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ANDY McDonald: Getting Britain’s rail policy right

Gregor Gall: Courts are pushing back hard-won rights

Andy Hudd: Rail workers now unpaid for 16 months

Philippa Edmunds: HGV platoon fear

Marz Colombini on a Homage to Catalonia

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Solidarity to a tee: Mick on our Tolpuddle stall

Passion, commitment, humanity and humour

Jeremy Corbyn is one of the hardest-working men in the country. He spoke to more than 100,000 people, who loved the Labour leader, at the Durham Miners’ Gala, and thousands more the next weekend at Tolpuddle. Rallies he attends up and down this country are oversubscribed by men and women, young and old, from all of our communities, who want a Labour Party led by Jeremy. Perhaps the PLP, so keen to undermine him, should look to the membership, and the electorate? Then we can concentrate on progressive politics that changes lives for the better.

One man who agreed with me is someone ASLEF, and the whole labour movement, loved – Davey Hopper. His unwavering passion, commitment, humanity, and humour inspired many of us to believe in a better world and the greater good. His sad passing, just a week after the biggest Big Meeting of recent times, is poignant. Davey was a true working-class hero, and our friend.

It is strange how quickly you can go from being inspired to deflated; the unnecessary Labour leadership election – when we already have a perfectly good leader – and the shabby tactics, including the exclusion of trade union and affiliated members who joined on the promise of such rights, is nonsense. I could understand a future cut-off point, to prevent entryists, but not what has been proposed.

The rail industry has been in the headlines for the wrong reasons, with the Daily Mirror reporting a significant increase in sexual assaults. That’s why we need a visible presence on trains and stations supported by a fully invested BTP. We also need the full complement of fire and police services restored.

The Southern Rail debacle rumbles on – with emergency timetables, and ministerial resignations, yet some MPs are still trying to blame safety-critical staff by playing the sickness card. We know who we’re sick of! We did write to David Cameron when he suggested, at PM Qs, driver sickness had played a part, but we may now be waiting a long time for a retraction or even a response from the former Prime Minister. Rail Minister Claire Perry declined to see us and Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin is now Conservative Party chairman as Theresa May looks to attract working-class Tories. We have extended the usual courtesies to the incoming minister, Chris Grayling, but are not holding our breath.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary

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Follow the leader

ICK WHELAN, in a passionate speech at the 132nd Durham Miners’ Gala on 9 July, called on the Parliamentary Labour Party to start backing, and stop undermining, Jeremy Corbyn. Mick was joined by Richard Burgon, Labour MP for Leeds East, Dennis Skinner, Labour MP for Bolsover, new GMB general secretary Tim Roache, and Unison GS Dave Prentis in calling on the party to rally behind the leader and turn their fire on the Tories.

Jeremy told the Big Meeting: ‘It’s an honour to speak here as Labour leader and it will be an even bigger honour to speak here as Labour Prime Minister.’

Later Mick was instrumental in shoring up support for Jeremy after a leadership challenge by Angela Eagle and Owen Smith. He told the NEC: ‘ASLEF, as a trade union affiliated to the Labour Party, is disappointed that, just when we should be turning our fire on the Conservative government, a decision has been taken to challenge the leader of our party who was only elected, with overwhelming support, ten months ago.

‘We believe the only way for any challenger to Jeremy Corbyn to seek a legitimate mandate from the Labour Party is through a democratic election in which Jeremy is able to defend his record, his programme, and his vision, directly to the members who elected him last year.’

PM condemns ‘unacceptable’ service on Southern Railways

David Cameron, in one of his last acts as Prime Minister, answering a question from Jeremy Quin, Conservative MP for Horsham, at PMQs, slammed the performance of Southern Railways – branded Southern Railways by fed-up commuters as ‘unacceptable.’ London Mayor Sadiq Khan has called for the franchise to be taken away from GTR and handed to TfL. And passengers have been handing out flyers headlined ‘Urgent Appeal: Have you seen this woman?’ with a photo of Claire Perry and the hashtag ‘Where’s Claire?’ because the then Rail Minister went missing in action.
I have always depended on the kindness of strangers

Maxine Peake: Twinkle twinkle little star

International Brigades Memorial Trust commemoration in London on Saturday 2 July she was happy to nail her colours to the union mast by sporting an ASLEF ‘No DOO’ badge lobbying for ‘safety before profit, fighting for fully staffed passenger trains.’ Next month she plays self-destructive Southern belle Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams’s A Streetcar Named Desire at the Royal Exchange. Asked about doing a Mississippi drawl, she joked, ‘We’re setting it in Bolton.’

Off the rails

KEN CLARKE, who has always been on the left of the Conservative Party, was caught on an open mic at Sky News offering the stark truth about the Tory leadership contenders. When Sir Malcolm Rifkind muttered, ‘I don’t mind who wins as long as Gove comes third,’ Ken agreed, saying, ‘With Michael as Prime Minister we’d go to war with at least three countries at once,’ but added, ‘He did us all a favour by getting rid of Boris. The idea of Boris as Prime Minister is ridiculous.’ Then Ken turned his fire on Andrea Leadsom. ‘So long as she understands that she’s not to deliver on some of the extremely stupid things she’s been saying.’ And finally new Prime Minister Theresa May: ‘She’s a bloody difficult woman but you and I worked for Margaret Thatcher.’

MICHAEL SANDELL, Professor of Government Theory at Harvard, put his finger on what’s gone wrong in Britain when he said: ‘A large constituency of working-class voters feel that not only has the economy left them behind, but so has the culture. The sources of their dignity, the dignity of labour, have been eroded and mocked by globalisation, the rise of finance, the attention lavished by parties across the political spectrum on financial elites, and the technocratic emphasis of established political parties.’

GUY VERHOFSTADT, leader of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in the European Parliament, has accused Nigel Farage of being a Nazi. He told the UKIP leader, who has since said (not for the first time) he is stepping down, that he used ‘Nazi propaganda’ – the infamous poster showing lines of refugees – during the EU referendum campaign. Guy also attacked Boris Johnson, condemning ‘the selfishness of one man prepared to do anything to become Prime Minister of the UK.’

NICHOLAS LEZARD didn’t hold back, either. The left-wing literary critic, whose Down & Out column is consistently the best read in the New Statesman, said: ‘The figureheads who wish for our country to leave Europe are the most despicable, venal and, in some cases, actually insane people you could possibly imagine.’

CATHERINE GEE, who writes about the arts for The Telegraph online, got in trouble with older readers with this wicked tweet: ‘You know that time travel conundrum: would you kill baby Hitler? Same but Nigel Farage...’

TOSH McDONALD of ASLEF with Nicky Wilson of the NUM paying homage to the boss. ‘Not a railway boss or a pit boss,’ tweeted Tosh. ‘But the Boss. Bruce Springsteen at Hampden Park. Rock’n’Springsteen Roll.’

500 CLUB: P Beaumont, with number 40, won the July draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £374.

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Every road through life is a long, long road

RMS committee member DAVE COURT reports on the National Pensioners’ Convention in Blackpool

RAY JACKSON and I from ASLEF’s Retired Members’ Section were delegates to the NPC at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool from Tuesday 14 to Thursday 16 June. We joined NPC general secretary Dot Gibson to protest outside BHS before the pensioners’ parliament was opened by the deputy mayor of Blackpool, Gary Coleman. We heard speeches – much food for thought – from Richard Burgon, Labour MP for Leeds East; John Hilary of War on Want; Anthony Curley, Unite young members; Judy Downey of the Relatives and Residents Association; and Gary Fitzgerald of Action on Elder Abuse.

On Wednesday morning Ray and I attended a session called How Healthy is the NHS? in the Pavilion theatre. Speakers, including Dawne Garrett of the Royal College of Nursing and Clive Peedell of the National Health Action Party, condemned the way privatisation has affected health services and urged us to mobilise to defend the NHS.

In the afternoon we went to a session on the future of bus travel in Britain. Speakers, who included Bob Mason of Blackpool Transport Services, James MacColl of the Campaign for Better Transport, and Peter Rayner of the NPC, said the forthcoming Devolution Bill could adversely affect our bus services. Blackpool, refreshingly, is one of 11 municipalities which has not privatised its buses. Ray and I spoke about trains, the threat of DOO, and what pensioners could do to safeguard properly run transport services.

The Wednesday evening social in the Empress ballroom, with Bill Barrow’s Jazz Knights and a 60s/70s disco, saw Ray dancing a jig or two.

