ‘most anti-fascist party.’

Network Rail is coughing up £16 million compensation to train and freight operating companies in lieu of lost revenue after the destruction of the Dawlish line in south Devon during the storms earlier this year.

‘International’ policy co-ordination is like the Loch Ness monster,’ write Olivier Blanchard, Jonathan Ostry and Atish Ghosh in a paper for the IMF’s global economy forum. ‘Much discussed but rarely seen.’
When Adam delved and Eve span who was then the gentleman?

**KATE MAKOWSKA** of King’s Cross branch reports from the TUC women’s conference

> The story of women’s struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist, nor to any one organisation, but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights.’
> – Gloria Steinem

Attending this year’s conference was an eye-opening experience. I was shocked at how much discrimination and injustice there still is in this wealthy and beautiful country of ours.

There were many wonderful, strong, women at the event, which addressed many of the issues on which trade unions have worked (and still are working). They spoke about how these issues affect us, our families and our future.

It is hard to comprehend that in some parts of the working world women are still paid less money, and receive fewer benefits, for doing exactly the same job as men; as well as being penalised, bullied and abused for being female, which is disgraceful.

Many families are struggling to put food on the table, and bring up their children, because of a broken benefits system, lack of job security and lack of equality. Discrimination doesn’t only affect women; it affects their partners and their children, too.

It was extremely emotional and heartwarming to listen to Irmíta Salanueva, the daughter of René González, one of the Miami Five. She told us of the struggle to free her father and make her family complete again. She burst into tears while thanking everyone for their support and saying how getting her father out of jail would have been impossible without it.

Being a delegate underlined the brilliant work that ASLEF; the TUC, and other trade unions do in this country and abroad. There is so much to this amazing institution and so many wonderful people putting their time into fighting for all we have: Wendy Hurst of District 5, Debbie Reay of District 8, Collette Gibson of District 7, who attended as delegates, and Lee James and Liz Cocks who supported us as visitors. ASLEF representation was highly professional; the motions, on the terrible situation in Greece and the proposal for breastfeeding vouchers, were proposed in a strong and comprehensive manner.

I am proud to be a woman and consider myself lucky to be part of ASLEF. I believe every worker should be part of, protected and supported by a trade union to ensure that basic human rights are delivered to every human being. We should all support each other and fight for a better future for us all.

Rail unions seek judicial review

ASLEF, the RMT and the TSSA have launched an application for a judicial review to challenge the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition over InterCity East Coast and the award of rail franchises. The three unions believe members’ jobs and conditions, as well as the interests of passengers and taxpayers, are threatened by the government’s failure to adequately consult over the future of the East Coast main line.

The unions are concerned that, despite the Brown review of rail franchising recommending that decisions on rail franchises should take a minimum of 24 months, the government is rushing through the East Coast privatisation in 15 months, to be concluded before the next election. In its haste to push public services back into the private sector the coalition has cut corners, breaching its own commitment to proper consultation of stakeholders, including passenger groups and the rail unions.

Mick Whelan, general secretary of ASLEF, said: ‘It is imperative that we raise the genuine concerns of all stakeholders but, especially, the employees before this is rushed through. We cannot, in good conscience, allow the mistakes of the past to happen again.’

Mick Cash, acting general secretary of the RMT, said: ‘The public have a right to transparency about an ideologically-driven attempt to sell off Britain’s most successful rail route to speculators and chancers after two previous private sector failures.’

And Manuel Cortes, general secretary of the TSSA, said: ‘The coalition knows that rail franchising is not fit for purpose.’
Fierce the beacon’s light is flaming

**JOHN BOREHAM** reports on the Welsh Labour Party conference at Llandudno

It was with great pleasure that I had the privilege of representing the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen at the Wales Labour Party conference in Llandudno. It was the last conference for Stan Moran, as our delegation leader, and I would like to thank him for his assistance at both Wales Labour and Wales TUC; both conferences will be duller without Stan’s professionalism and inimitable style.

We were very fortunate that our busy general secretary was able to attend and he joined in meetings with Assembly Members and Members of Parliament to further ASLEF’s aims. We listened to Ed Miliband’s address, delivered in a relaxed style from centre stage, which underlined how this country is worse off under the Tories to the tune of £1,600 per worker since the start of the Tory-Lib Dem parliament. And how their perception of workers in this country is of beer swilling bingo players who should be eternally grateful for George Osborne’s budget.

Carwyn Jones, the First Minister of Wales, referred to the recent furore over who will pay for the Great Western electrification to Swansea and the valleys. David Cameron, speaking on the BBC, gave a commitment that the government would pay, but now they refuse to meet and are seeking to hold a debate in the press where they can camouflage the truth. The Tories have launched an attack on all that Wales Labour has achieved in government in Wales and this latest attack is, he said, designed to deflect criticism from their shammbolic record at Westminster.

Our weekend in North Wales concluded with an address from Owen Smith, the Shadow Secretary for State for Wales, on the importance of the European elections in May to both Wales and the UK as a whole. Remember vote – and vote Labour – don’t get confused by statistics and all the rubbish from UKIP Europe is important, we must stay in, and we stand to lose far more by opting to leave.

Can’t pay? Won’t pay!

**TOSH McDONALD** joined the Freedom Ride in South Yorkshire

From 1 April pensioners and disabled people have no longer been able to travel on trains for free because of the government imposed cuts that the South Yorkshire passenger transport executive has been forced to make. So in April pensioners and disabled activists have travelled on trains, refusing to pay, but showing their South Yorkshire passes. Campaigners travel from Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield to meet for a rally at Meadowhall interchange. Northern staff at Meadowhall have shown support and the driver of the train from Barnsley last week passed my details on to the organiser, Dave Gibson, chair of Barnsley TUC, who contacted me about today’s freedom trains.

I decided to join them on the freedom train from Doncaster and had the honour of addressing the rally at Meadowhall. I was inspired by the commitment and enthusiasm of the campaign and all those taking part.

The rally ends in a traditional way with the whole crowd chanting a slogan and, because of our presence, the chant was: ‘ASLEF union hear us say: we welcome your support today’.

Since this cruel, heartless, and unelected, government has come to power we have seen young people take to the streets in direct action and now pensioners and the disabled taking to the trains with direct action. Let’s see the labour and trade union movement joining in with these campaigns for the sake of all the advances past generations have made for us.

Are driver training DVDs acceptable?

**Asks MICK HOLDER of ASLEF’s health and safety department**

ASLEF reps occasionally call the H&S dept and ask: ‘My TOC or FOC is using DVDs to teach new drivers how to drive – surely this is wrong?’ Each TOC and FOC is legally required by the Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006 to ensure that any employee who is carrying out safety critical tasks is competent and fit to do so.

Drivers must be competent, which means suitably trained, including updating and refresher training. What the ROGS regs don’t do is specify exactly what that means. That is included in the Train Driving Licences and Certificates Regulations 2010 and each company bases its driver training course on the requirements of Schedule 7 which says there must be a good balance between theoretical (classroom and demonstrations) and practical (on the job) training.

So, yes, DVDs can be used, but not at the expense of replacing practical experience driving on the track.

And, as there is no nationally agreed training programme, each company is allowed to design its own course – as long as it complies with the rules in Schedule 7 of the TDLCR.

The Rail Safety and Standards Board provides guidance on the practical application of the regulations. This is backed up by agreements reached between ASLEF and any TOC or FOC at the company council.

