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Mick pays tribute to emergency services workers

Somewhere up the stairs into the fire

T’S been a long month with the run up to the election and, of course, our own parliament, AAD, in Bristol, much of which is covered in the following pages. We have a hung parliament with the Conservatives seeking an alliance, not a coalition, of ‘confidence and supply’ with the DUP. With the fraught situation at Stormont, it would be very foolish to do anything that would undermine the Good Friday agreement.

But that is the norm for the Tories – 25 percentage points ahead in the polls, hubris and arrogance, so far ahead we can do what we want, the public will swallow an uncosted manifesto and more austerity – including a dementia tax, as spiteful and damaging as previous policies such as the despised bedroom tax – removal of PIP, ATOS assessments, and hundreds of thousands using food banks. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that there were 1 million people, including 312,000 children, destitute in the UK in 2015. How many more now? No surprise, then, to some of us, that a properly costed manifesto for the many not the few from a credible leader like Jeremy Corbyn (not the one ritually demonized in the right-wing press) produced more seats – and votes across the country – for Labour.

Unions, federations, there are a lot of names for organisations that represent workers. We have condemned the cuts, under the guise of austerity, in public services and ‘cutting red tape’ which is just a euphemism for the removal of the employer’s duty on health and safety whilst, at the same time, removing the worker’s rights to redress from bad employers or injury. The government that voted down a bill that private homes should be habitable is a moral and ethical disgrace in the 21st century. So, on behalf of ASLEF and its members, I offer an unqualified tribute to all those frontline workers in the police, fire brigade, ambulance and NHS, and those working behind the scenes, who have done so much, particularly after the incidents in Manchester and London Bridge and the terrible Grenfell Tower fire.

They have a vocation and a dedication that has not been properly rewarded. If the race to the bottom on health and safety is shown to be a contributory factor then the law must be changed to penalise government and other bodies which are negligent for monetary gain.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
The tiring duds of May

HERESA May’s election gamble backfired badly as the Tories lost seats – and their overall majority in the House of Commons – while Labour gained votes in almost every constituency.

After saying she would serve until 2020, when she succeeded David Cameron as Prime Minister a year ago, Mrs May did a handbrake turn and called a snap general election on 8 June after opinion polls suggested she could win a three figure majority.

Instead, the Conservatives fell to 318; Labour gained 30 to 262; the SNP fell to 35; the Lib Dems went up to 12; the DUP returned 10; Sinn Fein 7; Plaid Cymru 4; and the Green Party 1 (the Speaker makes 650).

Mick Whelan, ASLEF’s general secretary, hailed the result as an endorsement of the positive, popular, socialist policies – including, of course, public ownership of the railway – put forward by Labour under Jeremy Corbyn.

The result has left Mrs May giving the impression, in the words of Norman Lamont during his resignation speech in 1993, ‘of being in office but not in power.’

She has to rely on the votes of the Democratic Unionist Party – meaning her disparaging phrase ‘the coalition of chaos’ has come back to haunt her – while former Chancellor George Osborne cheerfully described her as ‘a dead woman walking.’

Five train drivers – and ASLEF members – stood at the general election (see page 6).

Mind the gap

Train drivers have the smallest wage gap between men and woman of any UK job according to new figures published by the Office of National Statistics. The overall gender pay gap is 18.1% but among train drivers it is 0.7%. ‘I’m delighted,’ said Mick Whelan. ‘ASLEF has worked really hard to promote diversity and encourage train companies to ensure train drivers are more representative of the communities they serve.’ The GS added: ‘Train drivers are highly unionised and covered by strong collective bargaining agreements which have helped to deliver this success story. While the news is welcome, the rail industry needs to do more to improve its recruitment policies and we will work with it on this.’

Passengers have paid £50 billion for rail privatisation

Rail privatisation is ‘financially flawed’ according to a new report from academics at Queen Mary and Essex universities which finds that the cost of running the railway has increased by a staggering £50 billion since John Major’s sell-off.

The study suggests that the impact of unnecessarily expensive track upgrades, excessive train leasing costs, the bureaucracy of the franchising system and train company profits have been passed on to passengers through grossly inflated fares.

‘This new research follows the Transport Select Committee and many others in highlighting the lie that rail privatisation would deliver better value for money and cheaper fares,’ said GS Mick Whelan. ‘It has, in fact, delivered huge inefficiencies for which staff, passengers and taxpayers continue to pay the price.

‘That £50 billion could have paid for the first phase of HS1. But the government has no strategy for making the railway more efficient. It is ideologically blind to the benefits of public ownership.’

ANNE STEPS DOWN

Ann Rutter, one of the first women to drive trains on Britain’s railway, has retired. The Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 meant women could apply to join the footplate grade on British Rail in the late 1970s. Ann joined BR in 1979 and, after three years as a driver’s assistant at Norwood Junction, trained as a driver. She drove her first passenger train, on Southern Region, on 22 February 1983.

We tell the story of Annie’s journey to the driver’s cab next month.
Song and dance at Southern Fail

S

OUTHERN Railway, the struggling train operating company known to long-suffering passengers as Southern Railway, is being savagely mocked in a new comedy musical.

Southern Fail: The Musical premiered in the Spiegeltent during the Brighton festival last month, and then played at the Ropetackle Arts Centre in Shoreham and the Sallis Benney theatre in Brighton. It’s the brainchild of Mark Brailsford – whose clever parody of John Lennon’s Imagine, which we wrote about on this page in the Journal in June, features in the show – and Simon Levenson. ‘As well as being entertaining, and a lot of fun, Southern Fail will help publicise the campaign to support long-suffering commuters in their battle against an utterly incompetent and useless railway company,’ said Mark. ‘We support renationalisation of our rip-off railways.’

 hapless management at Southern – a company which has become a byword for delays, cancellations, and everything that is wrong with Britain’s privatised railways – are hammered in the show, which is in the same vein as The Book of Mormon and the Jerry Springer Show.

The Association of British Commuters is impressed, adding, ‘In a cruel satirical twist many theatregoers will be required to travel by train to see this show’ while the production’s Facebook page urges Southern passengers to attend: ‘You’ll weep. You’ll laugh. You’ll possibly arrive at the theatre in time for the interval...’

QUOTE...

‘The best way to reduce road congestion, collisions and pollution is integrated rail and road planning, not adding more lanes to motorways.’ – Philippa Edmunds, manager, Freight on Rail

...UNQUOTE

‘Proof that Ripple Lane men went everywhere!’ says Dave Brennand, who sent the Journal this pic. ‘This is Toffee Apple Brush D5511 at Inverness – this is the piccy of Ripple Lane men on the moon?’

END OF AN ERA

It was the end of an era when the last Bubble car on the national network was withdrawn (see page 8). ‘I think the warranty is going to expire soon,’ mutters Cliff (Frightliner) Blackwell. ‘It’s the last time you will get that wonderful driver’s eye view if he has the blinds up.’

CONFERENCES & RALLIES

The Matchwomen’s festival is at the London Irish Centre, Camden Square, London NW1, on Saturday 1 July. 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: N Musgrove, with number 134, won the June draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £394.

Off the rails

ROD LIDDLE, a one-time Trot – he was a member of the Socialist Workers’ Party in his teens – as well as a sharp and inspirational editor of Radio 4’s flagship news and current affairs programme Today from 1998 to 2002, has become world weary, cynical, and rather right-wing in his old age. He aspires to be a British version of PJ O’Rourke, the Republican Party Reptile, but is really just a low-rent Richard Littlejohn. Recent columns in The Sun, Sunday Times, and The Spectator have been criticised for being racist and misogynistic (often at the same time). On the eve of the general election he wrote: ‘Times reader David Stoneman applied many times for a place in the Question Time audience, making clear he was a middle-aged, middle-class professional who always voted Conservative. Rebuffed without even an acknowledgement every time. So next he stated he was “a militant trade unionist train driver who wanted fracking banned”.

Immediate email from the Beeb, followed by imploring phone calls. He was even asked on another BBC debate show he hadn’t applied for. If he changed his name to Mrs Winnie (formerly Winston) Nkobo, he’d probably get to present the programme. This is the man who in The Sun on 14 December described train drivers as ‘pig thick ASLEF meatheads,’ referred to our GS as ‘Baldy Mick’ and a ‘moron’ and urged the Tories to get ‘ruffy tuffy’ with us. Colleagues say it’s an Oedipal thing. Rod’s dad was a train driver.

