The state of freight

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HE attacks by the Chancellor, Philip Hammond, on this trade union have sparked a furore in the press and rightful indignation amongst our membership. During a cabinet meeting Mr Hammond said that driving a train is so easy ‘even a woman can do it’. He was slapped down, quite rightly, by the Prime Minister for his sexist remark. It’s not often I agree with the Prime Minister, but this is more than casual sexism. Then, on The Andrew Marr Show, he sought to blame the trade unions – us – for the lack of women in the driving grade. But we are not the employers, and we get our members from the people they recruit.

But the hypocrisy does not stop there. Because, when Mr Hammond was Transport Secretary, we wrote to the DfT and asked that, as all franchises are let by the government, they should be subject to equality impact assessments. Theresa Villiers, the Transport Minister, wrote back refusing. Why would we be surprised that Mr Hammond was – and is – so out of touch?

After all, this is the man who said he had been briefed on our ‘Spanish practices’ – such as demanding time to change ends – and we said that when he introduced teleportation – like someone in Dr Who or Star Trek – we would happily revisit the time taken to undertake our core activities.

We will continue to campaign for diversity – for youth, for women, for black and minority ethnic people – across our industry and seek job share, flexibility, and reduced hours’ contracts. But ask anyone who has applied, with our support, and they will explain how such requests are routinely rejected.

When people start digging they just don’t stop and, in the same interview, Mr Hammond said that those in the public sector earn more than their counterparts in the private sector. Somewhat crass to attack NHS workers, firefighters, the police, civil service, and others who have had no pay rises, or a pay cap which the government refused this month to lift, of the politics of envy. The truth is that there are far too many people in the public and private sector who do not earn enough – and he is not going to do anything about it. No wonder he wasn’t let out to speak by the Tories during the general election…

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
Mick hits back at Hammond

ICK Whelan, ASLEF’s general secretary, has hit back at ‘ignorant and ill-informed’ comments made by Philip Hammond, the out of touch Chancellor in an out of touch government.

‘I know Philip Hammond – condemned on the front page of the Daily Mirror as “Hammond the Hypocrite” – is an out of touch minister in an out of touch government but, really, this is ridiculous! For twenty years ASLEF has been at the forefront of pushing for diversity in our industry. We have run campaigns to encourage more women to become train drivers, we have a women’s section in our union, and a dedicated official at head office lobbying the train companies.

‘But the truth is that we can only recruit as members the people the privatised train and freight operating companies choose to recruit as drivers. The train companies, not the trade unions, control the recruitment process. And they have been very slow to listen to what we say and join the 21st century world of work.

‘And he appears to have conveniently forgotten that, in 2011, when he was Transport Secretary, we wrote and asked for the public sector duties of the Equality Act to apply to train companies and Theresa Villiers, the Transport Minister, wrote back and said “No”. On his watch!

‘Philip Hammond wallows in his own little world but it is, frankly, shameful that he doesn’t know more before he opens his mouth. His ignorant and ill-informed comments do nothing to help this industry, or his government.

Speaking on the Andrew Marr show, Hammond said: ‘It is a disgrace that 95% of train drivers are men. There is no reason that workforce shouldn’t be more gender balanced, except that the unions control the recruitment and training process. In the context of the discussion about industrial relations on the railways, I think it’s very important to focus on that control that the unions have over the training process.’

‘After Hammond told the cabinet that driving a train is so easy ‘even a woman can do it’, Lucio Buffone, chair of Paddington branch, said dryly: ‘Philip Hammond is right. Driving a train is easy. Stopping a train is the tricky bit.’

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

Childbirth? Simple, even women can do it. #PhilipHammond #casualsexism

Marz Colombini

Just wait until Hammond finds out that gays can also drive trains

Lucio Buffone

Hammond claiming the unions control recruitment on the railways which is a total lie. If @ASLEFunion did control it would be gender balanced

Kevin Lindsay

Will they sell off HS2?

On 17 July, the day the government announced £6.6 billion of contracts for the first phase of HS2, it was confirmed that the HS1 Channel Tunnel rail link, bought by Canadian pension funds Borealis and Ontario Teachers for £2.1 billion in 2010, has been sold to a consortium of investors for £3 billion.

GS Mick Whelan condemned the way that private companies make enormous profits at public expense and called on the Tories to promise that HS2, in turn, won’t be sold off, too.

He said: ‘In the light of franchises now being sold, like commodities, to groups that did not bid for them, and direct award becoming the new norm, we call upon the government to confirm that HS2 – which is being paid for by the taxpayer – will always remain in the public sector and not be asset stripped by any government for the benefit of privateers.’

LILIAN CONDEMNS ELECTRIFICATION DELAYS

Plans for electrification of Britain’s railways have suffered another setback, prompting an angry response from Lilian Greenwood, Labour MP for Nottingham South, a former Shadow Transport Secretary, and the new head of the House of Commons’ Transport Committee. She said delays would push up the overall costs of the rail network, and sell the environment short. ‘Electrification is partly about decarbonisation.’ She added that the delays would confuse rail suppliers, who had previously been instructed to focus on developing electric trains.

FLAWED BEYOND REPAIR

The Department for Transport is believed to be about to suggest that the government should take greater control of the running of privatised train operating companies. A leaked briefing document says that the franchise model ‘faces real challenge’ – a euphemism for ‘isn’t fit for purpose’ – and questions whether the current structure is commercially or politically sustainable. ‘The government won’t admit that their rail policy has failed,’ said Mick Whelan. ‘But the fact that they are planning a significant intervention in the running of our industry is an admission that their model is flawed beyond repair.’

Mick slams Taylor report

A government review of employment practices led by Matthew Taylor, Tony Blair’s former policy chief, has concluded that all work should be ‘fair and decent’. Taylor was asked to look at insecure working practices across the British economy and make recommendations. ‘For Mr Taylor to say work should be fair is a statement of the obvious,’ said GS Mick Whelan. ‘Unfortunately, his report offers no practical solutions to the scourge of insecure and low paid work and is, frankly, not worth the paper it’s written on.’
Thrown off train for daring to complain

ARIELLA Frostrup is taking legal action after she was thrown off a Somerset-bound train by police. The popular radio and television presenter was manhandled off the train, travelling from Paddington to Taunton, after asking an employee why it did not make its scheduled stop at Castle Cary.

Mariella, 54, who presents Open Book on Radio 4, among other programmes, was so upset by the way she was treated she has employed her human rights lawyer husband Jason McCue to begin a legal battle with Great Western Railway.

Mariella told her 56,000 Twitter followers that the train manager said ‘he didn’t care what happened to passengers because his shift ended in 20 minutes’ and he did not like her ‘attitude’ before getting a policeman to throw her off the service.

‘You’d think the police would have better things to do than back up railway bullies’, said Mariella, who splits her time between her homes in London and Castle Cary. ‘As a result of this girl off the train didn’t call at Castle Cary as a result of earlier disruption’ caused by a fatality.

CAN WE HAVE OUR MONEY BACK?

Two years after the Tories privatised the East Coast main line the franchise is in trouble again. Stagecoach, which owns 90% of the franchise – Virgin, under whose name it trades, owns 10% – says it paid too much and wants to renegotiate the deal with its friends at the DfT.

‘The franchise will have to be reset because the terms and assumptions no longer apply’, says Stagecoach chief executive Martin Griffiths.

CONFERENCES & RALLIES

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: M Samways, with number 25, won the July draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £394.

WATCHDOG BITES FIRST

FirstGroup’s takeover of the South West Trains franchise – running from Waterloo to the West Country – from Stagecoach has been challenged by the Competition and Markets Authority. It fears that as FirstGroup also runs, through GWR, the rail route from Paddington to Exeter, Plymouth and Penzance it will have a monopoly on services to the south-west of England.

Off the rails

DAVID HARE, whose plays include Plenty, Pravda, Racing Demon, and The Permanent Way, about the Tory government’s decision to privatise Britain’s railway, is typically forthright about Mother Theresa. ‘When needy Prime Ministers call vanity elections to demand “Do you love me?” they tend to get a dusty answer. In 1974, Edward Heath chose pointlessly to enquire “Who governs Britain?” and was rewarded with a chorus of, “Not you, sailor.”

The answer offered to Theresa May was no less startling. It’s as if electorates expect leaders to lead – that’s what they’re there for – and resent being solicited for expensive psychotherapy. The point about acclaim is that you don’t ask for it. You earn it. A hung Parliament wasn’t simply a verdict on her campaign. It was, more important, a verdict on her government. Ten months of achieving nothing.’

ALISTAIR OSBORNE, who used to be business editor of the Daily Telegraph, and now writes a business commentary in The Times, is seen at Central Office – now trading as Conservative Campaign Headquarters – as a guy who is usually on message with the Tories at the DfT and crony capitalism in general. Imagine, then, their horror when he told readers: ‘Hum along now. Who needs the Goldberg Variations or Enigma Variations when you’ve got Go Ahead with its GTR contractual variations.

Quick translation: it’s been fined £13.4 million for all those screw-ups on the Southern Railway. Of course, the Department for Transport should be fining itself for designing a contract built for strikes. Fancy doing away with the conductor.’