Mick Whelan says: ‘While we can see clear benefits to using new technologies to help new drivers learn, we are concerned that employers see this as an excuse to shorten the amount of time spent learning on the track and the length of the training courses themselves. That’s not acceptable and we’ve told some of them that’.
Young workers of the world unite

MATT FOWKES of Leicester branch reports from the TUC Young Workers’ Conference

On the weekend of 22 and 23 March I attended the TUC Young Workers’ Conference at Congress House in London with Nik Fetherston from Ramsgate branch. Conference opened with a moving tribute to Bob Crow and Tony Benn and a book of condolences from the GMB was presented to the RMT delegates.

Dom Anderson of the National Union of Students spoke about issues affecting students, and a new campaign partnership between the NUS and the TUC, and Abdeslam Ouaddou from the

ITUC’s Rerun the Vote campaign talked about the issues surrounding FIFA’s controversial decision to hold the World Cup in Qatar in 2022. He spoke about his own experiences of working in Qatar, as a professional footballer playing for the Qatar Sporting Club in Doha, and the abhorrent lack of workers’ rights there.

Workshop sessions followed the opening speeches, and we attended one on rights for trainees and apprentices. There is a real issue with employers in some industries exploiting young workers under the guise of an ‘apprenticeship’. The minimum wage for an apprentice is just £2.68 per hour, with one in five

Abdeslam Ouaddou, who played for Nancy, Fulham and Rennes, in the colours of Qatar SC paid even less than this. We were joined by our friends from the NUS who have set up a National Society for Apprentices to look at low pay, quality of training, respect in the workplace and careers advice.

Our second workshop – 44%: How do we get more young people to vote? – was led by Michael Sani from Bite the Ballot, a non-party, not for profit, organisation that exists to inspire

confidences from young workers, particularly in careers advice.

Patience is the key here where we need young people to get involved in the politics of their local areas.

Day two consisted of a formal session to debate 15 motions, which prompted a series of lively debates. One motion could be voted onto the agenda of the TUC congress in Brighton in September, and was selected via a secret ballot. It came from Unite, and called upon the general council to support the creation of a young workers’ strategy aimed at recruiting and organising young workers, particularly in industries such as retail, catering and hospitality, where the transient nature of many roles makes it much more difficult.

MEPs in the European Parliament have backed the European Transport Committee and put on hold plans to let 82ft long mega trucks loose on the roads of Europe. They called for detailed research into the potential impact of the controversial super long, super heavy, lorries on safety, the environment, and congestion. The decision was welcomed by campaigners.

Phillipa Edmunds, manager of Freight on Rail, said: ‘MEPs are right to reject the wider use of mega trucks – which are three times as long as a double decker bus and equivalent to the weight of 53 cars – as these larger vehicles cause more road fatalities, increase congestion, are more polluting and cause additional road damage as well as undermining rail freight, which is the low carbon, energy efficient and much safer alternative. However, we are concerned that the Conservative-led coalition might try to torpedo the ban.’

Mick Whelan, general secretary of ASLEF, said: ‘We welcome this sensible approach. All the analysis shows that mega trucks will be detrimental to the UK with enormous safety, environmental and economic ramifications. We are glad that the consequences of allowing these vehicles to cross borders throughout Europe is to be properly examined.’

A new app for mobile phones claims it can help you get over your jet lag. Entrain helps passengers – by train as well as plane – adapt their body clocks to a new time zone and beat the tiredness that comes from travelling. It works by using a mathematical formula, based on your sleep pattern, to synchronise your circadian rhythm. The iPhone software could also benefit shift workers who suffer because of irregular sleeping patterns.

GO WEST Crossrail will now run beyond Maidenhead to Twyford and Reading after the Department for Transport and Transport for London decided to extend the route. It means the east-west capital link will now serve 40 stations along the route when it is fully open in 2019.

‘Privatising the East Coast defies all logic. Since it was renationalised the line has gone from strength to strength.’

Frances O’Grady, general secretary, TUC

Photo by Andrew Henshaw
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KEITH RICHMOND reports on ASLEF’s ULR conference in Bristol

EDUCATION, education, education.’ That’s how one recent Prime Minister set out the top three priorities for his term in office. That the man setting out his party’s agenda for five years in Number 10 was Tony Blair – now, like New Labour, a tarnished, if not toxic, political brand – does not undermine the importance of the sentiment.

Blair, launching the Labour Party manifesto at Southampton University, said his government would try ‘to overcome decades of neglect and make Britain a learning society, developing the talents and raising the ambitions of all our young people.’

‘Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.’ – Nelson Mandela

ASLEF, like the Workers’ Educational Association, understands the importance of lifelong learning. That’s why the ASLEF education project continues to support union learning representatives to set up activities in and around the workplace, providing union members with opportunities to learn and develop their skills.

More than 60 union learning reps joined our education project workers – Ian Beckett, Chris Nutty, Emma Penman, Alan Reid, Julie Rutter, Mike Tansey – project co-ordinator Shirley Handsley, and Kevin Lindsay, the district organiser who oversees the project for the union, at our ULR development seminar at the Holiday Inn, Bristol, on 26 March.

Kevin told delegates: ‘In the last year we have enrolled more than 900 learners onto courses; trained nine new ULRs; provided follow-on training for nine ULRs; enrolled 67 learners on English and Maths courses; enrolled 559 learners on informal learning; signed up 89 learners on IT courses; and signed up 106 learners on further education courses.

‘ASLEF education continues to support trauma support courses; since their launch in 2011 we have had delegates from 16 TOCs and three FOCs. We have held 59 courses, with a total of 597 people attending, including delegates from British Transport Police and Network Rail.

‘And the project continues to support the ASLEF learning bursary scheme providing financial assistance to ASLEF members wishing to undertake learning activity. Up to £150 is being offered to members wishing to take up higher education and up to £30 to members wishing to take up further education or informal learning.

‘We are a recognised learning centre for Learn My Way, a programme of online courses which provides basic IT training.’

Kevin also announced Tony Barrett, a driver for Virgin Trains, who lives in Preston, as our Learner of the Year. Tony joined the railway in 2003, has been an ASLEF member for 11 years, and loves his job. But his life changed when, in 2008, after completing a ferry turn at 11pm, he fell into a trench a builder had dug, but not fenced off, and smashed his left arm.

‘The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.’ – Aristotle

‘Due to the extent of the injury, I realised it was going to be a while before I returned to work, but, after four months, and very little progress in getting any real movement back in my arm, I began to get concerned at the prospect of going onto half pay. Thanks to my LLC rep, Keith Sinfield, I never went on half pay, but returned to work on light duties, handing out rule book updates, etc, in the mess room for two years until the company doctor said there wasn’t enough improvement to be safe working a train and he would be recommending I was offered alternate employment elsewhere in the company. Eventually, I was assigned to the booking office at Preston.

‘Ultimately, it was a job, and I considered myself extremely fortunate because, with the help of Kevin Lindsay, Keith and company council rep Graham Fazackerley said I would remain on my driver’s salary indefinitely. That was a huge relief to Lisa and me. Although I was told my driving days were over, I refused to accept it, and continued doing the physiotherapy and, against all the odds, I passed a series of medicals and returned to the driving grade last year.