On Thursday morning Lynn Collins, north-west regional secretary of the TUC; Ciaran Osborne of Independent Age; and Neil Duncan-Jordan and Dot Gibson of the NPC discussed austerity and the effect it has had on young and old alike since the Conservatives came to power, originally with the support of the Liberal Democrats, in 2010.

Rosie MacGregor brought the NPC to a rousing close by leading the congregation in a rendition of Keep Right on to the End of the Road made famous by Harry Lauder.

By the light of a thousand candles

ASLEF activists were out in strength at the anniversary march and rally organised by the Orgreave Truth & Justice Campaign 32 years after South Yorkshire Police brutally attacked picketing miners during the bitter miners strike. ‘The demand for a public inquiry, after the Hillsborough verdict, has been overwhelming but the government is still dragging its heels,’ said EC president Tosh McDonald.

Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF’s organiser in Scotland, backs Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn at a rally at the STUC in Glasgow on Sunday 3 July organised by Scottish Labour Students, Scottish Young Labour, the Campaign for Socialism and Momentum.

ARNO’S GROVE

Arnos Grove branch (237) has closed. All members of Arnos Grove have been moved into a new branch called Piccadilly Line (274). Members from West Brompton, based at Northfields and Bollo House, have also been moved to this new branch.

Marz Colombini models ASLEF’s Kes tee-shirt – with a Harvey Smith to the Tories’ anti-Trade Union Bill – based on the iconic image from the famous Ken Loach film. £10 (inc p&p); email admin@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk

QUOTE…

‘We need solutions to the absolute failure of the neoliberal Project Few, whereby capitalism has been hijacked to serve the rich, where investing for the long-term has been replaced by short-term profiteering, and where globalisation has been allowed to wreck local economies in the name of free trade.’ – Jeanette Winterson, author of Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit

…UNQUOTE
Trouble at t’mill

CHRISS NUTTY reports from this year’s Silk Mill march

The annual Silk Mill march in Derby has undergone a makeover, moving from its traditional end of April slot to mid-June, and becoming an all-day event. The march celebrates the struggle of workers locked out of the mill in the 19th century for joining a trade union. Some socialists consider the Silk Mill as significant as Tolpuddle in the history of the trade union movement in this country.

This year’s march kicked off in Market Place with speeches from Moz Greenshields, secretary of Derby Trades Council, and Lee Baron of the Midlands TUC. Then, led by a bhangra dance troop, we set off to the Silk Mill for a wreath-laying ceremony and speeches from Tosh McDonald, ASLEF’s EC president, Ian Lavery, Labour MP for Wansbeck, and Lindsey German of Stop the War, who pointed out similarities between social inequalities today and back then.

The afternoon’s festivities included performances by Attila the Stockbroker, the Nottingham Clarion Choir, and raggle-taggle folk-punk group the Loscoe State Opera.

The march has always received support from ASLEF; back in the early days, GS Ray Buckton was a speaker. That backing continues, with Chris Dodd of the RMS on the organising committee. The Silk Mill is now an industrial museum, with a memorial to the workers at the entrance, and a whole floor dedicated to local railway history. It’s well worth a visit if you’re coming this way.

NETWORK RAIL’S DEBTS SOARS

GS Mick Whelan has slammed the government after it was revealed that Network Rail’s debt has ballooned to more than £40 billion for the first time while train delays worsen on Britain’s ageing railway system. ‘We are naturally concerned that Network Rail’s debt has increased by 10% in the last 12 months and concerned about infrastructure projects being pushed back from control period 5 to control period 6. The government needs to get a grip on the rail industry. Its hands off approach means we have failing franchises and failing infrastructure as well as failing politicians. Passengers are being sold short, and taxpayers short changed, by the utter incomptence of Patrick McLoughlin and Claire Perry at the DfT.’

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‘Cowboy’ operator fined for ‘disastrous’ blunders

West Coast Railways – the company condemned as a ‘cowboy operation’ – has been fined £200,000 and ordered to pay £64,000 costs for serious breaches of railway safety regulations. The Office of Rail and Road brought a prosecution after a report by the Rail Accident Investigation Board revealed that the controversial heritage operator was responsible for what would have been Britain’s worst-ever rail disaster.

The steam locomotive Tangmere ran a signal set at danger at a busy junction on the Great Western main line at Wootton Bassett on 7 March 2015 just 44 seconds after a packed high speed FGW passenger train went by. The RAIB condemned the company – owned by David Smith, a Yorkshire farmer who, according to the Daily Telegraph, ‘runs it in an authoritarian manner like his own private train set’ – after discovering that a device to automatically apply the brakes if a signal is passed at danger had been deliberately disabled. The driver, Melvyn Cox, was sentenced to four months in prison, suspended for 18 months. Judge Peter Blair condemned the company and its ‘flagrant disregard’ for railway rules.

ORR inspectors slammed the company for its ‘weak’ safety culture after finding ‘significant failings’ in management, and inadequate training to prevent ‘intentional misuse’ of TPWS equipment. ‘Our evidence showed the driver directed a colleague to turn off this essential safety system, designed to automatically apply an emergency brake,’ WCRC and Melvyn Cox both pleaded guilty at Swindon crown court.

Mark Watson, prosecuting, said: ‘He was travelling at excessive speed and the heavy locomotive came to a stand across Wootton Bassett junction 690 metres from the signal. A London-bound high speed train carrying 240 passengers had passed over the junction a minute before. Whilst no accident actually occurred, a catastrophic collision was only narrowly avoided. The historic train is much heavier that the high speed train and a collision between the two of them would have been disastrous.’ The court heard that Melvyn Cox accepted responsibility for turning off the safety device, but said ‘It was not an uncommon practice.’

Ian Prosser, chief inspector of railways, said: ‘Train operating companies and drivers hold positions of great responsibility, with a duty to protect the safety of colleagues and passengers. Almost all undertake their roles in accordance with the rules and their training. West Coast Railway’s ineffective management led to their driver deliberately misusing a key safety system on a train travelling between Bristol and Southall. Rail safety remains one of the regulator’s key priorities and we will always take action against companies if failings are found.’

QUOTE...
‘Tony Blair lost power in summer 2007. In the ensuing nine years he has lost his reputation. His business ventures and alliances with autocrats have made him a pariah among the public and his party.’ – George Eaton, political editor, New Statesman

Solidarity show forces TPE to back down

ASLEF has forced TPE to back down over plans to take away passes for retired railwaymen and women. Staff from the three rail unions – ASLEF; the RMT and the TSSA – staged a loud demonstration outside TPE’s head office in Manchester.

Inside, we said no pay deal would be done until the passes were given back. The company, which had earlier said it no longer wanted to give concessions to people who have worked for up to 50 years, because ‘We’re in the business of making money and they can pay like everyone else,’ promptly backed down. ‘Pressure from the trade unions, and a demonstration by retired rail workers, forced TPE to withdraw proposals to take passes away from retired staff’ said EC president Tosh McDonald. ‘Solidarity in action. Next stop Northern Rail.’

Virgin in trouble

Virgin Trains East Coast is in trouble after breaching safety regulations as it moves to a ‘union-busting war footing’ ahead of a possible strike. A driver manager is being investigated after instructing a train on the East Coast main line to pull away from a platform before the correct signal was given.

Brothers in arms

ASLEF’s general secretary Mick Whelan called for trade union unity when he was invited to speak at the RMT’s annual general meeting in Cardiff at the end of June. RMT officers thanked Mick for ‘a great speech.”The RMT’s GS Mick Cash spoke at ASLEF’s annual assembly of delegates in Southend last year.

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HS2 ‘unrealistic’

The £56 billion high speed rail project HS2 has an ‘unrealistic timetable’ and major cost pressures, according to a report by the National Audit Office. The schedule is ‘too ambitious,’ the target date of 2026 is now ‘at risk,’ and rising costs mean that not all its intended benefits will be delivered.

Quote...
‘Tony Blair lost power in summer 2007. In the ensuing nine years he has lost his reputation. His business ventures and alliances with autocrats have made him a pariah among the public and his party.’ – George Eaton, political editor, New Statesman

...UNQUOTE
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Whatever you do, take pride

The noisy and colourful Pride in London parade and festival celebrates the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in the capital.

**ROMOLO LANZI**, branch equality rep for Bournemouth, reports on a great day out and the contribution made by ASLEF activists

HAVENever been to a Gay Pride day in London before and, as a first timer, I count myself lucky to have been part of the LGBT parade for ASLEF on Saturday 25 June.

We met at a nearby pub and made our way to the rally point where I was able to meet other ASLEF members and was introduced to our president, Tosh McDonald, EC members Dave Calfe, Marz Colombini and Howard Kaye, and DOs Dicky Fisher and Nigel Gibson. We waited amongst other unions and the atmosphere was superb! From singing to dancing with the occasional drink in between!