MEL THORLEY recalls Lonsight legend Tony Evers, who retired from Virgin West Coast in July at 65. ‘He started as a cleaner at 98 Edgeley, at 15, but was made redundant before he got off the shed. Rapid depot transfers and closures forced Tone off the job in 1974 and he became a marriage guidance counsellor. He arrived at the 9A holiday camp in 1993, but the ‘r’ word again sent him looking for a locker, this time in Leeds. Rescued in 2000 by Tommy Abbott, he enjoyed 17 years on the WCML. At his leaving do at Billy Gaskin’s Troughs he admitted, ‘Tommy said if he’d known I had learning difficulties, he wouldn’t have taken me on!’

JACQUES PERETTI, in The Passengers That Took on the Train Line for BBC2, made some serious points, in a light-hearted manner, about the way our rail network has been chopped up and sold off to the highest bidder. ‘Given that the French, German, and Dutch governments all own parts of British rail franchises then it’s fair to say our railways have already been re-nationalised, just to foreign countries.’

BANK – the capital’s worst Tube station, according to The Londonist – is also responsible for the plaintive whisper of many a resident and tourist, ‘Oh lord, lead us not into Bank station,’ a wicked traveller’s variation on The Lord’s Prayer.
They went because their open eyes could see no other way

HE International Brigades Memorial Trust has issued a statement exonerating Tosh McDonald, president of ASLEF’s executive committee, after Tosh was bitterly and unfairly attacked – and the meaning of what he said traduced – following a speech he gave on the South Bank in London on 1 July.

‘We were saddened that the representative of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen & Women walked out of our commemoration which honours the International Brigade volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. Martin Sugarman has attended this annual event over many years to lay a wreath on behalf of AJEX at the memorial to the International Brigades.

‘Martin took exception to statements made in a speech by one of our guest speakers, Tosh McDonald. Tosh expressed the view that, just as the Spanish Civil War had been the great cause of young people in the 1930s, and the anti-apartheid campaign had been the great cause of his generation, the plight of the Palestinian people was the equivalent great cause for many young people today.

‘During the speech, Tosh also clearly – and unequivocally – denounced anti-Semitism and said it had absolutely no place in the labour movement.’

Lack of balanced judgement

S Mick Whelan has written to Chris Gibb, a non-executive director of Network Rail, after his report – slammed by critics as a ‘snow job’ – into the failures at Southern Rail.

‘I am writing further to your report on Southern Rail which was recently published. I was particularly disappointed to read your article in The Times on 11 July in which you simplistically misrepresent the position of the rail trade unions, particularly ASLEF.

‘As a career railwayman I know you appreciate the role of unions in delivering both change and success throughout the history of the railway, including major upheavals such as the end of steam. ‘I don’t have to remind you that ASLEF has always worked with the rail industry to deliver change and the implementation of new technology. Indeed, the industry relies on the goodwill and willingness of train drivers to change and will continue to do so, not least in the development of the digital railway.

‘So I very much regret your characterisation of ASLEF’s dispute with Southern Rail as “playing games” and your decision to blame my union for the system failures on the Southern rail network. Your article fails to acknowledge the disastrous role of both the government and GTR/Southern in contributing to those failures. I’ve known you for many years and I am sorry that you have not been able to demonstrate balanced judgement on this occasion.

‘I do hope that in your role as chair of the Thameaslink 2018 industry readiness board you are able to find some balance as you engage with industry partners in delivering the successful railway we all wish to see.’

SMOKING GUN

The Rail Safety and Standards Board has been accused of colluding with the Rail Delivery Group and the Department for Transport over driver only operation. A leaked email from Michael Woods, head of operations at the RSSB, to Daniel Parker Klein, head of policy at the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, reads: ‘I am responsible for a major piece of research into how to significantly extend the coverage of driver only operation for passenger services to much more of the network on behalf of the RDG, rail safety and, ultimately, the DfT.’

MUM AND SON NEARLY FALL THROUGH FLOOR

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch is to examine how a mother and her son almost fell through the open floor of a toilet compartment on a South Devon Railway train running between Totnes Riverside and Buckfastleigh on 22 June.

BORIS BLUNDERS ON

Radio highlight for most politicians – many on his own side of the House – was Boris Johnson’s spectacularly awful performance on PM. He fumbled the ball when asked what measures were in the Queen’s Speech to tackle the ‘burning injustices’ in Britain identified by Theresa May. When, belatedly, the Foreign Secretary thought of an answer, Eddie Mair damned him by saying: ‘It’s not a Two Ronnies sketch. You can’t answer the question before last.’

FOUR MORE FOR ELIZABETH

Transport for London is to order four more Elizabeth line trains – upping its order with Bombardier from 66 to 70 Class 345 EMUs – as it wants to run more services than planned.

MADE IN WALES

CAF, the Spanish rolling stock manufacturer, is to open a new £30 million production plant at the Celtic Business Park near Newport in South Wales next year, creating 300 jobs.

QUOTE...

“I value the work of all public sector workers,” said the Maybot. Though not quite enough to pay them any more.” – John Crace in The Guardian...

...UNQUOTE
Hero driver’s GC under the hammer

The George Cross awarded to hero train driver Wally Oakes, who sacrificed his life to prevent a catastrophic accident in Winsford, Cheshire, is to go under the hammer next month.

On 5 June 1965, Wally was working the Firth of Forth, a BR Standard Class 7 steam locomotive, from Crewe to Carlisle, when the fire blew back from the smokebox as it entered Winsford station at 55mph, filling the driver’s cab with smoke and flames.

His fireman, Gwilym Roberts, managed to climb out of the cab, but Wally remained on the footplate to close the regulator, open the blower valve, and apply the brakes, bringing the train to a halt and averting a major accident.

Gwilym phoned the signalman to raise the alarm and the southbound Royal Scot stopped to pick up the two stricken men. Wally, who suffered burns to 80% of his body, died a week later, aged 33. He was posthumously awarded the George Cross – one of only seven made to railway workers – for his gallantry in saving the lives of his passengers.

His GC will be auctioned on 2 September. The record hammer price for a George Cross – the second highest award in the honours system after the Victoria Cross – is £120,000.

‘Hero is a loosely-used word, these days, but that is undoubtedly what Wally Oakes was,’ says auctioneer Mike Soden. ‘As the citation says, he sacrificed his life for his passengers.’

David explains ASLEF’s success to delegates at the ETF

I was honoured when asked to represent ASLEF at the European Transport Workers’ Federation conference in Barcelona. I was asked to speak at a fringe event outlining some of the successes achieved by ASLEF in LGBT issues.

Some parts of Europe, historically, have a really poor record on organising for the LGBT community, and the point of this fringe was to share best practice. There were four speakers – a representative of the Belgian rail unions and three UK delegates from ASLEF, Unison and the RMT. We are a small craft union but, once again, at the forefront of trades union arena.

I was able to share details of campaigns that we as a committee have successfully run. I took some ASLEF published materials including posters from the Who’s Gay? campaign, our guide to dealing with HIV in the workplace, and brand new material from the current Mind the Gag! campaign. I also took an article from the Journal following a successful London Pride, and talked about the fantastic support from our members outside the LGBT community (demonstrated by the attendance at this fringe event of DO3 Colin Smith, ECS Howard Kaye and Angela O’Sullivan of the WRC).

ETF GS Eduardo Chagas took questions and was told it was unacceptable that there is an ETF women’s conference and a young person’s event but nothing to represent the LGBT community. He promised that if funds could be made available, future conferences would include an LGBT event. A real step forward.

Even Faster than a Speeding Bullet

The Japanese rail company JR East is to develop a new bullet train that will reach speeds of up to 360kph. The next generation Shinkansen model will be tested in spring 2019 and go into service by 2030.

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Way and above what’s expected

A N off-duty driver who rushed to help the passengers and driver of a train after it hit and killed a 19-year-old man is in line for a top rail award.

Mo Latif, from Luton, a driver with Thameslink on the Bedford to Brighton, Wimbledon and Sevenoaks routes, was a passenger travelling back at the end of his shift on the 22.05 Brighton to Bedford service last October when it was involved in a fatality near Horley in Surrey. Without a second thought, Mo leapt into action, providing support and emotional assistance to the shaken driver.

The passengers’ plight worsened when the train’s batteries expired, plunging carriages into darkness. Mo walked up and down the train, offering support and reassurance, making sure everyone was safe and understood what was happening.

When the train was finally passed safe to move, after midnight, the driver was too distressed to continue. Rather than delay the service further, and wait for a relief driver, Mo took the controls and moved the train to the next station where passengers got off. He then drove a further two hours to return the train to the depot in Bedford.

As a result Mo has been shortlisted in the Outstanding Personal Contribution category of the National Rail Awards. He was interviewed by the judges on 8 June and the winner will be announced in September.

‘Mo stayed on shift way past his sign off time to support the driver,’ said his line manager Mike Bland, ‘as well as to get the passengers to another station where they could carry on with their disrupted journeys, and then moved the train, whilst empty, back to Bedford. Way and above what would have been expected.’

Beer train in Belgium

A beer train running between Jupille and Ninove in Belgium will keep 5,000 lorries off the road every year. The beer used to be transported each day from InBev’s brewery in Jupille to a warehouse run by the supermarket giant Delhaize in Ninove. Now a new train carries the same cargo three times each week.

