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Mick: ‘We want a railway that delivers for the economy, passengers and workers here in the UK’

A people’s railway

NCE more I have to pay tribute to the emergency services and the workers across all grades who showed their dedication and responsibility after another terrorist incident aimed at the transport network. We will never be bowed or cowed by such cowardly and dangerous actions but vigilance – and a fully staffed railway – is essential to ensuring the safety of the travelling public and those of us employed in our great industry. I do wonder if those who proposed the removal of CCTV in Scotland and the subsuming of the BTP are now ruining those decisions...

Almost one million jobs have been lost from frontline public services – including the police, fire and NHS – to the detriment to our communities and futures. We have just spent a week at the TUC hearing horror story after horror story about the impact not only on the workers in these sectors but on the people they want to serve but cannot help under this government. Every sector is or will be in crisis and the notion of lifting the pay cap for police and prison officers was just a cheap attempt to attract headlines. A pay rise that isn’t a pay rise but a bonus, not pensionable, doesn’t reach RPI – so is in fact another pay cut – is beyond contempt. The CWU is��lloting over the attack on their pensions by what is now a privatised company that has paid out £800 million in dividends. They have our full support in their struggle.

On a happier note, I want to congratulate our AGS Simon Weller on once more being elected to the general council of the TUC.

We have also been at the Labour Party conference – reports in the next edition of the Journal – seeking to influence policy for a people’s railway that delivers for the economy, the passenger and the worker. We already have a commitment to bring the railways into public ownership, but we need long-term commitments to generational investment and security in the freight sector. It’s time for social impact to be considered when we procure – highlighted by Network Rail not using UK steel on some major projects.

In this post-Trump pre-Brexit age the world can seem a nastier place; then you spend a week with those who care about others and understand natural justice and you return to work reinvigorated.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
**SQUASH my cab**

SLEF is relaunching its celebrated SQUASH campaign to persuade the freight and train operating companies and the Department for Transport to bring drivers’ cabs into the 21st century and ensure they are ‘Safe, Quiet, User-friendly, Seated and Healthy’.

Keith Norman, general secretary when the original campaign ran in 2006, said: ‘Which is safer – a driver in an air-conditioned, clean and comfortable cab with an ergonomically designed chair and the respect that goes with it or an overheated worker in a grubby little box? If you don’t know the answer, it’s time you joined management!’

A motion from Hoo Junction branch was passed at AAD in Bristol calling on the EC to relaunch the campaign. ‘Progress has been made in the past,’ Colin Thornhill told delegates. ‘However, this branch believes the job is incomplete. Freight members, in particular, still face excessive temperatures in their cabs during the summer months. The installation of recirculating fans has proved insufficient. In order to provide a working environment conducive to the levels of concentration required to carry out our duties safely, the installation of air conditioning units on all forms of traction is a minimum requirement.’

‘Temperatures in some cabs are still far too high; many train drivers’ seats are not adjustable; and members have suffered hearing loss because of high-pitched and loud noise,’ said GS Mick Whelan. ‘We want clean, safe and healthy cabs for every driver and that is why we are calling on the TOCs and FOCs to invest in cabs for the health and safety of drivers and passengers and on the DfT to ensure that every franchise it awards includes a specific commitment to satisfactory cab conditions.’

**Thumbs up to EJRA**

SLEF members at VTEC and West Coast and Freightliner have voted to accept an agreement made with the companies on EJRA – the Employer Justified Retirement Age – to maintain a retirement age which will sustain a driver work force that can maintain the levels of professionalism and competence to the highest standards required by the rail industry and ‘promote inter-generational fairness and maintain opportunities for career progression for those at particular stages of their career’.

‘We support it because we don’t want people working till they drop,’ said Mick Whelan. ‘By law the train and freight

Kirkdale 121 was 100 years old on 20 May. Unfortunately, this coincided with the start of AAD and apologies were sent by our GS and EC president for their absence at the Casa, which supports social and political causes. Even with torrential rain, the event was well attended to hear DO Colin Smith, EC member Andy Hourigan and Mark Dowd from the RMS. Service badges were presented to Gary Navarro (20 years) and Steven Lamb (10 years).

**100 not out**

Keith Devling, branch secretary

**ASLEF BACKS RICHARD**

ASLEF has endorsed Richard Leonard, MSP for Central Scotland, as leader of the Scottish Labour Party after the resignation of Kezia Dugdale.

Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF’s organiser in Scotland, said: ‘Richard understands what we need to do to get a Labour government here in Scotland.’

**TERROR ATTACK ON THE TUBE**

After the bomb attack on a Tube train at Parsons Green station in south-west London, Finn Brennan, ASLEF’s organiser on London Underground, said: ‘It’s fine to praise staff as heroes but they can only be heroes if they are there in the first place.’

**TWEETS OF THE MONTH**

- Stop claiming train operators are ‘absent’ when @TfL management incompetence by not recruiting enough is to blame @piccadillyline.
  - Finn Brennan

- Racism is man’s gravest threat to man – the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason.
  - Colette Gibson

- Let’s be honest, if we had an effective electoral law leading Brexiteers would now be in jail. #wheresmy350maweekboris.
  - James Chapman
Women only carriages are not the solution

ICK WHELAN says women-only carriages are not the answer to the growing problem of sexual assaults on Britain’s railway network. He was speaking after Chris Williamson, Labour MP for Derby North, said it would be ‘worth consulting’ on the policy after new figures revealed that such crimes have doubled in the last five years. The MP said such carriages could create a ‘safe space’ for women.

“It’s up to the privatised train operating companies to make sure every space is safe on every train,” said Mick. “That’s their job – and their responsibility. Let’s make all carriages, on all our trains, safe for all passengers rather than restricting where people can and cannot sit. Because we don’t want gender apartheid on Britain’s railways.

“Separate carriages for women would normalise these attacks. The attackers are the problem, not where women want to sit, and women have a right to sit where they want. That’s why we have argued that trains need staff – to offer protection to all passengers. I am calling on the train companies to stop taking staff off trains, and stations, and putting profit before passengers, and ensure our railways are safe.”

Jess Phillips, Labour MP for Birmingham Yardley, said it was an ‘absolutely terrible idea’.

“It is, essentially, giving up on trying to prosecute assaults. Also, men should be annoyed by the suggestion they can’t control themselves. Sexual violence isn’t about urges, it’s about power. If you take your feminist cues from Saudi Arabia, you’ve gone wrong,” Stella Creasy, Labour MP for Walthamstow, argued that sex attackers are the problem, ‘not women’s seating plans.’

QUOT... 'Even by the exceptionally low standards of some recent Foreign Secretaries, William Hague was a failure.' - Peter Oborne in the Daily Mail

...UNQUOTE

OFF THE RAILS

JAN RAVENS won rave reviews for her new show Difficult Woman – which brilliantly if brutally sends up Theresa May – at the Edinburgh fringe. Head inclined to one side, as though weighed down with the woes of the world, wild eyes, Ravens has all the vocal ticks down to a tee, the PM’s mouth choming on some invisible aggravation. ‘It’s almost as if she’s embarrassed by what she’s saying,’ notes the impressionist. ‘Her mouth wants to smile but the rest of her face won’t let her.’

TIM SHIPMAN, political editor of the Sunday Times, was thrilled when Andrew Marr described him as ‘the doyen’ of the print lobby in Parliament. Less thrilled, though, when he referred to him on The Andrew Marr Show as ‘the biggest fish in the pool, if only physically.’ I got a text from a special adviser asking, ‘Are you paying him?’ but pointed out that Britain’s best-known political interviewer had just called me a fat bastard live on national television.

CARILLION, the construction giant which carries out track repairs for Network Rail, has dumped Bell Pottinger after the controversial PR firm, set up by Margaret Thatcher’s favourite spin doctor, Tim Bell, ran a racist campaign for Oakbay Capital in South Africa. The Public Relations & Communications Association has already thrown out Bell Pottinger, condemning its ‘completely reprehensible work’ for inciting racial hatred.