‘The course I signed up to was, for me, a no-brainer. I used the compensation money from my injuries to buy a small business – an opticians – that my wife runs. Neither of us really have any experience of getting the most out of a computer, and I saw it as a tremendous way of learning something I could actually use that will help us in the business by producing spreadsheets, databases and power points, etc.

‘I am so grateful to be given the opportunities to learn something that, had I had to pay for privately, would probably have been too expensive. Thanks so much, ASLEF, for getting my life back on track!’

Graeme Barclay of OnTrack Financial Planning led an hour-long workshop on basic financial awareness; Julie Rutter and Chris Nutty led another hour-long workshop on tackling the digital divide with Learn My Way; Keith Richmond spoke about ASLEF, the Journal, and media and communications; and Jos Andrews, a radio and television producer, gave an inspirational presentation on Learning through Sport.

‘Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.’ – WB Yeats

Jos, whose father was a railwayman, is the woman behind Raise Your Game, presented by Colin Jackson, an educational project for the BBC which uses sport – and sporting stars – to motivate young people to achieve their goals.

‘Inspiration, motivation, preparation, dedication, and concentration,’ said Jos. ‘That’s the key and it’s what all our stars say is what you need for success.’ A powerful message for the ULRs to ponder on their way to Temple Meads…
What has the political fund ever done for us?

ASLEF’s executive committee has called a ballot on our political fund in July. Vice-president TOSH McDONALD explains why this fund is vital for our union.

ASLEF, like a lot of other trade unions, is about to ballot members on maintaining our political fund. This is a legal requirement imposed by Mrs Thatcher in 1984 – many believe with the express purpose of destroying the Labour Party. This is the first myth that needs to be addressed. While there is no doubt that if union members had voted to abolish the political fund in 1984, or in subsequent ballots in 1994 and 2004 (not one union has, by the way) then the Labour Party would suffer because trade unions which choose to would no longer be able to affiliate.

But this makes up a very small part of the political fund.

CAMPAIGNING FOR MEMBERS
Without a political fund we would be unable to campaign on many issues that have a direct impact on our members.

Freight on Rail; Mail on Rail; Action for Rail; the Squash campaign for a decent driving environment; the Better Rail campaign, Keep East Coast on Track; Drive Down the Hours; and our recent successful campaign to force the Tory/Lib Dem coalition government to drop plans to abolish the protection granted on our pensions at the time of privatisation; all these have only been able to take place because we maintain a political fund.

The real purpose behind Thatcher’s nasty little scheme was to try and curb the ability of trade unions to campaign effectively for our members. If we had no political fund none of the campaigns mentioned in the previous paragraph would have happened.

In the best traditions of our membership, wanting the most we can get out of our fund, many will still ask, like the prisoner in Monty Python’s Life of Brian: ‘What have the Romans ever done for us?’

So, apart from those campaigns, what has the political fund done for us?

We still have facing us threats from Europe with the Fourth Railway Package, driver licensing, and the real possibility of a referendum on our membership of the European Union and, without the fund, we would have no ability to fight or influence any of these. And if we give politicians, of any party, free rein this could be devastating.

Even on the issue of Scottish independence, we have seen contributions in recent Journals from both sides of the debate. None of this could happen and we would effectively be silenced.

But, apart from that, what has the political fund ever done for us?

We engage in wider issues in society as a whole that have a direct impact on our members and our families like pensions, university fees, and privatisation of the NHS.

OUR RIGHT TO SPEAK OUT
I have recently had the honour of sharing a platform with workers from Care UK, nurses who have given their whole working life to the NHS only to be sold off to a private company which makes large donations to the Tory Party, now having their earnings halved, and sick pay cut, to try and drive them out of the jobs they love so cheaper, less experienced, staff can be employed with no account given to the patients’ need for experienced careers. That could be us or our family.

But, apart from that, what has the political fund done for us?

In our industry health and safety legislation plays a big part in keeping ourselves, and the travelling public, out of harm’s way and, without our political fund, we could not campaign against threats to health and safety legislation whether from Westminster, the Scottish parliament at Holyrood, the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff or from the EU in Brussels or Strasbourg.

We face a new attack on our right to speak out against injustices with the introduction of the gagging bill that takes away not only the right of unions to speak out in the year of an election but also gags charities and other organisations from criticising the government. We would be unable to campaign against this attack on our long-cherished freedoms without our political fund.

MONEY GOES TO THE TORIES
No such rules were brought in to curb the political activities of rich bankers or private sector companies such as Care UK. That’s because their money goes to the Tories.

Every time we have asked, members have said ‘Yes’. Why? Because the fund isn’t about financing Labour (I have to be careful this doesn’t lead to a Pythonesque theme about the Judean People’s Front and ‘splitters’). It covers a broad range of campaigning activity and, without it, unions would face costly legal action if we dared to speak up for our members.

ASLEF members will be asked to vote in a secret postal ballot over the coming weeks. I urge you to participate and I urge you to vote ‘Yes’.

Because this union isn’t just about what happens in the workplace. It’s about making Britain a better place to live, through the collective view of working people.

The political fund, which Mrs Thatcher (above right) wanted to abolish, allows us to campaign on issues like Action for Rail (above) which affect all our members.

The Trade Union Act of 1984, brought in by the virulently anti-union Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, requires a trade union once every ten years to ballot its members about whether it should hold a political fund.
Let the brass bands play and feet start to pound
I’m going underground

FINN BRENNAN looks back to the wildcat strikes of 1989 and ahead to battles over anti-social working

E HAVE just marked the 25th anniversary of the wildcat strikes on London Underground in 1989. A quarter of a century on, this series of fourteen 24 hour strikes, from April 5 to August 10, still provokes debate.

The issue that sparked the dispute was the spread of One Person Operation; drivers rightly felt that they had been given extra responsibility, and were delivering increased productivity, without proper reward. The background was the Thatcher government’s anti-trade union laws and the defeat of key unions like the miners, steel workers and printers.

ANGRY DRIVERS

Perhaps this was why the national leadership was slow to grasp the strength of feeling amongst our members. Open meetings called by local activists and reps were packed to the rafters with angry drivers – and, later, guards – who were ready to take events into their own hands. Ignoring the controversial Tory laws, they decided to strike by a show of hands and chose the dates by picking them from a hat.

They produced their own flyers and newsletters. I have to admit that the scandalous, and very funny, Tubelle, written by hand and photocopied in a corner shop, reads much better than some of our bulletins today. Though it did have the advantage of ignoring the libel laws!

The result was described by one Richard Littlejohn in the Evening Standard as ‘anarchy’. The Standard’s cartoonist took a more balanced approach with a line that read: ‘Well organised tube strike. They should round up the ring leaders and promote them!’

ANARCHY ON THE UNDERGROUND

Eventually both ASLEF and the NUR held strike ballots and, by July, both unions were taking official action. But when a settlement was agreed by the unions, without a mass meeting, the wildcats disapproved and called a final strike in August. There are still disagreements and strongly held views about the role of individuals and the unions during the dispute, but no one can argue about the importance of the strikes.

They led to a further change in the law that now forces unions to repudiate any unofficial action but, more importantly, laid the basis for the gains ASLEF were to win in the following decades. Although the employer gained ground in 1992 with the introduction of the company plan, the strikes had shown that Underground drivers had real industrial muscle and were prepared to use it if pushed too far.