‘This collaboration, in which a retailer like Delhaize transports a consumer product like beer by rail, is new in Belgium,’ said Geert Pauwels, CEO of rail freight company Lianex. ‘Thanks to this kind of innovative rail solution, which we develop together with clients, we can breathe new life into the railway and make an important contribution to achieving climate objectives and reducing traffic jams.’

Ben Weyts, the Flemish Minister of Mobility, said: ‘The beer train deserves to be copied. Companies don’t have to stare blindly at traffic jams at their front door; there are excellent alternatives at the back door, like waterways or railways. When partners work together and look at alternatives with an open mind, thousands of lorries can be removed from our roads.’

Up the stairs into the fire

Mick Whelan has written to Matt Wrack, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, to praise his members’ work during and after the fire at Grenfell Tower. He said: ‘I wanted to write to you to extend my union’s solidarity and support to you and your members for the tremendous work they have done following the Grenfell Tower tragedy. ASLEF salutes the strength and courage of all the firemen and women and their brave commitment to public service and public safety. Our thoughts are with you and your members now and in the future.’

GS Mick offered solidarity and support to the FBU

BEM FOR PAUL

Paul Breen, who suffered a brain aneurysm in 2010 while driving a train, has received the British Empire Medal for his charity campaigning. When Paul, who was in hospital for more than two years, was discharged he started raising money for a therapeutic garden at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. ‘Paul thoroughly deserves to be honoured,’ said Aberdeen branch secretary Brian Wood.

ALMOST THERE

Rail Minister Paul Maynard, in a written statement, told Parliament that ‘the Crossrail programme is approaching 85% completion’. All central tunnel section platforms have been completed, 90% of the track has been laid, and power and ventilation are on target, too. The £14.8 billion project will be completed in 2019.

MAGLEV LINE TESTS

Tests on Beijing Mass Transit Railway’s new 10.2 kilometre magnetic levitation railway line between Shimenying in western Mentougou and Pingguoyuan in Shijingshan start in November. The six car trains, carrying 1,032 passengers, will run at 100kmh.

VIVE LA FRANCE

SNCF celebrated the launch of two new high speed rail lines on 2 July. Both are extensions of the LGV Atlantique line from Paris – Bretagne-Pays de la Loire connects Le Mans with Rennes and Sud Europe Atlantique connects Tours to Bordeaux.

FILIP FOR THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines government is to build a 106 kilometre elevated railway line from the capital Manila to Clark, cutting travel time from two hours by car to just 55 minutes by train.

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

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#FeedingFatCats is a campaign run by Thompsons Solicitors. Thompsons is proud to stand up for the injured and mistreated.
The ASLEF Journal  
August 2017

ASLEF makes its point in Parliament

Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, used ASLEF’s parliamentary reception at the House of Commons on 12 July to hammer home the point that privatisation of the railways has failed, that the franchise system is not fit for purpose, and that the sooner Britain has a Labour government committed to bringing our railways back into public ownership, for the benefit of passengers as well as those of us who work in the industry, the better.

Our annual reception, hosted by Kelvin Hopkins, Labour MP for Luton North, and chair of the ASLEF parliamentary group, is a chance for EC members, DOs, reps and activists to put our views to MPs, peers, and other opinion formers. Kelvin called for the ‘public ownership of public utilities’ while Mick Whelan, ASLEF’s general secretary, looked forward to a Labour government, ‘sooner rather than later’.

Our guests in the Terrace Pavilion included Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell; Shadow Transport Secretary Andy McDonald; Tracy Brabin (Batley & Spen); Angela Eagle (Wallsend); Maria Eagle (Garston & Halewood); Maria Eagle (Garston & Halewood); Louise Ellman (Liverpool Riverside); Louise Haigh (Sheffield Heeley); Rupa Huq (Ealing Central & Acton); Sarah Jones (Croydon Central); Ian Lucas (Wrexham); Liz McInnes (Heywood & Middleton); Chris Matheson (Chester); Ian Mearns (Gateshead); Grahame Morris (Easington); Jared O’Mara (Sheffield Hallam); Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne); Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West & Penge); Ruth Smeeth (Stoke on Trent North); Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central); Gareth Thomas (Harrow West); Keith Vaz (Leicester East); Rosie Winterton (Doncaster Central); Peter Hain, former MP for Neath who now sits in the House of Lords; Ben Chacko, editor of the Morning Star; Stephen Joseph of the Campaign for Better Transport; and Steve Cavalier, chief executive of Thompsons solicitors.

Clockwise (from top left) Darran Brown, Jeremy Corbyn, David Jones and James Sutherland; Kelvin Hopkins; Mick Whelan; Maria Eagle and Mick; Mick, Angela Eagle and Peter Hain; Ruth Smeeth; Jamal Ajjane, John McDonnell and Tom Corbin; Mark Daniels, Ed Mayne, Julian Vaughan, Mick, Tosh McDonald, Tom Corbin and Andy Botham; Andy McDonald, Simon Weller, Mick, Tracy Brabin and Tosh; Colin Smith, Mark Daniels and Angela Rayner; Mick and Jeremy
Anatomy of the industry – the state of UK rail freight

SIMON WELLER, ASLEF’s assistant general secretary, and lead officer for DB Cargo, on the state of play

Things are moving quickly in the ongoing tragedy that is the DB Cargo story. Much of this may be history by the time you read this. The real danger is DB Cargo may also be history.

DB Cargo is in serious trouble. The financial problems the company face are real and immediate. The company had the standard corporate plan to save the business, so what has gone so horribly wrong?

Their plan, of reducing their overheads by reducing the wage bill by reducing the number of their employees, is straight out of the ABC of Managing Failing Businesses.

However, with the reduced driver head count they can’t cover existing traffic requirements. This is exacerbated by the fact that the DB road learning programme has been an absolute joke. For the last five years I and the company council have been raising the issue of route knowledge but their managers always knew better…

Their ill-advised plan, which was supposed to shock and awe the drivers, to cow us into submission, was badly thought out and underpinned by spite towards our grade. What they need to understand is that we are not the enemy – in fact, we are their only hope of sorting out the mess of their own making.

This does not get away from the fact that, in the short term, they are failing to fulfil their obligations. A significant proportion of the problems can be put down to IT teething troubles in the hastily introduced BRP rostering system, a system that has our support. If it wasn’t the Beta version with all the attendant bugs and glitches.

Good news (!) if you have a common name at your depot. If there are a number of drivers with the same surname then one is booked out and the others removed from the roster, so no work for them. If it wasn’t so serious it would be hilarious.

Not all of this is down to the IT bugs but a legacy of consistently poor management. The nadir of which was their decision to secretly design and implement Project Charles. The programme of dismissing all their drivers, ripping up our conditions, and imposing their plan could be their undoing.

They seem surprised that threatening drivers with dismissal has resulted in morale plummeting and many simply voting with their feet. Some managers talk about ‘internal terrorism’ which shows they have learned little.

As we have repeatedly said at branches we need to make changes for the business to survive and, in many ways, we have to take a leap of faith in the new BRP rostering system. It’s a good system, once the wrinkles have been ironed out, but as good as any system is it’s not going to magic fully trained drivers out of thin air.

We’re used to the fragile sector being vulnerable and suffering the vagaries of the market and, had they approached us right at the beginning, to work a way out of their significant problems, we could have done something. But they chose confrontation instead. There is a solution, and a sustainable future for the company, but it will only be achieved by the company working with, and not against, us.

When the margins at Kleenex increase

NIGEL GIBSON, District 5 Organiser, and lead officer for Freightliner Heavy Haul, Freightliner Intermodal, and GB Railfreight, looks at the challenges ahead for freight on rail

When I first got involved with the private freight operators as a full-time ASLEF official we proposed arrangements for any future redundancies but our request was met with uproar, the FO Cs were flabbergasted by the suggestion, and said it was inflammatory. Yet here we are now in an industry where reference to redundancies has become expectant; managers sadly blame those before them, or their competitors, which in reality is probably harsh.

In the last year or so we have seen the collective headcount reduced by more than 500 and, for context, when you consider that there are approximately 3,000 drivers in the freight sector, that is no small number. These are challenging times for our members and reps and there seems to be no let up; there have just been further redundancies at Immingham and Aberthaw.

While these companies are in the private sector, they will only survive by making a profit and they are finding this difficult to achieve, at least to the levels expected by investors. You might think that, in a sector dominated by men with egos, there are no tears shed but, when profit is discussed, the margins at Kleenex increase.

Continued attempts to undermine and erode each set of terms and conditions in the belief this is the only way to make that all too important dollar or euro is not the way forward. Our pensions, rates of pay, and daily working practices are not there for cherry picking.

There has been talk of a race to the bottom in the freight sector but I would question how much further they can go. Some operators are playing head teacher, using the disciplinary whip instead of creating a fair and open culture when dealing with operating incidents which happen in error.

Drive down any street and you’ll see a white van with another logo for rail work; you have to question whether industry resources are being exhausted by too many ready to get their paws into the market. Even worse, some of those whose experience comes from the days of a nationalised industry, are now selling knowledge they gained for free to new entrants needing that knowledge to get on.