THE PEACOCK, the pub in Stannington, near Sheffield, where former EC president and District Organising Secretary Bill Ronksley celebrated his 93rd birthday with ASLEF colleagues including Tosh McDonald, Ray Jackson, and Dave Court, has a special place in Bill’s heart. Because when his parents, who were agricultural workers with a young family, lost their jobs, and tied cottage, on a local estate, it was the village blacksmith – the pub was then a forge, with a cottage attached – who offered them a room at what became an inn. Bill, whose political views were forged on the anvil of such adversity, has never forgotten the kindness.

LONGSIGHT LEGEND Mel Thorley caught Burnley claret Mick Kelly posing proudly next to his black Beamer with the registration plate MK 10F (Rose Grove’s shed code when Mick was there). ‘That prompted Tommy Abbott, who started at Gorton, to say, “I could have TA 39A TA”, that being the code for the famous eastern shed in Manchester. That prompted one wag to say, “You’ll be lucky to see 2019, you beggar, never mind 2039!”

ANN MYATT, Tory candidate for Batley & Spen, former seat of Jo Cox, the Labour MP brutally murdered by a neo-Nazi last year, made the most tasteless remark of the election campaign when, at a hustings, she joked, ‘Well, we’ve not yet shot anybody, so that’s wonderful!’ It was the philosopher John Stuart Mill who said, ‘the Conservatives are the stupidest party’.
I wanna be elected

TS'a long time – 47 years, in fact – since a member of ASLEF sat in the House of Commons as a Member of Parliament. That was Archie Manuel, Labour MP for Central Ayrshire, who stepped down in 1970. But five of our members worked extremely hard during the general election campaign to put that right on 8 June.

Andy Botham came second to Conservative Party chairman Patrick McLoughlin in Derbyshire Dales. He polled 15,417 votes – up 8.4% from 2015 when McLoughlin was Secretary of State for Transport and the contest was described in national newspapers as the Train Driver versus the Fat Controller – and finished well ahead of the Liberal Democrat, Green Party and Humanity candidates.

Andy, 50, a local boy, a member of Derby branch, and a train driver for 27 years, said: ‘Young people made a big difference this time and I think the short campaign helped, because it focused minds and energised everyone. We ran out of garden boards and posters! Andy sent some young activists to help Chris William son campaign in Derby North; he retook the seat from the Tories, after losing it in 2015, promptly promising to deliver ‘the sunshine of socialism’.

Tom Corbin, who was re-elected as a councillor for Bemerton to Salisbury city council at the local elections in May, got 13,619 votes – up 10.2% on two years ago – to finish second behind John Glen, the sitting Conservative, in Sarum. Tom, 40, a train driver for 15 years, finished well ahead of the Lib Dem, UKIP and Green Party candidates, and out of sight of the independent, King Arthur Pendragon, which may well not be his real name.

Mark Daniels finished second behind Mark Francois, the Conservative, in Rayleigh & Wickford. He won 13,464 votes – up 11.7% – and was well clear of the rest of the field – the UKIP Lib Dem and Green Party candidates.

Mark, 44, a member of Barking main line, who has been a train driver for 21 years, and worked on the railway for 25, said: ‘It’s been an interesting night. My aim was to get 15,000 votes, which would have been the best Labour vote here ever, and there were times during the night, walking round the hall at the count, when I thought we were going to do it. We came close.’

Ed Mayne, 32, of Feltham Electric, and a driver with South West Trains, put on 6,000 votes in the contest dubbed the Train Driver versus the Transport Secretary. Ed, a Labour councillor in the London Borough of Hounslow, got 14,838 votes – up 9.5% - to finish second behind Chris Grayling, the Secretary of State for Transport, in Epsom & Ewell, with the Liberal Democrats and Greens a long way behind.

Julian Vaughan, 50, of Northern Line North, a Tube driver for 14 years, polled 18,277 votes – up 12.7% – to come second behind the sitting Conservative Alistair Burt in North East Bedfordshire. Julian was well ahead of the Lib Dem, UKIP and Green Party candidates.

QUOTE...
‘It was a crap campaign, Mrs May was a glum bucket, and the public hate austerity.’ – Sam Coates in The Times

SON OF MY FATHER
Jared O’Mara, whose father Ian was a train driver, and is now a member of the RMT, beat Nick Clegg in Sheffield Hallam. Jared won 21,881 votes – up 2.6% on 2015 – 2,125 more than the former Liberal Democrat leader who looks to have suffered for taking his party into coalition with the Conservatives from 2010 to 2015.

NO GO HEATHROW
Heathrow airport has lost its claim for £42 million a year in access charges for allowing Crossrail services to use the Heathrow spur as part of the new Elizabeth line. The Office of Rail and Road ruled the proposed fees out of order but the airport appealed – and lost after a three day judicial review.

TRESPASS TEENS SHOCK
Two 13-year-old boys were electrocuted and left with serious injuries while playing near a railway line. They were among four trespassing teenagers playing near tracks next at Wednesbury in the West Midlands.

CROSSRAIL LAUNCH DELAYED
The introduction of Crossrail trains on the new Elizabeth line was moved back from May to June. TfL blamed problems with testing, assurance and approvals.
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Transport Benevolent Fund CIO, known as TBF, is a registered charity in England and Wales, 1160901, and Scotland, SC047016.

Steel pile left on track

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch is trying to find out how a one tonne steel pile was left on the line near Kirkham in Lancashire after engineering work. The driver of a railway maintenance vehicle stopped short of the tubular pile after spotting it.

This stocky, scowling, crew cut yob is helping rail staff in Cardiff manage confrontation. Not that he knows it

training scenarios, such as dealing with drunks and crowds. Staff on duty for the Champions League final between Real Madrid and Juventus in Cardiff last month were trained on the simulator.

Suzanne Murray, a customer service manager at Network Rail, said the most delicate situation she has faced was when she found two rugby fans having sex in a waiting room after Wales played England in Cardiff in February. That, though, is not one of the scenes on the ATW simulator.

Key corridors

Investing in key rail freight corridors could cut lorry traffic on the strategic road network and save money by reducing the need for road repairs and improvements, according to new research carried out by the Metropolitan Transport Research Unit for the Campaign for Better Transport. It analysed the potential for rail to move significant numbers of HGVs off four key routes – the A34 and M3 serving Southampton; the A14 serving Felixstowe; the M6 in the West Midlands; and the M62 between Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire.

MUGGLES

Harry Potter fans are putting themselves in danger by walking along a railway line to a Hogwart Express landmark, the Glenfinnan viaduct in the Scottish Highlands. ‘Tourists from all over the world travel on the Jacobite steam train over the summer,’ said Sgt Kevin Lawrence of the British Transport Police. ‘Alarming, they get off at Glenfinnan and walk back along the line to take photos. This is extremely dangerous.’

RRIVA Trains Wales is using an advanced 3D simulator to train staff to deal with angry, difficult or reckless passengers. The company decided to run lessons in conflict management as passenger numbers continue to rise and problems on platforms and stations rise, too.

Screens on three walls of a projection room in Cardiff display a fictional station called Pillar Parkway (Parolffordd Pilar in Welsh). Its platforms are busy with avatars – including passengers tetering dangerously near the platform edge, running for trains as the doors close, and teenagers distracted by mobile phones.

The RSSB has just handed ATW £400,000 to develop more training scenarios, such as dealing with drunks and crowds. Staff on duty for the Champions League final between Real Madrid and Juventus in Cardiff last month were trained on the simulator.

Suzanne Murray, a customer service manager at Network Rail, said the most delicate situation she has faced was when she found two rugby fans having sex in a waiting room after Wales played England in Cardiff in February. That, though, is not one of the scenes on the ATW simulator.

