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Representative democracy

DEMOCRACY in its various forms has been a leading topic in recent weeks, whether as a result of recent by-elections in Stoke and Copeland, the sovereignty of Parliament in the Brexit debate, or our own internal and long-established, member-driven, rule book-based processes. The recent spin on Stoke and Copeland I found quite ironic. The rhetoric before Stoke was that if UKIP won it would mean Labour had lost the working-class for ever; after Stoke was won the same line was trotted out over Copeland. As for Brexit, and the triggering of article 50, the people have voted; but why then should Parliament not have a vote on whatever deal may or may not be achieved? They had to vote on the terms of joining the Common Market, why not on the terms for leaving the EU?

We are proud to be the most democratic trade union, with everyone in every position elected, from the branches to the representatives in the collective bargaining machinery to the officials who, uniquely, have all been train drivers and bring that understanding of our industry with them. It is a representative democracy based on the fact that all reps have to carry out ASLEF policy as created by AAD or our executive committee but, ultimately, it is based on majority decisions in every branch, local representative group, company or functional council, AAD or EC. Then all those involved have a collective responsibility to carry out that decision. You cannot opt in and out on the decisions you choose. I’m not sure why, after 137 years, that needs clarifying? When people choose to join ASLEF, and we are not a closed shop, they sign up to the rule book, and we are all covered by it.

Trade unions are about people, first and foremost, and we are lucky that we are tight knit, and there are not 27 layers of admin between the shop floor and the rest of us, who are all known by our Christian names, and have this industry and drivers at the heart of everything we do. We can always be better, we seek to evolve, but that means that you, the members, have to drive policy and change. The branches and AAD where our members make policy and analyse what we do and how we do it is what gives this union its impetus and strength. We are under attack, and fighting to keep what we have got, and your support and solidarity is extraordinary. It’s our union; use it, promote it, and, if necessary, change it. But let’s build it together.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
The union met in secret on the dark side of the hill

SLEF activists were out in force on the Make Some Noise for Orgreave Justice protest outside the Home Office in Marsham Street, central London, on Monday 13 March. Speakers at the demo included Matt Wragg of the Fire Brigades Union, Andy Burnham, Labour’s candidate for Mayor of Greater Manchester, and Sheila Coleman of the Hillsborough Justice Campaign.

It is now 33 years since officers from South Yorkshire Police – a force discredited after its failures at Hillsborough and over Jimmy Savile – brutally attacked picketing miners during the bitter miners’ strike. The Orgreave Truth & Justice Campaign is calling for an inquiry into the events of 18 June 1984.

‘The demand for a public inquiry, after the Hillsborough verdict, has been overwhelming,’ said general secretary Mick Whelan. ‘Home Secretary Amber Rudd ruled one out in October but papers just released show why – she fears, as Margaret Thatcher feared, according to papers in the national archive – that a public inquiry will reveal wrongdoing by the police.’

The Battle of Orgreave, a coking plant between Rotherham and Sheffield, was a defining moment in the dispute, and in post-war industrial relations. Mounted police charged and beat miners and their supporters, who were also set upon by police attack dogs, and 95 pickets were arrested and charged with riot and unlawful assembly. Trials subsequently collapsed after what Michael Mansfield QC called ‘the biggest frame-up ever’ by a police force discredited by its disgraceful behaviour over Hillsborough.

Why can’t trains wait for cars at level crossings?

Anyone with any knowledge of dry as dust Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond – known as Spreadsheet Phil until Nick Robinson on Radio 4’s Today programme inadvertently called him Spreadsheet Phil – knows he is not a railway buff. A point made perfectly by Christian Wolmar in a piece on Labour List: Philip Hammond’s knowledge of transport was well summed up at my first meeting with him soon after he was appointed Transport Secretary in 2010. Annoyed at the number of level crossings around Egham in his Surrey constituency, he asked me, ‘Why can’t the trains, which are often just carrying a few people, wait for the cars, rather than the other way round?’ I spluttered to explain about signalling, timetabling, and the like, and then rapidly changed the subject. Not surprising, then, that, as ever, transport barely got a look in at the Budget.

By the light of a thousand candles

Pete James, Northern company council, Mick Whelan, general secretary, and Tosh McDonald, EC president, with a National Union of Mineworkers banner commemorating Joe Whelan – no relation – an NUM official at Linby colliery in the heart of the Nottinghamshire coalfield. Mick, Tosh and Pete were in Barnsley for the David Jones and Joe Green memorial event at the miners’ offices on Saturday 11 March. Kevin Maguire, associate editor of the Daily Mirror, and Dave Anderson, Labour MP for Blaydon, paid tribute to David and Joe, two miners who died on the picket line during the bitter miners’ strike of 1984-85, as well as commemorating solidarity – especially between miners and railwaymen – shown during the struggle.

ASLEF AND SOUTHERN

ASLEF drivers on Southern Railways have been asked to vote on a proposed resolution to our long-running dispute with the company. The following question was put to members: ‘Do you accept the attached agreement between GTR and ASLEF?’ Ballot papers were sent out on Thursday 16 March to be returned by Monday 3 April.

ASLEF AND DB CARGO

ASLEF members have been asked to vote on a revised set of terms & conditions at the freight company DB Cargo. The following question was put to our driver members at DBC: ‘Do you accept the revised DB Cargo terms & conditions package?’ Ballot papers were issued on Monday 13 March to be returned by Tuesday 28 March.

M ARZ COLOM BINI RE-ELECTED

Marz Colombini, of Waterloo Nine Elms branch, has been re-elected unopposed as executive committee member for District 1. His four year term of office runs from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2021. ‘I would like to thank the branches from across District 1 for your nominations, and the district as a whole, for your support, in my re-election as your EC member,’ said Marz, who joined the executive committee in June 2009 when the previous EC member, Simon Weller, was elected national organiser.

Marz served his first full term from January 2010 to December 2013 and his second from 2014 to 2017. ‘Representing ASLEF members at any level is an honour, not a right. Your support is greatly valued and never taken for granted. I feel particularly privileged to have been re-elected unopposed which is indicative of the unity in our district; unity which, in these most difficult times, in both the freight and passenger sectors, is more important than ever.’

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

Clever of the Tories to write the words ‘Class 1’ in invisible ink in their manifesto. #Budget2017

Tom Watson

‘We are the party of the NHS’ claims Chancellor as Health Secretary nods vigorously. Quite a claim #Budget2017

Nick Robinson

Katie Hopkins, a lying peddler of hatred, the worst of Britain’s press in human form, finally gets served justice.

Owen Jones
What the TOCs really really want

RAIN companies put profit before safety because their duty is not to their passengers but their shareholders. The privatised TOCs want to bring in driver only operation because then they can slash the wage bill – they want to get rid of guards, conductors and on board supervisors in the long run – so they can make more money. The mindset of the TOCs is revealed by the response of TransPennine Express to an injury suffered by an elderly passenger travelling from Newcastle to Manchester airport in 2012. The train was very busy, with many passengers forced to stand, and luggage blocked many gangways. When she tried to leave the train at Huddersfield she fell over a piece of luggage placed in the aisle and needed stitches. She says the guard was not able to inspect the service ‘due to massive overcrowding and luggage blocking the aisles.’

But TPE curiously claims the guard is not under a duty to walk the service to ensure passenger safety, nor check tickets, assist passengers, or ensure the gangways and vestibules are clear of luggage and bags. Appleby’s solicitors, who are representing the passenger, say: ‘The active management of train services by a qualified guard is of upmost importance in ensuring passenger safety. Should this matter succeed at trial it will further prove the requirement of guards on services.’

Off the rails

**QUOTE...**

‘No one said that running the railways was easy. The DFT’s franchise department is proving it.’ – Robert Lea in The Times

...UNQUOTE

**Dave Calfe is re-elected**

EC vice-president Dave Calfe, of Euston branch, has been re-elected unopposed as executive committee member for District 6. ‘I would like to thank all the members in District 6 for my re-election to the EC,’ said Dave, ‘and for their support over the last four years. We will have many challenges over the coming years, during which I will continue to represent the best interests of all our members: His four year term of office runs from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2021.

**Conferences & Rallies**

The Scottish Trades Union Congress is at the Macdonald Highlands hotel, Aviemore, from Monday 24 to Wednesday 26 April. ASLEF’s annual assembly of delegates is at the Marriott Royal Hotel, Bristol, from Monday 22 to Thursday 25 May. The Durham Miners’ Gala is on Saturday 8 July. The Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival, near Dorchester, is from Friday 14 to Sunday 16 July. The Trades Union Congress is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 10 to Wednesday 13 September. The Labour Party conference is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 24 to Wednesday 27 September.

**500 Club:** S Howe, with number 143, won the March draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £394.

**MEL THORLEY**, Longsight legend, and a man who fondly remembers the days when drivers described the depot as Maplins, has another tale from the holiday camp. ‘I had heard about the reputation of John “Nikko” Nixon, former Edgeley steam fireman, and seen him on the picket line when the guards came out at Manchester. So, when he was riding back on my unit from Crewe on 6 December 1991, I grabbed him out of the train and stuck him in the front brake van of my 304 unit. I was telling him that I had been carpeted for dropping a driver off from the first empty stock to Macclesfield, couldn’t get going again on the leaves, and made the first London behind me ten minutes late. I told him the boss had said he was “simply following orders”. John gave me a bit of good advice for the next time. “Just say that’s what Adolf Eichmann said at his trial in Jerusalem in 1961, and they hanged him in 1962’.” I still see John every year at the 9A reunion, and he’s as funny as ever...’