Our policy as a union is to see a nationalised rail freight sector which could deliver vastly improved opportunities for growth, a collective workforce not competing but working for the common good. We need a government that acknowledges the advantages of rail freight to the economy and the environment.

We need a government that isn’t solely looking at votes on passenger trains but recognises that Network Rail needs to change and a DfT that stops pandering to the road lobby and remembers what the ‘f’ stands for in its title.
Reasons to be cheerful

Despite the serious problems of the last couple of years, since the loss of coal and steel traffic, MAGGIE SIMPSON, executive director of the Rail Freight Group, says there are reasons to be optimistic about the future of freight on rail.

OR anyone who works in rail freight, the last few years have been challenging times. The reasons behind the demise of rail-borne coal are well understood, but the impact on our sector cannot be underestimated and has affected all of us. Yet there remain good reasons to be optimistic for the future of our industry, and to press forward for renewed growth.

The most recent statistics show a continued reduction in coal movements, and also in steel and international. Yet there are significant increases in both construction traffic and intermodal traffic, which grew 7% and 6% respectively year on year.

Growth doesn’t happen by chance, but because rail freight is offering a service that our customers like, at an affordable cost compared to their other option of road haulage. When we talk to customers, they are clear that they want to use more rail.

Compared with a decade ago, rail is meeting their expectations on performance, indeed exceeding them in many cases, and is cost-effective over longer distances. In some cases, particularly construction, it is helping to get goods into urban centres, reducing reliance on HGV traffic, and helping to meet environmental concerns, too. And many ports rely on rail to get large quantities of imported goods quickly and efficiently away from the quayside and out to consumers.

Many customers are also investing in rail. In the last few years we have seen new wagons for the construction sector which are better for the track and can hold more goods than the ones they replaced. New and improved terminals are being constructed or in planning and development. Rail operators are also investing, with new locomotives and wagons being introduced, including the new bi-mode Class 88s which are now arriving in the UK. This investment helps to modernise and improve our services and make the best use of scarce capacity on the rail network.

Looking ahead, there are many challenges that we need to navigate. Continued government investment is essential to provide the necessary capacity for growth on the network, and we need to make sure that freight is a key part of those plans, whether for upgrading the existing rail network, for a digital railway, or for HS2. We need to ensure that the Office of Rail and Road set fair, stable and affordable track access charges in the next regulatory period from 2019 onwards. We need the government to commit to continuing and increasing rail freight grants, particularly to support newly-established services in the early stages. And we need Network Rail to ensure that rail freight is enshrined across all parts of its business, not just the devolved freight and national passenger route. We all need to help to make these messages heard, and to work together for the right outcomes.

We are fortunate to enjoy good political support – all three of the recent party manifestos included strong support for rail freight, and our discussions with regional bodies in the north and Midlands, as well as governments in Scotland and Wales, show that they are all keen to have more rail freight. As an industry we need to keep showing how we can deliver growth for our customers, and how, with the right support, we can do even more to support the UK economy.

End of white paper rostering

BARRY HARE, company council secretary, reports on GB Railfreight

HERE’S a £4.7 million deficit in the final salary pension scheme at GBf. A meeting has been arranged between G5 Mick Whelan and GBf MD John Smith to discuss a way forward. I’m sure there will be several options discussed at forthcoming meetings with the company council and DO Nigel Gibson. New rostering conditions came in on 2 July giving datum time windows within the rosters. This sees the end of white paper rostering at GBf and gives us roster expectations for the first time in the history of the company. It’s been a bumpy ride with some depots expressing concern with the datum times because not all depots have booked WTT work. Under the new terms all WTT work requires placing within the base rosters giving the datum time windows. Work that runs on different days of the week and has no fixed schedule runs on an SVT basis and can’t be placed within the base rosters. This has caused some upset to members who believe they are no better off under the new terms. The company council acknowledges the new terms are not perfect but believes they are a firm foundation to work from.

The company is seeking eight trainee drivers to undertake the next driver training course in early 2018. It has asked the successful candidates if they would commit to working at Crossrail for six months giving the trainees valuable experience driving in a controlled environment on a five-day week (one day a week will be committed to driver training such as front end tests). The company council supports this request. Not only does it help keep our members employed at a time when the freight sector is so volatile, it also gives our members valuable experience in the driving cab environment.

As for the eight assigned to the driver training course, their ground staff positions will be backfilled as per normal and advertised at a time when other freight companies are making redundancies. GBF is actively recruiting; this is good news for our members, making them feel a little more secure.

It was raised at AAD that GBf is not diverse by not employing drivers from ethnic minorities off the street. The reason drivers are not being recruited from the street is that an agreement was made between the company council and GBf that they would train 36 ground staff into the driving grade over a three year period. I believe once that commitment has been completed we will see recruitment in the driving grade both from the street and from within the company, if business requirements allow.

Challenging relationship with Colas

HE relationship with Colas continues to be a challenging one, with important issues remaining outstanding. Unfortunately, the company has continued with its plans to make driver redundancies at Shrewsbury’s Coleham depot and two of the four drivers employed there left Colas employment in July, with the two remaining drivers giving notice.

If the public gets what makes sense, as rail freight reduces road congestion, road damage, road fatalities and pollution. Our polling shows that almost two-thirds of the public want more freight on the railway with just 2% wanting to move freight on our roads.

There is demand for more consumer and construction traffic which is currently constrained by the
The landscape is changing

PETE MASON, business council secretary, reports on Freightliner Intermodal

The landscape is changing. T has been – and still is – a hard time for us in the freight industry, especially those drivers at DB and Heavy Haul who have suffered the most in the past 18 months. Whilst Intermodal has not suffered, the landscape for the future is changing. In December 2016 both sets of Freightliner management were merged into one and this has caused some unease with drivers. The business council has been upfront on whether the company is looking to merge two sets of drivers into one but we have constantly been told this is not what they want to do. At the time of writing, there is a cross cover agreement in place for IM drivers to volunteer to cover HH work when all other avenues have been used. We are now in talks to find a way forward that will safeguard IM drivers on current t&cs and look at something for future drivers that will safeguard the business.

Currently, the company is looking to change the whole train plan. Whilst this is being done to help the whole outlook, our local reps will be making sure that everything will be kept within our t&cs. This is something the business council will be keeping a check on, along with the discipline procedure. We have secured a two year pay deal, with a guarantee of no redundancies during this period, and the company is running a further driver graduates course in September. Also, the ALP was agreed and drivers received their first payment in May and, after a referendum, EJRA is now in place. On the health & safety side, changes are taking place but, from this year, we have got a JSC back in place and this is working how we want.

Modernisation of the fleet

ROBERT SMITH, company council secretary, reports on Direct Rail Services

ONTINUING the modernisation of the DRS fleet, and building on the success of the Class 68 locomotive, DRS has introduced the Class 88; a locomotive capable of hauling a train in either electric or diesel mode. Having undergone testing, the new locos have now entered revenue-earning service and are being utilised on DRS’s Anglo-Scottish intermodal flow for Tesco. They join an expanded fleet of modern traction operating daily with DRS and Chiltern Railways; and will soon be seen hauling services for TransPennine Express.

The Tory government’s drive to ‘reform’ public sector pensions has affected members at DRS who are part of the defined benefit combined nuclear pension plan. This attack on working people will see the government take over £600 million in savings from the scheme, leaving our members to pay more, work longer and receive less!

ASLEF has been involved throughout the consultation process, with our sister trade unions, who have argued to improve the proposals put forward by the government. We await the government’s response to the consultation process.

We are all aware of the fragility of the freight sector which must be addressed to ensure staff retention and recruitment; without which the sector will no longer be able to deliver services; perhaps nationalisation will bring much-needed job security and longevity to an essential part of our railway?
Get up in the morning slave

ARLY in the year, District 2 Organiser Kevin Lindsay, the EC member for District 5, and I were offered the opportunity to go to Palestine as part of a trade union delegation organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign to gain an understanding of the conflict and the difficulties faced by Palestinians. A week before departure we met with a PSC representative who advised us of the dos and don’ts when travelling to Tel Aviv and the West Bank.

We were perhaps a little blasé about these precautions and probably felt, as experienced travellers, that things had been exaggerated. We were to leave all paper work relating to the trip behind, we were to delete social media accounts and email trails associating us with PSC, and to travel and arrive separately, going through passport control independently of each other.

HELD FOR QUESTIONING
As it turned out we were the fortunate ones. On arrival at Tel Aviv we met up with our guide and two other trade union colleagues. We waited for hours before learning that two of our delegation – Hugh Lanning, director of the PSC, and a postal worker from the CWU – had been held for questioning about their visit and were not being granted access to the country. Later that evening we were told that both were to be denied entry and would be deported the following morning.

The reason for their refused entry was a new law that bans anyone who supported the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign. The deportation of Hugh was widely reported in the mainstream media as he has travelled to Palestine on many occasions. We then learnt of the line of questioning relative to our colleague who has a different ethnic background to us and it became apparent that we had been treated very differently.

We were not held in an area with others or questioned at length about our purpose or background. From the different experiences you can only deduce that skin colour and appearance had more to do than any real concern the immigration authorities had about the security of their country.