‘Switching to Smart means no more standing in queues to purchase tickets.’ – Cathy Craig, commercial director, Abellio ScotRail

…UNQUOTE

Tea and coffee tastes better in a red and white ASLEF mug! Price £3.50 (inc p&p); email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk
The difference between a woman and a man

A new TUC guide will help reps ensure that employers take the differences between men and women into account at work reports MICK HOLDER of ASLEF’s health and safety department

HE TUC has revised and updated its guidance on gender in occupational health & safety with help from ASLEF’s health & safety and equalities departments. The new guide for h&s and equalities reps addresses an issue which is often overlooked at work – employers taking the differences between men and women into account when managing health, safety and welfare risks at work.

At first glance why this is important seems glaringly obvious – men and women are different. But most research into occupational ill health studies adult men and misses out everyone else. Most personal protective equipment is designed for men to wear without taking women, or the different sizes and shapes of the men required to wear it, into account. And that’s just for a start.

The purpose of the new guide is not to give preferential treatment to one group or another but to help reps encourage employers to look at the hazards faced by people at work and then to take into account how those hazards might affect different groups of workers, notably taking gender into account, and make work safer and healthier for everyone.

Using the guide also presents an opportunity to challenge old gender stereotypes, such as women doing lighter work, or men being less likely to suffer from work-related stress. The guide provides background information on why the issue of gender matters and provides reps with a checklist which can be used in the workplace. The document is available free to download at www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/GenderH52017.pdf

New guide from the TUC

She pulled a knife when asked to pay

A violent teenager who slapped station staff in the face and then pulled a knife, threatening to kill, has been jailed for 14 months for affray, possession of an offensive weapon, and two counts of common assault. 

Siti Awled, 19, of Wembley, became aggressive when she was asked to buy a ticket – she had barged through a barrier at Action Town Underground station without paying. She slapped a female member of staff in the face and then, when asked to leave the station, pulled out a kitchen knife, Blackfriars crown court was told. ‘Everyone has the right to travel and work in a safe environment, without fear or intimidation,’ said DC Ross McAlpine of the British Transport Police. ‘This was a frightening experience for staff at the station. Behaviour like this will never be tolerated on the rail network.’

END OF THE LINE FOR THE 121

Chiltern Railways withdrew its last two Class 121 double-ended single car DMUs, which were running on the Aylesbury to Princes Risborough route, on Friday 19 May. The company said the units, built in 1960, were ‘the last remaining trains in service that use vacuum brakes’, and had become too expensive to maintain.

GBRF TIE-UP WITH DP WORLD

GB Railfreight, as part of its plans to develop ‘safe and reliable rail transport’ at the DP World London Gateway in Thurrock, Essex, has signed an agreement to manage the movement and preparation of all trains in and out of the deep sea container port for three years. ‘This is a fantastic opportunity to develop our services in London,’ said GBRF MD John Smith, ‘and ensure the economy continues to function effectively.’

UNION MEMBERSHIP SLIPS

Trade union membership has fallen from a high of 13.2 million in 1979 to 6.2 million in 2016. Frances O’Grady, general secretary of the TUC, said unions are rising to ‘the challenges of recruitment’ and blamed the loss of good quality jobs in the public sector and the rise of precarious short-term jobs in the gig economy for the drop.

BOMB HOAXER JAILED

Rias Choudhury, who dialled 999 and claimed there was a bomb at Gloucester railway station, has been jailed for six months. Choudhury, 41, who made the hoax call to emergency services two days after the bomb attack at the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester left 22 people dead, and dozens injured, pleaded guilty at Cheltenham magistrates’ court.
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](http://www.feedingfatcats.co.uk) to take action and stop the government #FeedingFatCats.
ASLEF’s parliament

SLEF’s annual assembly of delegates – our annual conference – was held at the Marriott Royal Hotel, Bristol, from Monday 22 to Thursday 25 May. AAD is ASLEF’s policy-making parliament, the foundation of our union’s democratic structure.

‘This is where we turn our trade union over to the membership to evaluate where we are, and what we have done, and to discuss future changes and evolution of policy based on items sent in from branches for discussion,’ said GS Mick Whelan.

‘It has been a hard year of legal, governmental and industrial attack and some decisions will have to be made that will impact on all our futures. This AAD will define attitudes and policy; what it cannot do is dictate strategy. That will always lie with the lead officers and, when the machinery is exhausted, the executive committee, who apply policy on a daily basis, which may often be subject to the vagaries of changing circumstance or what can be moved forward through negotiation.’

Delegates at AAD; D07 Brian Corbett, with badges and bag, by a colourful piece of Banksy street art in Bristol; and Temple Meads station, which opened in 1840. Conference photos by Nigel Goldsmith

TRANSPORT SYSTEM TO CONNECT EVERYONE

Marvin Rees, Labour Mayor of Bristol, welcomed delegates to the city on Monday morning, saying: ‘I congratulate you for leading the campaign to get the world-class transport system we need. It’s about sustainable economic development. I grew up here, in Bristol, as a poor, mixed-race kid, in a physically divided city, and part of the problem was the transport network, so I know the importance of a transport network in building an integrated modern city,

Mick thanks Marvin Rees otherwise people get locked out of economic opportunities. It’s essential that we make sure we have a transport system – here and everywhere else in Britain – that connects everyone.’

MINUTE’S SILENCE

AAD stood for a minute’s silence on Tuesday morning in memory of those who lost their lives in the suicide bomb attack after the Ariana Grande concert at Manchester Arena. An emergency motion moved by Gary Boyle, of Manchester Piccadilly No 1, and seconded by Trevor Robinson, of the Black & Ethnic Minority representatives’ committee, was passed to donate £1,000 to Hope Not Hate who later texted the GS: ‘We will use this money to heal the hate and to offer hope. This is the time for the good and the great to stand up.’


‘A lot of Bristol’s history is defined by the achievements of Isambard Kingdom Brunel,’ Andy Hudd, executive committee member for District 7, told delegates when they arrived on Sunday. ‘On your way here some of you will have travelled on the Great Western Railway and here in Bristol you can also see his famous Clifton suspension bridge and the SS Great Britain.’

STAR RISES IN BRISTOL

Delegates voted to donate £1,000 to the Morning Star. Petar Petrovic, of Euston branch, moved the motion, seconded by Simon Goode of Wolverhampton.

‘The Morning Star is the only daily paper that supports us day in, day out,’ said Tosh McDonald. ‘It’s run on a shoestring and the fact that it’s been coming out every day for the last 80-odd years is truly remarkable.’

Steve Richardson, of Waterloo Nine Elms, said: ‘The Morning Star is the only newspaper that provides an industrial correspondent, rather than a political correspondent, to report on industrial matters.’

BERNARD SHIPSHAPE AND BRISTOL FASHION

Bernard Kennedy, of Bristol branch, unanimously elected chair of AAD after 38 years in ‘my adopted city’, told the mayor the first thing he should do is ‘tackle the stranglehold that First Group has on buses and trains in this city’. Daniel Masrani, of Cardiff, was elected unopposed as vice-chair of conference.
Simple choice

AD debated the state of politics in Britain ahead of the general election on 8 June and in the light of opinion polls showing the gap between the Tories and Labour was narrowing.

Tosh McDonald, president of ASLEF’s executive committee, told conference: ‘There’s a simple choice at the general election between Labour and Conservative, a choice between investment and cuts. The Labour manifesto is a manifesto for which I’ve waited a lifetime. It’s a breath of fresh air! Yes, we have a mountain to climb, but we are winning the argument and we are closing the gap.’

Ian Smith, of Glasgow, warned: ‘Chris Grayling, the Transport Secretary, would like to destroy this trade union. Because the Tories today see us as Margaret Thatcher saw the miners.’

Darren Howe, of Bournemouth, agreed: ‘The Tories hate us. They don’t just disagree with us, they hate us. Margaret Thatcher sold you a council house – at a discount – so Theresa May can take it off you to pay for your dementia.’

NOT HERE TO MAKE FRIENDS

‘We’re here to protect train drivers, their roles, and their futures,’ said Mick Whelan, spelling out what AAD is all about. Hussein Ezzedine added: ‘We’re not here to make friends, we’re here to make policy!’ And, warning about the dangers of posting comments on social media, the GS argued: ‘If you’re not prepared to put your name on it, and put it up on the mess room wall, then you shouldn’t be putting it out on social media.’