**Saints Alive!** Southampton fans have a sense of humour. Well, say wags, you have to have a sense of humour when your team has only won one senior piece of silverware – the FA Cup in 1976 – in 132 years. They also do a decent line in satire, especially the topical problems of the hapless management at Southern Rail. Manolo Gabbiadini, the Italian striker who played for Atalanta, Bologna, Sampdoria and Napoli in Serie A, has been a big hit on the south coast since his £15 million transfer to Southampton in January. Prompting this waspishly wicked banner to be displayed at St Mary’s (and Wembley): ‘Gabbiadini strikes quicker than Southern Rail’.

**Margaret Fleming**, Tyne & Wear Metro branch equality rep, who writes about our first equalities weekend on page 7, has another claim to fame. Her actress sister has a part in Ken Loach’s magnificent film I, Daniel Blake, a moving parable about heartless welfare bureaucracy, which won the Palme d’Or at Cannes and the BAFTA for best British film.

**Dick Murray**, who covers transport for the Evening Standard, spotted this ad in his local paper under Antiques & Collectables: ‘ASLEF commemorative plate issued in respect of members who supported the 1982 strike showing all the different region badges. £30.’ Dick now wishes he’d bought a couple when they went on sale at a fraction of the price.

**Cliff Blackwell**, who retired in 2015 after 50 years on the railway, and who worked at Stratford, Ripple Lane, Marylebone, Intercity Euston, Freightliner Tilbury Docks and Freightliner Heavy Haul at Dagenham, sent the Journal this picture, with the waspish aside, ‘You only had one job to do...’
Labour in St John’s Toun

Mick: How not run a major project

Their track record is one of over promising and under delivering. In their 2015 manifesto, the Conservatives made grand promises to upgrade our rail network, despite being warned that works were running behind schedule, and over budget, leading to a series of broken promises to the electorate. ‘Under the Tories, punctuality has fallen to a ten year low, passenger satisfaction has declined, fares have risen three times faster than wages, and promised upgrades have been delayed by years or scrapped altogether.

‘The Tories need to come clean about what they’re able to deliver, as well as explaining how they intend to reverse seven years of failed management of our railways.’

Quote...

‘Trade unions are crucial in our age of zero hours and sessional contracts, tribunal fees and no effective civil legal aid for male and female workers in employment disputes. An age in which the worst workplaces resemble totalitarian regimes where employees are told how to dress, who they are allowed to talk to, and when to use the toilet – and are monitored by robots or wearable tracker devices such as sociometric badges.’ – Rachel Holmes in The Guardian

Praise for ASLEF WRC

The work of the ASLEF Women’s Representatives Committee was mentioned in dispatches in a recent article in The Guardian. ‘A TUC seminar on the menopause was packed out, and attended by male health & safety officers from the rail and fire brigade unions. ASLEF, the train drivers’ union, has negotiated a menopause workplace agreement, and work on abortion rights, sexual harassment and violence against women continues to be a priority.’

From loo to Military Heritage Centre

An old toilet at Dumbarton Central station is being transformed into a military museum for the Armed Forces Veterans’ Association. The old Victorian wash room at the railway station – which also served as a gent’s toilets and bobby – will become the new home for the museum. The room on platform two has many of the original Victorian tiles and was being used as a store room before refurbishment work began on 6 March.

REMEMBER THE DEAD – FIGHT FOR THE LIVING

District 3 North West & North Wales is marking Workers’ Memorial Day at midday in Lincoln Square, Brazennose Street, Manchester, on Friday 28 April. Details from D03 Colin Smith (07977 142460) or h&s rep Alan Moss (07917 063665).
It was just a bit of banter

MARGARET FLEMINING, Tyne & Wear Metro branch equality rep, reports from ASLEF’s first equalities weekend school at the Ibis hotel in Birmingham on 25 and 26 February

B eing new to ASLEF – and the subject of equality – I wasn’t sure what to expect. I was a little apprehensive but, after meeting Lee James and Romolo Lanzi, felt a bit more relaxed.

After registration the weekend started with a panel session featuring AGS Simon Weller, EC1 Marz Colombini and DOS Nigel Gibson. They talked about their roles in ASLEF, then there was a Q&A, which was very interesting and informative.

Next was the heavy stuff – the Equality Act – facilitated by Kate Lea from Thompsons solicitors. Kate told us all about the legislation – who and what is covered, protected characteristics, and in what forms discrimination occurs – and her lecture, and the actual cases, were fascinating.

Kerry Cassidy, Julie Clegg, Alison Miller, Debbie Reay and Angela O’Sullivan of the Women’s Representatives Committee gave a really impressive presentation about ‘women through the ages’; from 1880 to the present day, covering landmarks like winning the battle for the vote and women’s involvement in the labour movement. You could see a lot of hard work and passion went into this project.

The LGBT committee then acted out different social situations and how they can, quite suddenly, turn into acts of discrimination; this was both amusing and sad.

Nick Palmer gave a ‘challenging banter’ workshop which covered everything from the meaning of the word ‘banter’ to how ‘banter’ can become bullying and harassment. It was an amusing, and engaging, session.

The day closed with the BEM committee giving us a great presentation on the levels of black and ethnic minority members in our union and the industry. We can only recruit from among the men and women the train companies employ but I was saddened to hear how few BEM members we have. The day concluded with dinner and drinks; giving us the chance to discuss the day’s events and get to know each other a little better.

On Sunday GS Mick Whelan opened proceedings by talking about industry news, equalities, DOO and Southern Rail.

Elly Barnes of Educate & Celebrate, who’s on a mission to transform schools and workplaces into LGBT-friendly places, was next. And she was mesmerising! It was like being back in primary school when the teacher is standing right in front of you; she’s 10ft tall and your jaw drops in awe! (She’s not really 10ft, but her charismatic presence makes you think she is). LOL. It was a fantastic lecture, fast paced, fun and educational.

There was an informative report from the RMS committee about the cost of care and pensions.

And, to finish, a public speaking workshop facilitated by Lucio Buffone. He showed speeches by Martin Luther King, Winston Churchill, Charlie Chaplin in The Great Dictator, Kathy Burke’s British Comedy Awards acceptance speech, Margaret Thatcher and Donald Trump. Then we had to write and present our own speech; I’m not a speech maker but it was fun to try and fail. LOL.

All in all, a great weekend, a resounding success and I look forward to more workshops in the future. Brilliant, just brilliant.

REOPEN OLD RAIL LINES

Campaigners have called on the Scottish government to investigate the reopening of former rail routes. The sustainable transport pressure group Transform Scotland wants all old routes safeguarded until a thorough assessment can be carried out on the possibility of bringing them back into operation.

PAYING THROUGH THE NOSE

Passengers are ‘paying through the nose for decrepit trains’ according to a report by the think tank IPPR North. The average age of rolling stock in Britain is now 21 years with the oldest – 41 years old.

‘Britain’s most vilified train company, Gocia, the firm behind strike-ravaged Southern, and other poorly performing franchises, has admitted it has been wrongly telling customers they are not entitled to delay compensation because of a “computer glitch”‘ – Miles Brignall in The Guardian

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QUOTE...

‘Britain's most vilified train company, Gocia, the firm behind strike-ravaged Southern, and other poorly performing franchises, has admitted it has been wrongly telling customers they are not entitled to delay compensation because of a “computer glitch”‘ – Miles Brignall in The Guardian

...UNQUOTE
**RAIL FREIGHT AT RISK**

A grant that is key to supporting rail freight in Britain – the mode shift revenue support grant – is set to be slashed by £4 million each year – 21% of the budget – from 1 April with a further cut to £15.2 million in 2018.

The grant supports companies moving goods by rail instead of HGVs in recognition of the congestion, safety, air quality and CO2 benefits of removing trucks from our roads.

Pat Glass, Shadow Transport Minister, said: ‘Encouraging rail freight reduces congestion, road accidents, air pollution and climate change impacts, so it’s self-defeating for the government to go ahead with these cuts.

‘By slashing this grant, the Tories are encouraging companies to put more HGVs on our roads. We have some of the most congested roads in Europe and 40,000 early deaths each year are linked to air pollution – so it’s illogical for the Tories to pull the rug out from under the feet of rail freight.

‘We should support rail freight for the clear benefits to our economy and the environment. If the government cares about improving air quality, tackling congestion and supporting UK businesses, they should reinstate the grant.’

**TUC SLAMS PLANS TO HIT INJURED WORKERS**

The TUC has condemned plans to stop injured workers from reclaiming their legal costs in cases where claims are worth less than £2,000. Ministry of Justice proposals will mean that thousands of mostly low paid workers will no longer be able to get the legal expertise they need to seek compensation after an injury. ‘People injured at work because of their employer’s negligence shouldn’t have to pay their own legal costs,’ said TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady. ‘This move will prevent many low paid and vulnerable workers from bringing claims.’ She added that these plans – slammed by Tom Jones of Thompsons solicitors in an article in the Journal last month – ‘are dangerous and will encourage bad bosses to cut corners with health and safety.’