So our delegation was down to six and, in the absence of the PSC director, we were lucky enough to have a very experienced Palestinian bus driver who, for the purposes of this article, and to protect him and his family, shall remain nameless. He lives and works in Jerusalem, has supported other delegations from the UK, knew exactly where we needed to be each day, and was able to give us a real insight into his personal experience of what he has witnessed happening to his home and country. Whilst he was passionate about Palestine he showed no obvious malice towards the Israelis yet you could tell the hurt he felt for his fellow Palestinians and how they are treated as second class citizens in their own land.

The first impression we got of Jerusalem, looking out of the hotel window on the first day, was of a busy main road with a tram system and people going about the business. Of course this is not the reality. The tram system has been built not only to connect the illegal settlements which surround Jerusalem but also to divide Palestinian communities in half – literally.

You can only use many of the roads on which we travelled if you have the relevant documents – effectively preventing the majority of Palestinians, who were not born or raised in Jerusalem, from using them. During the visit we met an economics lecturer who works at the university in Ramallah who explained that Jerusalem is just a few miles down the road but she cannot travel there because of these movement restrictions. She gave us a real insight into the wider restrictions imposed by the Israelis with restrictions on imports and exports to the extent that the West Bank and Gaza Strip are effectively isolated from one another.

CHOCOLATE NOT ALLOWED
Imports of chocolate, for example, are not allowed because those in control determine it unnecessary to sustain a 2,200 calorie diet. We noted during the journey by bus that many of the houses have black water tanks on top of the properties because Palestinians are not allowed to access their own water supply and are therefore beholden to Israeli provision – who are known for withdrawing access – so these roof tanks help sustain a supply in such times. During our various visits to differing organisations it became apparent that the Palestinians are effectively being driven from their land. A statistic quoted on many occasions was that the illegal settlements that surround Jerusalem have a population of 600,000 people from across the world, including Europe and America, living in brand new purpose-built properties with all the facilities we would expect in the UK. Of 150 settlements, 100 are unauthorised, but also have access to good health and education services, children’s play areas, and the residents travel freely about their daily business. Driving through these areas felt no different from driving through a modern estate in the UK. The United Nations confirmed these statistics and explained that, under international law, these settlements are illegal yet this same international community sits on its hands and does nothing.

TOPPED WITH RAZOR WIRE
Not that we were sceptics about what we were seeing because, in all reality, you could not deny what the human eye could see but to hear the presentation from the UN gave some real perspective on the situation. They also showed us the changes in the geographical area and how the borders have changed so significantly with the occupation of Palestine extending for more than fifty years. These borders and the ‘green line’ were explained in great detail yet what was absolutely apparent, wherever we travelled, were the massive concrete walls topped with razor and electricity wire, some 700 kilometres built with checkpoints and gun towers at strategic locations. The Palestinians have to queue for two or more hours each day just to get to work in Jerusalem and the authorities have the right to close the checkpoints at their leisure – making employment opportunities difficult, at best.

We went to Hebron and witnessed first hand a once thriving community high street which has been completely cut off from its custom. As we walked along the street of shops, now all closed down, there was an eerie silence where you could imagine the hustle and bustle that you see in other parts of the world. As we walked up this street we were challenged by a soldier and his colleague from a checkpoint on the wall which now prevents access and the tone and, from the animated nature of the conversation between them and our driver, it
was apparent that, in their view, we should not have been there, not least because one of our delegation was wearing a hijab.

A REAL EYE OPENER
The Aida refugee camp was a real eye opener about how people adapt to circumstances, yet they have by no means forgotten their background or lost hope. At the entrance to the camp is an arch holding a huge key which symbolises the key to their homes which they retained when forced to flee in 1948 after the creation of Israel. The Lajee Centre, a community based grassroots organisation for new generations of Palestinians, provides education and opportunities for young people, some of whom we had the fortune to meet.

This centre is overlooked by a wall and gun tower. Soldiers have fired upon the community, and feelings are very raw, as an 11-year-old child was killed not so long ago. When the authorities were challenged they explained it was a mistake by the soldier concerned yet do nothing to help a community which regularly suffers attacks from the security forces, who use tear gas and other methods to quell the desire for struggle of these people to establish some basic rights and justice as Palestinians. We heard from an organisation that defends the rights of children. Stone throwing takes them through the Israeli military justice system, always stacked against the defendant, leading to unnecessary custodial sentences and real psychological problems.

BASIC RIGHTS
As trade unionists we were, perhaps foolishly, surprised to hear from our Palestinian counterparts, in the General Federation of Trade Unions and the Post Office Workers’ Union, that the laws and restrictions on taking industrial action are not dissimilar in Palestine to those we are now seeing introduced in the UK. Workers clearly have problems; legislation is less than progressive and unemployment levels for male workers stands at 26% with women at a staggering 60% – the glass ceiling on earnings makes life very hard.

If you’ve read this far, you might feel that, while you have found this very interesting, what is its relevance to our movement in the UK and, in particular, to train drivers. Well, ASLEF has long been a proud internationalist trade union, which seeks to support workers and their campaigns to gain employment and basic human rights, irrespective of their background. As an affiliate to the PSC we have a role to play in supporting its campaign. We are about people and what we witnessed in Palestine is something that cannot, surely, be justified. People must have basic rights, whether that be in the workplace or in society irrespective of skin colour, ethnic background or religion. What we witnessed is nothing short of ethnic cleansing and discrimination.

BOYCOTT ISRAELI PRODUCTS
The boycott, divest and sanctions movement is calling for a full boycott of Israeli products. We can look at where our investment lies in particular in areas such as pension schemes, and we need to question any UK involvement in military trade and ask why our government is so subservient to Israel. We can challenge and boycott companies that seek to establish themselves in Israel such as Orange and Hewlett Packard.

Measures such as these can have a positive effect and improve the lives of those people we met who want, in the words of our driver, to live peacefully and go about their lives without fear or favour in their homeland. That is not too much to ask, in my view.

I am not a religious individual but I respect the right of others to practice religion which is why I found it very difficult to comprehend the experience over these five days, witnessing such a divisive culture with such contempt for other human beings in a land that is the heart of so many of the world’s religions.

PALESTINE: AN ISSUE THAT CONCERNS US ALL

ASLEF, as a trade union, stands in solidarity with workers around the world. Palestinians living under Israeli occupation struggle every day; to find work, to get permits to work, to get past checkpoints, and to negotiate proper wages and decent working conditions. They struggle to get access to adequate housing, basic sanitation, health care, food and water. Many have been displaced and forced into exile. It is because of these injustices that ASLEF, along with many other trade unions, is affiliated to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and is calling for a lifting of the ongoing blockade and for Israeli compliance with international law with regard to the people of Palestine. By raising awareness of the plight of the Palestinians, by developing international solidarity, and by bringing political, economic, and social pressure to bear, we aim to bring hope to the Palestinian people and to realise their ambitions for justice and a lasting peace in the region.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign works for peace and justice for Palestinians, in support of international law and human rights. It is opposed to all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism. Find out more at www.palestinecampaign.org
Small but perfectly formed

EAMINGTON Spa were very pleased to be joined at our latest branch by EC vice-president Dave Calfe, D06 Dicky Fisher, Bob Earlam from London Midland company council, and GS Mick Whelan, on which to our knowledge was the first ever visit of an ASLEF GS to us. Mick gave a very interesting talk on national issues, focusing on D00 and DB, and presented long service badges to Nick Walker (15 years), John Pollard (20) and Phil Spice for an astonishing 50 years’ membership! He received a lovely medalion and some kind words from Mick. Bob gave us a more local report on the state of play at London Midland. Afterwards, we celebrated the recent retirements of Tim Clifford and Del Basi although, unfortunately, Del was unable to attend due to ill health. Tim started as a second man at Saltley in 1974, getting his driver’s job there in 1979, before transferring to Leamington in 1993. Del started as a railman, getting a guard’s job at Saltley, before returning to Leamington. He got his driver’s job with Chiltern at Marylebone before returning to Leamington once more. Best wishes to both Tim and Del from the branch and LLC. We are only a very small branch of 15, one of the smallest in the country, so people giving up their Sundays to come and see us is very much appreciated. Thank you! Nick Walker, branch reporter

Getting it right

Oropington celebrated members getting their long service badges on 5 June. We were pleased to welcome Mick Whelan who presented badges to R Gower and M Nazer (5 years), M Nash and G Baldwin (15) and M Lawford (30) as well as giving a powerful speech on all that is going on. We also managed to surprise Martyn Lawford with a medallion for his services to recruitment for ASLEF. Since Marz Colombini became our EC member in 2009 Martyn has played a pivotal role in recruiting new members and the number at Oropington depot has almost doubled. Thanks Marz and Ray Garland for organising this (as the first time he received it Martyn’s name was spelt wrong) Alfie Cochrane, branch secretary

Upcoming events

- RIPLE LANE – THURSDAY 7 SEPTEMBER
  Ripple Lane Jolly Boys outing to visit retired colleagues at the Old Clacton BRSA club from midday, being conveyed by an Essex Coast Express, for a day of frivolity, quaffing and storytelling. Everybody welcome.