Once the parade started we marched through London and I was astounded by the cheering and waving from all the viewers, even with the rain pouring down on us, spirits were high and we all had a fantastic time. I was ecstatic, not only because I was marching through London with, and for, Pride but because I was doing so representing our union and, with me, all my brothers and sisters who came on the day.

Everyone who attended had a great experience, enjoying the day, the camaraderie, the laughs and the feeling of togetherness! Gay Pride is not just a walk along some streets, it shows people who are happy in their own skin, with their own sexuality, and thus would be accepted in any society. Gay Pride is not just a day for everyone, not just our LGBT community; everyone is welcome and your support can’t but reinforce the belief that no matter what your skin colour, or your sexual preferences, we are all brothers and sisters united.

An epic, awesome, fantastic day celebrating equality and support. It was an experience I will definitely remember for many years to come and one I will repeat next year!

One under

**BILL DAVIES**, RMS, Bedford, reflects on what can be done to help drivers who have suffered a fatality

LOOKING at disruptions on national rail enquiries, curiosity made me examine the reasons for delays. To my dismay, three were because of ‘emergency services investigating an incident’ or, to put it bluntly, another track fatality. My thoughts go out to the drivers involved who, through no fault of his or her own, is part of an act of human destruction. Duty necessitates reporting the incident to ensure safety around the site and then the processes begin to restore the rail service. The driver may well be left alone; a solitary time which can be the start of a little soul searching. ‘What else could I have done?’ ‘How ought I to be feeling having involuntarily killed a fellow human being?’

Each incident is different, and each driver reacts differently. Whoever reaches the driver first will react according to the circumstances. Treatment of the driver at this point is crucial to their immediate and post incident future. Training people to deal with circumstances beyond their control, with paramount concern for staff, is difficult as each incident is unique. I doubt if a perfect on-site procedure can be devised. In many cases the first contact is perfectly performed but there have been instances in my experience when this has not been the case, inflicting further trauma on the driver concerned.

My concern is for drivers who, unfortunately, are ever more likely to become involved in a fatality as the toll of railway deaths rises, for all the palisade fences that have been erected. Laudable measures involving the Samaritans may have prevented an even bigger increase by offering a last ditch opportunity to seek help at especially vulnerable locations. What the industry might try is to get drivers together to discuss their experiences in an attempt to reveal any common threads in their treatment and to identify good and bad practice. Experiences with outside agencies such as GPs, mental health care workers and councillors could provide pointers toward resolving a way back into normal life.

Some drivers return to work immediately, seeing this as the way forward, but some who have suffered multiple fatalities may need considerable rehabilitation before resuming driving. For a long time I have felt deep concern for all those involved in railway fatalities; this is my humble attempt to restart a debate, looking for a constructive outcome. My experiences of attending inquests with drivers as an ASLEF rep taught me a lot, much of it about the deceased, but not enough to find the answer to a problem which causes so much grief to our members and their families.
It was a foggy day on the sixth of May when Plastic Chicken asked Super Scouse ‘Why not join our line-up? It’s completely free! All you need is transport and a current MOT’. PHILIPPA EDMUNDS, manager of Freight on Rail, argues passionately that HGV platoons would not only be bad for Britain’s railways, but bad for road users, too.

AUTONOMOUS vehicles are all the rage at the moment and are being trumpeted, with great fanfare, as a way of reducing congestion, emissions and road collisions. The government is backing research into this new technology and has set up an office for connected and autonomous vehicles; trials are being promoted in Coventry, Milton Keynes, Bristol and Greenwich.

Here I look at lorry platooning and the impact it will have on rail freight as I fear the government might try to use it as a cheap and easy alternative to supporting freight on rail but, of course, AVs would affect public transport, too.

The long-term vision of long road trains of enormous trucks being led by a single driver would dramatically reduce road freight costs as drivers represent more than one-third of haulage costs. In the short-term, it is unclear what the status of rear drivers would be. Would they be deemed to be driving on periods of availability which would reduce operator costs but could result in longer working hours for drivers?

PLATOONS OF LORRIES
Platoons of lorries might work in the wide open spaces of Australia or North America. However, there are serious obstacles to it being practical in the UK because our road network is so congested with frequent exits close together. If a platoon of lorries is on the inside lane, how will other vehicles leave or join the motorway? If the platoon is on the outside lane, there are obvious safety issues if other vehicles undertake on the inside.

I have been actively following this debate and taken part in a Department for Transport workshop on AVs. The DfT, when challenged, could not explain what it is trying to achieve by allowing HGV platooning. There was a meeting of the All Party Freight Group attended by rail freight operators and Unite. I also gave a presentation at a freight working group chaired by Steve Norris.

Proponents from the road haulage lobby always talk about environmental and financial savings but there is little, if any, acknowledgement of the costs. I start from a standpoint of the need to reduce the adverse impacts of freight distribution and how using rail can reduce road congestion, road damage, collisions and pollution far more effectively than a few HGV platoons. For example, platoons are expected to reduce CO₂ emissions by up to 10% whereas rail freight produces 76% less CO₂ emissions than normal HGVs.

The best way to reduce the cost of HGVs to the economy, society and the planet is to introduce a distance-based lorry road user charging scheme which could make HGVs pay for more of their adverse costs. Currently, HGVs pay only around one-third of the costs they impose on society which makes it difficult for rail to compete, in consumer traffic in particular. Were it a level playing field, with parity between the modes, rail, which has to compete on price, could increase its market share significantly.

INFRASTRUCTURE DAMAGE
We have to explain that if rail is further undermined by a reduction in the cost of HGVs, by using platoons, freight on rail will become less viable which will end up costing society more in terms of congestion, fatalities, road infrastructure damage and pollution. The country needs the flexibility of different freight modes so that they can play to their strengths. Rail is particularly well placed to deliver long distance consumer trunk haulage as well as traditional bulk cargoes. But, as we know, this market is very price sensitive and rail has already been adversely affected by reductions in oil prices.

THREAT TO RAIL FREIGHT
Lots of operational questions remain about HGV platooning. What will be the public’s attitude and how will platoons interact with other road users? And, crucially, where will HGVs formulate road trains and who will pay for this? What happens if a middle vehicle breaks down and needs to be disengaged in roadside refuges? How would this approach fit with smart motorways? And how does a platoon overtake a slow vehicle? How safely will they perform in bad weather?

There are also more basic questions – how does insurance work – and concerns about cyber crime. How does the costing model work when there are issues about sharing cost benefits – the leader of the convoy will have more liability and heavier costs. Infrastructure costs will remain high; larger HGVs are up to 160,000 times more damaging to road surfaces than the average car.

HGV platooning is another massive threat to rail freight at a time when, as we know, the sector is vulnerable. Rather than encouraging something – platooning – which we know will lead to more problems, we should be doing more to bring freight back onto rail. Platooning is not the solution for freight distribution.
Getting rail policy right is crucial for creating a prosperous economy

ANDY MCDONALD, Labour MP for Middlesbrough, was promoted to Shadow Secretary of State for Transport in Jeremy Corbyn’s post-Brexit reshuffle at the end of June. This is the text of a speech, very warmly received by delegates, which he gave to AAD in Aviemore earlier this year.

T IS my very great pleasure and privilege to be here this afternoon and to speak with you. I was delighted to accept Jeremy Corbyn’s invitation to take up the position of Shadow Rail Minister in January of this year. Jeremy, as many of you will know, is a complete rail enthusiast and when he wrote to me after I took up the role he said that rail was very close to his heart and he made that abundantly clear when he said he was delighted that I had ’taken on the brief to campaign for a fully integrated, publicly-owned, railway, to fight against job cuts and to fight for cheaper fares and better services.’

I took that as a pretty clear job description and he reminded me that he has worked with the rail unions for many years on these issues, and he knew that I would enjoy working with the unions, and he is absolutely right about that – I’d like to think I’ve got one of the best briefs in politics.

DELIVERING ECONOMIC GROWTH

I entered Parliament in 2012 after a career working in the legal profession and, for the last 13 years, with Thompsons solicitors and I was honoured to be given the privilege to represent the town, the party and the movement that I love and to which I have committed my life. And I could not be more delighted to have been given the opportunity to shape Labour’s rail policy over the coming years.

As you know, this is a tremendously important task because getting our rail policy right is absolutely crucial for delivering the type of economic growth needed to create the prosperous and just economy that Labour will deliver when next in government. And Labour’s transport policy will be more than just a mechanism for achieving economic growth, it also helps to build a more caring and inclusive society, alleviating social exclusion – connecting isolated communities and individuals. Rail policy will be central to our plans when next in government and I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with you and all our rail unions as crucially important colleagues in our movement.