**TORY CUTS PUT UK**

If you go down to the Woods today

Keith Woods, who runs the roots music magazine Tales from the Woods, is looking for former steam loco men to write about their days on the footplate. Tales from the Woods covers vintage rock’n’roll, rhythm & blues, jazz, blues, soul, country and cajun ‘with a little folk and skiffle stirred into the mix.’

‘It began life 16 years ago,’ says Keith, ‘Just a few dozen printed copies, but within a couple of years we built a subscription way beyond our hopes. Tales from the Woods has found a niche in the magazine world, and with a few special features, we will continue to surprising people with tales of the days when steam was king.’

‘Divers and firemen who want to share their memories of steam can visit the website (www.tftw.org.uk) and contact Keith, the editor, by phone (07941 540574), or by email (keithwoods25@hotmail.com) or Royal Mail (25 Queen Anne Avenue, Bromley, Kent, BR2 0SA).

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**Faster than the speed of night**

IGH Speed 2 – Britain’s biggest infrastructure project in decades – cleared its final hurdle when the HS2 Hybrid Bill received the Royal Assent on 23 February. It paves the way for a nine year construction programme on the 140 mile route between London Euston and a new station at Curzon Street in Birmingham.

GS Mick Whelan said: ‘We believe Britain needs not only a new high speed rail line but a new high speed rail network and we would, ideally, like to see HS2 run the length of the United Kingdom, being built from Scotland, and the south, at the same time, meeting in the middle, linking HS1 and going via Heathrow. While that is not what is on the table, we welcome the Bill, because it’s a major infrastructure project which will help bring our railway into the 21st century.

‘The number of passengers on our railways has doubled since 1995 while rail freight traffic has risen by 65%. The existing rail network is operating at near full capacity and neither new motorways, nor domestic air travel, are environmentally sustainable options to meet the mobility requirements of a British population expected to grow by 10 million by 2033.

‘Longer trains, and upgrades to the current network, will not be able to meet peak demand or provide the necessary enhancements to local services or freight. The consequences of insufficient capacity on our rail network would be disastrous for the British economy with major implications for our domestic and international competitiveness.’

David Higgins, chair of HS2, said: ‘Achieving Royal Assent for phase one of HS2 between Birmingham and London, with such significant parliamentary support, is a monumental step in transforming rail travel in Britain. We have a long journey ahead of us to build the railway and secure permission for phase two to make sure that the full benefits of HS2 are realised.’

GS Mick Whelan added: ‘As train drivers, we have a clear interest in a successful, integrated, modern railway network. Because we know that a better railway will mean a better Britain.’

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**QUOTE...**

‘The House of Lords is the best day care centre for the elderly in London. Families can drop him or her in, make sure the staff will look after them, nice meals subsidised by the taxpayer, and they can have a snooze in the afternoon in the chamber or the library.’

– Lord Tyler (former Lib Dem MP Paul Tyler)

**...UNQUOTE**
The government is trying to take away your right to free or affordable legal representation if you’re injured at work or anywhere else.

Why? They’re prioritising #FeedingFatCats

If government plans go ahead, nearly one million people will lose their right to free legal representation. Meanwhile it will cost the NHS and the government at least £150 million of your taxes every year and fat cat insurers will be rewarded with multimillion pound profits.

Visit www.feedingfatcats.co.uk to take action and stop the government #FeedingFatCats.

#FeedingFatCats is a campaign run by Thompsons Solicitors. Thompsons is proud to stand up for the injured and mistreated.
Dawn freshens, the climb is done. Down towards Glasgow she descends

NEIL BIBBY, MSP for the West Scotland region, and Labour’s Transport Spokesperson, knows, like WH Auden in Night Mail, the importance of the railway as a public service

PUBLIC transport is a public service. That principle was my starting point when I was appointed as Scottish Labour’s Transport Spokesperson by Kezia Dugdale last year. It’s the principle that guided me through these past few months as ScotRail’s performance, and the future of Scotland’s railways, exploded onto the political agenda. And it’s the principle that will continue to underpin Scottish Labour’s approach to public transport going forward. A public service run in the public interest.

A modern public transport network for Scotland should be integrated, and accountable to the public, serving the interests of passengers and the people of Scotland.

If you believe that public transport should be a public service, run in the public interest, then you have to value those who work on our railways as public servants. And you have to address the question of public ownership and how we reverse the Major government’s privatisation of the railways in the 1990s. That is what I have been working to do over these past few months, with ASLEF and the other rail unions.

The Scottish Labour conference in Perth at the end of February passed a motion brought by ASLEF, backed by the TSSA, and endorsed by our delegates which called for a ‘system of public control and public accountability which puts passengers and the taxpayer ahead of foreign interests or shareholders’. Across our movement, we are building a coalition for a publicly-owned railway for Scotland.

Since Dutch-owned Abellio was handed the franchise in 2015, in what was supposed to be a ‘world-leading’ deal with the SNP government, ScotRail has descended into a shambles. Relations with the workforce have been strained since last year’s industrial action was met with intransigence.

More than 20,000 people have signed an online petition calling for Abellio to be stripped of the ScotRail franchise if performance doesn’t recover to an acceptable standard. The independent passenger watchdog, Transport Focus, reports that passenger satisfaction is at a 14-year low. The head of the ScotRail alliance has walked after just 18 months in the job.

WEAK AND INEFFECTIVE

The SNP’s Transport Minister, Humza Yousaf, tasked with ensuring that ScotRail keeps up their end of the ‘world-leading deal’ has been exposed as weak and ineffective. He seems to have been reduced to the role of a bystander, someone hoping services improve – not someone making services improve. Responding to events, not shaping the future.

ScotRail is the most heavily subsidised rail operator in the UK, receiving £293 million in 2015/16 alone, and what we get back in return is simply not good enough. Taxpayers are pouring millions into ScotRail with far too little say over how that money is spent.

Meanwhile, Abellio is reportedly making £1 million every month out of, what they call, a ‘limited investment’ in Scotland.

With workers under pressure, passengers losing confidence, and the taxpayer getting ripped off, it’s abundantly clear that the system is broken and something fundamental has got to change. Instead of having a national rail operator accountable to shareholders or a foreign-owned company, ScotRail should be democratically accountable to the people it serves.

In recent weeks, I have represented Scottish Labour in cross-party talks on the future of ScotRail. Alongside ASLEF’s Kevin Lindsay and the other rail union leaders, we have been holding the SNP to a commitment they have given to bring forward a public bid for the ScotRail franchise.

This cannot be a talking shop. It has to be the start of a meaningful process to bring ScotRail back into public hands – and I am determined that it will be.

While the SNP might be the largest party in the Scottish Parliament, they do not command an overall majority. They are a minority government in a parliament of minority parties. If, however, they are serious about bringing forward a public bid for ScotRail, then they will have the support of Scottish Labour and an instant majority for a publicly-owned rail operator in Scotland.

PASSENGERS BEFORE PROFIT

My expectation is that through this process we should have the means to create a People’s ScotRail. A People’s ScotRail owned by us and run for us. A People’s ScotRail that is a public service, staffed by public servants. A People’s ScotRail that puts passengers before profit.

We have the power, we have the mandate, and we can assemble a clear majority in our Parliament. Through the hard work and campaigning efforts of the labour and trade union movement, Scotland is now closer to public ownership of our national rail operator than at any point in the last twenty years. It’s time to take our railways back.

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Neil Bibby, 33, was born and brought up in Paisley. He attended local schools and – the first member of his family to go to uni – studied Social Sciences at Glasgow University. He was elected as a councillor for the Johnstone North, Kilbarchan & Lochwinnoch ward of Renfrewshire council in 2007, stepping down when he was elected to the Scottish Parliament in 2012. Neil was re-elected to Holyrood in 2016 and is Spokesperson for Transport and Town Centres.
The railway should be run for passengers not shareholders

KEVIN LINDSAY, ASLEF’s organiser in Scotland, opens our four page special report by looking at the challenges – on DOO, at DBC, and with the BTP – we have faced in the last 12 months and the solidarity – and success – of Team ASLEF

SINCE the last Scottish Journal in April last year we’ve had many challenges in Scotland which, as a union, we have faced head on. I continue to work closely with Hugh Bradley and our branches and representatives. It was this unity that enabled us to successfully stop Abellio ScotRail’s plans to extend driver only operations. After months of negotiations we reached a settlement in which we would energise the doors but the conductor would perform the platform interface duties, then close the doors and dispatch the train.

We continue to put pressure on Abellio ScotRail to ensure that all existing driver only trains have a second person on board. We’ve been successful in forcing them to employ another 30 ticket examiners and will continue to campaign for a guaranteed second person on all trains. This is only possible if local reps continue to provide the information that allows us to hold Abellio ScotRail – and the Scottish government – to account.

We’ve had a couple of meetings with Abellio on DR12 but we’ve made little progress and I suspect it’s going to take a great deal of negotiation to try and reach an acceptable document. We’ve also got meetings planned on updating the PT&R and the outdated and draconian managing for attendance document.