At a time when the Tories are, again, discussing restrictions on the right of our members to take industrial action, they would do well to remember that if trade unions are not allowed to act effectively, the result may turn out to be ‘anarchy’.

There are interesting similarities with the issues we face today: new technology, relentless pressure to cut costs and a Conservative government that fears and despises working people. But I believe ASLEF, and our members, have learned important lessons that help us in dealing with these challenges. Our members on LUL have just received another inflation-plus pay rise because of the long term pay settlement negotiated by Steve Grant and Terry Wilkinson. If the other TUs had followed our lead in arguing for a five, rather than a four, year deal we would be guaranteed a similar rise next year. (In fact another union that likes to claim credit for

Options on track

TERRY WILKINSON reveals the options for medically restricted train operators

As part of the 2009 pay and conditions settlement, ASLEF reached an agreement that gave medically restricted train staff an additional option of taking a customer services assistant position if a suitable job could not be found by the redeployment unit.

We have recently encountered problems at a number of case conferences where the offer of a CSA position was made at the start of the redeployment process with the suggestion that if it wasn’t taken at this stage the opportunity would be lost. This is not the case. A train operator can turn down the offer at the outset, complete the redeployment process, and the position of CSA is still available at the end.

Twenty-five CSA positions are ring-fenced for train staff each financial year (with the normal protection of earnings, up to 10 years, with the first five at 100%). These positions are available regardless of vacancies and are unaffected by the Fit for Stations programme.

If it is apparent that an individual, regardless of role, is unlikely to return to their substantive position he or she should make an application to the pension fund to ascertain if an enhanced pension will be granted (don’t be put off by your manager telling you this is not possible, it’s no help being told it won’t be granted when you’ve left).

Unlike most schemes, the TIL pension fund measures your eligibility for an enhanced ill health pension against your current role, not your ability to carry out any job. This means that even if you are fit to carry out the role of CSA you can still qualify for up to 10 additional years on your pension although you are permanently unfit to drive trains.

Provided you have made an application for an ill health pension in good time, at the point of possible medical termination, a train operator unable to continue in that role could have the following options: take up any position through the redeployment unit with protection of earnings; become a customer service assistant with protection of earnings; take early pension (dependent on age); or leave with an enhanced pension.
Bully for you

KEVIN CROISSANT casts an eye over LUL’s policy on harassment and bullying

Every responsible employer has a harassment and bullying procedure to protect employees. London Underground has had one since 2001. At the time, ASLEF signed up believing it would be a force for good but, since then, it has been revised and not all the changes have benefited our members.

Originally, investigators were independent of LU; now they are LU managers. The complainant is allowed representation; the accused is not. The accused can be moved from their normal place of work and repeatedly interviewed, without representation, during a process that can take 10 months or more. LU’s procedure should be a force for good yet its treatment of the accused is discriminatory and unfair as it denies us the right to provide representation. ASLEF has demanded that the procedure is urgently reviewed and the company has agreed to set up a joint working party.

We will not support any procedure that is not shown to be fair to both those who suffer from, and those accused of, bullying or harassment.

Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes

JASON WYATT, trains health and safety council, looks at the cost of change

Change on London Underground is needed, but not at all costs, and certainly not on the basis of saving a few quid! Many rules have been in place for longer than most of us have worked on LU; they have no doubt saved lives and jobs but, when asked where they originated from, no one really knows.

Recently an operational standard notice was used to introduce a number of changes to existing rules. In many cases there were sound arguments to do so, others we fought hard against and managed to prevent their introduction. One example was the proposal for checking the signal after a SPAD; a train operator was to report the overrun and carry on if the block joint had not been passed and there was a clear signal displayed. ASLEF reps successfully argued this was fraught with danger.

Disciplinary review

While we are quite content with the current agreed disciplinary procedure we have made it clear to management that we would agree to changes if the procedure was amended to include representation at fact findings. This facility is available to all former Metronet, and all current Tube Lines, employees. The injustice of the current arrangements was highlighted recently with an operational incident on the Bakerloo line involving a train operator and a former Metronet employee. The train operator faced a fact finding investigation, without representation, while the former Metronet employee was entitled to representation immediately. Yet we are constantly told that one of LUL’s core values is that everyone should be treated fairly and consistently.

Fantasy football

DEBBIE REAY invites you to field a team for the Viner/Turrell Cup

In June 2011, Andy Viner was tragically killed in a car accident. Andy was a huge inspiration to people in ASLEF and a mentor to many, including our district organiser Finn Brennan. He was greatly admired for his dedication to the people he represented, and to his daughters, who he cared for solely after his partner died. He was a member of the trains functional council on LUL and worked out of Golders Green depot.

In April 2012, Mick Turrell died near Moorgate station of a heart attack on his way home from work. He was a much respected rep and his patience was a great help to new reps learning the ropes. Mick was also a member of the TFC on LUL and worked out of East Finchley.

After Andy’s death, Northern Line North branch began holding the Andy Viner Memorial Football Tournament in his memory, changed to the Viner/Turrell Football Tournament following Mick’s death. Teams play for the Viner/Turrell Cup, the Northern Line North Shield and the Viner/Turrell Women’s Penalty Champions Cup.

This year’s six-a-side tournament will be held at Whittington Park, Holloway Road, London, N19 4RS on 16 July. The nearest tube stations are Archway and Tufnell Park. We are looking for 16 teams (squads of 10) from all regions of ASLEF. Entry is £50 per team and this year we have decided to buy memorial plaques out of the proceeds, to be placed at East Finchley and Golders Green depots, with any money left over going to charities Andy and Mick supported. Contact Deborah Reay at northernlinenorthbs@aslef.org.uk for an application form by 8 June.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light

Do not go gentle into that good night, says TONY WEST of the RMS

IKE most people, I sometimes feel we live in a world where unfairness and cruelty, in whatever fashion, are not only accepted but barely remarked upon. At a time when people have been suffering the longest squeeze on living standards since before the Second World War, when record numbers rely on food banks to survive, the financial sector continues to hand out billions of pounds in bonuses as though the economic crisis they helped to create never happened. The effect of this unfairness, particularly among the elderly and the most vulnerable in society, is truly shocking.

NHS leaders complain that the growing overcrowding in emergency departments and a significant proportion of bed blocking are due to the inadequacy of local social care provision because those in hospital are unable to live semi-independent lives at home or be discharged despite being medically fit to go.

NOT ROCKET SCIENCE

This is highlighted in figures showing that the lack of social care meant 18,500 patients spent last Christmas in hospital even though they were well enough to be discharged. Not forgetting the human cost to those patients, and their loved ones, the financial cost to taxpayers was just over £4.8 million.

With the Tory-Lib Dem coalition government indicating it will implement another £20 billion cut in the welfare budget in 2015, and with an ageing population, and an estimated 16 million people over the age of 65 by 2030, it is not rocket science to see that things can only get worse, not just for today’s pensioners but for those in the future. Instead of rising to the challenge of the ageing society this government is taking us backwards and the care of older people is getting worse.

Every day we get reports about desperate poverty and attacks on welfare. We know of food banks, the plight of disabled people and the housing crisis. We know of the propaganda to make the poorest people the scapegoats for economic failure in this country.

A report by the Nuffield Trust and Health Foundation says four years of cuts to local authority funding have forced councils to ration social care tightly. A quarter of a million older people have lost their state-funded help with carrying out everyday activities such as bathing, dressing and eating in the last four years as council budgets have been slashed and rationed.