I believe the last Labour government has a record on rail we can be proud of. We invested more in our railways than any previous government; we invested in new trains, to replace the ageing fleet we inherited; we abolished Railtrack following the disasters of Hatfield and Potters Bar and set up Network Rail, prioritising passenger safety and delivering the safest railway of any major European country; we delivered the Channel Tunnel rail link; we drew up the blueprints for, or started, major projects including Crossrail, Thameslink and High Speed 2.

WE COULD HAVE DONE MORE

But that is not to say we couldn’t have done more. Because we could have done more and we should have done more. And I know many of you will share my frustration that, in 13 years of government, Labour failed to reverse the disastrous privatisation of rail in the UK.

When we look at the history of rail privatisation, and its impact on passengers, it isn’t difficult to understand the overwhelming public support for bringing railway services back into public ownership. We are told that we have to reach out to voters beyond our core vote. Well, let’s say it loud and proud, taking our railways back into public ownership is what the overwhelming majority of the public wants – whatever their allegiances. Quite simply, it’s popular.

And let’s be clear about something. The Tory privatisation of British Rail was a rushed, botched job which had more to do with ideology than any clear plan for the railways. The legacy we have been left with is a fragmented and expensive rail network.

We need to ask what railways are for? There are lots of answers: are railways about the efficient transport of people and goods from one place to another; and about connecting communities, families and friends; they are drivers of economic growth and they can help with the rebalancing our economy.

But, since 1993 and privatisation, the structure of our railways has been far too focused on extracting value, extracting profits, to pay dividends to shareholders of companies, be they foreign state owned or otherwise, and we have lost sight of why we have railways in the first place.

Our railway system is fragmented and far too complex. And the fragmentation of our rail network has left us with an efficiency gap of between 30% and 40% compared to other European networks, meaning that money which should be used to address the cost of travel and fund much needed investment is needlessly wasted.

Hundreds of millions of pounds leaks out of our railways in taxpayer subsidies that should be better directed to investing in our services, making fares affordable and supporting the people who really run our railways – the drivers, the guards, the ticket office staff, the cleaners, the catering staff, the administrators, the designers, the engineers, the managers – everyone who works in the industry – they run our railways and we should recognise their commitment to our railways, listen to them, and work with them to deliver the services our people want.

We have been left with a ticketing system which is the most expensive and confusing structure in Europe. Commuters’ fares are up by a quarter since 2010, rising three times faster than wages.

MASSIVE UNDERINVESTMENT

Our rail network suffers from massive underinvestment while private and foreign and state-owned companies are subsidised by the UK taxpayer, profiteering at the expense of commuters.

But, far from learning the obvious lessons of the past, the Tory Party instead redoubled their efforts to repeat them. Nothing illustrates the point like East Coast. After the Labour government took East Coast back into public operation after the private operator reneged on its obligations in 2009, East Coast proved itself to be one of the most efficient operators, returning over £1 billion to the taxpayer in premium payments as well as investing every penny of profit back into the service. Under state control, they kept fares down in real terms in 2014 when
no privately-run franchise took the same step. They had record passenger satisfaction and engaged the workforce with unparalleled success.

But, let’s be fair, the Tories do believe in state ownership of the railways. But, sadly, it’s not this state they are thinking of but Germany, France and Holland! They are quite prepared to see passengers and taxpayers subsidise other nations’ rail services.

DRIVEN BY OUTDATED IDEOLOGY
Quite simply, the attitude towards public ownership of this Tory government is driven by an outdated ideology which is totally out of kilter with the views of a large majority of the public – including voters from right across the political spectrum.

I was disappointed that Labour, when last in government, left in place the privatised market model for our railways. That is why I was proud to be a Labour MP when the first policy announcement, after the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party, was our commitment to publicly-owned railway services which puts the passengers and workers first rather than the profits of private or foreign state-owned companies.

Between now and the next Labour government, we have a great deal of work to do to fight for our railways and those who travel and work on them. As under every Conservative government, these past few years we have witnessed public services undermined, jobs axed and workers’ rights threatened – and our railways are no exception. This race to the bottom threatens not only the livelihoods of thousands of people who keep our railways running but the safety and the performance of the services themselves.

The drive to close ticket offices and remove staff from platforms and trains encapsulates the short-term thinking and false economies of the politics of austerity. And the push to expand Driver Only Operation across our networks is another example. Customers, especially people with disabilities, value human presence on their trains. Two of the main complaints of commuters are a lack of staff and concerns over personal security, especially when there are worries over national security. Despite this, and even though we know revenue will be adversely effected, the government and train operating companies want to plough ahead with plans that would leave nobody but a driver on the train, spelling joblessness for thousands, often those in regions that can ill afford the loss of skilled, secure employment. I am pleased to say that the Labour Party stands with you in the fight against cuts to jobs and services.

LABOUR BORN OF TRADE UNIONS
And whilst we may have breathed a sigh of relief that the Shaw report wasn’t promoting the wholesale privatisation of Network Rail we have to be on our guard in terms of the mooted breaking up of Network Rail into route-based business arms, the sale of the electrical power supply grid to private companies and the proposed selling off of the super-fast broadband network.

Steps that undermine the integrity of Network Rail have to be subjected to the closest possible scrutiny and I give you my promise to do exactly that.

In conclusion, I think the key word in all of this is ‘solidarity’. Labour is a party born of the trade union movement. We are at our strongest when we are standing by side, standing up for workers’ rights and better public services; working together to achieve a more prosperous and fair economy; fighting this incompetent and malicious Tory government and building the movement which will deliver a Labour government that stands up for the many and not just the few.

FACT FILE

- ANDY MCDONALD was born and brought up in Acklam, Middlesbrough, in 1958. He went to local state schools before reading Law at Leeds Polytechnic, which is now Leeds Beckett University.
- He worked as a lawyer, becoming senior serious injury solicitor at Thompsons’s office in Middlesbrough.
- Andy was active in local politics for many years, serving as a councillor for Westbourne ward, before being selected to fight a by-election after the death of Stuart Bell in 2012. Andy won the seat, increasing the Labour Party’s share of the vote to 60.5%.
- He was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to Shadow Attorney General Emily Thornberry in 2013 and then, after Ed Miliband’s reshuffle, PPS to Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna.
- Andy was returned to Westminster at the general election in 2015, polling 18,584 votes, well ahead of UKIP (6,017), the Conservatives, (5,388), Greens (1,407) and Lib Dems (1,220).
- He became PPS to Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell and then, in January, he was appointed Shadow Minister for Rail by Jeremy Corbyn.
- Andy was promoted to Shadow Transport Secretary when Lilian Greenwood resigned after the EU referendum.
I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night

GREGOR GALL examines how capricious and rapacious employers are using the courts – and the Conservatives’ anti-union legislation – to push back workers’ rights

ASLEF has found itself at the sharp, and costly, end of the Conservative anti-trade union laws in the last few months. Twice Govia Thameslink Railway applied for, and was granted, an injunction to prevent industrial action by members over the use of 12-car rather than 8-car operation. The bases of the granting of the injunctions were the allegations of the absence of a legitimate trade dispute; inducing drivers to take action before balloting; and incorrect members being balloted. In the case of the second injunction, costs of £250,000 for the employer were awarded against ASLEF.

CAPRICIOUS EMPLOYERS

Of course, these were not the first or only times in recent years that ASLEF has been up in court for trying to take industrial action to protect the safety of the travelling public and the terms and conditions of its members. There have also been cases with London Midland and London Underground.

Since 2010, when the Conservatives returned to power, and until this summer, 42 injunctions have been applied for by employers – with the overwhelming majority being granted. In addition, 43 threats to make applications for injunctions have also been issued by employers. Again, the outcomes have been overwhelmingly favourable – for the employers – with action being called off or ballots stood down.

The number of applications for injunctions and threats to apply for them are well down on previous highs in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet what is noticeable is that the applications, and threats to apply, are increasingly concentrated in a small number of sectors of the economy.

Of the 42 applications since 2010, 23 (55%) have been in transport, communications and emergency services. Of the 43 threats, 21 (49%) have been in transport, communications and emergency services. And what is startling is that 83% of all those applications for injunctions in the sectors of transport, communications and emergency services were actually in transport alone. And the punchline is that well over half of the applications for injunctions concerning transport come from the railway (overground and underground) sector. ASLEF and its sister union, the RMT, have been the targets of these injunctions.