I continue to meet with politicians of all leading parties to discuss ASLEF policies. In the last 12 months I’ve met Humza Yousaf, Transport Minister in the SNP government, to talk about Arriva CrossCountry’s proposed timetable, DB Cargo redundancies and, of course, the future of Scottish rail franchises. We are part of a Scottish government-led working party on a public sector bid for the ScotRail franchise. Whilst this development is welcome and, I believe, the Scottish government is serious on making a bid, I believe it’s unnecessary for vital services, such as the rail franchise, to be even put out to tender. The railway in Scotland should be run for passengers – not shareholders.

The Scottish government continues to ignore all train operators, passenger groups, British Transport Police federation and trade unions over the merger of the BTP and Police Scotland. We’ve lobbied hard on this and can see no real benefit to this merger. I have concerns that the railway will face a lack of specialist officers if this unnecessary merger goes through. Only the SNP, at this stage, has said it is in favour of the change. It is therefore vital members lobby Green Party MSPs as their six votes can stop this unwanted merger going through.

Freight in Scotland has taken a hit again with DBC announcing widescale redundancies but, thankfully, they pulled back last week. But we’ve still got a lot of work to do to try and get a successful negotiated outcome. The ongoing uncertainty is putting unnecessary pressure on our DBC members. The perilous state of the rail freight industry is tied to the failure of the UK government to protect our heavy industry; the closure of steel plants is just the latest example.

The challenges we face never really change. We continue to fight for improvements in terms and conditions; we continue to be a campaigning union; we continue to be part of a political movement; and we continue to be a lay member-led union.

These are the core values of our union and the values that make ASLEF the best trade union in Great Britain.

Living in interesting times

Hugh Bradley, EC member for District 2, reflects on DB Cargo, Southern Rail, Theresa May, Donald Trump and Brexit

WE ARE currently facing two of the most difficult challenges in our 137 year history. Dealing with the bombshell on DB Cargo and the implications for our members and, indeed, the rail freight industry; and dealing with GTR/Southern over DOO, a dispute not about pay or terms and conditions but about safety. With the DFT and the TOCs watching our approach to the imposition and extension of DOO very closely!

This dispute kicked off in March last year. GTR/Southern would not negotiate and took us to court to try and stop our right to strike. Eventually, in December, our members had three days out followed by a further three days in January. When it dawned on management that no trains were running on strike days they decided to talk.

During this dispute we have, unsurprisingly, seen the worst aspects of a hostile press, and the role played by the DFT. Our policy is no extension of DOO and, where DOO exists, having a second trained person on board. However, DOO has been worked on the railway for over 30 years, with services being introduced piecemeal over the network, and we are now dealing with that legacy.

Southern could have reached a similar agreement to ScotRail last year but chose not to. Later this year Abellio ScotRail is planning to introduce a new electric DOO service on the newly electrified Edinburgh to Glasgow line. The RMT was in dispute over this and in talks with ScotRail but once ASLEF got involved agreement was reached whereby the driver will release the doors and the conductor will be responsible for train dispatch duties. I’m sure that, with the solidarity of our members, and the skills of our negotiators, we will have a satisfactory outcome to this dispute.

Politically, we live in interesting times. We now have a Thatcherite Tory government, pursuing a neoliberal agenda, determined to break the trade unions and organised labour. We must remain strong and fight to return a Labour government. We also have the Brexit negotiations and, unfortunately, Theresa May and Donald Trump. The only solace I can give younger readers is to emphasise the importance of not viewing the future too bleakly given that we managed to survive the Thatcher-Reagan years – although most of us still carry the scars.

In Scotland we have a nationalist government which, by its very nature, is driven by the desire for independence at any cost. It would be better for the Scottish people if we could have a Scottish government which would take some responsibility and use the devolved powers it has instead of blaming everyone else for its failures. So much for being a progressive left-wing party!
Sweet taste of victory

ANDREW FERGUSSON, company council secretary, reports on a busy 12 months at ScotRail

COTRAIL company council and District 2 Organiser Kevin Lindsay had a victory in the long-running battle over DOO when we threw our full support behind our sister trade union, the RMT, who seemed to be losing the fight with Abellio. After six days on the street, we felt our timing was spot on, as this gave a fresh impetus to the dispute, and, after some tense meetings with management, and pressure being put on the Scottish government politically, a victory was won when we safeguarded the role of the guard, with a small concession on drivers opening the doors. A small but important victory in a long-running war!

Network area has had a tough time recently, with a major refurbishment of Queen Street station, with phase one completed and electrification due for completion in May on the E&G line. Training has started for drivers on network area for learning Class 380s which will allow faster times on the flagship line and, once the new Hitachi 385s arrive, a new training package will be agreed, with introduction in autumn ’17. Company council has also agreed a method of working to encompass this new activity with a guard in place. A new HST refurbished fleet will also be introduced from the end of August, for training, with a phased introduction into service commencing May ’18.

ScotRail is opening a new operations depot at Millerhill in August, requiring 18 drivers, who are already recruited.

Talks are still ongoing, albeit slowly, about Sundays as part of the working week, and a restructuring package.

Rumours have also been rife regarding Abellio and its lack of cash. We are assured that this is not true, and the withdrawal of fruit and energy bars has nothing to do with this, although, incidentally, it will save them over £120,000 per year. Looking forward to the next 12 months…

Don’t swallow Branson’s pickled propaganda

RAB WICKSTED, company council secretary, reports on Virgin Trains East Coast – a joint venture between Richard Branson at Virgin (10%) and Brian Souter of Stagecoach (90%) – which took over the East Coast franchise two years ago

The very recent two year pay deal agreed via a referendum of VTEC drivers was accepted, giving a 2.33% pay rise for 2016 and a 2.2% pay rise or RPI (February 2017 figure, published in March) whichever is the greater. The DCC is also trying to establish an RDW agreement and is working towards a new PDA to improve the antiquated agreements we have.

Maybe after the other referendum for action short of/or strike action received a massive majority of support, this company might start listening to its drivers and representatives, move forward in a more positive manner, and actually address and deliver change to the problems within that current PDA.

Drivers should understand that as driver reps, we negotiate and try to get the best deal for drivers, but this management, not the DCC, created and caused problems within our grade, by sending out propaganda messages and blaming ASLEF for the length of time we took to negotiate a deal. Were they having a laugh?

The problem we faced as a council was the fact that some drivers actually believed the management propaganda! ASLEF, as a trade union, represents train drivers. VTEC, as a private train operating company, represents the interests of its shareholders. The day a TOC represents a train driver at pay talks, or changes to our terms & conditions, will be the death of trade unionism.

Future of the franchise

Virgin West Coast company council reps MARK FREND and JIM MORRISON report on Virgin West Coast

IT HAS been a quiet year on West Coast with the main focus on the future of the franchise. It would seem that the franchise will eventually merge, in one way or another, with an element of the HS2 franchise but it is not clear how this will look. We have been told that it may require a consortium with high speed running experience to bid for and win the franchise.

On 4 December last year one of our trains was involved in a collision with a car at Cleghorn level crossing a few miles north of Carstairs in South Lanarkshire. It was dark at the time and the driver, being vigilant, reacted instantly and, although unable to avoid the collision, he was able to reduce the speed on impact, averting...
Direct award and new pay talks

JOHN HAY, company council secretary, reports on positive developments at CrossCountry

IN SEPTEMBER last year it was announced that Arriva CrossCountry had been given a direct award by the DfT to run the CrossCountry franchise until November 2019. A timetable consultation exercise (subject to the approval of the DfT) started at the same time. The consultation included an increase in capacity in the central area of the XC network.

Whilst this was a positive development and would mean job opportunities for our colleagues in the stricken freight industry, it was proposed that services to Aberdeen would be much reduced, and this could mean a reduction in the required manning levels at Edinburgh. The consultation ended in January and, as we go to press, the company has indicated that the reduction in services in the north may not be progressed.

Thanks to District Organiser Kevin Lindsay for his help lobbying the Scottish Parliament on this issue.

This year will also see us entering into pay discussions with the company for the first time since 2015. We are hopeful that not only can we retain our position at the top of the pay rankings, but also see real improvements in terms and conditions as well.

The company had asked for a rest day working agreement to run for the duration of the direct award and the ASLEF executive committee accepted this, on condition that the company introduced an employer justified retirement age (which would be the individual’s state retirement pension age). The discussions were not without their setbacks but, as we go to press, after an avoidance of disputes meeting, we believe we may have an agreement. This will be subject to confirmation in writing from the company and acceptance by the EC, followed by a referendum of the driver workforce.

Job opportunities at CrossCountry for our colleagues in freight

DBC in dire straits

CHIC BOLTON, train crew company council, reports on the crisis known as DB Cargo

AS YOU all know, DB Cargo UK is in dire straits with the company losing money every week. The assistant general secretary, Simon Weller, and the negotiating team sat round the table with management for six weeks, not negotiating, but being consulted on new terms & conditions for our drivers.

They initially stated that all 1,116 drivers would be dismissed, that 391 would be made redundant, and 725 would be re-employed under new t&cs. During the consultation process with ASLEF, this threat of dismissal was withdrawn. However, the deal was still on the table. As you know, it went out as a referendum and the result was 86% No, 14% Yes. As I sit here writing this article, new talks have begun to try and find a way forward through this chaos.