- FRATTON – FRIDAY 6 OCTOBER
  Fratton train crew and railway reunion from 12.00 to 18.00 at the BRSA Club next to Fratton station. All members, retired members, and other retired railway staff welcome. Free buffet and raffle. For details contact Gary White on 07798 706204.

- 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

- HITHER GREEN – WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER
  Hither Green reunion at the Richmal Crompton (Wetherspoons) opposite Bromley South station with, hopefully, a few surprise guests and a new badge to commemorate the occasion.

The Bournemouth crew welcome the GS to the south coast

Unity through adversity

Bournemouth branch recognised the loyalty of members in June at its annual presentation evening. GS Mick Whelan handed eight members badges representing 165 years’ membership of ASLEF. Prior to the presentation Mick addressed our meeting with a thorough and informative overview of the issues facing ASLEF in the short and long term. He inspired the branch with his passion and resolve in the face of these challenges and reaffirmed that unity through adversity is our strength. Jamie Martin, branch secretary

Peak practice

Many thanks to EC3 Andy Hourigan for attending Buxton & Peak Forest branch in June. Andy thanked our chair Dave Evans for attending and contributing to AAD and gave updates on DB Cargo and Arriva Northern. Andy presented retirement certificates and RMS badges to Alan Gabbittus, Paul Genders and Sean Melia. Alan and Paul were also given 40 year badges. Thanks to all drivers, past and present, who attended to give our Brothers the send-off they deserved. Paul Costello, branch secretary

Reaching the Peaks: Alan Gabbittus, Paul Genders, Sean Melia and Andy Hourigan

Northern Line North branch with GS Mick Whelan, EC vice-president Dave Calfe, EC8 Terry Wilkinson and DO8 Finn Brennan

GS Mick on the banks of the River Leam
Cracking job

The reunion on 6 July was to have been held in Tonbridge. Thanks to Tommy Taylor and his team for volunteering to run it at Ashford. They made a cracking job of it. Well done to those who dug deep buying raffle tickets; there are still those who don’t understand how these events are funded. Use it or lose it!

P J Smith, RMS reporter

Mick Holder turns back time to August 1917

Railwaymen killed in action and pubs running out of beer were topics in the Journal 100 years ago

WHEN THE WAR IS OVER

With the war of attrition on the Western Front, the pages of the Journal were packed with railwaymen speculating on what might happen afterwards. J Jordan mused: ‘There is one thing we must not forget and that is that, in free trade England, previous to the war, there were always at least a million men out of work, and any scheme whereby such a state of things could be avoided is worthy of sympathetic consideration. When the war is finished – as finish it must some time or another – there will be many problems to settle, such as housing, reform, education, the land question, the price of the necessities of life, etc, and it is up to us, a responsible body of working men, to educate ourselves, so that when the time does arrive we may take our share in the fight that is bound to take place for the settlement of all these questions.’

HALF THE PUBS OUT OF BEER

Following a report in a daily newspaper that ‘Half the public houses in the Rhondda Valley are out of beer’ the Journal published a poem by Idris which concluded:

Life was scarce worth living, yet
There was something left, you bet.
Now that something’s gone – Oh, dear!
Half the pubs are out of beer!

Bless the days when peace comes round.
Peace and plenty to be found –
Money flowing far and near,
And the pubs chockful of beer!

LOST IN FRANCE

Newcastle-On-Tyne Branch reported the death of Bro GH Cavan, killed in action. ‘Bro Cavan joined the army at the outbreak of war, and was shortly afterwards promoted to acting-corporal in the West Yorkshire Regiment. He served in the Dardanelles, Egypt and in France, where he met his death. He was a most promising member of the branch, always taking great interest in Society matters.’
125 for 059 – celebrating Derby quasquicentennial

SUNDAY 28 February 1892 was a special day for the enginenmen and firemen in Derby employed by the North Staffordshire Railway.

A desire had been expressed to have a branch of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen and, with that object, a meeting was convened at the Bridge Inn where GS TG Sunter delivered an address on the objects and benefits of the Society. Following his speech 20 new members were enrolled with 10 more said to be ready and willing to join but who couldn’t – yet – as they were at work that day.

Derby branch was born, J Brown was elected branch secretary, and meetings were held fortnightly at the Bridge (which is still a public house today). From 1898 branch meetings were held in the Welcome Coffee House near Derby station (long since gone). By 1902 Derby had 116 members and the branch held its first reunion tea (which continues to this day). In 1917 the branch split in two – Derby No 1 (London, Midland & Scottish Railway) and Derby No 2 (London and North Eastern Railway) until 1954 when it reverted to Derby No 1.

Over the years members of the branch have taken on senior roles in our trade union. WM Gamble was EC member 1897-1923. JT Trolley was District Council Secretary 1923-1930. CAW Clifford was EC member 1942-1946 and Organising Secretary until 1970. L Kirk was EC member and president 1956-1967 then, from 1967-1969, Irish officer in Dublin. In 1969 he was elected District 6 Organiser, a role he held until 1983.

EC member Dave Calfe giving excellent speeches to a well-attended branch. A presentation of our new branch badge was made to Mick and Dave – which makes a nice change as they are usually the ones giving out presentations! Further celebrations will take place later this year at the ASLEF old boys’ reunion.

I’m sure our colleagues back in 1892 would be very proud to know that ASLEF’s Derby branch is still going strong today, fighting to protect drivers’ pay and conditions, supporting other trade unions, and continuing the global fight to support workers all over the world.

To celebrate our 125th year, a special badge has been produced and is on sale for £8 from both EMT and XC depots. Also an ASLEF tie in the colours of Midland Red with the ASLEF crest and steam badge 17A plate representing Derby four shed (£10).

Eamonn Tague, branch secretary

Want to join us?
I attended a special branch meeting to commemorate the 125th anniversary of Derby branch. Mick Whelan was our main guest speaker and I introduced myself as chairman of the Birmingham branch of the British Transport Pensioners’ Federation.

We are losing members due to natural wastage (a horrible term I know) and making a determined effort to try to recruit new, younger members and their families and, as part of this effort, I asked Mick if it would be possible for something to be published in the Journal.

Reg Sargeant, Birmingham BTPF branch chairman and retired member of ASLEF’s Derby branch

General Secretary Mick Whelan, EC vice-president Dave Calfe and DOS Nigel Gibson join the crew to celebrate 125 years of ASLEF’s Derby branch 1892-2017

Viennese roles
After the STUC at Aviemore in April, Austrian train driver Martin Neumann, who was over on a month’s secondment with the ITF, in conjunction with his union Vida, invited ASLEF to send two delegates to the 66th Sozak Social Academy European conference in Vienna at the Chamber of Labour. All employees in Austria must subscribe to the Chamber of Labour on top of voluntary trade union membership. ASLEF sent Derek Lappin of Polmadie branch and Murray Fraser from Edinburgh No 2, the delegates at this year’s STUC.

A well-attended conference began on Wednesday with presentations on internships and speeches about education in Europe. On Thursday there was an interesting speech from Professor Suzanne Pernicka of Linz University followed by a series of workshops. Murray gave a presentation on gaining and retaining new members. Friday, the final day, included a tour of Red Vienna’s history and buildings.

A very interesting few days exchanging ideas with colleagues across Europe. With Brexit on the horizon, which was a hot topic of discussion, it’s vital to communicate with fellow trade unionists.

Murray Fraser, Edinburgh No 2
TONY SULLIVAN
KING OF THE ROADS

Very sad to report the death, on 19 April, of our mate Sully, aged 73. Tony was a Salford lad, proud of it, and very quick to correct anyone accusing him of being a Manc. He left school at 14 and was training to be a mechanic when, one day, he was in Tagge Lane, looking for the entrance to 26B Agecroft MPD. He started as a cleaner in 1960, the beginning of a 49 year career on the iron road. A Lanky (Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway) depot, the foreman offered him the choice of 51 locos. Austin 7s, Austeriyts, five B1s, which included the shed’s only namer, 61008 Kudu, the engine with an impressive CV – Stratford, King’s Cross top shed and Leicester GC – the twins, Amos’n’Andy, 5337 and 5338, were all in the stable and, last but not least, the Pugs, numbers 4, 7, and 29. Stories about shunting Irwell Street goods yard in Salford with these veterans were always a mess room highlight from an Agecroft man having, as they did, a little 24 hour pilot coaling stage, making their shuffles back to the shed as infrequent as possible. Tony was an enthusiastic railwayman and always looked out for a visiting Kingsmoor crab or black five, easily identified by their big Scottish numbers, working in on a Carlisle goods. All this ended on 17 October 1966 when Agecroft, by then 9J, closed. Tony moved not only depot, but home, to Longsight move to Nottingham (EMT) in 2009 cut his travelling time and further expanded his horizons. He moved to Derby (EMT) in 2014 for HST work.

Dave – always known as Young Dave – was a knowledgeable, approachable and friendly train driver and was quickly elected to the LDC. He was very proud of ASLEF and what it stands for and of an increasingly left-leaning Labour Party. A very proud moment for Dave and his family was when, last year, he drove the advanced passenger train prototype from the 1980s.