Off the AAD rails

ANDY WAKEFIELD, of Nottingham branch, got home after a long day helping Andy Botham campaign for re-election to Derbyshire county council. ‘There was a knock on the door, I opened it and there was Anna Soubry, Conservative MP for Broxtowe. I thought I’d have a bit of fun so I asked her what she was going to do about the railway and she said, “Well, we’re going to stop train drivers striking because they’re always on strike. And we’re going to control their wages because they’re on disgusting wages. In fact, we’re going to break them.” She went on in this vein for ten minutes and then she stopped, paused for breath, and asked me what I did for a living. And I said, “I’m a train driver…”’

DELEGATES were surprised to find, in the top drawer of the cabinet beside their bed, next to the Holy Bible placed there by Gideons International of Lutterworth, Leicestershire, a copy of The Book of Mormon – ‘another testament of Jesus Christ’ – courtesy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints of Salt Lake City, Utah. That’s the power of a Broadway – and West End – musical.

TOSH MCDONALD brought the house down with his opening remarks, displaying faux disappointment at something or someone – actually, a group – not on the agenda in Bristol. ‘Brian Corbett and Andy Hudd made a good case for bringing the parliament of our union to this great city. But we were promised The Wurzels, and that’s not happened…’

DANIEL JASZCZAK, Newton Heath, speaking on the political report, dryly announced, ‘I agree with everything the other guy with the long hair said!’ Daniel doesn’t keep his barber in clover and sports what is now known on the railway as ‘a Tosh.’

TONY VENSON, Rugby, organised a bucket collection among the 80 delegates, further to the formal donation on Monday, for the Morning Star, saying he wanted ‘to hear it rustle, not clink’. It raised a further £89.22 for ‘the beacon of the left’.

WHEN Mick Whelan wondered: ‘Who put in the 22p?’ Ben Wallington, of Rickmansworth, joked: ‘And I wanted change!’

NIGEL ROEBUCK, Sheffield, drew appreciative laughs, and full marks for self-awareness, when he said: ‘The moment the photographer enters the room Sheffield will get up to speak.’

DAVID HOOPER, Westbury, raised chuckles around the room – laughing in the face of adversity – when he talked about ‘DB Cargo – or should I say DB Cargone?’

QUOTE...

‘Don’t know if you’ve been to Cleethorpes lately. Even the pawnbrokers are boarded up.’ – Nigel Roebuck, Sheffield No 1

…UNQUOTE
Tackling cancer

J

IM Peters, in a thoughtful, informative and poignant speech on Monday morning, which ended with delegates rising to applaud his courage in talking so honestly about such a sensitive issue, spoke movingly about his battle with prostate cancer.

‘I spent 13 years at King’s Cross and, before that, I was at Eurostar for seven. I’m here to tell you my prostate cancer story. I’m going to try my best not to make it too heavy. I hope that, by telling you what’s happened to me, not only will you be better informed about prostate cancer, you will talk about it to others and, most importantly, you will think about getting tested.

‘One in eight men get prostate cancer – that’s 10 of you here at conference today – but not every man who gets it will die from it because, providing it’s found and treated early, it can be cured. Too many men don’t get checked and that’s why one man every hour dies needlessly from a cancer that could have been cured.

‘What is a prostate? Well, it sits just under your bladder. It’s about the size of a walnut. It’s integral to your sex life. And it’s one of the things that helps you not to pee yourself.

‘My first noticeable symptom was, as the doctors put it, impaired sexual function or, as I said to my GP, I can’t get it up, doc. I didn’t so much say it, though, as whimper. I was 53 and went from having trouble keeping the bloody thing down to the opposite in a few weeks! I found it embarrassing admitting to that sort of thing but figured I was far too young to give up sex. My doctor put me at ease and did a prostate specific antigen test. He prescribed me some pills, something I’d never heard of called Cialis, they’re like Viagra and were a bloody miracle. It was like being 16 again!

‘But, in early 2012, I had to go to the doctor’s because I was too ill to work. I lost two stone in 10 weeks. I was referred to hospital where it took 19 months of tests, scans and biopsies – 19 months of waiting, worrying and getting more ill – before it was found.

‘Being told you have cancer, even when you expect it, is a shock. Everything went quiet, and into slow motion, but eventually my brain kicked back in and my first thought was now they know what’s wrong I can get something done.

‘I had surgery. But the cancer had spread to my lymph nodes and I was told there was no cure. I reckon if I’d had regular PSA tests the cancer would have been found early and one treatment would have cured me. Instead, for the last 3½ years, since I had the surgery, I’ve had continuous treatment to try to slow the cancer down – radiotherapy, hormone therapy, chemotherapy – and I’m still on treatment now to keep me alive.

‘The way things went for me isn’t the way things have to be for you. You can get a simple PSA blood test done. It only takes a few minutes.’

At AAD 56 delegates went for a PSA test offered by the Graham Fulford charitable trust.

Tory Theresa’s ideology trumps common sense

CLAIRE McCARTHY, general secretary of the Co-operative Party, underlined the symbiotic relationship between her party and the labour movement on Wednesday morning.

‘She said:’We, in the Co-operative Party, and in the co-operative movement, recognise the vital role that trade unions play in Britain. We share a vision for a better society, one with a more democratic economy, where all communities have the same opportunities and services as those in the leafier places I pass on the train as I go around the country.‘

‘I haven’t read all of Theresa May’s manifesto – turns out she hasn’t, either – but I don’t have to, I know she has a different vision from us. One in which, when it comes to public services, including the railways, ideology trumps common sense.

‘While some of the rhetoric coming from the Conservatives now sounds a bit different, we know that this Conservative government is no different from its Conservative predecessors in not understanding the role or value trade unions play or the solidarity in the workplace that unions and co-operatives bring.

‘The Co-operative Party is proud of the relationship we have built with ASLEF. We share your vision of a modern, integrated, publicly-owned rail network, fit for the 21st century, run in the interests of passengers, employees, and the whole country.

‘This is the Co-operative Party’s centenary year. A chance to celebrate our proud history. And a moment to look forward. If you agree that co-operatives are a better way of doing business; if you believe in the power of people to come together to challenge vested interests and take control based on shared interests; if you want to see public services, like the railways, the utility companies and social care, run in the interests of people, not profit, then I’d ask you to consider joining us.’

Tosh McDonald hands over an ASLEF presentation plate to Julie

Severn up

JULIE BOSTON, a former primary school teacher, and NUT rep, and now organiser of Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways, thanked Bristol branch secretary – and AAD chair – Bernard Kennedy for his help in their campaign and told delegates how drivers can work in tandem with community groups to keep local services alive. Speaking on Wednesday afternoon, she explained how FoSBR saved the Bristol to Severn Beach line – due to be replaced by a bus service – with a more frequent and reliable train service which has seen passenger numbers soar.

QUOTE...

‘Isambard Kingdom Brunel would be a good chap to have supper with. Anyone who builds a railway and then, when he gets to Bristol and can’t go any further, builds a steamship, must be a good chap.’ – Fergus Henderson, chef/proprietor of St John in Smithfield

...UNQUOTE
It’s OK not to be OK

**DR STEPHANIE FITZGERALD**, a clinical psychologist who is lead health and wellbeing specialist with the Rail Safety and Standards Board, addressed AAD on Tuesday morning.

She works with stakeholders to promote health and wellbeing on the railway. Her current projects include reducing the stigma of mental health in the rail industry and improving the recognition and management of trauma following a fatality on the permanent way. The subject may be difficult, but Stephanie’s presentation was, by turns, amusing, engaging, and reassuring. And as entertaining as it was informative.

‘I want the men and women who work in the railway industry to know it’s OK not to be OK and to admit they’re not OK. Because when people say they’re “fine” often they aren’t. We need to change the way we regard mental health, not just on the railway – where depression and anxiety are all too common – but in society at large.’

We have to stand together

**NEIL DUNCAN-JORDAN**, national officer of the National Pensioners’ Convention, told delegates on Wednesday afternoon: ‘We were set up by Jack Jones, the great general secretary of the T&G, who felt that if men and women need the protection of a trade union when they are in a job – and they do – then they need the protection of a trade union when they are retired.