ASLEF has been working in the background with other FOCs and TOCs to try and secure employment for DB drivers. We have been very successful in the south but it has been quiet in the north because other FOCs and TOCs have issues of their own.

I am going to end, though, on a positive note about my DB Cargo colleagues and the effort they have put in trying to turn this company around.

The performance in Scotland by the drivers has been outstanding, with a 99.8% target of on time results achieved with Royal Mail Services. Also, I am hearing highly positive feedback regarding the 385 unit testing for ScotRail, and the customers are happy with the results on the intermodal services.

I know there will be hard times ahead, and some of our colleagues will be moving on to pastures new, but we need to stand together, and be strong.
Plight of DBC is not drivers’ fault

EC2 HUGH BRADLEY, a driver with Freightliner Intermodal, reports on the problems of rail freight services in Scotland and says it’s time for DB management to look into the mirror if they want to know who to blame.

In MY freight report last year (Journal, April 2016) I discussed the impact on the freight industry of the demise of coal traffic due to the run down of coal-fired power stations. Then we were dealing with the impact of a 40% reduction in traffic in Scotland and the consequences, for our freight members particularly, in DB Cargo and Freightliner Heavy Haul. After coming through this scenario we thought there would be a bit of stability and settling down in the industry – but it wasn’t to be!

In October last year we knew there was going to be an announcement on DB Cargo; we didn’t know what it was but nothing could have prepared us for what happened. Although the Southern DOO dispute has had high profile publicity we have heard nothing in the mainstream media about the dismissal of all the DBC drivers, with 391 losing their jobs and the other 725 being brought back on far worse t&cs. Because the state-owned German railway is losing £1.5 million per week, with an 85% reduction in revenues over the last two years, due to the run down of coal, steel, international and intermodal traffic, and a reduction in engineering work.

Management even tried to blame the t&cs of the drivers; at no time did they look at themselves and the role they directly played in this downfall. Management now claim that if there are no changes then the company will go bankrupt and all 1,116 driver jobs will go, along with the other DB Cargo staff!

Going to press, the executive committee, along with the AGS, and the DBC company council, have put the new package out to a referendum of members with a recommendation for acceptance. We wait to see if members agree.

Sadly, once the dust settles there will be fewer than 40 DBC drivers based in Scotland at a hub on the M8, Junction 3A, between Mossend and Millerhill. Before privatisation there were more than 3,000 drivers on what was to become DBC, with depots at Aberdeen, Ayr, Hunterston, Inverness, Longannet, Millerhill and Motherwell.

Another freight issue seemingly under the radar is the ongoing dispute with Colas IM where our members have been in dispute with the company since last June. You can imagine the difficulties we face where our members are sparsely spread around the country, feeling isolated, with communications difficult at times. Tie this to a management who don’t want to talk or negotiate but to impose and there is going to be trouble.

Slowly they have come back to talks and have now agreed a pay deal, and meaningful discussions in relation to outstanding issues. Hopefully this will be resolved to our satisfaction in the very near future. And, hopefully, next year there will be something positive to report and we’ll still have a viable rail freight industry!

No dark sarcasm in the classroom

WULLIE SIMPSON, ASLEF Education’s project worker in Scotland, reports on another successful year.

URING the last year the Scottish Union Learning Project has successfully delivered a range of courses throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. The scheme has seen a major transition with a changeover of project workers, with Alan Reid handing over the reins to Ayr branch member Wullie Simpson, and a changeover of college providers from the old Stow College to the brand new flagship City of Glasgow College on the Clyde.

We have run a range of successful courses, alongside our partners at ScotRail and the Collective Learning Partnership, throughout Scotland. These include ESOL and ECDL in Aberdeen; photography at Yoker; basic Spanish at Atrium Court; digital tablet courses at various locations; and core skills, health and wellbeing, and pensions seminars throughout Scotland; as well as CV and interview skills for colleagues who face redundancy at DB Cargo.

We also ran a pilot course on trauma support in partnership with ScotRail for drivers, managers and frontline staff, delivered by the Samaritans, to assist our colleagues in the event of a traumatic experience such as a fatality, and we aim to roll out this course throughout Scotland.

We have rail union learning centres at Ayr, Dumfries, Dundee, Edinburgh Waverley, Inverness, Shields depot, Stirling and Yoker, available to all staff, and we also use the City of Glasgow College and the Centre of Excellence at Atrium Court. Members can also take part in e-learning and distance learning.

We currently have eight union learning reps at ScotRail and two at Virgin Trains; the ULRs are the first point of contact for the learning programme and are here to assist members to facilitate any learning requests.

Going forward I am pleased to say we have been successful in our application for funding from the Scottish government and Scottish Union Learning for another two years from 2017 to 2019. The project will be focusing on trauma support, driver accreditation, ICT digital skills, languages, everyday skills, dyslexia awareness, leadership and equality & diversity.

The education project is run for the benefit of our members and I would strongly encourage members to take up these opportunities which are free, and at shift-friendly times to suit learners’ requirements.
Different trains

Survivors talk about their personal experience during the Holocaust. They talk of hope, education, reconciliation and tolerance that they hope will prevent the Holocaust ever being repeated. But mass murder is still going on. What a pity the world at large has learned nothing from the persecution and murder that went on in Europe.

– Bernard Grunberg

The kindertransport – German for children’s transport – was a last ditch rescue effort to save the lives of 10,000 Jewish children from Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia on the eve of the Second World War. In November 1938, after the devastation of kristallnacht, British Jewish and Quaker leaders appealed to the government to take unaccompanied children into this country. The first refugees – 196 of them – left Berlin for Harwich on 1 December; another 600 left Vienna by train on 10 December. The last group arrived from IJmuiden, in Holland, shortly before the Netherlands fell to the Nazis in May. The children were taken by train from Harwich to Liverpool Street station. Some of the children saved by the kindertransport include the artist Frank Auerbach; the Labour peer Alf Dubs; the film director Karel Reisz; and the TV director Herbert Wise.

Bernard Grunberg has never been more relevant. Bernard was one of 10,000 Jewish children to escape the Nazi Holocaust on kindertransport trains.

In the Holocaust or Shoah – the deadliest genocide in history – the Nazis killed six million European Jews as well as hundreds of thousands of socialists, communists, trade union activists, homosexuals, Roma, physically handicapped and mentally ill people of all ages. It was, Hitler decided, die Endlösung der Judenfrage – the final solution to the Jewish question.

I’ve known Bernard for several years, since he spoke at a Holocaust event I organised as a ULT at East Midlands Trains. Bernard was born at Lingen, a small town in Lower Saxony, and always talks fondly of his childhood before Nazi ideology began to infiltrate German schools and change his classmates’ attitude towards him.

‘I lost my friends, my playmates. They bullied me mentally, and physically, for being Jewish.’ Against a growing background of hostility towards the Jewish population in Germany and Austria his parents Bendix and Marie-Anna seized the opportunity to send Bernard, then 15, on one of the kindertransport trains to England. It gave him the chance to live that they never had; his mother and father and sister Gerda were interned and then killed in a Nazi concentration camp.

When Bernard arrived in England he was sent to a holiday camp in Lowestoft, which was not as nice as it sounds, as it was the middle of winter and the place had no heating. Kindertransport refugees were not allowed to undertake any paid or unpaid work until shortly before the outbreak of war. This opened the way for Bernard to start work milking cows, something he had learnt while helping his father back in Germany.

Bernard later married and settled down in his adopted country. Eventually, in 1983, he was invited back to Lingen, as part of a reconciliation event where he was made an honorary citizen of the town. A memorial stone garden was opened and Bernard finally got to learn the fate of his family, from a woman who had known them in the camp to which they were sent in Latvia.

So many were displaced, and lost, or killed, during the Holocaust and then the Second World War, as armies swept first one way and then another across the continent of Europe, that the details of what happened to loved ones are often hard to find. Bernard only learned recently the truth about the deaths of relatives – his aunt, her daughter, and the daughter’s husband – in Holland.

The passing of the years does not dim the pain these memories bring to Bernard, yet at the grand age of 93 he is still a regular speaker at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum at Laxton near Newark in Nottinghamshire. And the message Bernard brings to those who want to listen is a powerful one we should not ignore. It is a message about reconciliation, education and tolerance to others. For more information about the Holocaust, or to plan a visit to the National Holocaust Centre, go to www.nationalholocaustcentre.net

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Sorcerer’s apprentices

ASLEF and Virgin Trains West Coast recently reached agreement for a pilot driver apprenticeship scheme – the first of its kind across the industry – which will initially mean three new drivers at Liverpool, Manchester and Preston undertaking a three year training plan.

Joe Wilson, Samantha Jones and Simon Tyrer were selected from 858 applicants who took the assessment; they will gain a City & Guilds Level 2 NVQ in rail services as part of their apprenticeship. The first year will encompass functional skills around Maths, English and communication technology but will also include time with fleet, resources, on board and station staff, to get an overview of the railway at work. After personal track safety and trauma support training they will shadow a driver at their depots before the final two years see them undertake their full driver training.