RAILBUSINESSDAILY.COM bizarrely boasts ‘Happy Birthday to us! Since we launched we’ve been overwhelmed by the support and stories we have received. In just a month we have featured 120 stories written by our customers (compared to 40 in an average monthly magazine – that’s triple the number of stories). What this guff means is ‘No editorial judgement here, we put up any old rubbish!’

YOUSOV, the online pollster, reckons the Jubilee line is the best on London Underground. Prompting Stephen Bush, special correspondent of the New Statesman, to argue that ‘The Piccadilly is the best of all possible lines.’ Why? ‘Thanks to Eurostar at King’s Cross and the airport at Heathrow, it’s the only line that can take you anywhere in the world.’

SOUTHERN FAIL has been caught out telling porkies – again. Passengers on the 7.44 ex-Brighton hadn’t got to Preston Park before the driver announced: ‘This service is not going to Victoria because of an alleged shortage of train crew. But I’ve checked my diary and I’m down to do this service...’

KEVIN MAGUIRE reckons Ian Paisley, the DUP MP who inherited his father’s name, as well as his North Antrim seat, has a sharp sense of humour. Paisley Jr was overheard at a cross-party dinner quip, ‘People say I’m an Orangeman. I’m not. I’m a Lemonman. We’re much more bitter.’

500 CLUB: Skipton branch, with number 202, won the September draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £390.

CONFERENCES & RALLIES

The Scottish Trades Union Congress is at the Macdonald Highlands hotel, Aviemore, from Monday 16 to Wednesday 18 April 2018. ASLEF’s annual assembly of delegates is at the Marriott Hotel, Liverpool, from Monday 21 to Friday 25 May. The Durham Miners’ Gala is on Saturday 14 July. The Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival, near Dorchester, is from Friday 20 to Sunday 22 July.

ASLEF’S 2017 poppy badge is now available - price £5 (inc p&p) - just email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk. All proceeds will be donated to the Royal British Legion’s poppy appeal.

ASLEF’s annual congress was held in September 2017.
HE summer of 2017 was marked by the closure of train crew depots and a mass exodus of DB Cargo drivers. In common with our colleagues around the country, there was much sadness, and anger, but we were determined to give a suitable send-off to the Millerhill drivers who opted for early retirement rather than face an uncertain future with DB in a new ‘hub’ structure. In truth, few wanted to leave, but such is the almighty mess that has been created that relatively young men have, understandably, had enough. It is a sad end for a depot which few, if any, in the country could match for solidarity and togetherness when the chips are down. And many of the retirees played a big part in creating and fostering that spirit.

Our colleagues didn’t go away empty handed, each receiving a framed ASLEF retirement certificate and engraved tankard at a memorable retirement party. Farooq Rashid of Carlisle branch, who held positions at Edinburgh No1 for a number of years, and never truly left us, also received a tankard and certificate. We wish him well in his new career – on the buses.

Since the party Davy Beddoe and Ronnie Maney have also left. Davy was, until recently, an LLC rep, during particularly challenging times, whilst Ronnie was a popular character and practical joker at the depot who often performed the role of branch photographer at get-togethers.

John Haggarty is always willing to speak his mind and may even have crossed swords with a few of us at one time or another! But, more importantly, there’s not one of us he hasn’t helped out – a true railwayman – and always an active branch member. We wish him well and hope that the seasonal gout has gone for good. Tam Chappelle and Davy Hillhouse, on the other hand, go quietly about their business, though not on a Sunday, in Davy’s case. Maurice Darling – mild mannered Mo – known for his elegant moustache and never having a hair on his head out of place is another the likes of which we won’t see again. Likewise Ali Forbes, ‘old railway’, and unlikely to ever conform.

Millerhill train crew depot may be no more, and who knows what the future will bring for those of us now rebranded as ‘train operators’ in the ‘Scotland hub’. But the undefeated spirit of the Hill lives on.

**QUOTE...**

‘The lie is nailed – there is an alternative to austerity. For years we’ve been told only deep cuts can save our economy. Portugal has proved the opposite.’ – Owen Jones in The Guardian

...UNQUOTE

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**Get involved**

The Labour Party is on a war footing – it believes another election is just around the corner – so ECS HOWARD KAYE explains how you can get ASLEF heard in Parliament

**S** Harold Wilson once said, ‘A week is a long time in politics’ and so it was for Theresa May and her ambition to return a massive Tory majority at the general election in June. Unfortunately, her government is now propped up by the DUP on the promise of extra finances for Northern Ireland. In truth, she has lost her mandate. The Tories have already started attacking trade union rights and have backtracked on many promises to electrify and modernise the railways.

Only a Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn will halt, and reverse, this decline. The next GE could happen at any time and we need to be prepared. The Labour Party continues to progress and grow popular support, currently leads in the opinion polls, and that momentum must be maintained. So what can we, as ASLEF members, do to help?

First, ensure you are paying into the ASLEF political fund because, without that, we are silenced. Second, join the Labour Party as an individual and become active in your Constituency Labour Party; many of you already are. Third, as per the ASLEF and Labour Party rule books, get your ASLEF branch to affiliate to the CLPs in your area. It costs just £6. Then elect delegates and get ASLEF members attending meetings.

We have seen the number of ASLEF members trying to become a Member of Parliament rise from three in 2015 to five in 2017. The selection process will begin shortly for those seats targeted as winnable by Labour at the next GE and it would be good to see ASLEF members selected for some of those seats. You can help by getting your branch affiliated and then getting involved in the selection process.

**WHERE THERE’S A WILL**

Merseyrail union learning reps Keith Devling and Andy Morgan kept up their sterling work by organising another wills and pensions seminar with the knowledgeable Emily and John from Thompsons solicitors on Merseyside on 13 July. John spoke about the importance of being in a union, and the cover you receive, and Emily underlined the importance of filling a will, and pension nomination form, for your loved ones. We also had the pleasure of District Officer Colin Smith and our own pension champions Peter, Billy and Paul. Special thanks to Graham Chesters, who helped plan the day. Anyone who needs any assistance with a will, pension nomination, or with starting a seminar, please contact us.

Keith Devling, Kirkdale ULR rep
Is fare evasion really criminal? asks judge

A MAN jailed for three weeks for not buying a £2.70 train ticket has been released after a judge criticised the sentence as ‘entirely inappropriate’. Bradley Howsego, 22, was jailed by Chelmsford magistrates after admitting he ‘bunked’ the fare for a 15 minute journey from Hythe to Colchester. Greater Anglia told the court he had six previous convictions for fare evasion – a claim which turned out to be untrue. Howsego has no criminal convictions for fare dodging.

Judge Jonathan Seely, sitting at Chelmsford crown court, cut his 21 day custodial sentence to just one day, meaning he was immediately released, and then questioned whether fare evasion on Britain’s privatised railways should be considered a criminal matter. ‘I observe, in passing, that in many European countries fare evasion is not a criminalised matter at all!’ Sarah Steggles, the duty defence solicitor, said: ‘I don’t believe we should be sending people away for railway fares. It should be decriminalised.’ But Greater Anglia insisted: ‘Not buying a ticket results in fares going up and less money available to invest in the railway.’

DUP so last century

ASLEF’s executive committee has adopted a joint equalities motion – from the Women’s Representatives’ Committee, the Black and Ethnic Minorities’ Committee, the LGBT Committee, and the Young Members’ Forum – condemning the Conservative government’s decision to get into bed with the Democratic Unionist Party.

‘The DUP has an appalling record on LGBT+ rights. They have consistently blocked attempts to introduce equal marriage in Northern Ireland, despite a majority of Northern Ireland Assembly members supporting equal rights. Their MPs are responsible for some of the worst homophobic language, with Ian Paisley Jr saying he is repulsed by “gay and lesbianism” and Iris Robinson describing homosexuality as an “abomination”.