‘Right-wing think tanks like the Institute for Fiscal Studies say pensioners are getting something for nothing. That’s not true. Pensioners have paid in, one way or another, for what they get out. Everyone deserves dignity in retirement. That’s why we need to bring care back into public ownership. At the moment the profits are huge but the private care companies don’t pay their workers properly. And we need solidarity between the generations. The Tories want to divide us – suggesting one sector is doing better at the expense of others – so they can make more cuts. Don’t fall for it! We have to stand together!’

BRIZZE BE BEST

**BRISTOL**, like Liverpool, is a city built on slavery. From 1697 to 1807 more than 500,000 men, women and children were taken, in chains, from Africa to the Caribbean on ships trading out of Bristol, many of them belonging to the Society of Merchant Venturers, one of whom was Edward Colston. The Colston Hall, one of Britain’s best known music venues, is to change its name, possibly to the Bristol Concert Hall, because of the way in which Colston made his money from human misery.

**DANIEL DEFOE** met Alexander Selkirk, who spent four years castaway on an uninhabited island in the South Pacific, in the Llandoger Trow in King Street, Bristol, just a few hundred yards from our conference hotel, which inspired him to write *Robinson Crusoe*. Robert Louis Stevenson based the Admiral Benbow, the inn in *Treasure Island*, on the Llandoger Trow.

**ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON** also used the Hole in the Wall, just off Queen Square, Bristol, as the basis for the Spyglass Tavern in *Treasure Island*.
Bringing them back to the negotiating table

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C1 Marz Colombini brought delegates up to date on our long-running dispute with Southern Railways. ‘Our dispute with Southern is a dispute with Southern Rail. It’s not about bringing down the government – despite what a few badly-informed Tory backbenchers like to claim – and it is not a dispute designed to undermine the GTR franchise. It is not a dispute in support of another trade union or another grade. It was, and is, an industrial dispute over imposed changes in our terms and conditions.’

He added: ‘The purpose of industrial action is not to indiscriminately damage an employer but to put them under pressure to come to the negotiating table when they would not otherwise come to the table. Which is more or less where we find ourselves at the moment.’

Peter Scott, Horsham, said: ‘We don’t seem to be working to get this back together. My daughter is a guard and a member of the RMT. Told “Become an OBS or lose your job.” Conditions at Southern are toxic. There’s mistrust between the drivers and the conductors and the company. And our relationship with the RMT is not in a good place.’

That prompted Gary Comfort, Jubilee Line East, to say: ‘The relationship with the RMT on the Underground is toxic. They nick our members, report them, disciplinaries.’

Bad company

Freight on rail in Britain has contracted by 30% in the last 12 months. The government – and the freight operating companies – are entirely to blame. The Tory government, and the Conservative-led coalition before it, forced coal and steel off the railway while the four big FOCs – Deutsche Bahn Cargo; GB Railfreight; Freightliner Intermodal; and Freightliner Heavy Haul – knew the contracts were going to end but sat on their hands instead of finding new business.

Nigel Roebuck, Sheffield No 1, and chair of DBC company council, told delegates: ‘We had to make some decisions which we didn’t want to make but we made those decisions to keep an industry alive. We need to give the freight drivers a message that they are not the forgotten people. ’

‘DB Cargo was in financial trouble, haemorrhaging money, because of the management who have been running the company, badly, for the last ten years. Yet the new CEO claimed everything was down to the terms and conditions of lazy drivers! That tells you everything you need to know about the FOCs and the way they see things and the way they treat us.’

Hussein Ezzedine, Edinburgh No 1, said: ‘They threatened to close the business if they didn’t get what they want. Unfortunately there are some guys clambering over themselves to get redundancy while we’re trying to save jobs. The fact we’ve saved their fifty grand a year job is the worst thing in the world! Freight privatisation

Drivers! That tells you everything you need to know about the FOCs and the way they see things and the way they treat us.’

LIBERTAD

A five minute video made by Justice for Colombia of Huber Ballesteros, a member of the national executive of the Colombian TUC, vice-president of the agricultural workers’ union, and a leader of the Patriotic March, who spent three and a half years in prison in Bogota, was played on Monday afternoon.

RUNNING ORDER

The arrangements committee for AAD comprised Tony Venson, Rugby, chair; Gary Boyle, Manchester Piccadilly No 1, secretary; Chris Sneddon, Wimbledon, and EC1 Marz Colombini.

NO PASARAN

Jim Jump, secretary of the international Brigades Memorial Trust, spoke about the Spanish Civil War at the gala evening in the Palm Court of the Marriott Royal Hotel on Wednesday.

SHORE THING

The Bristol branch social on Tuesday night, at the Shore Café Bar, raised £1,800 for the Julian Trust night shelter.

QUOTE...

‘I first came to conference 10 years ago and the items we see in the political report are now quite different to what we saw then. In a good way!’ – Daniel Masrani, Cardiff ...

‘The RMT don’t want us to cross their picket lines but they always cross ours.’ – Jeff Turner, Barnham ...

‘We have discussions, we get heated, then we go to the bar and have a pint together. That’s what we do.’ – Tosh McDonald ...

Mick Whelan, with Brian Corbett, Andy Hudd and Bernard Kennedy, presents a cheque for £5,000 to Marion Colverd and Andy Irwin for the East Bristol food bank.

Delegates listen to the debate on rest day working
Protecting our pensions

Dave Tyson, who has served 16 years as a trustee director of the Railways Pension Scheme, members, up almost 9,000 since 2012; 105,000 preserved members; and 139,000 pensioners. £775 million was paid out in pensions last year along with £204 million in lump sums and £23 million in death benefits.’

GS Mick Whelan, thanking Dave, said: ‘It’s every GS’s nightmare – two ASLEF presidents in the room! Seriously, Dave is erudite and funny and comes here every year to bring us up to date – and he does an awful lot of work behind the scenes for this trade union.’

Phil Clark, a partner of Moore Stephens, presented the auditor’s report. ‘The union is in a sustainable position. There may be challenges ahead but you have a platform on which to meet them. You have a clear report. The underlying records support the report you have before you. We are signing a clear audited report on the union.’

Dave Tyson, who spent ten years on the EC, and is now a trustee director of the Railways Pension Scheme, gave a typically thoughtful, lucid and elegant report on the state of the scheme on Thursday morning.

‘Over the past two years we have seen the scheme add somewhere in the region of £4 billion in value to its assets. From the low of £14 billion in 2008 assets have climbed to £25.5 billion as of 31 December 2016. Much of this is due to the investment team at Railpen being given more power to make quicker investment decisions. ‘We have 94,000 active

Delegates at the launch of the union’s Mind the Gag campaign – examining when banter, ‘the playful and friendly exchange of teasing remarks’ (OED), becomes bullying and harassment – on Tuesday lunchtime.

A View from the Chair

BERNARD KENNEDY, secretary of Bristol branch, and a driver with Arriva Cross Country, was thrilled to be elected chair of AAD. Partly because Bristol is his adopted city – ‘I’ve lived here for 38 years, since 1979’ – and partly because, at 60, he doesn’t think he’ll get another chance.

‘It’s my third time as chair – after Southport in 2000 and Nottingham in 2009 – and special because it’s here in Bristol,’ said Bernard, who started on the railway as a guard in 1980 and became a driver nine years later. He’s been to 15 AADs, his first in 1995, and understands the importance of conference to this union.

When he settled into the chair’s seat he promised, ‘I will endeavour to be a delegates’ chair; get the debate going, and get through the business,’ and he did. Delegates said he did a great job.

‘We discussed the important things at length, quality not quantity, as we should. Things we must get right, like rest day working and the terrible problems on Southern and DBC. AAD is far more cohesive than it used to be – in the past it was often the top table against the floor, with some nasty confrontations – but this union has really come together under Mick.’

INTIMIDATION ON MERSEYSIDE

An emergency motion moved by Tony Cashman, West Brompton, and seconded by John Bryans, Southport, condemned ‘the outrageous intimidation and victimisation’ of union members on Merseyrail. The company sent threatening letters to guards saying they will not be considered for promotion to train driver if they take part in a third day of strike action. ‘You cannot, on Merseyrail, be a driver unless you have been a guard,’ said Mick Whelan. ‘So the company is saying if you lawfully strike you will be barred for ever from being promoted. That is outrageous!’