So what explains this concentration on the rail sector? Capricious minded and rapacious acting employers are one obvious factor – but there are plenty of those outside the rail sector so this cannot be the clincher. Even within the rail sector, there are also plenty of occasions when employers do not run to the courts. The current driver only operation dispute between the RMT and ScotRail is a case in point – although here ScotRail is using other means to try to undermine strike action by the RMT.

AGGRESSIVE MANAGEMENT

A far more convincing explanation is that employer applications for injunctions highlight a coincidence of aggressive management and effective industrial action. In other words, employers are only really concerned about industrial action that has the capacity to halt or seriously disrupt their operations and, thus, their revenue and their profits.

That is something of a backhanded compliment from employers as the vast majority of strikes do not have this capacity. Those that do have the characteristics of having an immediate effect where there are no existing stockpiles; few alternatives; the goods or services are perishable; and supplies of strike breakers do not exist.

Using this as a rule of thumb explains why there are now few groups of workers, other than train drivers, and train crew, that have the power to stop employers – if you’ll excuse the pun – in their tracks. Bus drivers are one and Royal Mail postal workers are another.

What does all this mean in the ‘brave’ new world of the Trade Union Act 2016? It was passed by Parliament on 4 May this year. ASLEF members are unlikely to be troubled by the new statutory thresholds when they come into effect later this year (once the commencement orders are issued). This is because turnouts in ballots for industrial action are in excess of a simple majority and majorities for action are also above the additional threshold for transport where the majority for action must also equate to being above the threshold of 40% of all those entitled to vote voting for action.

BACKHANDED COMPLIMENT

That’s another backhanded compliment to ASLEF members. But – and the ‘but’ is a very big one indeed – it still does not alter the fact that the Tory anti-union laws of the 1980s onwards will continue to operate as they have before. The interpretation of them may even tighten as judges establish new precedents.

The task of removing these laws from the statute book remains as pressing as ever and the only possibility of that happening is the re-election of a Labour government with a policy to do so. This means, of course, a Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn. For ASLEF, the same is true for returning rail to public ownership. Only then will the likes of GTR be held in check before being done away with altogether.

Gregor Gall is Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Bradford. His research on the use of injunctions by employers in collective industrial disputes has just been published in the British Journal of Industrial Relations – a copy of which can be obtained on request from him (g.gall@bradford.ac.uk).
Homage to Catalonia

MARZ COLOMBINI, executive committee member for District 1, reports on the International Museum of the Spanish Civil War in Barcelona

ISTORIANS, human rights campaigners, and trade union activists have come together in the Association for the International Museum of the Spanish Civil War to create a permanent space in Barcelona to explore, explain and remember the bitter and bloody Spanish Civil War.

It was one of the most ideologically complex conflicts of the 20th century with the progressive left – socialists, communists, anarchists and republicans – battling the repressive right – monarchists, fascists, ultra-conservative Catholics and foreign mercenaries.

There was, within the broader struggle, a revolutionary process that included the collectivisation of major industries – including transport – and what started as a civil war was cynically exploited by Hitler and Mussolini as a test run for the Second World War.

Tens of thousands of workers from around the world fought to defend the young republic; sadly, governments in Western Europe and North America turned a blind eye to what was happening and pursued a policy of appeasement towards Nazi aggression. The Republican government became isolated and eventually fell, with decades of disastrous consequences for millions of Spaniards who were executed, exiled, or expatriated from society.

Fortunately, Spain is now a democracy and the UGT is free to engage in its activities openly. We were made very welcome and left a few tokens of our appreciation in the form of ASLEF regalia. Fortunately, Spain is now a democracy and the UGT is free to engage in its activities openly. We were made very welcome and left a few tokens of our appreciation in the form of ASLEF regalia.

On Saturday we had a guided tour of the battles of Barcelona, many of them mentioned in George Orwell’s memoir Homage to Catalonia. The Civil War is still a very tender subject in Spain; this conflict, and the divisions and repression that followed, cast long shadows. We flew home on Sunday, mentally refreshed. Huge thanks to Steve Richardson, District 1 council, for organising such a fascinating and informative trip.

It was there we fought against the Fascists

DUNCAN BIRD, union learning rep at Waterloo Nine Elms, reports on District 1’s educational trip to Barcelona

District 1 activists gathered at Gatwick on Thursday 9 June for a flight to Barcelona to learn more about British members of the International Brigades who fought against Franco and Fascism in Spain.

On Friday we met Ana Molina of the UGT, Spain’s biggest trade union, representing 600,000 workers, and Josefa Dorado, from the UGT’s railway section, who explained the history of the union, the civil war and repression during the Franco years.

Franco’s Nationalist army was backed by right-wing Falangist irregulars and soldiers from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as Hitler and Mussolini used Spain as a testing ground for the tactics, troops and weapons of the Second World War. The governments of Britain and France, wedded to an ill-conceived policy of appeasement of the great dictators, agreed on a cynical policy of non-intervention because, cabinet papers subsequently revealed, they feared socialism, and the power of the workers, more than they feared the Nazis and the Fascists and their rich friends in England.

But, on the Republican side, volunteers in the International Brigades answered Joan Miró’s call to Aidez L’Espagne, many of them living, fighting and dying under a slogan used by anti-Fascists ever since: ‘No Pasarán!’

You’ll never find friends such as we

DAVE COURT reports on the IBMT commemoration in London

EC president Tosh McDonald, vice-president Dave Calfe, EC1 Marz Colombini, EC3 Andy Hourigan, DO1 Graham Morris, Debbie Reay of the WRC, and Dave Court of the RMS proudly attended the International Brigades Memorial Trust’s rally in Jubilee Gardens, London, on Saturday 2 July. There were speeches and presentations, including a wreath laid by Waterloo Nine Elms branch, and the whole ensemble sang El Valle del Jarama made famous by Woody Guthrie. It was all very colourful, with banners from Doncaster and Waterloo Nine Elms joining flags and banners from the IBMT and Durham Miners. We sang the Internationale and reassembled at the Camel & Artichoke in Lower Marsh Street.

The IBMT commemorates the battle against fascism in Spain where, in the 1930s, the democratically-elected left-wing Republican government introduced social and economic reforms to improve the lives of industrial workers and peasant farmers. Conservatives – the rich, the powerful and the Roman Catholic church – were furious and in July 1936 the army, led by General Francisco Franco, tried to overthrow the government by force. Thousands of Spaniards rallied to the Republican cause, the coup failed and the country was plunged into a bloody civil war.

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Upcoming events

- **DERBY** – **FRIDAY 5 AUGUST**
  Reunion from 14.30 at Nunsfield House social club, 33 Boulton Lane, Derby. All retired four shed staff welcome. Contact Eamonn Tague on 07500 099190 or eamonn.tague@sky.com

- **BURY** – **SUNDAY 7 AUGUST**
  Depot and station staff, 25 years since closure, reunion from 1pm in the Trackside bar at Bury Bolton Street station. Only the second we’ve held. Cheers’n’beers! Details from Dave Hebblethwaite via jackrussel.terrier@btinternet.com

- **FRATTON** – **FRIDAY 30 SEPTEMBER**
  Reunion from 12.0 to 18.00 at Portsmouth Railway Social Club next to Fratton station. Bring photos of railway interest. Free buffet and raffle. Call Gary White on 07798 706204.

- **RAINHAM** – **THURSDAY 6 OCTOBER**
  Southeastern retired and working members’ reunion from 11.0 at Rainham Social Club, 86 Station Road, Rainham.

- **PETERBOROUGH** – **FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER**
  Booz’n’Chat meeting at the Parkway club, Maskew Avenue, Peterborough. £5 in advance, £6 on the door. Call Malcolm Bell on 07884 43242 or fletton.brick@btopenworld.com

Please send your all branch news, reports and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk

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**John picks up MBE from the Queen**

John McCree Scott, magistrate, train driver, long-standing member of Gateshead & Newcastle branch, and Key Worker (Journal, March) received his MBE from the Queen at Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh on 5 July. ‘It was a wonderful day, in a great setting,’ said John, chair of the South Northumbria bench. ‘Well organised, and the Queen was very gracious. The award is a great honour, not only for me, but for my fellow magistrates, the unsung heroes of the criminal justice system.’

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**Really appreciated**

Dave Calfe, EC vice-president, and Bob Earlam, London Midland company council, came to Leamington Spa branch. Dave gave an interesting state of the nation report about the DOO dispute on Southern, incidents involving the West Coast Railway Company, ballots on Colas, cab inward-facing CCTV, changes to t&cs on EM Trains, and the European train driver licence.