‘The DUP also deny Northern Irish women the same rights to abortion as women in the rest of the UK, with many being forced to travel elsewhere for terminations, or relying on unsafe and unregulated abortion pills bought online.’

Iron road to Hull

George Osborne, the former Chancellor, has urged the government to build HS3 – a high speed rail line from Liverpool to Hull – ‘to better connect communities across the north of England.’

Waterloo sunset

Spotting a South West Trains/Network Rail banner proudly proclaiming ‘Improvements at Waterloo will mean significantly fewer trains 5-28 August 2017’ – which numpthy came up with that one? – James Ball, former special projects editor at The Guardian and now a special correspondent at BuzzFeed UK, tweeted: ‘That… that’s not an improvement.’

TRENITALIA PULLS OUT OF SOUTH-EASTERN RACE

Trenitalia, the Italian state-owned rail operator which moved into Britain by buying c2c from National Express, has pulled out of one of the three UK franchises for which it was bidding. It has withdrawn from south-eastern, one of the country’s busiest routes, which serves London and Kent, to concentrate on its West Coast partnership bid. This leaves Govia, a joint venture between Go Ahead and Keolis, to fight it out with Stagecoach, and a joint bid by Abellio, the East Japan Railway and Mitsui, for the south-eastern franchise.

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HE number of railway trespassers has hit a ten year high. Shock new figures released by Network Rail reveal that a disturbing number of children have been caught playing on railway lines, too. Four in ten of those climbing on the track said they risked their lives ‘to save time’ while one in five said ‘thrill-seeking’ was the motivation.

‘It may seem harmless taking a short cut, or fun to play on the tracks, but this is not just illegal, it is also very dangerous,’ said Allan Spence, head of public and passenger safety at Network Rail. ‘Taking a short cut or messing around on the tracks can kill or maim you. Parents, peers and family can all help press home our simple message: keep off the track.’

Network Rail recorded more than 8,000 incidents of people on rail lines last year, 555 of which involved children. Being struck by a train was the main cause of trespasser deaths, with one in five fatalities the result of being electrocuted and a further 11% who were killed falling onto or near the railway. Half of those who died were under the age of 25.

British Transport Police says it will step up patrols across the country in an attempt to stop trespassers dicing with death on the tracks.

Built in Britain

First Group and MTR – which took over the south-western rail franchise from South West Trains on 20 August – have signed an £895 million rail and maintenance contract with Bombardier for 750 ten-carriage Aventra trains. The new locos will operate on the Windsor, Reading and west London suburban routes from mid-2019 with a full roll-out expected by December 2020. ‘Passengers, alongside improved performance, want additional seats and we will deliver this via state-of-the-art trains,’ said Steve Montgomery, managing director of First Rail.

Richard Hunter, MD of Bombardier, said: ‘It demonstrates confidence in this market-leading rolling stock designed and built in Britain.’

AGE OF THE TRAIN IN SCOTLAND

A radical shift in travel habits by Scots – from air to rail – has cut carbon emissions equal to two years’ traffic on the M8, a new report by Transform Scotland has revealed. ‘In the past decade there has been a major change in how Scots travel to London, with a move to rail saving more than 680,000 tonnes of carbon emissions,’ This, says the report, A Green Journey to Growth, is the equivalent of removing all traffic on the M8 between Glasgow and Edinburgh for two years. ‘Rail’s share of the travel market has grown strongly over the past decade,’ said Colin Howden, director of Transform Scotland. ‘Edinburgh to London by train has risen from 24% of journeys to 34%, with Glasgow to London rising from 15% to 32%.’

Tories’ Tweets on Trump

The President of the United States has just turned his face to the world to defend Nazis, fascists and racists. For shame.

Ruth Davidson

The ’leader of the free world’ loses moral authority when he cannot call fascism by its name.

Sam Gyimah

Neo-Nazis: bad. Anti-Nazis: good. I learned that as a child. It was pretty obvious.

Sajid Javid

QUOTE...

‘Trade unions are embedded in the Labour Party. The political and industrial wings of the labour movement are bound together organisationally, financially and culturally, in pursuit of a better deal for working Britons.’ – Kevin Maguire in the New Statesman

PASSENGERS SAY NO TO PILOTLESS PLANES IN SKIES ABOVE BRITAIN

Boeing is to test a pilotless remotely-controlled plane next year. But a cloud has been cast over the plan after a survey, by UBS, showed that an overwhelming majority of passengers are opposed to the idea. People said they wouldn’t feel comfortable getting on a plane without a pilot.

‘Automation in the cockpit is not a new thing – it already supports operations,’ said Steve Landells of the British Airline Pilots’ Association. ‘However, every single day pilots have to intervene when the automatics don’t do what they’re supposed to do. Computers can fail, and often do, and someone is still going to be needed to work that computer.’

Jarrod Castle, head of business services, leisure and travel research at UBS, said: ‘It’s a question of public perception and people being comfortable with the idea.’ And John Strickland, an air transport consultant, said: ‘There would be a huge psychological barrier to get over to win the public’s trust.’

SEX OFFENCES UP

Reported sexual offences on trains have more than doubled in the past five years, according to official statistics. British Transport Police figures show that 1,448 offences were reported in 2016-17 – up from 650 in 2012-2013. Most of the incidents were sexual assaults on females aged 13 and over. Passenger groups said the report – which covers England, Scotland and Wales and includes London Underground – underlines why the train operating companies should keep guards on trains.
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

Visit www.feedingfatcats.co.uk to take action and stop the government #FeedingFatCats.
Safety reps save lives

MICK HOLDER of ASLEF’s health and safety department reports on 40 years of safety representatives in the workplace in Britain

This year is the 40th anniversary of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977, a piece of criminal law passed by Parliament which gives legal rights to trade union reps in companies where there is a recognition agreement between the employer and the trade union – and more legal rights than any other union representative.

These regulations have allowed the election of trade union health and safety representatives at workplaces and given them rights in law. Rights that have allowed them to negotiate for a safer, healthier world of work; so much so that the clarion call is clear – ‘safety reps save lives’.

“The health and safety of the people should be the supreme law.” – Marcus Tullius Cicero

Rights such as the right to inspect the workplace, to talk to members, to investigate accidents and incidents, to raise issues with the employer, to have copies of documents and access to information, to make representations to the enforcement authority (such as the Office of Rail and Road), to request a safety committee be set up, with rules on the need for a balanced committee membership (ie not dominated by management which can then oust the union side). All in all, time work.

Employers are required, by law, to manage health and safety by a process of risk assessment, to identify all the hazards arising from their work and quantify risk, put controls in place to reduce the risk and monitor how well they perform, making adjustments where failings are found or improvements can be made. Employers are also legally required to consult trade union health and safety reps on any measure that substantially affects health and safety in the workplace ‘in good time’.

And the law allows reps to be trained to help them fulfill their functions – in work time and paid by their employer. These courses are normally of ten days duration, one per week, with stage one teaching the basics and stage two giving a more in-depth look at the role after the rep has been fulfilling the function for a while. There’s also a longer, more in-depth stage three course.

The quality of this training and the standard of reps it produces has been recognised as being longer and better than the training most shop floor managers receive in a lifetime. The rights of health and safety reps, including the right to paid time off for training, are underpinned by the collective bargaining agreements we have with employers and the machinery associated with it.

“A health and safety problem can be described – but not understood – by statistics. It can only be understood by knowing the pain, anguish, depression and shattered hopes of the victims and their wives, husbands, parents, children, and friends.” – George Robotham

ASLEF reps have been negotiating on behalf of members on issues as diverse as improving new train cab designs to the provision of toilets and rest facilities. Whilst our reps haven’t completely won every struggle – rotten Class 66s come to mind although, even there, there have been improvements – and the fight against DOO is yet to be won, but they have achieved much.