QUOTE...

‘When I look round this room I don’t see black men, or women, or white men, or women, or gays, or straights. I see locomotive engineers. ASLEF locomotive engineers.’ – David Dobson, Leeds

‘We’ve got people out there whose only crime is to be made redundant. Because the company they work for is crap. It’s not their fault. It’s the fault of the industry.’ – Nigel Roebuck, Sheffield No 1

‘Can’t be right for drivers to work past the state retirement age. The people who do it are not the hard-up or poor but the most financially secure.’ – Steve Richardson, Waterloo Nine Elms

THE RED FLAG

AAD ended, in the traditional way, at 5.30pm on Thursday with everyone singing the Red Flag.
Brighton rocks

The seventh annual ASLEF Brighton reunion was on 2 May – and what a fantastic afternoon it was. It was well attended, with drivers old and new. These events are not just about honouring our retired members but also a fantastic opportunity for new drivers to meet, share stories (and a beer or two) and keep the solidarity across the generations alive. Our GS presented service badges including a 50 year medallion to retired railwayman Spike Jones and an engraved decanter on behalf of Brighton branch to Paul Edwards. I would like to thank Mick Whelan, Marz Colombini and Graham Morris for attending as I know how busy their schedules are. Also a huge thank you to Paul for all his hard work in making this event happen and the success it was. See you next year!

Jem Hannam, branch secretary

On the estuary of the Orwell

On Sunday 7 May Les Muir, the RMS national secretary, Alan Taylor and I attended Ipswich branch to report on what we are doing for ASLEF. It also gave us a chance to hear what is going on in their TOCs. We thank them for a warm welcome and for agreeing to affiliate to the National Pensioners’ Convention, on which we represent ASLEF, and Les had the pleasure of presenting Mark Wade with his 45 years’ service badge.

Peter Smith, RMS reporter

Quarter century

At another well-attended Hammersmith & City 267 branch meeting in May, Bro George Mayers received his retirement certificate from EC8 Terry Wilkinson. Approaching 25 years in ASLEF, Bro Mayers signed up for the RMS, along with Bro Keith Dale who retired recently. George, hope to see you in August for your 25 year badge…

Gary Jarman, branch secretary

Water of life

Ray Jackson, RMS chair, and three committee members – Alan Taylor, Dave Court and me – went, along with Bristol branch secretary Bernard Kennedy, to the reunion at Didcot Railway Club on 29 April. It was very well attended; Ray Cooper, with others from Hither Green, along with others from as far afield as the Midlands, and Newcastle, made the effort to be there. Ray, on behalf of the organisers, presented the oldest members – the oldest being 96 – with a bottle of fine whisky, for medicinal purposes, and the RMS added one of the new ASLEF 50 year badges to each. Instead of a fund-raising raffle this year the chair asked for donations – Didcot branch and the RMS stumped up – to ensure we can afford to meet again next year. As we all know, these functions cost money to run.

Peter Smith, RMS reporter

You can drive my car

Martin Neumann, an Austrian train driver and trade union rep, and I relieved Brother Richard Moyer, a Whitmoor driver, at Peterborough, and worked 6E88 via the joint line to Doncaster. I would like to thank GBRf for allowing me to give Martin an insight into freight working in the UK and a special thank you to ASLEF who asked me to arrange the cab ride for Martin!

Martin, Barry and Richard Hare, GB Railfreight company council

Don’t let it cost you your job!

Time to cheque the money

Branch News

Upcoming events

- **ASHFORD – THURSDAY 6 JULY**
  Southeastern retired and working members’ reunion from 11.0 at Ashford Railway Club, Beaver Lane, Ashford.

- **WATFORD – SATURDAY 7 OCTOBER**
  Watford reunion from 14.00 in The Flag next to Watford Junction station. All past and present drivers welcome. Please contact Kevin Corcoran at kev.corcoran@virginmedia.com for more information.

- Please send all your branch news, reports, features and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk
Mick Holder turns back time to July 1917

Inflation, profiteers and railway nationalisation were some of the topics in the Journal 100 years ago

PROFITEERING WINGS ITS WAY

On the pressure of working under wartime conditions, the editor notes: ‘Profiteering still wings its evil way unchecked, and the people generally appear to be willing to grumble and let it continue. According to the Board of Trade figures, the cost of the chief articles of food on 1 June 1917 had increased by 106% in large towns, 98% in small towns and villages, or 102% for the United Kingdom, over the cost of such food in July 1914. Oh, for a humane and honest government!’

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

‘It is just possible, now that many of the friends of those in high places have made their pile out of the war, that some check will be put on in some very slight degree, to show the working-classes that the government will not allow them to be exploited. Ha, ha! What mugs we are! The commissions of inquiry into industrial unrest may be the first tentative steps in that direction, or they may, together with the honours showered upon trade union leaders, and the press campaign against the revolutionaries in Russia, be an attempt to stave off the possibility of the workers of this country following the lead of the Russian people. The general secretary and councillor B Wild have given evidence before one of the commissions, on behalf of our Society, emphasising the fact that the low wages and long hours of our employment, coupled with profiteering, are the main causes of very serious unrest amongst our members.’

URGENT NATIONAL NECESSITY

The editor also reports: ‘It may interest our members to know that at the annual meeting of the Railway Nationalisation Society, held in London on 7 June, our general secretary was elected to the executive committee of that organisation. The general secretary’s views on railway nationalisation are well known, i.e., that it is an urgent national necessity, not in the interests of railwaymen alone, but for the welfare of the community as a whole.’

King’s Cross lions roar

The King’s Cross contingent in the Cock Tavern

The King’s Cross branch on 8 May at the Cock Tavern was well attended, especially by GTR drivers. We were pleased to have District 1 Officer Graham Morris give a report on the state of the nation as far as his patch is concerned, a factual update on the Southern controversy, and the burning question from King’s Cross drivers was the loony proposal by GTR to open new signing on points at Hornsey, Welwyn Garden City and Letchworth, and the disruption to those who will have to follow the work. Unfortunately, neither Graham, the LLR or company council reps could give concrete information as no diagrams or timetable have been presented by GTR. They did not have final diagrams ready for the KX LLR so could not present the coming rosters. Reminds me of what was said about our generals in the First World War – driver lions and GTR donkeys.

PJ Smith, King’s Cross

Pirates of Penzance

At our May meeting, Penzance branch was pleased to welcome Andy Hudd, executive committee member for District 7, who gave an update on EC matters, along with a report on District 7, particularly on Wales and Great Western Railway and DB Cargo driver issues. Andy also had the pleasure of presenting Bro Phil Jones with his 40 year badge and Bro Andy Carr with his 10 year badge. Andy Hudd said, ‘It is always a pleasure to show ASLEF’s appreciation for long service and I think this is one of the best parts of being the EC member. Congratulations to Andy for 10 years’ service and especially Phil for 40 years’ service to our union.’

Mike Butler, branch secretary

All smiles in Pennsans

Preston presentations at St Gerard’s Catholic Club, Lostock, in May. Dave Forshaw received his retirement certificate after 42 years’ membership and John Holland picked up his 50 year medallion. We wish both members all the best in retirement.

Graham Fazackerley, branch secretary
The 133rd Durham Miners’ Gala will be held on Saturday 8 July 2017.
**STEVE BULL**

**TUG OF THE RAILWAY**

Steve Bull, a great friend and servant of ASLEF, passed away on 8 October 2016 at Saint Christopher’s hospice, surrounded by his family, after a mercifully short battle with lung cancer.

He began his railway career, which spanned more than 40 years, as a second man at Norwood. There was a brief sojourn when Steve worked at his brother’s garage, but the tug of the railway was too strong and he soon returned. He became a driver instructor and, when the position became available, Norwood health & safety rep, at one point the most highly qualified local staff has rep, to the immense benefit of all our members.

Steve had a great love of family; his own, his colleagues, and his railway family. No matter what happened at the end of a debate he’d always ask how you and your family were.