Bob spoke about a short LM extension to RDW, extra driver agreement. We would like to thank Dave and Bob for visiting us regularly. We are only a small branch of 17, so the fact that people give up Sundays to come is really appreciated.

**Beer & badges**

Hastings welcomed EC1 Marz Colombini to our beer & badges night where he handed out long-service awards to Bros A Bales, R Evans (5 years); E Holland, S James (10); K Brooker, C Pulsford (15); and (right)

- D Hazleton (25), Ricky McCain, branch secretary

Edinburgh takes Pride in District 2

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**DANCING IN THE RAIN**

Bishop's Stortford welcomed ECS Howard Kaye and DOS Nigel Gibson to our June meeting. Howard gave a well-received speech, including sobering observations on the dangers of indiscreet electronic communications, and presented service badges to Bro Rick Furmanis, assistant branch secretary, and Bro J McCabe, a long-standing member.

Richard Roscoe, branch secretary
Mick Holder turns back time to August 1916

Education, coroner’s courts, and the shortage of paper were topics in the Loco Journal 100 years ago

WE DON’T NEED NO EDUCATION
Writing about what may well have been the first national education survey, the editor says: ‘The Workers’ Educational Association has started an important campaign with the object of rousing working-class opinion on education. A pamphlet has been written by the general secretary, JM Mactavish, on “What Labour wants from Education,” in which he seeks to discover what ought to be Labour’s ideal in education, discussing the educational needs of the individual, the class, and the nation; his conclusion being that Labour wants health and development for the body, knowledge and truth for the mind, fineness for the feelings, coupled with such a training as will make its members efficient, self-supporting citizens of a free self-governing community. A free copy is to be sent to every trade union branch, trades council, etc, in the country. This, so far as we know, is the biggest attempt yet been made to give working people an opportunity of saying what they want from education.’

INSTANTLY DONE TO DEATH
Organising Secretary W Warwick reports: ‘I was again employed making enquiries re a fatal accident on the Bakerloo Tube, in which two of our members were concerned, and the following day I attended the inquest at Lambeth coroner’s court. In this case a soldier, on his way back from France, after a few days’ holiday, attempted to board the train after it had started, with the result he got down between the train and the platform and was instantly done to death. The jury returned a verdict of accidental death and exonerated our members.’

THE GREAT SHORTAGE OF PAPER
Two years after the outbreak of hostilities in the Great War, and with troops entrenched on the fields of Flanders, privations stretched all the way back to the home front. ‘The editor regrets to announce that, at last, we have become affected by the great shortage of paper, and the Journal will in future be reduced by eight pages.’

Tales of the iron road
I’m hoping members can help me. I’m a driver on London Underground, and have been for 15 years. I have stories to tell but love hearing the old boys telling theirs and that’s given me an idea for a book. What I want are tales from the railway. They don’t even have to be about trains. Funny stories; sad stories; disturbing stories; gross stories. Anything that’s happened to a train driver, I want to know. I should make it clear that anything shared will remain 100% anonymous; my book will ‘be based on real life’. No names, no packdrill. Please send your stories to tomharcourt@yahoo.co.uk
Tom Case Harcourt

Legends all
Hoo Junction (DB Cargo) held a retirement party for William Dockrill, Mick Leggett, Laurie Keeble and Graeme Hicks (top) retiring with 185 years experience between them. John Staggs, company council, Hither Green, presents William with his 45 year badge (above). Legends all.

DO3 Colin Smith stands shoulder to shoulder with NUT activists, and the Liverpool Socialist Singers, gathering signatures to show support for Jeremy Corbyn.

Five retired Southall drivers (from left) Ken Rackley, 86; Ernest ‘Ginger’ Pearce, 90; Reg Preston, 96; Ted Abear, 85; and Les Smith, 86, at the Acton reunion.


Mick Whelan addresses Salisbury branch on Thursday 2 June.

Tom Case Harcourt
DARE DEVIL RIDES TO JARAMA

A new play by Neil Gore

‘To you we speak, you numberless Englishmen, To remind you of the greatness still among you Created by these men who go from our towns To fight for peace, for liberty, and for you.’

Clem Beckett and Christopher Caudwell were two such men. Moved by most Spaniards’ determination to defend themselves against Franco, Hitler and Mussolini, they crossed the Pyrenees to fight for democracy and against Fascism in Spain. Clem ‘Dare Devil’ Beckett; the rugged journeyman, and Christopher Caudwell, poet and literary critic, were unlikely friends; but a common cause brought them together and they fought and died at a machinegun post covering their battalion’s retreat at the Battle of Jarama in 1937.

Commissioned by the International Brigades Memorial Trust, Dare Devil Rides to Jarama tells the story of the British and Irish volunteers in the brutal Civil War in Spain, capturing the idealistic hopes and dreams, raw passions, fear and anger in a powerful new drama which features stirring songs, poetry and flamenco dance.

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VICTOR BURTON LIVED LIFE TO THE FULL

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of RMS member Bro Victor Burton, whose previous branches include Hartlepool, King’s Cross and Thornaby. Vic started his career on the railway in 1944 as a knocker-up, progressing to cleaner, senior cleaner, fireman and finally driver at King’s Cross. After 14 months he transferred back to Hartlepool to fill his 8b.

During his long career on the railway he got involved with ASLEF and held many positions in the union including LDC, sectional council and assistant branch secretary of Hartlepool until its closure in the 1980s. He was also heavily involved with the local Labour Party where, after years of membership, he was persuaded to stand as a councillor, a position he held for more than 20 years, as well as being a county councillor, too. In 1992 he was given the honour of representing the town he loved as mayor, a job in which he and his late wife Violet took great pride. Sadly, he lost his battle with cancer, a battle he fought with great dignity, and on 19 May passed away surrounded by his family. I like to think that Vic has moved into the senior link.

He will be sadly missed, not only as a father, and a friend, but also as a mentor. You lived your life to the full. RIP dad.

Geoff Burton, Thornaby branch secretary and son

P.S. Here is a poem Vic found on a mess room wall and which he thought was very apt for the life of a train driver. I think other drivers, old and new, will relate to it, and maybe it will raise a smile…

THE ENGINE DRIVER’S DREAM

One night a driver dreamed a dream,
And dreaming dream he died,
And straight away to the gates of heaven,
His sin-stained spirit hied.

And there before the saints he stood,
With downcast head, and low,
‘My record’s very bad,’ he said,
‘I guess I’m bound below.

‘I’ve smoked a lot, and drunk a lot,
Confess it all I must,
And flirted too; and what is more,
Great heaven, how I’ve cursed!’

Then good St Peter looked at him
With kindly smiling eyes,
He shook his head, ‘Don’t ask,’ he said,
‘A mansion in the skies.

‘You’ve taken some old rattlers out,
And tried to make them go,
And when you’ve asked for a better one,
The answers have been no.

‘You’ve had to face the stormy days,
And the foremen in their lairs,
You mostly went to bed each night,
Too tired to say your prayers.

‘You’ve spent much time away from home
And eaten warmed up meals
And every nerve your body holds
Has been jarred by bumpy wheels.

‘You’ve had to work all kinds of crooks
Keep time with every one
And when you’ve interviewed the boss
He has said “Your life’s all fun.”

‘And once a week you saw your kids
Now tell me, is that so?”
‘It is,’ replied the driver
As he took his hat to go.

‘Ah, well,’ said good St Peter,
Opening the portal wide,
‘We’re very glad to meet your, sir,
Just kindly step inside.

‘We’ll try to make you happy here,
We’ll do the best we can.
You’ve had your punishment on earth
For you’ve been a footplatem an!’

DAVE FELLS TIRELESS WORKER

Dave Fells, our former LDC secretary, who had just recently retired, has passed away at the age of 60. Dave was a tremendous and tireless worker on the LDC and his efforts on behalf of his colleagues cannot be praised enough. They earned him the greatest respect among his colleagues and this was borne out by the number who attended his funeral on Friday 13 May. Dave was also a great friend to those of us at Chingford and always willing to help a colleague when the need arose. We are united in our sadness and extend our sympathies to Dave’s wife Lyn, his son Mark, daughter Carrie, and the rest of his family and friends.

Steve Jestico, Chingford

STEVE WAND

Further to Andy Eggleston’s obituary (Journal, July) I first met Steve, along with his wife Janice, at Gatwick airport in summer 1987. I was with two friends and our flight to Crete was delayed by four hours, so we were having a drink and started chatting. It turned out Steve and Janice were on their honeymoon and, once we arrived in Crete, we met up on several occasions, and really hit it off. At the end of the holiday we exchanged addresses. Sometime afterwards I received a letter from Janice inviting me to a party at their flat in Bexleyheath and that was the beginning of a great friendship. I have very fond memories of Steve. He was such good company, a great character, with a broad smile.