Better walking routes; defoliation; lighting of depots; cab ergonomics; improving new technology such as GSM-R, DAS and ERTMS; taxi agreements; a BTP hotline for suicides; suicide prevention; suitable toilet and rest provisions for women; uniforms suitable for men and women to wear; and assisting people to make personal injury claims against their employer are all victories in the workplace in which our reps can proudly say they played a significant part.

“Grenville changes everything. It must change everything.” - Hilda Palmer

Any ASLEF member with a health, safety or welfare problem at work should raise the matter with their health and safety rep who will advise on the best way to progress the matter with their employer and their workmates. If there is no suitable progress with an issue the rep can raise the matter through the joint safety committee, or equivalent, and, ultimately, with their district organiser.

As with all industrial relations it is best to follow agreed procedures within each company just in case the issue goes further than the workplace, say to a court of law or employment tribunal, as this gives a more likely chance of a successful outcome.

Events to recognise the work of these union reps are being organised, with a planned launch in Parliament this month followed by activities all the way up to Workers’ Memorial Day on 28 April 2018. ASLEF will be marking the work of our own reps who have made a significant contribution to the safety performance of Britain’s railways – currently amongst the best in the world.

There is information about the role of health and safety reps in the public and members-only sections of the ASLEF website.

The Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations are available in the brown book – a pdf version of which is available free to download at www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/BrownBook2015.pdf
ASLEF in action

ASLEF sent five delegates – Mick Whelan, general secretary; Simon Weller, assistant general secretary; Dave Calfe, executive committee vice-president; Cliff Holloway of Euston branch; and Garry McKenney of Sheffield Midland – to the 149th Trades Union Congress in Brighton from Sunday 10 to Wednesday 13 September. EC members Marz Colombini and Howard Kaye, district organisers Dicky Fisher and Nigel Gibson, Women’s Representatives’ Committee chair Deborah Reay, James Sutherland and Tony Holdsworth of our Young Members’ Forum, Neville Fox and Paul Moore of Bletchley, and Phil Sweeney of District 4 attended as visitors.

The congress slogan – changing the world of work for good – was embraced by delegates organising hard to build a better Britain for the many, not the few. ‘It’s crystal clear that this government can’t be trusted to negotiate a deal [on the EU] that puts rights at work, decent jobs and investment, and great public services, first,’ said TUC GS Frances O’Grady. ‘So it’s up to us to make the case and win the new deal working people need.’

Delegates from 50 unions, representing 5.6 million members, gathered on the south coast for the annual parliament of the trade union movement. There were lively debates on a strong economy that works for all; building a new housing consensus; Brexit, the single market and rights at work; public sector pay; pensions; climate change; and the education funding crisis.

Leaving the EU means leaving the single market

Mick Whelan joined Kelvin Hopkins, Labour MP for Luton North, Jacqui Johnson, former president of the UCU, and Paul Embery, national organiser of the TUAEU – Trade Unions Against the European Union – for a fringe in the Gresham room at the Old Ship Hotel on Monday lunchtime.

‘I don’t believe we want to belong to a union which, when they saw what was happening to Greece, said if you privatise everything we won’t allow your people to starve,’ argued Mick. ‘I’d love a Europe for everybody but I don’t believe egalitarianism is at the heart of this European Union, which basically seems to do whatever the bankers want them to do.’

‘Out of the EU means out of its main platform, the single market,’ said Paul. ‘This will create opportunities for progressive planning and the rebuilding of industry and public services.’

SEX WORKERS NEED PROTECTION

Laura Watson of the English Collective of Prostitutes and Cat Stephens of the GM8 spoke at an ASLEF fringe, organised by equalities adviser Lee James, and chaired by Debbie Reay, in the Regent room of the Grand Hotel on Monday lunchtime, ahead of our motion on decriminalising sex workers. ‘Workers’ rights are universal,’ said Lee. ‘But sex workers do not have the same rights as workers in other industries in the UK.’

Debbie said: ‘The trade union movement seems happy to defend any worker unless they’re a sex worker – because this work offends some people’s sensibilities. You will never get rid of sex work and sex workers – people have been trying, and failing, for thousands of years – and we believe that sex workers, like other workers, need our protection.’

Cat said: ‘We’re not telling every woman to take their pants off and earn a fiver. We’re saying that sex workers have a right to be protected just as every worker in Britain has – or should have – the right to be protected. That’s what trade unions, and the TUC, have always been about. Every worker in the sex industry, whether there by choice, circumstance or coercion, is entitled to the protection of the law.’

Can’t pay? Won’t pay!

GS Mick Whelan paid tribute to ‘the McDonald’s workers’ historic strike’ and slammed employers who refuse to pay the minimum wage when he addressed congress from the podium on Monday morning. He was speaking in support of a motion moved by Ronnie Draper, general secretary of the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers’ Union, about wage protection.

‘The minimum wage was meant to be a base line for all workers – not an excuse for employers to keep workers’ wages down. The boss of one international hotel chain told me – and he was serious – that paying his workers an extra 10p an hour would deter American tourists from coming here.’

As well as the motions on the conference floor, and a plethora of fringe meetings every lunchtime and evening, congress offered ASLEF reps an opportunity to meet activists from other unions over a cup of coffee or a pint of beer. ‘We’re all doing the same job – representing our members,’ said Mick Whelan.
We have to invest in our future

ARY McKENNEY, of Sheffield Midland, told congress that the Tories are failing Britain by failing to invest in this country’s infrastructure. Speaking from the podium on Tuesday afternoon, he said: ‘Political parties across the spectrum are talking about the importance of infrastructure investment. But we have yet to see anywhere near enough investment under the Tory-led coalition, or the last Tory government, nor do we hold our breath with this minority Tory government. ‘We are told of the need for a flexible workforce, nearly always at the cost of the worker, in order to make our economy competitive in a globalised world. ‘Britain is the fifth biggest economy in the world. Creating infrastructure to match our status could dramatically bolster our economy. Borrowing to invest makes economic sense and is supported from groups as diverse as trade unions, the CBI, and the OECD. The OECD points out that governments in many countries are currently able to borrow for long periods at very low interest rates and has, therefore, urged them to increase spending on public investment projects. These will more than pay for themselves.’

Garry: ‘Borrowing to invest makes economic sense’

‘Yet, in July, the Tories reneged on their promise to electrify the Great Western main line form Cardiff to Swansea, the Midland main line, and tracks in the Lake District. This was despite many assurances over the years that the work was going to happen. Electrified rail is faster, greener, more efficient and more reliable. Despite the government’s protestations that bi-mode trains are a better alternative we know they are not the long-term answer to our transport needs. This represents short-termism and the same old Tory agenda of cuts. “Not only would electrified lines improve the transport network, the work would have brought good quality jobs, in regions that have not had the same investment as the south-east, and the possibility of apprenticeships and training opportunities.”

Simon Weller was re-elected to the general council of the TUC on Tuesday afternoon - he polled 208,000 votes - and also re-elected to the TUC’s executive committee.

No union can impose its terms on a sister union

NE of the last debates on the last day of congress was a motion moved by Mick Cash, general secretary of the RMT, suggesting that TUC rules are unclear on the question of the general council or general secretary responding to a request for assistance from an affiliate involved in a trade dispute when another affiliate is also involved in a similar trade dispute, at the same time, with the same employer.’

Although ASLEF was not mentioned in the motion – or in Mick Cash’s speech – the RMT was picking over the bones of the bid by Frances O’Grady and the TUC to help solve the Southern dispute at the start of this year.

Mick Whelan, ‘rising to support,’ said: ‘We asked the TUC for their assistance. To be independent arbiters to hold the management to account, to help us through, and I want to thank the TUC for all the help and support they gave my union and our members.’