BANKERS’ BONUSES

My colleague Alan Taylor, who is also a member on the RMS committee, drew attention in his article in the last issue of Grey Power to the relationship that ASLEF has with the National Pensioners’ Convention to which we are affiliated at national, district council and branch level.

The NPC recognises that this crisis brings together the generations – frail elderly people, their families and health care workers. Over the last 13 years there have been 19 commissions and inquiries into aspects of health and social care provision – all of them critical of the care system.

The NPC, in its analysis of this year’s budget, said: ‘There was no mention of the need for additional spending on social care to address the very serious problems that exist in the service. The portrayal of the budget can suggest that older people are gaining at the expense of the young. The Chancellor only mentioned young people once in his 55 minute statement, and it is vital that any attempt at electioneering must not try to set one generation against another.’

Inequality is rife in society today. Barclays, HSBC, RBS and Lloyds are paying out £5.5 billion in bankers’ bonuses this year. In 2012 the average pay of FTSE100 chief executives rose to £4.8 million; the High Pay Centre expects this summer’s figures to reveal a much higher increase for 2013.

85 RICHEST PEOPLE

Against this background, according to the National Audit Office, at least £22 billion was owed to the government last year in unpaid taxes, fines and overpayments. The NAO says ‘the government has yet to get to grips with how to manage the debt.’

Oxfam, in a paper published in January, made the point that the richest 85 people in the world have the same amount of wealth – $1.7 trillion – as the bottom half of the earth’s population. If you put those 85 people on a London double decker bus (not that they would be seen dead on a bus) they would be as wealthy as 3.5 billion people.

As we get closer to the general election in May 2015 we will see the political classes slave over the latest soundbite or policy initiative delivered, in the main, by an 82% Tory-leaning press.

In ASLEF and beyond I know we will continue in the run up to the election to fight for and uphold the rights and personal dignity of older people, within the context of ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of those who are increasingly less able to care for themselves or to properly conduct their affairs.

Tony West is national secretary of ASLEF’s Retired Members’ Section
Changes to TUPE – what do they mean for me?

RICHARD ARTHUR reveals what the coalition’s recent changes to TUPE mean for us

EW regulations amending the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 came into force on 31 January. TUPE is supposed to provide crucial safeguards for employees should the organisation they work for be transferred to another.

However, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government’s amendments to TUPE have considerably weakened these vital workplace rights and represent a cynical attack on hundreds of thousands of employees right across the country. It is vital that workers are aware of the changes and how they will be affected.

MAIN CHANGES
The main changes that have come into effect are:

- Allowing collective agreements (those agreed between the employer and trade unions or worker representatives) to be re-negotiated after just one year provided the overall package is no less favourable to the employee.
- Removing entitlement to public sector collective terms negotiated in the future – especially future pay awards.
- Allowing employers to count pre-transfer collective redundancy consultation for the purpose of redundancies after the transfer.
- Making it easier for employers to change terms and conditions, and dismiss employees, in connection with a transfer, especially where there is a change of workplace.
- Requiring outgoing employers to provide information about the workforce to the new employer at least 28 days before the transfer.

DRIVING DOWN T&CS
Aside from changes to collective redundancies consultation, the amended regulations will apply to all TUPE transfers after 31 January 2014. In short, the changes will make it a great deal easier for employers to drive down terms and conditions at work and to make redundancies in the workplace following a transfer.

Sadly, and in keeping with many of this government’s policies, the changes to TUPE will hit women, and the low paid, hardest. This is particularly the case for those working in the public sector, where there is considerable pressure to outsource services.

The changes have been lambasted by trade unions, which have warned the government that the changes will upset workplace harmony and encourage industrial disputes.

REQUIRED TO CONSULT
As if these devastating amendments were not damaging enough, this coalition government had originally intended to go even further in its campaign to dismantle vital protections for workers; the provision to make it easier for employers to make dismissals before a transfer even takes place, and another to restrict the circumstances in which a dismissal would be unfair, were, fortunately, defeated.

Despite these changes, some safeguards for employees do remain. Crucially, employers are still legally required to consult with employees in the event of a TUPE transfer and trade unions therefore continue to play a key role in engaging with employers and protecting the interests of their members.

Unions are able to ensure that there is a written recognition agreement in place, strengthen contractual rights by ensuring that any negotiations on terms and conditions are settled and agreed before the transfer, and can make sure that collective agreements are incorporated into the employment contract.

Some of the worst excesses of the government’s changes to TUPE are yet to materialise but the end result is clear – it’s a cynical attack on collectively bargained terms and conditions and an incursion into collective redundancy consultations – a weakening of the vital safeguards put in place to protect vulnerable workers across the country.

TUPE The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, which replaced the 1981 rules, implemented in the United Kingdom the European Union’s Business Transfers Directive of 2001 to safeguard employees’ rights ‘in the event of transfers of undertakings, businesses or parts of undertakings or businesses’.

They were designed, by the last Labour government, to ensure that when a business is sold by one company to another, workers should not lose out just because of the change of owner.

The regulations set out that ‘when a business transfer occurs’, ie when one company sells a firm or a part of a firm to another, or when two companies merge to form a new business, or when activities are outsourced to a contractor, or brought back in house, then employees moving from the old employer to the new employer are able to take with them their terms and conditions and length of service.

This is particularly important in the rail industry where, post-privatisation, the franchise system, and the fragmented nature of the new business model, means train drivers can, overnight, find themselves working for a new employer.

Mick Whelan, ASLEF’s general secretary, said: ‘It is vital that our drivers are fully and properly protected when a new company takes over a franchise and, although they are doing the same job, on the same route, and in the same cab, they find they are working for a different employer.’

Richard Arthur is head of trade union law at Thompsons solicitors
Stan lost for words

The April meeting of Swansea branch was honoured by the presence of Mick Whelan who, as a prelude to the social events that followed, gave us an excellent insight into the way that ASLEF conducts its campaigns in the corridors of power, covering such topics as pensions and the fourth rail package. Long service awards were presented by Brian Corbett, EC member for District 7, to Steve Williams (40), Clive Bowler (30), Paul Warlow and Tony Buffery (both 25). And the GS handed a 50 year medallion to retired driver Joe Jones from Panyffynnon. The event culminated with a presentation to retiring District 7 Organiser Stan Moran. Tributes to Stan from the GS and branch members followed. The way Stan achieved so much success in pay negotiations and, more pertinently, in discipline cases, was recognised and, for the only time I can ever remember, Stan was lost for words! Swansea branch wishes Stan a long and happy retirement. Steve Williams, Swansea

Team photo in south Wales. Back row: Brian Corbett, Mick Whelan, Paul Warlow and Stan Moran. Front row forwards: Steve Williams, Joe Jones, Clive Bowler and Tony Buffery

Beer and sandwiches at the bar

At a special branch meeting of Southend branch we welcomed three guests. Our District 5 Organiser explained the issues the union will face when members are ring fenced and, ultimately, transferred to Crossrail in May next year. Howard Kaye, EC member for District 5, spoke about a variety of issues taking place within ASLEF nationally. Good friend of the branch, and well respected RMS secretary, Tony West then demonstrated his continued ability to capture an audience despite the subject matter being of a political nature.