Paul Longmead

TONY BURNETT

Another Stratford man has departed on his final journey. Tony Burnett, 69, originally from Lincolnshire, went through the grades at Stratford. Fireman, passed fireman but then he came off the footplate to do the foreman’s assistant job. Later he went into the freight sector, doing several different jobs. A hard working man, when he came off the footplate his world was shattered, but he picked himself up, and made big strides in management. Tony, you will be missed mate.

Dave Pizzie, RMS

ROY CROSS

With sadness I report the loss of Roy Cross, a March depot man all his life, from cleaner to driver on steam and on diesel. Roy died on 27 February, aged 75, a true ASLEF member, like his father before him. He served on branch and welfare committees, as assistant branch secretary, sub on LDC, and member of the RMS from retirement until his death.

Roy’s funeral at Fenland crematorium on 16 March was full, with many ASLEF and RMT members in attendance.

Dennis Bell, RMS

DON CORDWELL ENJOYED RAILWAY REUNIONS

Former Chingford and Hertford driver Don Cordwell has died at the age of 83. Don started on the railway at King’s Cross before moving to Hertford; when it closed he joined us here at Chingford until he retired from the service in 1997. He was a very likeable person, and a regular attendee of functions and reunions until ill health got the better of him. We extend our sympathies to Don’s family, friends and former colleagues.

Steve Jestico, Chingford

PETER RUSSELL LOYAL MEMBER SERVED ON THE LDC

Peter Russell, a very loyal member, started at Tunbridge Wells, did his national service with the West Kents, and when he returned got his driving job at Orpington where he stayed until retirement. He spent many years on the LDC and was there during restructuring. Our thoughts are with his family, all of whom wore ASLEF badges at his funeral, at this sad time.

David Weddle, RMS Tonbridge
Don’t take the D train
I was extremely disappointed to read the article extolling Vivarail’s D78 project (Journal, July). This is a train which doesn’t meet the crash standards of 1980s Sprinters, let alone those required for new trains today – Vivarail’s much-touted crash test knocking a water tanker off a stack of bricks at low speed is not a demonstration of crashworthiness, however much the media may have enjoyed it. I certainly wouldn’t like to be stuck in that cab in a real crash, such as the 55mph collision with a van misusing a crossing I survived some years ago while driving a Class 153 unit. Worse still, despite lots of pretty buttons and bright lights, the cab environment is still basically that of the original Underground train, complete with bench seat; to accept that would mean ASLEF’s SQUASH campaign to improve cabs wasn’t worth a bean. Looking at the pictures, the train is configured for driver operation of doors (even if not full DOO). Isn't ASLEF supposed to be 100% against DOO? I am bewildered by ASLEF’s apparent endorsement of a train which seems to go against almost everything this union has campaigned for in terms of cab environment and driver safety over the past decade.

Ross Hamilton, Lincoln

GS Mick Whelan says: ‘We were not extolling the virtues of Vivarail’s D train, but reporting on a possible solution to the Pacers problem. The article was reporting on something that someone is looking at; that’s what we do in the Journal!’

Turbulent times at TPE
For the last three years drivers at TransPennine Express have endured a turbulent relationship with the company, to say the least. On four occasions we have been balloted to strike while RDW has been repeatedly withdrawn, with issues ranging from the complete abrogation of our terms and conditions to drivers being dealt with unjustly after a SPAD or similar incident. The catalyst was the mandate handed down from the EC to our company council to achieve implementation of a 156 rest day pattern agreed at the beginning of the previous franchise. We now find ourselves involved in productivity talks as the company needs the current driver workforce to be more productive and flexible to meet commitments agreed in the new franchise in April. We finally have a date for implementing a 156 rest day pattern, with no strings attached, although drivers had to reject a recent proposal, endorsed by the EC, as a productivity item was included with no increase in pay smacked of the company trying to achieve productivity by the back door. The conduct of some senior managers and directors has led many of us to be cynical that any credible offer will be tabled for the productivity items we believe the company desire although, as yet, TPE remains tight-lipped about what it actually wants, and is still rostering spare to spare which has been one of the main areas of dispute. We feel the EC is not listening to company council and members as it continues to sanction RDW even though the company continues to abuse our t&cs. The EC remains unwilling to show similar support. Our fantastic LDC rep Stuart Boaks asked for donations to help our RMT colleagues at this difficult time. I am proud to say that our depot, with about 60 drivers, raised £2,500 which was shared equally among RMT members. I think this is a fantastic effort and shows our spirit and commitment to do everything we can to stop any expansion of DOO services.

Pete Scott, branch secretary

London is your lobster
I’ve been complaining to RSTL and TFL regarding priv rate London Overground services. Since TFL took over some routes it has been increasingly hard to purchase priv rate tickets because ticket offices have been closed or open for enquiries only. Prices for inner London are pitched to persuade the public to use Oyster cards meaning a priv rate paper ticket is overpriced. Although we should be fighting for a fair system where both safeguarded and non-safeguarded staff receive the same travel facilities, I believe for now we should be asking for a non-safeguarded version of the Oyster card that will apply the priv rate to journeys made on Overground services in the Oyster card area and full fares for Underground and buses. I’m quite sure the technology is there to differentiate what services have been used and it would be a start to better travel facilities.

Joel White

Less bellicose, gentlemen
Reading the AAD reports (Journal, June) about the debate on DOO I read that the words ‘dig the trenches and prepare for war’ were used. Just because someone at the DfT said something similar we should not go down to their level. One hundred years ago many of
our forebears fought and died in the First World War and I think it is an insult to their memory to talk of trenches and war in this context. This is what the media like to hear from trade unions, and make something of it. Strong words, by all means, but please less bellicose.

JE Rimington, Maidstone, Kent

Drivers, spies & videotape

Wow! The July Journal certainly packed a double punch! While on page 5 there is an article about 1984 and Big Brother and a commitment from the government to protect trade unions from new spying powers on page 18 there is an advert from the RSBB asking drivers about ‘your thoughts on in-cab inward-facing cameras.’ Did they get the notion from my in-cab camera back in 1996 when I videotaped myself driving an engineer’s train back to Ruislip depot from Buckhurst Hill?

Dennis Bostock, Clacton-on-Sea

Can’t thank Kathy enough

I left our industry because of an eye condition on 28 May with many happy memories of working on the railways and I would like to say a big thank you to my LDC and company council reps for the way they dealt with my case. Thank you! Over the years I worked with many wonderful colleagues, and made so many friends, and I want to thank you for the support and comradeship you have given me as a train driver. I can’t thank Kathy Thomas enough for her support during my absence from work. Kathy kept me informed from start to finish and made sure I was still actively involved and invited to branch meetings, reunions and occasional nights out.

Norman Kaid, Newport

In times of adversity

I’ve been a loyal member for the past 31 years, part of the ASLEF collective. It’s in times of adversity you realise how close we are as a railway family. Following the sudden and unexpected death of my young son, many branches organised collections which went a long way to easing the stress and unexpected financial burden of organising a funeral. My family and I would like to thank everyone whose support helped ease the pain in our darkest hour.

Steve Wardle, Portsmouth

14 years on the shovel

Re Bro Dave Johnson’s letter (Journal, July) I agree 100% although I would have used stronger words than ‘job thief’. I assume Arno Brooks (Journal, May) got his driver’s job without doing anything more physical than climb up three steps and sit down on a padded seat. Perhaps if, like me, and many others, he had spent 12 or 14 years on the shovel as a fireman he would have more respect for the job. ASLEF should take away his membership so next time he is riding the range and anything should happen, let his zero hour bosses help him out. Ray Buckton must be turning in his grave.

Ron Kettle, retired, Southend Vic

Remember Tolpuddle

I would like to remind Arno Brooks (Journal, May) that the Tolpuddle martyrs were employed by farmers and they went to work for a living wage, not spending money! ‘Nuff said...

Dave Darwin, Chesterfield

Nothing too much trouble

I want to thank the general secretary, staff and officers for organising a great AAD this year. Nothing was too much trouble for anyone I asked for help in the run up to, and during, conference. Please convey my sincere thanks to all involved and also to those who stayed behind to run head office and answer the phones to members across the railway whilst we debated the hot topics of the day. Please also pass on my thanks to the visitors for their time, courage and enthusiasm when addressing conference – not an easy task! I would also like to thank Katy Proctor and Marz Colombini for their pre-conference support and advice to District 1 delegates and for Marz’s social media updates during the week.