Frances O’Grady made a statement saying the GC supports the motion on the proviso that ‘it does not and cannot cut across or undermine the sovereign rights of affiliated unions to negotiate a trade dispute as it sees fit. Solidarity is fundamental – it’s who we are and what we do – but no one union can impose its terms on a sister union.’
**Promised profits**

‘As train drivers, we want a safe, efficient, and modern railway delivering for passengers and business in Britain. We do not want to see the safety of our railway compromised by a desire to cut costs and increase profits for privatised train operating companies. We want the government to take a robust approach to regulation and inspection on our safety-critical railways. Let’s not allow our railway to return to the dark days when we had Clapham, Purley, Southall, and Ladbroke Grove.’

**PROTECT OTHER WORKERS**

Mick Whelan, speaking for the general council, moved a motion, he said, with ‘no issue, with no subject for a union moving to our own’ it’s an issue of developed stations and depots are not usually suitable. This is a not an issue that is going away without good reason.’ Austerity, substance abuse, and trends of workers reporting violence. But sex workers being the sex work environment on the New Zealand model is to decriminalise, but the Modern Mat. Decriminalisation would increase the police time and end the criminal industry. The motion was seconded by A SLF, Southall, and Ladbroke Grove.

Simon: ‘Not an issue that is going away’

Mick: ‘I want to thank the TUC’

**LIFE HOLLOWAY,** of Euston branch, told congress that rail could be key to meeting the UK’s clean green commitments. Speaking from the podium in the climate change debate on Tuesday afternoon, he said: ‘ASLEF fully supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through the development of a sustainable transport policy based on improving the public transport sector and moving more freight transport from road to rail. Transport is responsible for a quarter of the UK’s greenhouse emissions. We see large cuts in transport emissions of carbon dioxide as essential if the UK is to meet its climate change targets.’

‘We would like to see priority given to investment in public transport. Trams in city centres can reduce road traffic by 14% and produce three times less CO2 than railways. Our vision is for everyone to have access to affordable transport options that protect the environment, improve commuters’ quality of life, and offer genuine alternatives to using private cars.

‘Unfortunately, our rail fares are among the highest in Europe and many of our services are overcrowded and rely on old rolling stock. We believe the government should replace the current fragmented system with a publicly-owned accountable railway that makes sure the system operates as a coherent whole. We need a railway that delivers for people and for the environment and puts passengers before profits for shareholders.

‘A single freight train can remove 70 HGVs from our roads and rail freight produces 76% less carbon than lorries. Moving goods around the country currently puts 400,000 tonnes of CO2 through.”

‘I want to thank the TUC’

Off message

**ASLEF** delegates were media magnets in Brighton. Mick Whelan wrote a full page feature about infrastructure in the Morning Star on Tuesday and was interviewed by Paul Mass for The World Tonight on Radio 4 on Tuesday and then for The Week in Westminster on Saturday; while Simon Weller was interviewed after Jeremy Corbyn’s speech on BBC Berkshire, BBC Derby, BBC Sheffield, BBC York, Three Counties Radio and the Asian Network. And delegates lobbied Alan Jones of the Press Association; Mark Ellis and Kevin Maguire of the Daily Mirror; Raj Syl of The Guardian; Ben Chuckos, Ross Sitwell, Conrad Landin and Steve Sweeney of the Morning Star; Iain Watson of BBC News; Jon Craig of Sky News; and, er, Quentin Letts of the Daily Mail.

**RADICAL CHIC** A popular parlour game during conference season is spotting the most interesting tee-shirt on show. Two outside the Brighton Centre provoking smiles of admiration included the serious young man with a hipster beard and a tee sporting the manifesto ‘Never trust an atom. They make up everything’ and the young woman from Unison proudly proclaiming ‘Cute. But Psycho’.

**MICK WHELAN** got the biggest laugh at an otherwise serious TUAU fringe when, apparently inadvertently, he described the train and freight operating companies in the UK rail industry, post-privatisation, as ‘profiteers’ rather than ‘privateers’. It was, he confided to colleagues later, a well-rehearsed spontaneous ad-lib.

**ASLEF**, the RMT and TSSA usually sit next to each other in the conference hall. Not this year. The TUC discreetly put the RMT on the far right hand side of the hall, next to Nautilus, and ASLEF on the left wing with the CWU, TSSA, and Community.

Debbie’s Friends meet

Debbie Reay, ASLEF’s WRC chair, spoke at a packed Labour Representation Committee fringe – on the Tories and austerity – at the Friends Meeting House on Tuesday night. She was on a platform with Matt Wrack, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union; Mark Serwotka, general secretary of the PCS; Maria Exall of the Communication Workers Union; and Niki Adams of the

**TRAINSPOTTING:** Mick Whelan spoke at the Palestine Solidarity fringe in the Brighton Centre on Tuesday evening. The subject – the plight of the Palestinians 100 years after the Balfour Declaration – was serious. But Mick brought the house down when he revealed how he managed to get into Israel with a PSC delegation – Hugh Lanning was refused entry – by telling the truth. Sort of. ‘They asked me my occupation and I said train driver. Then they asked me the purpose of my visit to Israel. And I said trainspotting…’

**MICK WHELAN** chaired the Justice for Colombia fringe meeting in the Brighton Centre at Tuesday lunchtime. Speakers included Huber Ballesteros, Colombian trade union leader and former political prisoner (right addressing congress on Wednesday); Mariela Kohon, director of JIC; Steve Cavalier, chief executive of Thompsons solicitors; and Tony Woodhouse of Unite.
It’s no sin to fight to be free

T IS incredible to think that the pardons and release of the Tolpuddle Martyrs – George and James Loveless; Thomas and John Standfield; James Hammett; and James Brine – was achieved in 1836 by a national outcry of indignation. In an age before social media, 250,000 signatures were collected calling for justice, and 30,000 supporters organised a political protest in London, culminating in a march down Whitehall.

It is even more incredible that, nearly 200 years later, the men whose actions lit a fuse under the agricultural and industrial working practices in this country are still revered by the modern trade union movement. The six martyrs, if they could travel through time, would be incredulous.

This year’s Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival, in beautiful Dorset, was a festival of firsts and lasts – but mainly firsts – and ASLEF was prominent.

“We raise the watchword, Liberty. We will, we will, we will be free!” – George Loveless

It was my first time at the festival, after many a year of thinking about going, but the opportunity presented itself and off I set with Pete Coles, of Nottingham branch, in my 27-year-old Renault camper van, complete with whining gearbox and a promise that, when I got back, I would get it looked at, and the clutch replaced!

Fortunately, our road trip from Northampton was uneventful and we arrived on Friday afternoon, to a rapidly filling campsite, in glorious sunshine. Other notable campers were Andy Hudd and Maureen, and Tosh McDonald, with a large contingent of RMT members occupying the top of the site, an area festooned with all manner of vans and flags!

The first thing that struck us was the atmosphere, that just got better and better, enhanced by the good weather, a family-friendly and comradely atmosphere which endured the whole weekend, with only a tiny minority of RMT members wishing to sour this with sarcastic comments about ASLEF’s strategy in the Southern DOO dispute. One particular unfortunate, after a rake of beer on Saturday night, decided Tosh McDonald would be an ideal target; Tosh, in the public spotlight, and being restrained, still (casually) dismissed him to nurse not just a hangover but hurt pride, to boot!

After setting up, and a long drive, it was, naturally, time for refreshment, so a walk down to the main festival site and beer tent was in order. A beautiful evening with a relaxed atmosphere set the scene for a pint or two of Trade Union Pale Ale and some great live entertainment. Whilst looking at the various stalls and debating tents it was great to see so many trade union tee-shirts, flags and banners on display as we went in search of our stall and the ASLEF contingent.

We couldn’t find them so sat down on an empty plot next to the Bakers Food & Allied Workers’ Union stall and enjoyed the evening sun and a beer. Then a couple of taxis pulled up and out spilled the GS, Dave Calfe, Dicky Fisher, Howard Kaye, Deb Reay and Marz Colombini, followed by a van, driven by Simon Weller, which contained the stall and ASLEF merchandise.