Tony for his running commentary back in 1990. When you see the preserved 45337 proudly adorned with a 26B shed plate just imagine a smiling Sully leaning out of the fireman’s window. It was a pleasure and a privilege to work with.

Mel Thorley, RMS Longsight

Dave Norman joined the railway at birth on 7 September 1983. When Dave was four his dad, an Alfreton platerlayer, had to check a job on the former Pleasley branch line. They both ended up travelling on the footplate of a pair of Type 1s, and young Dave couldn’t stop talking about it afterwards. He grew up going on train trips with his dad and brother Robert and, in later life, enjoy it all with a pint of real ale as well!

Dave did work experience on Sheffield station from school and started as a guard at 18. He put in for driving as soon as he could and was passed out at 20 but had to wait for his 21st birthday to drive on his own (and for a link position).

Whilst waiting he would often be seen relaxing in the mess room at Sheffield and, one day, woke to find a bowl of milk with the name Tiddles on it. Dave liked the nickname and had a passion for work and to Middleton to live. He passed out as a driver in 1974. Family holidays and an interest in the Great War consumed rest days and leave. He followed the exploits of the Salford pals with a passion.

On 9 May, during a packed service at Middleton crematorium, I recalled a cab ride with Sully from Stockport to Wembley Central for an FA Cup final replay. Still a guard, I was amazed by his knowledge of the line. When I made it into London as a driver, I remember sitting on the blocks on platform 1 at Euston and thanking Tony for his running

DAVE NORMAN
YOUNG TIDDLES

Ken Needham died in December just weeks short of his 91st birthday. Ken started on the footplate in 1941 at Hasland depot in Derbyshire. After cleaning and firing he moved to Watford for his job as a steam driver, then transferred to Charing Cross in the early 1970s, moving to Victoria Eastern to see out his final years on the footplate. After he retired he moved back to Chesterfield. RIP Ken.

Ray Cooper, RMS Hither Green

Tony Sullivan 1944-2017

STAN THE MAN PARSONS

Sad to report the passing of Stan (the Man) Parsons at 75. Stan started his career on the footplate at Hither Green in 1957, first cleaning, then firing and finally driving in 1965. I took his place in the top link and well remember a loyal member in all our disputes. Stan was a regular at our reunions and a legend in his own lifetime!

Ray Cooper, RMS Hither Green

Ken Needham

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Ray Cooper, RMS Hither Green

KEN WINSTANLEY

Sad to announce the passing of retired Ashford driver Ken Winstanley on Sunday 18 June at his home in Folkestone. Ken was a very popular and respected driver. A keen sportsman, he loved golf and was a football referee for many years. His retirement was mainly spent on the golf course and, although 87, he was out on the fairways only a couple of days before going to the old golf course in the sky.

Robert Kilkie, Ashford branch reporter

Ken Needham

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We welcome letters, either by email to journal@aslef.org.uk or by Royal Mail to ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN. The writer of our star letter wins a rich range of ASLEF regalia.

Time to call in the shrinks
After the election, in which Theresa May pulled off one of the biggest own goals in political history, her desperation to cling onto power was shown by her misjudged ‘confidence and supply’ deal with the Democratic Unionist Party. Northern Ireland is beautiful but, unfortunately, a country on the edge of the abyss. The Good Friday agreement depends on all parties accepting conditions and policies and being able to convey to their supporters how working together will improve things.

Regrettably, a very small minority on both sides, Republican and Unionist, still believe the only way to resolve differences is through paramilitary organisations. That is why it is imperative that the Westminster government oversees politics in Northern Ireland as an impartial observer, which is part of the Good Friday agreement.

The UK government should never go into partnership with any political party from Northern Ireland, for any reason. The implications and complications of this Tory/DUP deal are enormous. Theresa May is poking a horns’ nest! If this is ‘strong and stable’ politics, then call in the shrinks.

Ryan Howe, Exeter

Thank you for your input
Now that the dust has settled on the general election – even if the repercussions are still being felt throughout Westminster and beyond – I wanted to write to thank all of the attendees of the rail freight group for your valuable input to our meetings over the years. Your support and friendship have been very much appreciated; thank you. As you know, I didn’t retain my Parliamentary seat in Stoke-on-Trent South and so I am unable to take the freight group forward in Parliament.

At this stage I don’t know whether a willing volunteer will come forward to carry on the group’s work. But I hope the real progress raising the profile of logistics at Westminster can continue. Watch this space!

For my part I am now concentrating on a new career doing consultancy and advocacy work bringing to bear my knowledge of the freight sector, the operation of government and the Houses of Parliament, as well as knowledge from my life before Westminster.

Rob Fiello

The Living Dead at DBC
I found the Bad Company article (Journal, July) hugely offensive and am certain I am not alone being just one of the 481 drivers clambering over themselves’ according to Hussein Ezzedine of Edinburgh No 1 to get made redundant. This figure does not take into account the hundreds of others who bailed out to other companies, simply resigned, or are still looking into alternate methods of escape – surely the fact that the majority of DB drivers want to leave should tell both ASLEF and DB that despite the ‘fifty grand a year’ we are all supposed to be unwaveringly grateful for, the job has become simply unbearable.

I wanted redundancy because, at 52, I look around at the drivers I work with and we look like the living dead. The freight sector is tailor-made to make you ill. Diabetes, deafness and mental health complaints are rife, not to mention the climbing divorce rate among drivers who are simply unable to spend any time with their families during daylight hours. This is not to mention the back complaints that affect drivers on shift as we sit hunched over in a single position for hours unable to take a break. As I get older I have watched the people around me one-by-one falling victim to disease – is it any wonder I want out?

I work in Victorian conditions where basic health & safety regulations, such as access to water, are sometimes not even met, let alone being able to use a working hotplate or a clean cab. It is bad enough to be told by our lousy management that ‘lazy drivers’ are the reason for their failings, yet ASLEF is trying to vilify me for wanting out of conditions I never agreed to.

Paul Cardy, Hither Green

Talking of West Coast
I feel I should enter into the West Coast Railways debate after reading Tim Stedman’s letter (Journal, July). Tim thinks that a traction inspector should be on the footplate of all steam working. Why? I have just retired and, although I never worked for WCR, I did work in BR days and, latterly, with West Coast drivers as colleagues and route conductors, etc, and found the north-west drivers and several Midlands drivers to be both conscientious and very knowledgeable.

One driver who, in BR days, as a traction inspector, passed me out on rules & regs at Manchester became a train crew manager and, as an ex-steam man, started driving for West Coast at Carnforth. He knew the rule book inside out and I would challenge anyone past or present to catch him out with a question about anything to do with operating any traction he worked. So why would he have needed someone stood over his shoulder who did not possess the knowledge he had? I don’t know the management at WCR but the drivers I have worked alongside have been very professional.

Len Hawkins, RMS, Southport
Passengers before profit
Only a few months’ respite since the utter misery of last year and the beginning of this year, and Southern Rail is once again disrupted by overtime bans and strikes. I cannot begin to comprehend why there is such a problem keeping a guard on these services. As a 60-year-old renal patient travelling to Guy’s Hospital from Redhill frequently, I am reassured by the presence of a guard on my train should I need help or if there is a problem. Guards are responsible for far more than just closing the doors so the fact that some trains already operate driver only trains is irrelevant. In the light of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, where safety issues were flagrantly dismissed in favour of profit, will it take another avoidable death on the railway to demonstrate that customer safety, not ‘working smart’, should be paramount.

Jill Bellamy, Redhill, Surrey

Place of safety
I’m lucky enough to remember a time when we had platform staff, guards and conductors on trains. It was safer. As a woman I risk assess all my travelling activity. I now would never travel on either of the two later trains in my area. There’s often no one to ensure my safety on the train. I support any movement that puts my safety before profit.

Stephanie Howarth by email

Goodbye Southern Fail
The sooner the guard issue is resolved the better but, as a passenger, it is not the only issue that needs resolving. We will all be very happy to see the end of the current Southern Rail franchise, the company and its failing management.

CD Smith by email

Help for fire victims
I am a driver with Great Northern, a member of King’s Cross branch, and, with help from Network Rail, organised at short notice a collection for the Grenfell fire fund on 19 and 20 June. I was joined by Brother Jacob Sparkes from Southeastern’s Grove Park depot; Callum Laing, assistant train manager at Tonbridge, GB Railfreight; Rebecca Mouncer, depot staff, South West Trains; Robert Leach, gate line assistant, Ashford; and a number of KK staff from VTEC. The total raised was £6,447.70.

Nick Hair, King’s Cross

Anti-Semitic? No way, JC
The *Jewish Chronicle* has run a story accusing ASLEF’s president Tosh McDonald of anti-Semitism at an International Brigades Memorial Trust event at Jubilee Gardens in London.

Tosh spoke of how the Spanish Civil War was a defining moment for a generation in the 1930s, and said every generation has its Spain; in his case it was Chile and apartheid in South Africa, and for this generation it will be Palestine.

Unfortunately, a representative of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women stood up and condemned the speech, saying it was ‘disgraceful that politics was being used at a Spanish Civil War event’ and stormed off, taking his wreath with him. Now the JC is running a story accusing Tosh and the IBMT of tolerating anti-Semitism. The article is absurd. The IBMT has refuted this in a statement on its website and, in his speech, Tosh condemned anti-Semitism. I was there and a witness. He never said anything inflammatory or racist or anti-Semitic.