His patience knew no bounds, and this showed as he nurtured each of his ‘trainees’ along. He followed their progress long after they had left his care. Whenever you needed an opinion, Steve’s Norwood man. ‘Nuff said would be reasoned, backed by knowledge and, no matter what you wanted to hear, it would be the right one!

Steve leaves a loving wife, three lovely children, and a long lasting legacy at Norwood depot. He will be remembered by all who knew him for a long, long time. The union room at Norwood has been renamed the Steve Bull so his name lives on at the depot he cherished. Rest in peace Steve. A Norwood man, enough said.

Daniel Bound, Norwood Junction

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**The Measure of a Man: a tribute to Steve**

If your measure of a man is by how high he stands, counted in feet, or in hands like a horse, you could be pardoned for thinking that Bully didn’t make the cut. But you’d be wrong, because that man had a backbone strong as running rail steel.

Maybe you feel that a muscled chest, or bulging arms or all the rest, is what impresses you? Well, that’s fine I guess! But Bully, in a test of wills, had a strength of character that could pull a thousand slew, up and down three hills.

If courage is your benchmark, a list maybe of daring dos. You talk the talk but, really, could you fill old Stevie’s shoes? Bully had an inner power, he had nerve, he walked the walk, what we call battle. I would liken his passion, and the fire in his heart, to a Diesel 66 in full throttle.

I have known many men who thought that they were great, some have fallen by the wayside, some I tried hard not to hate. The last time I saw Bully, I looked into his eyes, and said ‘Take care’. Kissed his aching head, and stroked his hair, in the knowledge that a real man would soon be dead.

Mick Green

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**SID BEE ON THE OCHE**

Sid Bee was born in 1940 and in 1956 very nearly followed his dad and brother down the coal pits at Worksop but decided to become an engine cleaner at Worksop railway depot. He moved on to Shirebrook and then Stratford in 1965 where he eventually moved to the supervisory grade. Sid was a very good darts player, playing against top players of the day such as Eric Bristow in competitions with his great friend John Sutton, also a Stratford man. As a foreman he organised the annual trip to Aintree to watch the Grand National, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part. Sid, you will be missed by all who knew you.

Dave Pizzie

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**HARRY DUFFIELD**

**PLUM DUFF**

William Harold Duffield – Harry or Plum Duff to his friends on the railway – has died aged 86. He began his rail career as a cleaner with the LMSR at 9C Macclesfield in 1945 at 15. Unitisation resulted in Macc’s early closure so, in 1961, he moved 11 miles north to 9B Stockport (Edgeley).

When Edgeley lost steam in 1968 Harry chose to cross the border into Derbyshire to 9L Buxton, 1,000 feet above sea level. Then he had one last throw of the dice on the railway snakes and ladders board and moved back into Cheshire at Altrincham. He drove 304 EMUs on the Crewe to Alderley Edge route, a scheduled retirement date of 1994.

Zap! Along came the trams, with Metrolink pinching Harry’s MSJA commuter line out of Manchester. So he decided to call it a day, in 1991, at 62. Ironically, Buxton carried on.

Harry got married in 1957, and went up the links, father, grandfather, greatgrandfather. He took great delight in taking the children to railway museums, including the NRM in York. He used his traction knowledge not only to impress the kids, but also museum staff.

Having retired, he was able to visit the Pack Horse Bowling & Social Club more often and his two pints at 22.00 most nights got him a second nickname – 10 o’clock happy!

His last booking off was witnessed by family, friends, and former workmates, departing this station to the strains of Nessun Dorma. Another good mate lost.

Mel Thorley, Longsight

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**TREVOR BALL**

**WHAT A FRATERNITY**

Trevor Ball, who has died at the age of 89, joined the Great Western Railway at Shrewsbury as an engine cleaner in 1943 at 15. He moved to Tyseley Birmingham to get promotion to fireman, worked at Bordesley goods yard as number 9 pilot, a busy yard where he worked six days a week and two out of three Sundays, and then went back to Shrewsbury as a fireman, with promotion to driver in 1960. From Shrewsbury he worked trains to Cardiff, Bristol, Newton Abbot, Birkenhead, Liverpool, Blackpool, Manchester and central Wales, and said, ‘I enjoyed every day of it.’ With the coming of diesels he took up the position of instructor, was active in his ASLEF branch, and served on the

LDC. He was presented with an EC medallion for services to ASLEF which he wore with pride. In 1974 he had to retire from the footplate on ill health grounds, saying, ‘I worked with the finest bunch of men you would ever wish to meet. What a fraternity!’ His soul mate passed away in 2007, after 57 years of marriage, leaving a daughter and granddaughter. In tribute to her dad, Debora wore his medallion at his funeral. May he RIP.

Peter Smith and Deborah Fox

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Trevor Ball 1928-2017

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It was 20 years ago today

Having read the June party political edition of the Journal, I feel compelled to respond. Like so many people I, too, would love to see the nation’s railway back in public ownership, and fully despite the day our industry and its staff were dispatched into the uncharted territory where we find ourselves today. So incensed was I about the wholesale betrayal of privatisation, I jumped at the chance to vote Labour in 1997, because in their manifesto was a commitment to renationalise the railway. We all remember Labour’s landslide victory!

This was only 20 years ago, and yet it is very surprising to me that hardly anyone has made mention, in this election campaign, of Labour’s failure to deliver on their pledge when they had the chance. What angered me more than anything was when, a year into Labour’s tenure, one of their MPs had the nerve to deny they had promised to renationalise the railway. I haven’t voted Labour since.

Even if Labour could bring it about they would have to borrow vastly more money now to renationalise the railway than 20 years ago. They must have hoped the electorate’s memories were not just poor, but non-existent.

ASLEF maintains that only by electing a Labour government on 8 June can the railway return to public hands. This seems to ignore the past. These eight weeks have simply given Jeremy Corbyn time to produce headline grabbing nougats which, I’m afraid, he could never be trusted to bring within reach. He and Diane Abbott have famously failed, on air, to quote the basic figures of their pie in the sky policies. But, faced with certain electoral defeat, makes promises he is unlikely to ever be tested on. Why should we trust them now?

I haven’t met anyone yet, even at work, who has said they will happily be voting Labour on 8 June. If this letter is printed, by the time it is read it will be some weeks after the big day, but I do not agree that just because I am a member of a trade union I should feel defeated, makes promises he is unlikely to ever be tested on. Why should we trust them now?

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case. So much for free market dogma! The all line vacancy list with its in-built controls had, in my view, many virtues. All this played a part in my voluntary decision to leave the management game behind and relocate to a more subdued location and life. I am now a signalman on the S&C and have never for one minute considered a return to a manager role. It is always good to see Paul and many others at the Hatfield reunion each August. He is one of many who, whilst not vociferous in demeanaour, talks a lot of sense. Ultimately, it is the passenger and taxpayer who suffer as a result of this dogma.

John Walton, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria

No colour bar at the Cross

I am amazed at the statement from Neil Howard (Journal, April). If, as he says, ‘BR operated a colour bar on main line footplate work until 1966’ can he explain how at top shed (34A King’s Cross) we had several coloured firemen on the main line. To places such as Leeds, Hull, York and Newcastle and on steam, of course.

Some of these had started at the Cross in the early ‘50s, went through all the links as firemen, and some went on to be drivers. Hornsey (34B) also had their share; their main line work was to Peterborough. Some of these came to IX when their depot closed and took up their link seniority positions.

I understand some depots did try to restrict them to non-line of promotion as they did with Poles and Italians who stayed in Britain after the war, but this was overruled either by management or staff at union meetings. Sadly, Neil’s appeal might have come a bit late as most of those so employed will have retired by now.

David Rollins, Retired Members’ Section, ex-34A, Brisbane, Australia

The lack of the third man

In response to Arno Brooks’ latest letter (Journal, May) yes, we can do better. In it, he clearly describes the methods of operating steam on the main line as developed under BR in the 1970s, ie the provision of a traction inspector on the footplate.

This is the method used throughout by the only company to have operated steam on the main line continuously and successfully since the demise of BR, namely DB Cargo/DB Schenker/EWS. What he conveniently forgets to mention is that the fact that their outfit, West Coast, elected to dispense with the traction inspector on the footplate as soon as they began operating, it not being a rule book requirement. Perhaps if they, too, had stuck with the BR method they would not have had some of the incidents that have so far led to two bans?