The van was quickly unloaded and the stall erected by the assembled ASLEF massive, which meant we could relax for the rest of the evening with a few more beers and a great band. Great conversation and laughs, too – special mention to Hussein Ezzedine and Pat O’Rourke – were had not just with ASLEF comrades but with other unions, and the night was rounded off with punk folk band Black Water County who had the whole of Tolpuddle rocking.

“My Lord, we were uniting to preserve ourselves, our wives and our children, from utter degradation and starvation.” – George Loveless

One regular feature of Tolpuddle is the Prison Officers’ Association’s Tolpuddle hike. Which recreates, in reverse, the eight mile walk the martyrs took from their village to Dorchester, where they were tried. On Saturday morning my Nottinghamshire comrade and I were taken by bus from Tolpuddle to Dorchester prison where we met up with Dicky Fisher, Howard Kaye, Dave Calfe and daughter, Andy Hudd and Maureen.

Approximately 30 trade unionists made the walk back to Tolpuddle which took about three hours. A special badge was given to those who took part, and we then retired to the Martyrs Inn for suitable refreshments.

As is now traditional on Saturday afternoon we headed off to the GMB field where ASLEF co-hosts the barbecue. Marz Colombini did a sterling job cooking for and serving the hungry hordes of trade unionists and MPs – including Jo Stevens, Labour MP for Cardiff Central, and Clive Lewis, Labour MP for Norwich South – who joined us for a chat.

“I was sold like a slave for £1. The convicts’ names were written on slips of paper, the agent drew lots, each man at £1 per head.” – James Hammett

Another first was that the – until now – annual cricket or football match at Tolpuddle between ASLEF and the TSSA was cancelled – by the TSSA – for reasons unknown. Maybe they had been nobbled by the RMT?

Saturday continued in the GMB marquee where the evening’s entertainment consisted of a brilliant stand-up performance from Mark Steel, whose irreverent brand of humour, with his take on the current political scene, had a packed audience in fits of laughter.

This was followed by the last performance of Dare Devil Rides to Jarama, an outstanding piece of political theatre, written by Neil Gore, directed by Louise Townsend, and starring David Heywood as the daring speedway star and Wall of Death motorcycle rider Clem Beckett, who joined the International Brigades to fight with the Spanish people and defend freedom and democracy against General Franco’s fascists.

We also met more comrades from the RMT – nice ones! – and ASLEF, including Graham Wyatt from Fratton and his pal who were being the diplomatic bridge between the RMT and ASLEF, as they were camping in the RMT enclave. Saturday night was rounded off nicely with more drinks and more live music back on the main field.
Saturday was very busy, with a record attendance, but Sunday was much, much busier, with coachloads of visitors arriving to enjoy not only the great atmosphere and all the festival has to offer but also to see the magnificent parade of banners through the village and hear some great speakers including Frances O’Grady, general secretary of the TUC, and the immensely popular Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn.

JC’s speech was received very warmly indeed, including his promise that a Labour government would deal with Southern; this received huge applause! Indeed, such was his popularity that every band that appeared, anywhere at the festival, did a quick rendition of ‘Oh, Jeremy Corbyn!’

Throughout Saturday and Sunday the ASLEF stall proved very popular with huge numbers of people stopping by to snap up ASLEF merchandise. Another attraction that proved popular was the Vintage mobile cinema; a restored 1968 Bedford lorry turned mobile cinema which shows short political films from the collection of the Radical Film Company.

“Labour is the poor man’s property, from which all protection is withheld. Has not the working man as much right to preserve and protect his labour as the rich man has his capital?” – George Loveless

Jeremy Corbyn led the parade of banners, which was truly impressive. Eleven ASLEF banners were on display – from Bournemouth, Exeter, Salisbury, Southampton & Northam, and Weymouth branches; Districts 1, 5, 6 and 7; the Women’s Representatives Committee, and the head office banner – and they drew much applause and admiration from the throngs of spectators lining the route, including JC himself who referred to ‘these wonderful ASLEF banners’ as he led the parade back to the festival site. Here was another first; it was the first time the District 6 banner had appeared at Tolpuddle, it drew much interest, and I was particularly proud to carry it.

More ASLEF comrades arrived on Sunday, including Nigel and Collette Gibson, and many others I didn’t know, but particular thanks must go to the chap who provided the pre-march ASLEF curry. It was delicious!

It was whilst manoeuvring our banner that I literally bumped into former Northampton and Bletchley comrade Terry Cuthbert as we jostled for marching room. Terry was helping to carry the Bournemouth branch banner, and we had a few post-march drinks talking about old times.

A quieter Sunday evening followed with drinks with fellow campers from the NUT; however, this small drink quickly swelled to include others, including the RMT enclaves, and some of our own. This is what makes Tolfest great, a sense of solidarity, of common purpose, and comradeship.

There is something for everyone at Tolpuddle – unless you are a Tory, I suppose – and there is even an area for children, so you can bring the family.

I intend to go again next year, which will be from Friday 20 to Sunday 22 July to avoid clashing with the Durham Miners’ Gala on Saturday 14 July. I had a great time and am very proud to have been involved and to represent my great trade union. If you have not been, I urge you to come along and experience it for yourself; if you haven’t been for a while, then come again.

“Arise, men of Britain and take your stand! Rally round the standard of liberty, or forever lay prostrate under the iron hand of your land- and money-mongering taskmasters.” – George Loveless

As, increasingly, people look for alternatives to the political elite, to improve their lives and society, many are realising that the best way of achieving this is collectively, via the trade union movement, and a Labour Party that once again recognises the dreams and aspirations of working people. That is why the Tolpuddle festival achieved record numbers this year. Be part of a growing movement!
Peter Smith, RMS
the NVR for their welcome and a look at the loco.

Les Muir thanked Derek Deacon and Glyn Wassal for organising it and the chance of a rummage round the shops in Peterborough amiss. Temperance Tours on a visit to the Nene Valley Railway. The girls gave Branch News evening badge event, of the evening to pinnacle presentation.

Jon coulton, branch secretary

Mick, Marz, Graham and the Salisbury crew (above): Kovo gets his 50 year medallion from Mick (left); and Clem, Bob, George, Alan and Kovo (top) Photos: Geoff Rebeck retired driver Kovo who joined the railway as a cleaner in 1964, moving to fireman a year later, before becoming a second man in 1967, when he joined ASLEF, the only man who could fall asleep leaning on a shovel with his eyes wide open! He got his driver’s job in 1983, a Salisbury man all the way, and loyal ASLEF member for 50 years. Kovo served the union at branch and local rep level, is still chair of the Salisbury social fund and tirelessly organises our retirement dinner and dance every year. We all thank you, Kovo, for your loyalty and service to this great union of ours.

Jon Coulton, branch secretary

ONE FOR THE ALBUM The lads from Gillingham joined 73D Temperance Tours on a visit to the Nene Valley Railway. The girls gave the chance of a rummage round the shops in Peterborough a miss. Les Muir thanked Derek Deacon and Glyn Wassal for organising it and the NVR for their welcome and a look at the loco.

Peter Smith, RMS

ALISBURY
179 held a double celebration on 6 July marking 50 years in ASLEF for Anthony Kowalewski, known as Kovo, and 50 years since the end of steam on the Southern region.

The organisers – Clem Dymond, George Lynam, Tony Kowalewski, Alan Hughes and Bob Hind – managed to bring together 150 former steam drivers and firemen, the tough men of our industry, mainly from Salisbury, but also Exeter and Brighton and long closed depots such as Nine Elms and Yeovil Junction. It was great to hear old stories exchanged and see old photographs pored over – at the tender age of 40 I felt positively young, especially when I was referred to as ‘nipper’ on a number of occasions – because that’s the way it was and, for some of these men, the way it still is. These old boys of the railway made a huge contribution to the heritage and history of our grade and our union.