Members of the drivers’ company council recently met Joe, Samantha and Simon at the talent academy in Crewe to learn about the role, and history, of ASLEF – and were signed up as members.

It is hoped this pilot scheme will be the starting point for apprenticeships in the driver grade as ASLEF is keen to see this develop as part of an apprenticeship framework and wants to be included in addressing overall recruitment plans and giving young people an opportunity in the driving grade. The scheme started with the ASLEF Education project team and ended with ASLEF negotiating with VT to reach an agreement.

We wish our new members well but, for the old hands out there, it must seem a long way from being asked how to wire a plug and what your parents thought about you being out at all hours of the day!

Si Goode, DCC, VT West Coast

Northern powerhouse

UGING by the turnout at Blackpool North branch we are our very own northern powerhouse. A packed club on the Fylde coast welcomed GS Mick Whelan with D03 Colin Smith, EC3 Andy Hourigan, and John Metcalfe, DEC Northern secretary. It wasn’t long before the talk got round to the issue affecting drivers nationwide – D00/DCO. The GS gave us an in-depth speech about the issue, knowing we at Northern are one of the franchises in the path of this government-backed scheme. Mick went on to discuss politics, the digital railway and how our union has been running under his leadership.

Andy Hourigan and John Metcalfe talked about the issues in Northern or Arriva or whatever the company is calling itself right now. Explanations about the talks regarding AOD to avert strike action, updates on rest day working agreements, and the possibility of brothers and sisters in the freight industry

Pulling the same way

Another good turnout at our March branch when our GS visited the principality to report on up to date developments affecting our members. We have Southern members fighting off the imposition of D00(P) and the dire situation at DBS where 400 plus drivers are losing their jobs. But it was evident that the GS, with the CC and EC, are all pulling the same way to get the very best outcome for the membership. Mick stood for over an hour and, at the end,

Mick presents h&s rep Keith Millard with his 15 year badge

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

Upcoming events

STRATFORD – SATURDAY 1 APRIL
Annual Stratford reunion is at the Railway Tavern, Stratford, from 17.00 till late. If you want accommodation please ring the Railway Tavern (020 8534 3123) quoting Stratford reunion.

RAMSGATE – THURSDAY 6 APRIL
Southeastern retired and working members’ reunion from 11.00 at the Red Arrow Club, Newington Road, Ramsgate.

NORWICH – FRIDAY 21 APRIL
Colleges from other grades and depots are welcome to join us at 19.00 at Arkwright’s Social Club, Hobart Street, Norwich, NR3 3JB. Free buffet thanks to the Norwich loco welfare fund who have sponsored this year’s reunion.

DIDCOT – SATURDAY 29 APRIL
Past, present and associates welcome at our reunion from 12.00 at the Staff Association Club, Station Road, Didcot.

BRIGHTON & SUSSEX – TUESDAY 2 MAY
Informal open afternoon for all retired and working members of Brighton or any Sussex motive power depot from 14.00 at Brighton Railway Club, Belmont, Dyke Road.

HITHER GREEN – WEDNESDAY 10 MAY
Hither Green old boys’ reunion at Richmal Crompton pub, Bromley South, from 11.00. Details from Ray Cooper, RMS.

OLD OAK COMMON – TUESDAY 13 JUNE
Annual reunion from 13.00 to 16.00 at the Acton Garden Village Club, Alwyn Gardens, Acton, London W3 0JH. Anyone with any OOC history is welcome.

Please send all your branch news, reports, features and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk
Del Boy and the DfT

District 5 Organiser NIGEL GIBSON says the share transfer shenanigans at c2c and Abellio are selling taxpayers, passengers and railway staff short

N NOVEMBER 2015 National Express took on the 15 year Essex Thameside franchise, under the brand name c2c, short for Coast to City, after beating Abellio, First Group and MTR through the bidding process. Just 14 months later National Express announced it had sold its shares to Trenitalia, the Italian state railway company, leaving NX without any train operating companies in the UK.

In October 2016, Abellio won the bid to operate the Greater Anglia franchise, ahead of other interested parties, including National Express and First Group. Just months later Abellio announced an agreement to hand over 40% of its shares to the Japanese company Mitsui.

Both announcements were made within a week of each other, and both with the backing of the government through the Department for Transport, but where does that leave the whole debate about transparency and accountability? Both of these franchises operate in my region and I believe we have good industrial relations with the current incumbent so my purpose in writing is not to attack these companies individually but to question the principle of what is being permitted by the UK government.

Neither Trenitalia nor Mitsui has been involved in operating UK rail services and both companies found their way into the market through the back door without being subject to the scrutiny that the full bidding process would have demanded had they been involved originally.

In all honesty, I really don’t care about those private companies which have spent millions of pounds submitting bids, and lost out on this occasion. They take enough of our money – a private profit made at public expense – out of our industry anyway. What I do believe, though, is that they will get that money back another way.

Yet if you have a bidding process surely the winner should live, or die, by its commitments without recourse to introduce other unaccountable organisations. How can the DfT allow operators to sell their shares in such a manner? And why would the DfT not demand that, if the bidder awarded a franchise no longer wants to provide the services it pledged to run, and be custodians of that franchise, the keys should be returned?

I am not known for being cynical but I do have to question the motivation of, first, those selling their shares and, second, the reason for the government’s Nelsonic ‘blind eye’ approach. I can only come to the conclusion that perhaps the bids were not as robust or as lucrative as the companies had hoped and the opportunity to allow another operator to take it on – and the chance to cash in on their chips – was more attractive.

From the DfT perspective surely there is only one answer? The DfT cannot be seen to oversee yet more failings of a flawed privatised system because of the government’s ideological principles. How could they demand the return of the franchise keys when millions of pounds of taxpayers’ – and bidders’ – money had been spent just months before, in theory, if not in practice, to establish a long-term operator of the railway in our region. Wouldn’t it look so much worse, from the perspective of the DfT, if they were to take the keys back, suggesting incompetence on their part. It’s easier to save the blushes and ride the companies’ ‘it’s just a share transfer’ argument.

The question for the travelling public, and trade unions, is how can the DfT justify such a blatant slap in the face from a government hell bent on ensuring that private companies make more money off the backs of fare-paying passengers and the workers who provide what should be a public service? Where does it leave the men and women employed by these new companies and what can they expect in the future? How many other external organisations will see an opportunity to make a few quick pounds – without the proper scrutiny of a proper bid – before selling the shares when the next interested party comes knocking at the door?

All this leaves a bad taste in the mouth, and worse in an industry where scepticism amongst workers is already high, not least because we can see other international – yet nationalised – operators making capital from our railways. In my view, this just shows the contempt this government, and the DfT, have for railway workers and those members of the travelling public who use the services.

The Department for Transport has questions to answer over why it waved through the dodgy c2c and Abellio deals.

Mick Holder turns back time to April 1917

Revolution in Russia, a call to arms and a serious industrial injury were all in the Journal 100 years ago

WONDERFUL NEWS FROM RUSSIA
Marking monumental history in the making, the editor writes: ‘There is wonderful news from Russia, where the fearless leaders of the people, after many years of effort and preparation, have seized the most opportune moment to spring the revolution and make it a success. Whilst it is said that universal suffrage will be one of the methods of their future elections we cannot take too much for granted until the air clears. We can fervently hope, however, that having once thrown off the yoke of one set of oppressors the people will not permit themselves to be saddled by another set under a new name. All forms of monarchy must go if they are not to slip back to a similar position, and government must be directly from the people, not by grand dukes or others of the aristocracy.’

THIS IS OUR COUNTRY
And in a serendipitous report on the general secretary’s speech to Rugby branch members, the branch secretary writes: ‘The GS reminded us that we were being told that after the war there would be no trouble between capital and labour; after the war the lion would lie down with the lamb. Possibly so, but, said Mr Bromley, the lamb would be inside. His advice to the workers was that after the war they should rise up wholeheartedly and declare: “This is our country, we have fought for it, and sacrificed for it, we have paid for it, and it is ours.”

ASLEF KEPT ME ABOVE WATER
David Davies writes: ‘After having been in receipt of £1 per week compensation from the GWR since 25 June 1911, the result of an accident I received at Henley-in-Arden, while acting driver on the Wolverhampton and Bristol express, I have been offered a sum of £200 and a pension of 11s 8d per week (besides 5s per week from the GWR Mutual, which I was already in receipt of) which I have accepted. I now beg to thank the Society for the aid given me in my hours of trial. The grant of £100 which I received kept me above water. Otherwise I don’t think I could have kept on swimming for nearly six years.’
TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS’ FESTIVAL

Friday 14 to Sunday 16 July 2017

Put the dates in your diary for a great event

The 133rd
Durham Miners’ Gala

will be held on
Saturday 8 July 2017

TRADE UNION

PALE ALE

4.5%
DAVID SHOPLAND THE BIG MAN

It is with sadness that I report the death of retired driver David Shopland at the age of 87. His railway career began and ended at Three Bridges and he served as LDC secretary, branch secretary, and branch chair during his 50 years of loyal service to our Society. His only absence was for military service; he served in Northern Ireland and Libya as a member of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, a period he enjoyed as it allowed him to increase his knowledge of the internal combustion engine.