Thanks Tosh ...and come back soon

All at Sheffield No 1 would like to thank the EC member for District 4 and vice president Tosh McDonald for his visit and talk about the position of the union. His speech was well received and we can’t wait for his next visit. Thanks, Tosh. Ian Davison, branch secretary

Upcoming events

- **STRATFORD – SATURDAY 26 APRIL**
  Annual depot reunion from 17.00 at the Railway Tavern Hotel, 131 Angel Lane, Stratford, E15.

- **DONCASTER – THURSDAY 1 MAY**
  Doncaster branch celebrates its 125th year in 2014. We extend an open invitation to members, active and retired, and friends to join us at the Trades Club in Donny from 16.00.

- **DIDCOT – SATURDAY 3 MAY**
  The Retired Members’ Section is holding its annual reunion from 12.00 at Didcot railway staff club.

- **BRIGHTON & SUSSEX – TUESDAY 6 MAY**
  An informal open afternoon for all retired and working members of Brighton or any of the Sussex Motive Power Depots from 14.00 at the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont, off Dyke Road, Brighton.

- **ENFIELD & NORTH EAST LONDON – 16 MAY**
  The annual reunion is at the Jolly Butchers, Baker Street, Enfield, from 19.30. All welcome to hear tales from the days of yore over a pint. Contact Steve Jestico on 07788 153711.

- **TATTENHAM CORNER – FRIDAY 30 MAY**
  Twenty years after the closure of Tattenham Corner, we are having a reunion for Tattenham, Caterham and Purley staff (and anyone who wants to come and say hello) at the Rectory pub in Purley from 16.00. Details from Daniel Nash on 07971 775816.

- **MERSEYSIDE – FRIDAY 30 MAY**
  Reunion for all staff, existing and retired, who worked at all Merseyside depots from 19.30 at Tess Riley’s, 6 Great Charlotte Street, Liverpool. A warm welcome awaits! Employed staff £3, retired staff free.

- **OLD OAK COMMON – TUESDAY 10 JUNE**
  The retirement section’s annual reunion is from 13.00 to 16.00 at the AGV Club, Alwyn Gardens, Acton, W3 0JH. Anyone with any OOC history is welcome.

- **LEICESTER – SATURDAY 14 JUNE**
  Our 26th annual reunion is at the Barley Mow in Granby Street, Leicester, from 12.00. All welcome.

Please send your branch news to journal@aslef.org.uk
Beer and badges
Faversham branch proudly welcomed our guests, general secretary Mick Whelan, Marz Colombini, the EC member for District 1, and District 1 Organiser Graham Morris, to our annual beer and badges celebration. ASLEF loyalty badges were presented to Brothers George Hollands, Dave Piggott, Steve Rogers, Kevin Fraser and Kevin Nye. Retirement certificates and gifts were presented to Brothers Graham Walker and Steve Fullick at the Labour Party conference in 1981.

Tribute to Tony
We have just lost one of the most iconic politicians this country has ever seen, a man who will be remembered for his never wavering stand for the oppressed of this country. Whilst endless tributes have poured in I would like to share with you a humorous episode that I had with Derrick Fullick at the Labour Party conference in 1981.

I was an ASLEF delegate, and Derrick, as vice-president, was there in place of the president, Bill Ronskey, who was not a member of the Labour Party. We were having a few libations when Alan Meale, now the Labour MP for Mansfield, but then our political officer, found us and asked if we knew where the GS, Ray Buckton, was. Tony Benn had been expected to win the election for deputy leader of the Labour Party but lost to Denis Healey, by less than 1%, because Neil Kinnock abstained when he had been expected to vote in favour of Tony. Tony’s entourage had landed on a victory party and it was still going to go ahead, despite the negative outcome of the election.

Anyway, Ray could not be found and Alan insisted that ASLEF should be there to emphasise our support for Tony (ASLEF had voted for him in the electoral college), so we complied, even though we were slightly merry. As we, along with other supporters, were being presented to Tony, and his charming wife, one of us uttered ‘This is ****ing handsome’ (Derrick swears it was me and I, likewise, swear it was him). The ASLEF delegation had always stayed at the Ship Hotel and we both thought our hotel would have fitted into the atrium of Tony’s, thus the expletive. No one gave any indication of offence but, as we were shaking hands, we suddenly found ourselves back in the corridor. We were beautifully thrown out and never even knew it!

I’ve dined out on that story many times. Tony, always the gentleman, laughed with us, the last time being at the 20th anniversary of the miners’ strike, held at our beloved Arkwright Road head office. A fantastic politician but, more importantly, a wonderful human being. RIP.

Len Worboys, RMS

All smiles at Faversham in the Garden of England
‘Speedy’ Dearing. After which a considerable amount of celebrating took place! Marz Colombini and Graham Morris have regularly supported this event and it was a great pleasure to welcome Mick along for the first visit by a GS in living memory. A well attended event was thoroughly enjoyed by members, retired members and their partners. Roll on next year! Steve Gurdler, Faversham

GOOD THINGS PROVIDED
Basingstoke branch reports: ‘Members held their tenth annual event on Good Friday, when 43 sat down to dinner with our locomotive foreman, Mr A Moore, in the chair. After the company had done justice to the good things provided by the host, Mr M Butt, the tables were cleared for the holding of a musical evening. Songs were then ably rendered by Brothers Preston, Cave, Boult, Hudson, W Rattue (NUR), and many others. Brother Bunsell gave us a treat with his gramophone. This ended one of the most enjoyable evenings possible. I am pleased to report the branch concluded the year with a record membership and we can look into the future with every confidence’.

TO THE KING AND THE SOCIETY
Oxford branch reflects this mood – no portent of the war to come – with a report of their annual dinner. ‘The branch maintained its excellent standard of entertainment. Toasts were given: “the king” by the chairman, “the society” by H Du Parcy, a barrister, who dealt at some length with the necessity of organizing into societies such as our association. A toast of “the visitors” was proposed and the meeting was brought to a close by the secretary proposing “our hostess”.

Acton branch: ‘Members spent a most enjoyable evening when the landlord of the branch headquarters was formally introduced as an honorary member. The proceedings commenced with a dinner, to which about 30 sat down.’

TO THE SUN TO FILL OUR TANKS
‘Takes the Biscuit’ of Reading reports: ‘On Good Friday all trials of railway work were set aside and we turned our thoughts to the good things we were going to have and do. A football match was played in the morning between the Great Western and South Eastern and Chatham Railways. By the kindness of Reading football club we were able to turn out in our various colours. After the match we proceeded to The Sun to fill up our tanks.’

But there was, however, sadness at the death of general secretary Albert Fox. Oxford branch: ‘A vote of sympathy and condolence with the family of our late general secretary.’
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The roles primarily involve train driving and route conducting duties in the following key areas: London and the south east, south west England, Wales & east & west coast main lines.

Candidates will need to possess the following key skills and experiences:

• A qualified train driver with a good safety record.
• Able to carry out minor maintenance and repairs.
• Have a good awareness of railway health and safety requirements, particularly as they relate to train operations.
• Be able to make a positive contribution to a small dedicated team working on high profile contracts.
• An appreciation of the importance of good customer relations.
• Able to communicate clearly and concisely, both verbally and in writing.
• Hold a current UK driving licence with no more that 6 penalty points.