On the way to the evening badge event, the taxi took us past the long since demolished location of Salisbury 72B shed and the site of the old railway club, and nostalgia was heavy in the air. I haven’t seen some of these blokes since 1968; admitted one fellow traveller wistfully. Special guests were GS Mick Whelan, DO1 Graham Morris, EC1 Marz Colombini and Angela O’Sullivan and Deborah Reay from the WRC who presented badges and medallions to loyal ASLEF members with a total of 205 years’ service: Steve Thies, Dave Thomas and Andy Cooper and Tom Beavis and John Bowen (35).

We moved to the pinnacle presentation of the evening to

Upcoming events

- **RAINHAM – THURSDAY 5 OCTOBER**
  Southeastern retired and working members’ reunion from 11.00 at Rainham Social Club, 86 Station Road, Rainham, Kent.

- **RIPPLE LANE – THURSDAY 5 OCTOBER**
  The old LT Club at Hornchurch station has changed its opening hours, so the Ripple Lane gathering/quaff will, from October, be held on the first Thursday of the month. Cliff Blackwell, RMS.

- **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.

- **PETERBOROUGH – FRIDAY 6 OCTOBER**
  Booz’n’chat at the Parkway Club, Maskew Avenue, Peterborough. £5 in advance, £6 on the door. Call Malcolm Bell on 07884 432424 or fletton.brick@btopenworld.com

- **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 from 11am at the Richmal Crompton (Wetherspoons) opposite Bromley South station with a few surprise guests and a new badge to commemorate the occasion. See you there! Ray Cooper, RMS.

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

Time to say goodbye

Manchester Piccadilly No1 said goodbye to two railway stalwarts, Peter Grant and Gary Baker, at our July branch. Peter started his railway career in 1975 at Old Oak Common, became a second man, and passionate union man, in 1976, and moved north in 1986. Peter has been a committed branch secretary, chair, LLC and DCC chair, and sat on the ASLEF appeals committee. Gary began his career at Newton Heath in 1978, as second man, and became a driver in 1985 when he went to Manchester Piccadilly. He became an instructor, training drivers with his vast railway knowledge.

C Thompson, branch secretary

Mick presents tankards to Gary (left) and Peter (right)
Loyalty on Anglesey

Holyhead branch welcomed DO3 Colin Smith and EC rep Andy Hourigan to our meeting on 20 July where Colin presented long service badges to Dewi Griffiths (25 years) and Sylvia Jones (15). Andy and Colin gave their usual informative reports on issues in the industry including best practice for CDP that Andy has now finished with RSSB and sent out seeking approval and sent out a proposed policy on mental health. Colin gave a passionate speech about the railways and how they can improve under a future Labour government and the importance for members to take advantage of the free will service available via Thompson’s solicitors. Questions included updates on disputes over DOO on Southern, Northern and Merseyrail, ASLEF’s EJRA policy, and many other issues. A good evening with friendly and interesting debate continued onto a local restaurant. The branch thanks Colin and Andy for attending, and is grateful for the loyalty and support of members. We can only achieve success for the grade with continued loyalty.

Kev Ederle, branch secretary

Top bloke

Ian Morris and John Carmody (Watford LLC) and I would like to thank DOG Dicky Fisher and EC vice-president Dave Calfe for attending the Watford branch meeting on 25 July and presenting Peter ‘Punky’ Smith, a top bloke, with an excellent driving record, with his 40 year badge.

Kevin Corcoran, Watford DFC

Hammersmith & City driver Bro Wayne Mitchell receives his 20 years in ASLEF membership badge from District 8 EC member Terry Wilkinson. Congratulations Wayne!

Gary Jarman, branch secretary

Good old days

Tilbury broke with tradition on 2 September by holding its branch on a Saturday rather than a Sunday due to a re-organisation of the old LT Club at Hornchurch. Sadly, there were no guest speakers but, once business was concluded, there were presentations to retired drivers Cliff Blackwell and Frankie Munn (50 year medallions) and driver Andy Pearson who received a suitably inscribed empty glass on taking early retirement from Freightliner Intermodal. An excellent buffet was provided by Margaret Wilson. It was nice to see some old faces and enjoy a quaff about the good days under the BR banner.

Cliff, Andy and Frankie

A war cabinet promise and a rise in union membership were both topics in the Journal 100 years ago

SHORTER WORKING DAY PLEDGE

The front page of the Journal records this promise by Sir Albert Stanley, President of the Board of Trade: ‘I pledge the government, war cabinet, and myself, personally, to continue the present control of the railways for a time after the cessation of hostilities, so there would be an opportunity afforded within one month to bring forward a request for a shorter working day while the railways were under control, and that any reasonable request for a shorter working day would have the immediate and sympathetic consideration of the government.

Another cabinet minister, George Barnes, adds: ‘I convey to you the sympathy of the war cabinet in what they regard as a perfectly justifiable demand under normal conditions and in normal times, and also the sympathy, as I know, of every member of the cabinet; and to assure you that all that Sir Albert has said will be carried into effect literally and without qualifications after the cessation of hostilities.’

The editor notes: ‘Remember these pledges. We want 44,000 members to have them in mind at the cessation of hostilities, and to insist on their literal interpretation, in spite of any opposition, trade union or otherwise.’

WOMEN AT WORK IN THE WAR

The Board of Trade Labour Gazette is cited on the employment of women in industry during the war. ‘The number in July 1914 was estimated to be 3,298,000 and these have increased during the war by 1,240,000, representing a direct displacement of 1,256,000 men. The 19,000 employed by the railways in 1914 increased by another 62,000 in 1917.’

A MIGHTY AND GROWING FORCE

Pax reports on the Trades Union Congress in Blackpool: ‘It was attended by 695 delegates, the largest number ever present, who represented 235 trade unions and 3,076,352 members. Trade unionism is a mighty and still growing force.’

Mick Holder turns back time to October 1917

ASLEF service badges were presented to Domenico Pasquariello of GTR GN (10 years) and Steve Ellis and Mark Dawson of VTEC (15) by ECS Howard Kaye. PJ Smith, King’s Cross

October 2017 | The ASLEF Journal 17
Drivers and diabetes

What should you do if you are diagnosed with diabetes? And what are the implications for your employment as a train driver? With numbers predicted to grow sharply in the next few years, Mick Holder, of ASLEF’s health and safety department, offers some timely advice.

Being diagnosed as a diabetic by your GP does not – and should not – in most cases mean automatic suspension from driving or the end of a career. Whilst that may be the outcome in more serious cases, where loss of consciousness is a real threat, or your eyesight degrades beyond an acceptable standard, most people, helped by a sympathetic employer, will be able to manage the condition safely for the industry and the individual.

Diabetes is a condition where the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood is too high because the body can’t use it properly. If left untreated, high blood glucose levels can cause serious health complications. There are two main types. Type 1 diabetes generally occurs early in life when no insulin is produced which causes glucose levels to rise in the blood, can cause very serious health conditions, and is treated by regular injections of insulin without which the individual can die.

Type 2 diabetes is when the body doesn’t make enough insulin, or the insulin it does make doesn’t work properly, meaning glucose again builds up. Up to 58% of type 2 cases can be prevented or delayed by a healthy lifestyle – diet and exercise, primarily. About 90% of people with diabetes have type 2.

In general terms, the predicted increase in diabetes arises from people leading more sedentary lives, together with a poor diet – both hazards for train drivers. If a member is diagnosed with diabetes he or she should report this to their manager who should complete a risk assessment (which is done on a case by case basis). If the driver has been driving without problems to that point and there is no risk of loss of consciousness and their eyesight is of an acceptable standard then there should be a discussion about how the individual is to manage the condition, what the employer can do to support them, and how it can be monitored. Diabetes is covered by the disability section of the Equalities Act which requires employers to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to assist the individual.

Members are advised to talk the matter over with their ASLEF health and safety rep and, if they feel it necessary, have their rep accompany them when discussing matters with management. Should a member feel the outcome of any discussions means they have been unfairly treated they should put the matter formally into the machinery.