Phil Brand, London (Unison member)

The shortage of drivers
I agree with much of what John Walton (Journal, July) says but the shortage of drivers goes back to before privatisation. During the 1970s retirements were slow but British Rail was told there would be a retirement bulge in the 1980s because many of those who started between 1936 and 1948 were in the same age group. After the 1982 flexible rostering dispute many of these retirements came earlier. There was some recruitment, but never enough, so by 1990 BR was complaining they were short of drivers in many parts of the country. ‘You were told!’ was the loud reply. Ono privatisation and 1,000 drivers among the TOCs and FOCs were paid off. The new companies did not take into account the shorter working week, and more trains running, so around 2,000 new drivers were needed nationwide. The commuter TOCs have never recovered from this period.

JE Rimington, Maidstone, Kent

Thanks for your support
I want to thank you all at ASLEF for your support and assistance for the last 25 years. I thoroughly enjoyed and felt it a great privilege to have held various positions within this proud trade union. I wish you all every success in maintaining the high standards you have set over the years. I would also to thank the hard working staff at head office.

Farooq Rashid

I would like to thank ASLEF for the financial support given to my son Jared O’Mara to assist his campaign in Sheffield Hallam, resulting in the defeat of Nick Clegg and the election of Jared as the first ever Labour MP in that constituency. Special thanks to Tosh McDonald for his assistance at Dore station.

Ian O’Mara, Sheffield No 1

I want to say a big thank you to Longsight branch, Alan Moss and Jim Hopkins for arranging my retirement do at The Swan With Two Necks in Stockport. I had a great day with great people. Thanks to all who turned up. It was the best day I have had since City beat United 6-1!

Tony Evers, RMS Longsight

CLASS 15 locomotive (D8233)
emblem 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).

ASLEF BRANCH 111
King’s Lynn is 111 years old and has commissioned a limited edition numbered badge to mark this and the introduction of the Class 387 on KL services. It depicts the historic south gates to the town, a Class 387, and the old BR totem sign.

All proceeds to the King’s Lynn branch welfare fund. £7.50 inc p&p from Mark Steele. J Rosecroft, South Wootton, King’s Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 3WX.

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

DAVE EAST is selling three badges – Class 302, Class 312 and Class 453 – to raise funds for the preservation and repainting of the last Phase One 4 CIG 1753. £5 each + £1 p&p for up to three badges. Please send cheques payable to Network South East Railway Society to NSERS, 41 Highfield Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 6DD.

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

WOKING branch 50 year commemorative badge. £5 + £1 p&p each. Contact Chris Smith, branch secretary, on aslefwoking23branch@hotmail.co.uk

DERBY branch 125 year large commemorative badge £8 + £1 p&p from Eamonn Tague (07500099190) or eamonn.tague@sky.com

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THREE BRIDGES branch strike badge 2016/17. £5 inc p&p (proceeds to charity) from Paul Eden (branch secretary) email paul@homerdz.com).

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A new museum has just opened celebrating the Mail Rail under London which, at its peak, moved 4 million items every day. CHRIS PROCTOR enjoys going underground...

Round the back of the huge Royal Mail centre at Mount Pleasant, a short bus ride south of King’s Cross, a new tourist attraction opened on 28 July. On one side of the road is a postal museum, telling the story of the mail since the days of horse-drawn coaches and showing its rise to become the most vital communication system in the country. Across Phoenix Place, another part of the exhibition houses the Royal Mail’s decommissioned mail train – its underground railway that began service in 1927 and has been mothballed since 2003.

Hacked out by hand, the tunnel looks like something from *Gulliver’s Travels*; a perfect miniature model of the Underground – and a Tube spotter’s dream! Its 6.5 miles criss-cross the Tube lines under London. It was hidden from everyone except the 220 postal workers who moved the subterranean mail at its peak; so clandestine that during the First World War the Rosetta Stone was hidden in its deep reaches.

‘Letters for the rich, letters for the poor, / The shop at the corner, the girl next door’ – *Night Mail* by WH Auden

At its height, the Mail Train moved 4 million items of post along its 2ft gauge line each day. Letters were hurried along the narrow tunnel from Paddington in the west to Whitechapel and Liverpool Street in the east. At its peak, the service operated for 22 hours a day.

Why was it necessary? In a word, congestion. The streets of the capital in the early 1920s were blocked by horse-drawn, rather than internal combustion vehicles, but the problem was the same then as now.

The solution was to build Mail Rail, the world’s first – and, sadly for ASLEF, driverless – electric railway. The original, pneumatic, attempt ran the short distance between Euston station and Eversholt Street. Innovating engineers later developed the network we can see today, including a battery-powered locomotive that could come to the aid of broken-down engines and could haul tools, equipment and even whole trains. Some of the later rolling stock could crank up to speeds of 40mph.

Below the track at one stage of the single-kilometre ride modern tourists can take on the mini-Tube is the sight, on a lower level, of a ‘graveyard’ for the old traction and wagons. Although a few of our members would doubtless see it as more of a treasure-trove of traction than a locomotive graveyard!

The journey on the specially-made passenger train that rumbles for a quarter of an hour along the narrow track and through the original platforms is fascinating. Audio visual technology and projection mapping beamed onto the curving walls recreates the frantic activity of the old days on these stations, displaying a vivid picture of a lost era: some, like the Blitz years, happily so.

The days when the post stood alone as the most important tool of modern communication has waned, and with it the volume of mail passing though the capital. In 2003 the entire operation was mothballed, leaving just three engineers to prevent its total decline. The Communication Workers’ Union argued at the time that it could be used as an environmentally-friendly method of moving stock for the retail shops it runs beneath in the over-crowded city centre but the initiative was never followed up.

‘Letters of thanks, letters from banks, / Letters of joy from girl and boy’ – *WH Auden*

Tony Clarke, the Labour peer and former postal union leader, tells me that my assertion that the train never carried passengers isn’t quite true. ‘When I started work here, it was considered part of your initiation to be – albeit unwillingly – dropped into one of the canvas-covered wagons and dispatched to the far end of the city,’ he tells me. ‘And once or twice a postman might have used it to get home after a thirsty night out!’

There is plenty here to interest rail and mail enthusiasts. Next to the departure area for the Mail Train stands the original car depot where engineers maintained and repaired engines and wagons around the clock: now it houses an interactive exhibition space revelling in the ingenious ways our ancestors devised to move letters and parcels.

‘The chatty, the catty, the boring, the adoring, / The cold and official and the heart’s outpouring’ – WH Auden

Over the road the broader Postal Museum tells the history of the service in four zones describing the beginnings, popularity, difficulties and social and artistic contribution of the Royal Mail.

It’s often sad to see a place that employed hundreds of workers transformed into a tourist attraction; but at least it is preserved for the future. And it serves both as a monument to the ingenuity and vision of the engineers of their day – and a fruitful pleasure for the interested idler of our own age.

© The Postal Museum is at Phoenix Place, Mount Pleasant, London, WC1X 0DA. For details visit www.postalmuseum.org
ICHABOD BOND, who has died at 91, was working as a BBC cameraman when he went to Oxford Street on Christmas Eve in 1956 to buy a last-minute stocking filler for his wife. He spotted a little bear all alone on a shelf in Selfridges and, on a whim, bought it. That decision changed his life.

Because the toy bear inspired Bond – who had been writing stories in his spare time for a decade without conspicuous success – to create the series of stories about Paddington the Bear, a polite, good-natured, but disaster-prone creature, which went on to sell more than 35 million copies around the world and was adapted for film and television.

MICHAEL BOND, who has died at 91, was working as a BBC cameraman when he went to Oxford Street on Christmas Eve in 1956 to buy a last-minute stocking filler for his wife. He spotted a little bear all alone on a shelf in Selfridges and, on a whim, bought it. That decision changed his life.

The somewhat melancholy atmosphere hangs over Paddington railway station as described by Bond in the opening chapter of his first book, A Bear Called Paddington, published in 1958. Some of the trains are still in steam, ready to run on lines not yet cut by Beeching. The Browns, waiting for their daughter, come across a small brown bear from ‘Darkest Peru’ who has stowed away on a boat to Britain. He sits, on an old leather suitcase, near the lost property office, with a jar of marmalade and a label saying: ‘Please look after this bear. Thank you.’

Bond was inspired not just by the bear he bought for his wife, but by childhood memories of child evacuees passing through Reading from London during the war. They all had a label round their neck with their name and address and a little case or package containing all their treasured possessions. Paddington was a refugee, and I do think that there’s no sadder sight than refugees.’

Bond also created The Herbs – an animated television series featuring Dill the Dog, Sage the Owl and Parsley the Lion – Olga da Polga and Monsieur Pamplemousse but was best known for Paddington. A bronze statue of the bear, placed on platform 1 at Paddington station in 2000, is one of the most popular memorials in London, attracting dozens of fans to pose for a selfie with the little refugee every day.

Keith Richmond

Congratulations to Steven Parker, of Oldham, Greater Manchester, 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 135th prize crossword in the July edition of the ASLEF Journal. If you successfully complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 August.

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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