Tim Stedman, Barking

Brigadiers, Blackadder and train company management

I would like to take issue with one of the short pieces in the Off the Rails column (Journal, June). Although I agree that the management of rail companies do hide behind front line staff, rarely appearing at the coalface, I do not agree that they are ‘like generals in the Great War’ who made sure they stayed ‘a long way from the front line’.

Try telling that to the families and descendants of the 78 British and Dominion officers of the rank of Brigadier General or above who perished whilst serving (on the front line) in the Great War.

Not to mention the 146 who were captured, wounded, or gassed in the line of duty. I’d advise the article’s author to take history lessons from contemporary sources and not watch re-runs of Blackadder Goes Forth on Dave!

Iain MacFarlane, Inverness

Wanted – push-pull train operation anecdotes

Before the collective memory disappears for good, I am trying to compile notes on the operation of two types of train: (i) push-pull, pull-push, autotrails and rail motor trains and (ii) other passenger trains that reversed over shorter or longer distances, such as Dorchester South (up direction), Inverness, Scarborough, Whitby, Guisborough, and Buildwas, and empty trains such as at Euston, Maiden Newton, and Yelverton.

I’m really looking for anecdotal comments from those who actually operated such trains, as it seems the regulations were not always followed to the letter. No disciplinesary seem likely at this stage! If you can help, please contact me at ericstuart38@aol.com

Eric Stuart, RMS

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Suburban 707 limited edition 35x30mm enamel badge £5 + £1 p&p from Martin Thompson (Wimbledon Park) email wdrailbadge@live.co.uk

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

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It’s easy as 1-2-3 do-re-mi, A-B-C

GREGOR GALL, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Bradford, looks at the opportunities afforded by protests organised by the Association of British Commuters against the Conservative government and Southern Rail

Could it now be as simple as ABC?
That is a question for ASLEF and the other rail unions in the light of the founding, by disaffected Southern Rail passengers, of the Association of British Commuters. For years, campaigns to properly fund and regulate the rail industry, with the ultimate aim of a return to public ownership, have lacked the ability to act effectively in concert with the travelling public.

Because, until now, the travelling public has been unorganised and atomised. Passengers grumble – often using expletives – when trains break down, signals fail and leaf mulch gets too much. But then they get off the train, get on with their lives, and put it all behind them until the next time. And so on, and so on.

But one group of passengers has decided to buck this trend. Arising out of the still continuing disaster that is Southern Rail, run by Govia Thameslink Railway, a passenger lobby group called the Association of British Commuters was formed in September 2016 after months of delays, cancellations, and overcrowded conditions, with short-staffing and strikes compounding these problems.

DIRECT ACTION

The old bureaucratic ways by which the rail users’ consultative committees and rail passengers’ councils used to operate were thrown out of the window in favour of direct action. For the last year, rail users and local campaigners came together to organise protests, initially at Brighton and London Victoria stations.

With the success of these protests, the #SouthernFail campaign was born. Then, in December, the ABC organised a large demonstration at Victoria, calling for the resignation of Transport Secretary Chris Grayling. They marched to the Department for Transport where they called on the government to intervene in the dispute, and get on with their lives, and put it all behind them until the next time. And so on, and so on.

Stephen Joseph, executive director of the Campaign for Better Transport, believes the ABC represents ‘a new type of passenger lobby group organised by young professionals who are adept at using social media’. Currently, the ABC has 4,000 Twitter followers and some 1,500 friends on Facebook showing it has a bigger reach than these numbers alone suggest. Indeed, it crowd-funded £25,000 to launch a judicial review of decisions made by the DfT and the government over Govia and Southern.

Out of all this, the ABC has established itself as a non-profit company to represent the interests of the travelling public. So it (i) campaigns for a safe, affordable, accessible and reliable transport system – not only in the south of England, but right across Britain; (ii) provides an online community for discussion by members, volunteers and partner campaigns; (iii) seeks to build greater public understanding of the issues surrounding the Southern Rail crisis, as well as transport issues around the country; and (iv) wants to elevate the voice of the commuter to be heard in Parliament and the national press, while exerting pressure on key organisations in the rail industry.

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

After the announcement of the snap general election, the ABC said ‘there [wa]s no better time for… restat[ing] the demands we’ve been making throughout the Southern Rail crisis. We will be addressing all former and prospective MPs with these demands and requesting their full response – so we can tell you which candidates have the best positions on Southern Rail.

And it called for an independent public inquiry into the relationship between Govia Thameslink Railway and the DfT; the return of guaranteed assistance for disabled passengers on services currently branded as Southern Rail – best achieved through the ‘guard guarantee’; the immediate removal of the Southern contract from GTR; and ‘passenger representation in any solution’.

So the ABC represents a positive development in terms of passengers getting themselves organised. But, before anyone concludes that this is manna from heaven for the rail unions, a few issues must be pondered.

Given that it has taken one of the longest and most intractable industrial disputes on Britain’s railways to bring ABC into existence, one has to ask – somewhat gingerly – if that is what it will take to get the travelling public organised in other parts of the country in order to make the ABC a genuinely national organisation. One hopes not.

FLASH IN THE PAN

Next, it’s possible the ABC will prove to be a ‘flash in the pan’ and peter out of existence if, as and when the Southern franchise is sorted out. Once the anger is gone, the momentum and mobilisation will go too.

And, finally, while the rail unions could make common cause with the ABC over increasing rail fares, under-staffing, and safety issues, etcetera, there will also be times when the likes of ASLEF will be in danger of falling out with the ABC. Most obviously, over industrial action in support of a pay claim. So, while alliances with passengers should be sought, it’s worthwhile not seeing the ABC as a magic panacea. The return to public ownership by a Labour government must remain the key priority. And that opportunity may come sooner than we think given the Labour advance – and Tory meltdown – on 8 June!

Gregor Gall is Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Bradford, Visiting Lecturer in International Labour and Trade Union Studies at Ruskin College, Oxford, and a visiting lecturer at the University of Hertfordshire.
M cDONALD’S, the fast food firm, hates the term McJob. It likes the ubiquity of the Big Mac, and the company has taken out a trademark on the name of its most celebrated burger (and on its famous Golden Arches logo, too). It likes the idea of customers having McFun eating mechanically retrieved meat from a dead cow but it irks McDonald’s that McJob – meaning low paid dead end work – has come to be synonymous with the firm.

The term was coined by Amitai Etzioni, an American sociologist, and communitarian, in an article in the Washington Post in 1986. ‘The fast food factories: McJobs are bad for kids’ examined the plight of thousands of teenagers flipping burgers in McDonald’s – the antithesis, he suggested, of the American dream.

And it really got traction five years later when Douglas Coupland, in his novel Generation X, described a McJob as ‘a low pay, low prestige, low dignity, low benefit, no future job in the service sector. Frequently considered a satisfying career choice by people who have never held one.’

The term – a useful short form for so many zero hour contract jobs in the gig economy – captured the public imagination to such an extent that the Oxford English Dictionary defines McJobs – 30 years later – as ‘stimulating, low paid, job with few prospects’, where ‘job insecurity is a common feature’. Adding ‘from McDonald’s, with allusion to the company’s practice of using Mc in its proprietary product names’.

Bosses love McJobs. Because bosses, over thousands of years of human history, have tried to pay their workers as little as they can get away with, keeping most of the money back for themselves. That’s how capitalism works. They would rather pretend a worker is self-employed than put you on the payroll. They want to be able to hire and fire at will. That’s why they bang on about workers – who mostly prefer to be paid properly, with good terms & conditions, sick pay, holiday pay, and a pension – enjoying the ‘flexibility’ of a zero hours contract McJob.

Paul Pomroy, chief executive of McDonald’s UK, airyly dismisses the idea that zero hours contracts are just a way for companies to keep people in insecure, low paid work. Ten years ago McDonald’s campaigned to have McJob removed from the dictionary. The company is still trying. ‘I would love it to go,’ says the CEO. Of course he would.

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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Thank you for all your responses to the 134th prize crossword in the June 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 July.

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