In return we offer a competitive salary and benefits package with a salary of between £33-40k p.a. dependent on role. (pro rata for part time positions)

To find out more call our recruitment team on 0115 9210471 or apply in writing to: Dave Brewin, HR Advisor, Balfour Beatty Rail Plant, Old Station Yard, Sandiacre, Nottingham NG10 5AG.

Email enquiries to: david.brewin@bbrail.com
donna.mckone@bbrail.com

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Email enquiries to: david.brewin@bbrail.com
donna.mckone@bbrail.com
STAN SHORE JASON KING DEPARTMENT S

Stan Shore passed away on 2 February. He started on the railway with George Pirie and Bill Rimmer in 1952, after national service in the RAF, and worked his way through the ranks at Southport steam shed until it closed in 1966. He moved to Lostock Hall and, when that depot closed in 1968, went back to Southport where he stayed until early retirement, due to ill health, in 1994 after a lengthy 42 year career on the railway.

Stan was a lovely man, always helpful to fellow workers, and if you ever wanted a bird table, Stan was the man as DIY was one of his hobbies. He earned the nickname Jason King — after the legendary character in Department S — as the only person at the depot to have a suntan all year round. Sunbeds had not been invented but his wife Peg said he swapped shifts to go on the beach. We used to wind double of Jason King!

Stan liked a drink and was never without his pipe and there were a few tales of him having one too many and spending an hour or two up the sidings sleeping one off; but that was the railway in those days, such happy times with the camaraderie.

Our thoughts at this sad time are with his wife Peg, who he married in 1954, and family. Rest in peace, Stan, from all your colleagues, past and present.

Bill Baxter, Southport

ALAN HALL ROYAL ALBERT

The light that shone so bright from Faversham’s favourite Yorkshireman, Alan (Royal Albert) Hall, has been extinguished. He would not want us to mourn so just remember the love, kindness and laughter he shared with us all in abundance.

Former Faversham driver Alan ‘Albert’ Hall passed away on 7 December. He was 73. Alan had a long and successful career as a cleaner, fireman and driver, starting at Ardsley in 1955, moving to Darlington, then Milton, and on to Healey Mills in 1967. He then made the move south to Slade Green in 1973 and finally settled in Faversham until his retirement in 2001.

As you know, Albert continued to live life to the full in retirement. We will all miss him but let’s make sure we carry on his legacy and carry on looking after, and caring for, each other. He was without doubt one of the nicest people you could ever wish to meet.

BILLY GASKIN STEAM BOAT BILLY

Bill Gaskin began his career as an engine cleaner at Stockport Edgeley MPD in 1963 aged 15 years 2 days. When Edgeley closed he transferred to Guide Bridge and was reunited with steam traction in 1973 when BR relaxed the steam ban. He then moved to Longsight Inter-City and finally Virgin West Coast, Pendolinos being his last class trained. He retired in 2008 after 45 years on the footplate. His funeral on 3 February was so well attended the crowd outside the crematorium had to be parted to allow the hearse to reach the entrance. After a workmate gave a 10 minute eulogy the whole congregation applauded.

In 2010, two years after he retired, Billy joined friends on a visit to ASLEF head office in Arkwright Road; and afterwards took on a good amount of ‘water’ in a Hampstead hostelry as the pints flowed, many tales of Steam Boat Bill were shared.

Many moved on to the Swan with Two Necks in Stockport. Robinson’s brewery had named a bitter after Billy and,

JIM STEADY TRUE ASLEF MEMBER

Jim was always a true ASLEF member, and a person you could rely on. He was a good family man and well-liked in Great Bentley, where he lived, and where he enjoyed bell-ringing and indoor and outdoor bowling.

KJ Anderson, Colchester

ANDY COOPER MESS ROOM HUMOUR

It is with deep sadness that I report the death on 17 March of Morden train operator Andy Cooper. Andy started as a guard on the Northern Line at Morden depot in February 1998. When he became a driver he went on the west end of the District line. He came back to Morden a few years ago as it was nearer home for him. He was very active in ASLEF our branch chair for many years (he was also branch chair for West Brompton branch while on the District line). We will be sadly missed by all his colleges and fondly remembered for sitting in the mess room reading a book and chipping in with his dry sense of humour.

Ian Rowland, Morden

DENNIS KNOTT

Dennis Knott, who started as an engine cleaner at the age of 15 years and 18 days in 1962, has passed away at the age of 66. He became a fireman and worked freight trains in the Lancashire-Yorkshire corridor until steam finished at Edgeley. Denis switched to the P-Way, working as a pool driver, until he became an arboriculturalist in 1986. Finally, in 2001, he became a rail flange supervisor. He retired in 2011 after 49 years’ unbroken service to the railway industry.

Mel Thorley, Longsight

CHARLIE MERRITT

Old Oak Common driver Charlie Merritt, a quiet, unassuming man who worked on the railway for 49 years, passed away on 22 February just nine days before his 88th birthday. He is sorely missed by his wife Jean, sons Paul and Alan, and daughters Diane and Lynn, and all his friends and former colleagues.

Bob Morse
The purpose of the union is that we live in a democratic society with democratic values, so I’m wondering at which point this union has not met its obligations regarding the issue of Scotland’s future? Mr Tansey goess on about ASLEF’s decision to back the No campaign being disgusting. Well, for Mr Tansey’s information, this decision was taken at every branch room in Scotland where every member of this union had the right to attend and make his or her voice heard and enter the debate for the Yes/No vote. This union further had a debate at district council where it was voted unanimously to back the No campaign. That’s democracy, Mr Tansey! As far as the AAD decision went, yes, only about 10% attending could actually vote in the referendum but at least it showed the feeling among our colleagues in England and Wales that we are indeed Better Together and the vote solidly confirmed this.

His next point is ‘why were the Scottish members of this union not canvased?’ All members have the right to attend branch meetings which is, incidentally, where the business of this union is actually conducted. Members have an equal say and decisions are voted on. Mr Tansey says this union made a decision that disgusts him but it was a democratic decision after a democratic debate at branch, district council, and even AAD.

Mr Tansey says ‘I will freely fight against this decision in the workplace.’ May I remind Mr Tansey that if he actually attended his branch meetings and put across his point of view instead of being the booby lawyer then maybe he may be heard and even get support for his nonsense.

Wullie Simpson, Ayr branch secretary

Alternative views

Tom Burns of Perth branch informed us, in May 2012, that ‘anti-English kicking is not a basis for Scottish independence.’ Then, in September 2013, he proudly said ‘I would simply offer a take it or leave it position on major issues such as pensions and benefits safe in the knowledge that an independent Scotland would have no choice at all’.

I understand that following last year’s AAD decision to back the Better Together campaign the Journal became part of that campaign’s propaganda machine. However, reading such nonsense in a trade union...
It makes me sick to see his name on the plaque at Crewe signing-on point when he would happily see those drivers out of work to further his own interests. Tell Steer that thousands of residents continue to be disadvantaged by the lack of train services to their local stations before he mounts his socially disadvantaged bandstand.

Robert McMillan, Wolverhampton

Restoring my faith

I am an ASLEF member of 16 years based at Leeds with CrossCountry. In December 2013 I was unfortunate to have a SPAD. Now, after three months, the matter has been resolved. I wish to record my gratitude to Gary Ellis, Leeds LLC, and Eamon Tague, company council, for their help and advice during what was an extremely stressful time for me and my family. I have not always agreed with ASLEF, or its officers, but the professionalism and dedication shown by both brothers has gone a long way to restoring my faith in the union and what it stands for.