As a lad he won a scholarship to Collier’s Grammar School in Horsham, necessitating a 14 mile bicycle ride. When not at school he worked with his father on the farm, and that is how his passion for steam power and mechanical things began. Traction engines, steam threshers, and Fordson tractors all became his play things, leading him to his railway career. He also purchased a motorcycle and rode daily up to his retirement.

David had a comprehensive knowledge of the countryside, Sussex in particular, and a day out in his company was always an entertaining adventure. He was a big man in stature and in character. His whole outlook reflected this, his integrity was massive, his permanent smile was known by the numerous friends and acquaintances he had, not only among the railway fraternity but from all walks of life. A great chasm has been left by his passing that will never, in a lifetime, be filled.

Our thoughts and sympathy are with his devoted family.

Paul Eden, Three Bridges

ERNIE CASTLE LOVED STEAM

Ernest George Castle died on 5 December 2016 at the age of 94. He was born in 1922 and started his life on the railway in Stratford at the age of 18. He was only at Stratford for a short while before he took a position at Hertford East and his favourite line, the Buntingford line, known as the Bunt, which he always referred to when talking about his time with steam engines. He moved to Bishops Stortford depot in 1975 and was there until he retired at 65. He loved steam and would go to any steam rally or traction engine gathering. He was also a member of the BS railway club. He had a long retirement, 29 years, and is survived by his eldest son Tim and his two grandchildren. He was a gentleman who enjoyed life and will be missed by family and friends.

Dave Clark, retired driver, Bishops Stortford

IAN CLARK PRODIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

Ian Clark, late of Southend Victoria, was something of an enigma. A one-time goods guard at Kettering, he eventually found his way to Reading, via Eastleigh, where he began his footplate career as a second man. He arrived at Sheffield in 1975 as a new driver, and our friendship began. In the ’80s he transferred to Southend Vic, where he remained until the John Major big nonsense of 1994-95 when he left the railway and moved north to Carlisle and Penrith. This led to his losing touch with some of his former colleagues, but he was his own man and something of a loner, but we remained in regular communication.

Ian was a complex man. He was born in 1950, his childhood and youth was none too special, and the nightmare he suffered during the early ’90s regarding his remaining family affected him deeply, though he would rarely speak of this. He had some odd ways, and mannerisms, and his eccentricities meant he could, on occasion, appear aloof. But when you got to know him properly, as many colleagues did, he was a very good man.

Ian’s knowledge of the railways was prodigious, from signalling to steam locos, the permanent way to goods wagons. This interest led him to visit Germany, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Outside of the railway he was an enthusiastic radio ham, with a wide knowledge of electronics and electrics. A loyal ASLEF man, and a regular at branch meetings, he was also secretary of the old Parkfield branch.

Nobody could talk with Ian for long and not learn something, and for that his colleagues were always grateful. Ian was cremated at Carlisle crematorium on 21 February.

Roy Lingham, RMS, ex-Gidea Park and Scarborough

WILLs AND PENSIONS SEMINAR ON MERSEYSIDE

Wills and pension provision are two of the most important things you can do for your partner and family. With this in mind, ASLEF union learning reps Andy Morgan of Birkenhead and Keith Devlin of Kirkdale, in collaboration with District 3 Organiser Colin Smith and Thompsons solicitors, organised a seminar for Merseyrail staff in Birkenhead.

We held a morning session with an opportunity for informal discussion over lunch and repeated the session in the afternoon to try and accommodate shift patterns. Colin introduced both sessions and led on the pensions. Colleagues learnt of the necessity to nominate or re-nominate every two years who they wish to receive their pension and/or death in service benefit. This helps to show consistency if there is ever a challenge against your nominated person’s right to receive monies from your pension.

Katie and John gave an overview of the services Thompsons provides to members and their families. They also outlined the many misconceptions people have about wills, or the lack of a will. No will means the probate court decides what happens to your estate and this isn’t always straightforward and can drag on for some time, compounding the stress for your family. For you and your loved ones a professionally drawn up will can give peace of mind and help negate the stress at a time of sadness and loss. The 23 people who attended had not made any will provision and all took away a free will pack.

Many thanks to the company council reps, who are all pension champions, for their support and contributions. Also ULR Keith Devling for his assistance. Make sure you check out the Thompsons free will link via the ASLEF website. Andy Morgan (Birkenhead) and Keith Devlin (Kirkdale)
GOIN’ TO JAMAICA THAT SUN IS GONNA BAKE YA

I am writing to introduce our new project Changing Trains Changing Lives and to explore if we might have common ground or a common cause. We are proposing to reopen a 40 mile branch line in Jamaica as a community and heritage railway with a mission to move tourists with money to communities that have none. Poverty in Jamaica is endemic, and very much harsher and more brutal than that seen in developed nations.

The proposal will be UK-funded, but we are assembling a global network of partner railways and railway people to help make it happen. We have done well in other countries, and have developed work in progress arrangements in Australia, Canada, South Africa, the USA and Zambia. British Rail operated a colour bar on main line footplate work until 1966 and, one way or another, so did most of them.

In the UK we have formed a JA-UK diaspora rail task force, and we seek to strengthen this through connecting with professional railway people of Jamaican heritage. London Underground has been helpful, but there is more than a hint of

Neil wants to connect with railway people of Jamaican heritage living in the UK for a project in the West Indies

institutional racism in Network Rail and we do not see them as being partners in this. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Jamaica, chaired by Dawn Butler, is fully behind the scheme.

Can anyone in ASLEF help us connect with the Jamaican railway diaspora in the UK, especially those who have made it to the front end on the main line?

Neil Howard, Jamaica Eastern Railway

Four years of frustration

After recent letters of mine were printed in the Journal criticising ASLEF’s EC and senior union officials for their lack of attendance at Manchester Piccadilly branch meetings during our ongoing troubles with TransPennine Express, we finally had the pleasure of welcoming Simon Weller, assistant general secretary, to our branch in February.

Unfortunately for Simon, he was witness to four years of anger and frustration from TPE drivers directed towards the EC, the company, and the content of the recent productivity package put to drivers in a referendum endorsed by the EC and, apparently, the company council. I say apparently as we were always promised that all four members of the company council would have to support any package negotiated before being put to a referendum. The general consensus amongst most drivers is that the four year deal falls way short of our aspirations given the terms & conditions we are being asked to sacrifice.

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Although Simon admitted his knowledge of our productivity talks was minimal he was prepared to stand up and do his best with all that the 20 plus Piccadilly TPE drivers in attendance had to throw at him and he is to be commended.

Simon promised to report back to the EC exactly how drivers at TPE feel and the concerns we have regarding the disconnect we feel exists between the EC, company council and driver membership at TPE. Bridges need to be built between ASLEF and drivers at TPE to heal the divisions that are now apparent and I just hope that after our branch can now begin to move forward, both as a union and driving grade.

Steve Hill, Manchester Piccadilly No 1

Tosh McDonald says: ‘I don’t know who told you that all four members of the company council would have to support any package but, whoever it was, misled you. Our union is a representative democracy. We work on a majority.’

Ragged trousered drivers

AGS Simon Weller. Well, comrade, like Leslie Crowther, you came down, but the price was not right, obviously. It would seem the aspiration of the ragged trousered driver is wanting parity. With whom? Well, who knows for whom they seek parity? They may get a rise, perk or benefit within an hour of them accepting the offer and that’s not thought to be just. There was alleged cajoling of elected individuals, to accept this jam, for the 19% on offer over four years, but they all cry they would have it over three years. How does one pull back from this? Well, they tell me the company will hand the keys back, they can’t manage, they can’t fulfil their franchise obligations. Well, at the moment, no state of emergency has been declared and, lo and behold, the audacity the council has to drive trains! No meeting at the moment. I wonder where we as a Society will be led by these ragged trousered people. Clause 9.3 was re-written by the council in their submission; the actual one that was voted down. Well, that’s my rant over. We live to fight another day, but will never lose the passion to fight, and argue for what we believe.

Philip Jackson, Manchester Piccadilly No 1

Striking a light last year

Once again, we had a great Matchwomen’s Festival in July 2016 and, once again, we were delighted by ASLEF donations. Branches gave us in excess of £600, making ASLEF our top union contributor. We were able to use this towards the cost of our venue, PA system, and to provide a children’s area.

We were lucky to have vastly inspiring, funny and talented speakers and acts last year. We began with a moving short film on what learning about the matchwomen meant to local schoolchildren. Mulberry School girls visited the factory; Bangladeshi pupils devised a dance inspired by the women’s lives, and pupils read the names of striking women aloud in an eerie, now-empty work room. I’m hoping to get the school’s agreement to show this again, as I was stunned by its quality and by how engaging it was.

Shami Chakrabarti brought us back to the present with a bang with her hilarious, no holds barred thoughts on the state of the country now, what we can do and why we must stay strong and positive in this post-Brexit world.

Nina Malik is an advocate and trainer with the Freedom Programme, an innovative course which can be done in groups or online. I first found out about it when I chaired a day conference for Women’s Aid and heard graduates of the programme speak. I don’t
have space to list all our wonderful contributors but we had comedians, poets and bands until late.