Andrew Cook, Selhurst

Welcome in the Highlands

I enjoyed immensely seeing the democratic process in action and taking part in the debates. What must be mentioned is the hospitality bestowed upon us by our comrades from District 2. Hugh Bradley, Kevin Lindsay and the Scottish delegates made us feel most welcome all week.

Alan Moss, Longsight

Nailing railway laser louts

Re the article on laser pens (Journal, July) I had an incident earlier this year when my cab was deliberately tracked with a laser pen. I reported the incident and used my knowledge of the area and Google Earth to narrow the source down to a few houses but my manager didn’t seem interested in pursuing it. Thought Andy Hudd might be interested, though.

Iain Bond, Ashford

Welder of words

Big, big well done to Tom Williams for his crossword. No cryptic, no conundrums, just does what it says on the tin, a straight good old-fashioned crossey. Great stuff, Tom!

Bill Jones, RMS

Legends of the iron road

Please can you do a regular feature on railway legends? My wife and two teenage sons love Mel Thelby’s stories in Off the Rails! By the way, I enjoy the political content, too!

Rob Spears, Crosscountry, Birmingham

GLASGOW branch 125 year celebration badge. £4 including p&p. Contact ASLEF’s Glasgow branch secretary John McCue at johnmccue1970@msn.com

ON LOAN from British Rail hard enamel badge. Individually numbered, brooch fastening. £6 + £1 p&p from josephduddington@gmail.com

OAKS MEMORIAL commemorative badge honouring 361 miners killed in an explosion at the Oaks colliery near Barnsley on 12 December 1866. £3 from remembertheoaks@gmail.com

LONGSIGHT badges to mark 125th anniversary. £5 + £1 p&p. Also a bespoke tie at £8 + £1 p&p. Contact Jim Hopkins on 07810 564804 or jimmyhopkins@hotmail.com for details.

BESPOKE CUSHIONS Hand made 40cm square cushions of railway engines and carriages. £50. Call Abi on 07954 659849 or email me at adm.uk.me@btinternet.com

PROFESSIONAL ENGRAVING at sensible prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on the pint tankard. Contact Paul Potts by email at ppotts1969@hotmail.co.uk

BRISTOL branch 125 year celebration badge. £5 plus £1.50 p&p. Contact Andy Gregg at thegreggster@yahoo.co.uk

BLAND ENCOUNTER by Donald Wightman is a comedy novel about risqué encounters on the railways. A donation from the sale of each book will be made to the Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes. Paperback £7.99 ebook £3.95 from www.amazon.co.uk

CLASS 73/1 JB 50 year badges for sale. Three variations as shown at £5 each plus £1 p&p. Cheques, payable to Network South East Railway Society, to 41 Highfield Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 6DD.

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Shinga mushandishinga!

ANDY HUDD, executive committee member for District 7, reports from the congress of the Zimbabwe Amalgamated Railway Workers’ Union in Plumtree, Matabeleland

Out of Africa: Andy Hudd in Bulawayo and ZARWU officers in Plumtree (right)

money to spend while, in contrast, Bulawayo struggles due to the decline of its industry and infrastructure leaving citizens with little disposable income. As a consequence, many desperate Zimbabweans cross the border to work illegally, sometimes working for a month before being reported to the authorities by unscrupulous employers trying to avoid paying wages.

BE BRAVE WORKER, BE BRAVE
Saturday was the first day of congress with solidarity greetings from ASLEF and the GS and president of the TSSA; also speeches from the Ministry of Labour and National Railways of Zimbabwe, which got an understandably frosty reception due to 16 months of non-payment of wages to workers and the owing of union dues to ZARWU.

Sunday saw the election of officers and EC members. Nominations were sought and votes cast during a process that exemplified their solidarity as each round of voting was followed by singing and dancing. Slogans were shouted by each nominee – ‘Shinga mushandishinga!’ (Be brave worker, be brave) and ‘Solidarity!’ – followed by cries of ‘forever’ from the packed conference hall.

After congress we once again made the 100km journey to Bulawayo which allowed us to collect our thoughts in preparation for our return home. On the way we stopped at Plumtree station where the dusty platform showed no sign of activity apart from the station master who invited us to have a look around. We did the same in Bulawayo where a rundown but still impressive station stands alongside the remnants of two railway buildings, one of which was quite majestic and where the NRZ executive held its board meetings in a more affluent past.

The railway infrastructure is slowly being eroded - boundary fences are collapsing, rails are declining to the point where the trains that do run have to reduce their speed more and more to ensure safety. The signals that haven’t been stolen are in urgent need of repair, which has resulted in the implementation of a form of ticket working that has been responsible for a recent and tragic accident that resulted in the deaths and injury of several railway workers after a head on collision.

HEART OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
ZARWU is going through a very difficult time at the moment. Membership has dropped to around 3,500 as workers are dismissed or walk off the job because of non-payment of wages. It’s an impossible situation for the leadership as strike action is ineffective because only few trains run each week anyway. Despite this, the union is proud, optimistic and resolute and making representations to government ministers and the NRZ in the hope that the heavy investment needed to rescue the country’s infrastructure is given the green light and Zimbabwe’s railway is put back where it should be at the heart of southern Africa.

On a personal note, there are some things you do in life that change your perceptions forever and this delegation opened my eyes to a struggle not only for the survival of a trade union but for the rail industry in Zimbabwe. Our support has breathed life into ZARWU, in the short-term, but this needs to remain consistent to ensure the union survives to see in a new era of investment to save Zimbabwe’s historic railway.
ASLEF’s legal services

If you are being harassed at work, bullied or discriminated against, and if your local, branch or district rep is unavailable, call the industrial relations department at union headquarters (020 7324 2400) or email info@aslef.org.uk. If you are arrested or interviewed by police and need legal assistance – day or night – call the members’ emergency hotline on 0800 587 7530. ASLEF also provides first class legal advice free for members and dependents.

Changed your address? Please let us know! Just fill in this form

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POP-up山谷

Lucy Knox serves up a summer favourite

Pop 6 jumbo sausages in a roasting tin. Cook in an oven preheated to 200C/180C fan/Gas 6 for 25 to 30 mins or according to packet instructions. Melt 25g butter and 2tbsp sunflower oil in a pan. Add 3 halved, thinly sliced large onions, and stir well. Cook gently for 15 to 20 mins until golden brown, stirring occasionally to make sure they don’t stick and burn. Season with a pinch of sugar, salt and freshly ground black pepper. Remove the sausages from the oven, pop in a hot dog roll, add a spoonful of crispy onions and serve.

STRAWBERRY & CHOCOLATE MERINGUE

Quick and delicious dessert

Put 6 meringue nests on plates. Add a generous spoonful of extra thick double (or clotted) cream in the centre of each nest. Top with a small handful of hulled small straw berries (or raspberries) and drizzle with squeezy liquid chocolate sauce. Serve straight away.

Prize Crossword 123

Across:
3 Power 6 Terrace 7 Prison 8 Drugs
9 Omelette 12 Ocean 14 Olive 15 Exterior
18 Conga 19 Banana 20 Grilled 21 Swede
Down:
1 Argument 2 Parson 3 Pepper 4 White
5 Roost 6 Tadpole 10 Triangle 11 Emerald
13 Silage 14 Orchid 16 X-rays 17 Erase
Congratulations to Sue Painter of Holton Wincanton, Somerset, who was last month’s winner. The winner of this month’s Prize Crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25.

You can see more of Tom Williams’s crosswords, word games and puzzles at wordgames.co.uk

Thanks for all your responses to the 123rd prize crossword in the July edition of the ASLEF Journal. If you successfully complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 August

Solution to Crossword 122

Across:
1 The tube of a gun
4 Country in east Asia
7 Already used by a previous owner (6, 4)
8 Inflamed swelling
9 Large bird of prey
11 Pudding or sweet
13 Explanatory sketch
15 Complete disorder
17 Long narrow cut
18 Strict training
20 Stressed and strained
21 Thief

Down:
1 Bungled
2 Highland dance
3 Big spotted cat
4 Pronounce on guilt or innocence
5 Padded vegetable
6 Jog with the elbow
7 Afternoon nap
10 A throat wash
12 Small fish like a minnow
14 Armed forces trainee
16 Ginger or cinnamon
17 Short turned-up nose
19 Moral wrong

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Prize Crossword 124 by Tom Williams

Across:
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JUMBO HOT DOGS

Food & Drink

& CRISPY ONIONS

Lucy Knox serves up a summer favourite

JUMBO HOT DOGS & CRISPY ONIONS

Lucy Knox serves up a summer favourite

POP-up山谷

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Food & Drink

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