Paul Scott, Leeds

Justice for Palestine

All credit to ASLEF for its affiliation to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. I hope you will be pulling out the stops during this UN international year of solidarity with the Palestinian people because there has never been a more important time to show support for the Palestinians and to expose the rogue state of Israel which has been in breach of international law since anyone can remember.

Laurie Holden, RMS

Blame Supermac, too

I noticed in my ASLEF Diary that 27 March was the 51st anniversary of the Beeching report. That man was paid huge sums to take the blame for destroying the railway network of this country. But the people really responsible were Harold Macmillan and his henchman Ernest Marples.

Terry Cadby, RMS

Publication is disappointing. Rather than inform members of the implications a Yes vote may have on the running of our union or, indeed, the Labour Party, we get lazy journalism. This time (Journal, January) Brother Burns is concerned about the business community. There are alternative views in the membership and some recognition should be given to each.

Kevin O’Connor, Motherwell

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Tough act to follow

As an active ASLEF member I would like to say a few words in tribute to the late Bob Crow, who died on 11 March. Bob was a leader through and through. He stood up for his members and defended what he thought was right. He would welcome going toe to toe with politicians (Boris didn’t fancy that too much) and was a straight talking man. I will miss his rants, and am fairly certain my thoughts and best wishes to Bob’s family are echoed across our membership. He will be a very tough act to follow.

Mark Haggerty, Bishops Stortford

Medical checks

The untimely death of Bob Crow should ring alarm bells for members of all ages. Make sure you have regular medical checks, not just the cursory exams companies give. I recently had a prostate cancer check (clear) and a blood cholesterol check (sky high). Tablets have brought this down but how many of you are aware of your true state of health? Make an appointment with your GP before it’s too late.

Jeff Veale, Battersea

Not in need of a Steer

It saddens me to see Jim Steer featured in the pages of the Journal (March) as he is not a friend of the railway industry, only self-interest. He did not respond to my requests to deal with the pressing problems of returning North Staffordshire stations to use. If he worked for the Strategic Rail Authority he did so illegally since at the same time he was working for his own consultancy; he was, technically, seconded.

This is a country that has not only stolen Palestinian land, but siphoned off most of their water and demolished an estimated 27,000 Palestinian buildings. Israel’s illegal occupation affects every aspect of Palestinian life. Boycotts and disinvestments are making big waves in Israel, with talk of a tipping point such as that which helped the people of South Africa end apartheid.

Laurie Holden, RMS

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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 07907 or motherwells1969@hotmail.co.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

COMMEMORATIVE badge to mark the 25th anniversary of the Clapham rail disaster. Each badge is individually numbered. £5 including p+p, cheques payable to ASLEF Bournemouth branch, from J Martin, Flat 1 Blenheim Court, 26 Marlborough Road, Bournemouth, BH4 8DH.

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 UNDERGROUND MEMOIRS 1968-2008 at £15 on a CD data disc containing 450 A4 pages, including photos, with free Ongar line and engineers DVD. Text details to 07599 018271. Pay by cheque or postal order only on receipt of discs. In ASLEF, and you, I trust.

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.
It’s a long way to Tipperary to the sweetest girl I know

A new exhibition explores the Great War through portraits of some of the protagonists. KEITH RICHMOND reflects on what the pictures reveal about the war to end all wars...

MAGES of the Great War of 1914-1918 are seared on the souls not just of the dead – of those who fought and died in four years of global conflict, or those who survived and have subsequently gone to meet their maker – but of those born long after the first world war who have become familiar with photographs, paintings, and government propaganda films made at the time.

This is partly, of course, because of the scale of the conflict; the numbers of men and women involved, the different theatres of operation, the way the war redrew the maps of Europe and the Middle East. The way, too, that the peace treaty signed at Versailles in 1919 sowed the seeds of the Second World War twenty years later and the way the Great War cast such a long shadow over the 20th century. And partly because of developments in technology; the Great War was depicted in a detail unprecedented in the history of human conflict.

‘My subject is war, and the pity of war. The poetry is in the pity’ – Wilfred Owen

To mark the centenary of the outbreak of war, the National Portrait Gallery has organized a small scale exhibition – 80 images arranged in six rooms – not all of which are, despite its title, portraits. But that doesn’t matter. Because here, on these walls, in an exhibition you can see in under an hour, and which is free, is a crash course in the war which changed the world.

It is carefully, and thoughtfully, curated. The first images you see are large, traditional, full colour portraits in oil on canvas of Emperor Franz Josef I of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, King George V and Kaiser Wilhelm II. On the opposite wall is a small black and white photograph of Gavrilo Princip. In the next room are paintings of Marshal Foch, von Hindenberg and Douglas Haig in all their pomp and circumstance while, on the next wall, is The Dead Stretcher Bearer by Gilbert Rogers, who served with the medical corps and represented the reality of death in the trenches with an unflinching eye.

‘Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew / Your cosmopolitan sympathies’ – Isaac Rosenberg

One wall is covered with 40 poignant photos – head and shoulder shots – of men and women who served. They include the well known – Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Isaac Rosenberg, Albert Ball, Manfred von Richthofen, Mata Hari, Edith Cavell – the less well known – Walter Tull, the first person of Afro-Caribbean heritage to become an officer in the British army, and Shahamad Khan, a Punjabi Muslim who won the Victoria Cross in Mesopotamia – and the unidentified.

‘If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood / Comgargling from the froth-corrupted lungs, / Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud / Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, / My friend, you would not tell with such high zest / To children ardent for some desperate glory, / The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori’ – Wilfred Owen

There are a few first class pictures – La Mitralleuse by CRW Nevinson, Sir Winston Churchill by William Orpen, Gassed and Wounded by Eric Kennington, Self Portrait by Isaac Rosenberg and Self Portrait as a Soldier by Ernst Kirchner – as well as some unexpected surprises – such as Hell: The Way Home by Max Beckmann and Hans Erdt’s poster for the film Bei unseren Helden an der Somme – which are worth a visit on their own.

Collectively, though, these fascinating images offer an insight into the truth, behind ‘the old Lie’, of life and death in the trenches.

Harry Patch, the last surviving fighting Tommy, who died in 2009 at the age of 111, was wounded at Passchendaele in 1917. He believed war was ‘organized murder’. He said in 2005: ‘Why should the British government call me up and take me out to a battlefield to shoot a man I never knew, whose language I couldn’t speak? All those lives lost for a war finished over a table. Now what is the sense of that?’

The Great War in Portraits is at the National Portrait Gallery in London until 15 June. Admission is free.
Solution to prize crossword number 96 which appeared in the April edition of the ASLEF Journal

**Across:** 7 Grille 8 Emigre 9 Lyre 10 Shipping 11 Eggcups 13 Loath 14 Hello 15 Eagerly 18 Material 20 Trot 22 De-icer 23 Myopia

**Down:** 1 Orgy 2 Aloe 3 Mess up 4 Remit 5 Wisp 6 Prenatal 12 Grey area 16 Aplomb 17 Diary 19 Etch 20 Thor 21 Obit

Congratulations to Arthur Thomas of Heol Iorwerth, Machynlleth, Powys, who was last month’s winner.

Thanks for all your responses to the 96th ASLEF crossword in the April edition. If you successfully complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 May

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