Contributing branches and regions – I hope this is a complete list but did the admin single-handedly this year so omissions are possible! Please let me know if you’ve been left out: Bedford, Birmingham, Bishop’s Stortford, Bletchley, Bristol, Buxton & Peak Forest, Chingford, Clacton, Faversham, Feltham, Hitchin, Horsham, Immingham, Leicester, Nine Elms, Northern Line North, Newcastle, Norwich, Perth, Slade Green, Three Bridges, Woking, and Wolverhampton.

We hope to see you at Matchfest 2017 on Saturday 1 July at the London Irish Centre in Camden – a really beautiful venue. We’ll be talking, amongst other things, about the campaign to properly honour the driving crew, amongst other things, about the campaign to properly honour the driving crew, and, through them, the trade union movement they began. For more information to book tickets go to: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/matchfemmens-festival-2017-tickets-32326760210 Louise Raw, St Albans

Blind eye to a dodgy deal
National Express sold the c2c franchise to the Italian state railways for an estimated £70 million. I cannot believe that this underhanded sale can legally take place. When other franchises have used the ‘get out and run’ clause, they have handed back the keys to the government of the time. It seems NX did a deal under the table to benefit themselves. David Deadman, Victoria South Eastern (retired), and RMS

Don’t dump on the Trump
I noted Journal, March) a letter from Eric Stuart stating his concern about the Journal ‘Trump bashing’ but earlier I read your Off the Rails piece on Kellyanne Conway, one of Donald Trump’s top aides, where you call her “hapless” because she described falsehoods as ‘alternative facts’. I’m new to ASLEF but not the political arena. Might I suggest that be the last of your liberal-left ignorance of the Donald Trump issue? This is a railway journal and not a democratic mouthpiece. Please refrain from ignorantly giving an opinion on a subject you clearly know nothing about and stick to railway news, which every other Off the Rails piece contained. President Trump loves the UK. He will invest here, which will be good for our businesses, and economy. Not something Barack Obama considered!

Adam Thompson

Mick Whelan says: ‘The ASLEF Journal is not a railway magazine; it is a trade union journal for members of ASLEF, the train drivers’ union. As such it covers everything of interest to members of our trade union.’

Model rail in Motherwell
Can you please help me? When we were at Motherwell at the Retired Members’ Section AGM, I was talking to a member who was there with his wife, and they live in the Brighton area. They took the train to Edinburgh and stayed there before coming to Motherwell. During the meeting he was taking notes for his branch meeting, while his wife was out shopping. He was telling me about his interest in model railways and MERG, the Model Electronic Railway Group, but I forgot to get his name and contact details. Does anyone know the member in question? If so, it would be good to get in touch. You can email me at kevin.christie75@btinternet.com.

Kevin Christie

Reinventing the wheel
I read Bro Steven Nimmo’s letter (Journal, March) with great interest and, very quickly, realised he doesn’t work for GW! As we’re now all being advised that common sense is no more but it has been reinvented as non-technical skills! Now we are all eagerly awaiting the reinvention of the wheel. I can only assume that common sense is not quite so common these days!

Tristram Mitchell, Penzance

STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

It’s been a long time since I’ve seen a call for contributions to the ASLEF fighting fund but, through the pages of the Journal, I would like to extend my thanks to all those at Longsight branch who contributed, and extended the hand of comradeship, to those in the Associated Society who may need to use the fund. I believe that, going forward, the number of disputes, engineered by the Tory government, will increase. It’s never been so important to stand shoulder to shoulder with our fellow members. I doff my cap to you all who answered the call, not just at Longsight branch, but every member the length and breadth of the nation who put their hands in their pockets (or purse). Proud to be union!

Alan Moss, Longsight

NORWICH 125 year commemorative badge, limited edition. £5 + £1 p&p from Dave Tyson at daverart@btinternet.com or 14 Pond Road, Horsford, Norwich, NR10 3SW. Cheques payable to ASLEF Norwich Amenities Fund.

GLASGOW branch 125 year celebration badge. £4 including p&p. Contact ASLEF’s Glasgow branch secretary John McCue at johnnmccue1970@msn.com

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

DAVE EAST has some badges to sell to raise money for preservation and repainting of Phase 4 CIG 1753 named Chris Green in August. £5 + £1 p&p. Please send cheques payable to Network South East Railway Society to NSERS, 41 Highfield Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 6DD.

CLASS 15 locomotive (D8233) enamel badge on sale to raise funds for restoration of the sole surviving Class 15 loco by the Class 15 Preservation Society. £5 + £1 p&p from Ipswich driver Clive Whiting. Payment can be sent via PayPal to treasurer@d8233.org.uk (friends & family to avoid fees).

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.

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.

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 for details.

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

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

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NEW exhibition at the Museum of London’s site on the Isle of Dogs takes us on a fascinating journey across and under the capital, following Crossrail from east to west, offering a slice of 10,000 years of human history in and around what the Romans, who established the first settlement here in AD43, called Londinium.

‘Tunnel: The Archaeology of Crossrail’ is partly a testament to an extraordinary feat of civil engineering, and partly a collection of the artefacts they found, which offer a glimpse of how, at different times, we used to live and work and die.

Eight large TBM s – tunnel boring machines, all, as is mining tradition, given women’s names – were used in pairs to create two tunnels, one eastbound, one westbound, to build the new 118 kilometre Elizabeth line running from Abbey Wood and Shenfield in the east through the heart of the West End to Heathrow and Reading in the west.

The tunnels are between 30 and 40 metres below ground, to avoid gas, water and electricity pipes, London Underground lines, and the foundations of buildings along the route, so most of the 10,000 artefacts recovered were found during the building of 10 new stations, grout shafts, and other forms of surface work.

The oldest exhibit – 8,000 years old – is a collection of waste flakes from flint cobbles left as a Mesolithic man made an axe. There’s also the outline of a woolly mammoth – which prowled the prehistoric forests and marshes of these islands from 100,000 to 12,000 years ago – marked up on the wall which proves irresistible for children to stand next to, and measure for size, but the mammoth’s jaw bone itself isn’t here as it’s being analysed at the Natural History Museum.

There are a lot of Roman coins – and a rare bronze medallion featuring the face of Emperor Philip I from AD245 – as well as many domestic items such as hairpins, bracelets and brooches. Lots of pottery, too, and leather shoes which have survived from the 15th and 16th centuries. There are skulls found at Liverpool Street and skeletons, too, some from a 17th century plague pit.

There’s part of an iron chain used to secure ships on the slipway as they were launched by the Thames Iron Works & Shipbuilding Company, which played a major role in British shipbuilding from 1837 to 1912 – turning out ironclad warships such as HMS Warrior and HMS Thunderer for the Royal Navy as well as ships for Queen Victoria and the Pope – and a nod to the shipyard workers, playing for the company team, Thames Ironworks, who turned professional in 1900 as West Ham United and whose crest famously includes two crossed shipyard workers’ hammers.

One of the last exhibits on display is a cast iron manhole cover from 1911 – embossed GW R, oil, and gas – found during excavations at Westbourne Park depot. There’s a tribute, too, to Old Oak Common which, when it opened in 1906, was the largest goods yard and rail depot in Great Britain, if not the world. It included a vast engine shed measuring 444ft by 360ft containing four turntables and big enough to accommodate 112 locomotives, but was largely demolished in 1963, when the introduction of double cab diesel engines made the need for turntables redundant.

This engaging exhibition offers a chance not just to learn a little more about our history, but about how Crossrail was built, too.

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This engaging exhibition offers a chance not just to learn a little more about our history, but about how Crossrail was built, too.
`For myself,' said Lopez, ‘I can conceive no vainer object of ambition than a seat in the British Parliament. What does any man gain by it? The few who are successful work very hard for little pay and no thanks, or nearly equally hard for no pay and as little thanks. The many who fail sit idly for hours, undergoing the weary task of listening to platitudes, and enjoy in return the now absolutely valueless privilege of having MP written on their letters.’

Your man with a thin skin, a vehement ambition, a scrupulous conscience, and a sanguine desire for rapid improvement, is never a happy, and seldom a fortunate, politician.

‘I have seen a good many Prime Ministers, Cantrip, and I’ve taught myself to think that they are not very different from other men. One wants in a Prime Minister a good many things, but not very great things. He should be clever but need not be a genius; he should be conscientious but by no means straitlaced; he should be cautious but never timid, bold but never venturesome; he should have a good digestion, genial manners, and, above all, a thick skin. These are the gifts we want, but we can’t always get them, and have to do without them.’

‘I don’t care a straw whether it run to Radicalism or Toryism. The country goes on its own way; either for better or for worse, whichever of them are in. I don’t think it makes any difference as to what sort of laws are passed.’

Solution to Crossword 131

Across: 1 Whippet 5 Safe 7 Run 8 Bachelor 9 Local 10 Ever 13 Lane 14 Sink 18 Tear 19 Hinge 21 Canivale 22 Rob 23 Well 24 Skipper

Down: 1 Wireless 2 Innocent 3 Pebble 4 Ticket 5 Shekel 6 Frog 11 Raindrop 12 December 15 Kennel 16 Bribes 17 Chilli 20 Game

Congratulations to Michael Hawthorn, of Banbury, Oxfordshire, 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 131st prize crossword in the March 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 April.

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.

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