Some people will, sadly, not be able to drive on diagnosis because their condition presents a real risk to the safety of the railway, and some people’s health will degenerate to a point where it becomes unsafe, but most are likely to be able to manage the condition throughout their career.

In the past being insulin dependent was a barrier to driving trains but there are drivers now who have managed the condition and kept driving.

Members diagnosed with diabetes can get free, confidential advice from the charity Diabetes UK at www.diabetes.org.uk. You can check the RSSB’s guidance on medical fitness for safety critical railway workers at www.rssb.co.uk/rgs/standards/GOGN3655 Iss 2.pdf

Time the Tories stopped treating mental health like Cinderella

Tuesday 10 October is the World Health Organisation’s mental health day. Ian Beckett works in ASLEF’s GSP and policy departments, is a Labour councillor in Harlow, and the authority’s mental health champion. Here he talks about some of his personal experiences, reflections and ideas about the way forward.

MENTAL health problems cost UK employers £30 billion a year in lost production, recruitment and absence. So why aren’t we doing more about it? And why are we so reluctant to talk about the subject?

I was born 53 years ago into a household familiar with mental health problems. My father had major bouts of depression, as did his brother. Both took their own lives. Before I started school I was prescribed phenobarbitone (a barbiturate designed to depress the central nervous system) to ‘help me sleep’. Adolescence gave rise to depression and anxiety which went largely unchecked until my mid-20s. Later, I had a full-blown breakdown, was admitted to hospital, and eventually embarked on a course of cognitive behavioural therapy which equipped me with the skills to take control of my life. That course, 23 years ago, lasted 18 months. On the NHS. Today, on the NHS there’s a waiting list for an eight-week online self-help course.

As a mental health champion I look for opportunities to build relationships with individuals and organisations, to find new ways to tackle stigma and break down barriers. But it’s not easy. Despite the fact that one in four of us will suffer some kind of mental health problem during our lives it’s a subject we find difficult to talk about. Mental ill-health is considered too personal, too deep and too complex to talk to your partner about, or friend, union rep, your GP; let alone your boss.

The Centre for Mental Health estimates that employers should be able to cut the cost of mental health by one-third by improving the management of mental health at work. So why don’t they? Because they have yet to fully understand the problem and that prevents them from producing the correct strategies. This is where trade unions like ASLEF have a role to play (and we’ve started!)

For several years ASLEF Education has run a number of 12-week distance learning courses in a wide range of mental health areas, from general awareness to subjects such as autism, dementia and counselling. Members have found them invaluable. They are not designed to make you an expert, but they do provide you with knowledge you can share and who, where and when to signpost people for professional support. Want to know more? Speak to your ULR.

Encouraging people to talk about mental health problems and challenges is the foundation stone of necessary change. Education builds on and strengthens those foundations. Ultimately, though, we need to persuade the government to stop treating mental health as a Cinderella service and give it the resources that will not only change lives but save lives.
NEIL MILLIGAN GS WHO LOVED THE POETRY OF RABBIE BURNS AND TRANSLATED FOR JIMMY KNAPP

EIL MILLIGAN, the only Scot ever to be elected general secretary of ASLEF, has died at his home in Torquay, Devon. He was 91.

Neil was born the son of a miner in the Lanarkshire coalfield in 1926, the year of the general strike, and grew up with some of the labour movement giants of his day.

He started work on the LNER aged 14 as a boy demurrage clerk at Springburn, Glasgow, before becoming a fireman at nearby Eastfield depot from where he fired trains up the notoriously-demanding West Highland line.

Neil joined ASLEF in 1943 and was very active in Glasgow from the immediate post-war years. He was elected to ASLEF’s executive committee in 1962, before becoming Scottish secretary in 1967, assistant general secretary in 1985 and then general secretary, succeeding Ray Buckton, in 1987. He retired in 1990.

His years in the top ranks of the union were dominated by the fight against rail privatisation, several fatal rail accidents, and a successful campaign to bust the Tory government’s pay cap.

A keen golfer, and follower of boxing, who loved the poetry of Robert Burns, Neil’s favourite joke was to ‘translate’ for NUR leader Jimmy Knapp, whose impenetrable Ayrshire accent was unintelligible to many south of Hadrian’s Wall.

Neil was a member of the Communist Party until the early 1980s, when he joined the Labour Party, and a good comrade of Mick McGahay, Jimmy Airlie, Lawrence Daly and Jimmy Reid.

He married Margaret, a nurse, in 1957. They had one son, Duncan, and two daughters, Patricia and Elizabeth, and three grandchildren, all of whom survive him.

GS Mick Whelan sent condolences to Neil’s family on behalf of all members who remember the contribution he made to ASLEF.

Paul Routledge

VERNOR WHITEFORD

Vernon Whiteford passed away on 5 November 2016 at the age of 88. Before joining the railway in 1947 Vernon, like many of his generation, did national service. He was a Western man, starting as a cleaner, promoted through the links to fireman, at both St Philip’s Marsh and Bath Road. He came from a railway family – his uncle was a signalman – and eventually became a driver, progressing to the top links at Bath Road, and ending up on top mileage jobs. He retired in 1993 to spend more time with his family and hobbies.

He was a proud family man, keen gardener, staunch Labour supporter and passionate about photography. In the army he was involved in using cameras for reconnaissance work and on the front of his funeral service was a black and white photo of a very young Vernon in uniform. The family say this is possibly one of the first ‘selfies’ ever taken!

Bernard Kennedy, Bristol

PHILIP ROWE

My father Philip Rowe was on the railway all his working life, starting as a station boy at Crews Hill at the age of 14. He was allowed to leave school early to take up that job. Dad was told that when the men came back from the war he would not be needed, as they would want their jobs back, but that didn’t happen. Dad worked his way up on steam locos, eventually becoming a driver, and drove steam for 15 years, from depots including Hornsey (Firm Park), Stratford, Ilford and Shenfield, and said he never broke down. He retired at 60 and spent his time collecting and riding British motorbikes and going clay shooting, becoming Essex veteran

A Western man

Vernon in uniform. The family say this is one of the first ‘selfies’ ever taken!

Bernard Kennedy, Bristol

BOB HUKINS

Bob ‘Reverend’ Hukins, one of Ashford’s finest, passed away on 10 August aged 89. Bob, a well-respected driver, spent his entire working life at Ashford depot. With a wonderful, friendly smile, he got on with everyone and never spoke ill of anyone. He was a prankster, and, on one occasion, put the fear of the lord into Alf Mills when, dressed as a vicar, he entered Alf’s pub one Sunday and rebuked him for drinking on the sabbath. As Alf, in

Prankster ‘Rev’ shock, meekly headed for the exit, Bob took off his disguise, astonishing a bewildered Alf who let out a few ripe expletives at being duped. Bob’s devoted wife Ann passed away earlier this year and now he has gone to be reunited with her.

Robert Kilkie, Ashford

ALLAN SCHNEIDER

Allan Schneider passed away on 21 October 2016. He was 61 and had been ill with cancer for some time. Allan was in the army from a young age, joining the cadet corps at 15, until he started working on the railway. ‘Schi’ did a number of jobs, including conductor guard, before being promoted to driver and joining ASLEF in 2006. He ended up working on the GWR high speed side at Bristol, retiring due to poor health in 2015. Allan used to enjoy a drink with his colleagues after work and was often seen in the old Railway Club in Bristol, before it closed, the Knights Templar, or the New Found Out in Totterdown.

Bernard Kennedy, Bristol
We welcome letters, either by email to journal@asleref.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.

Sticks to trains, comrades!

I was disappointed to read the article about Palestine by Nigel Gibson in the August Journal. First, what has this got to do with the UK railway industry for which, as a member of this union, I pay my membership fee to be represented? Second, this is a biased report which only looks at one side. The Middle East and, in particular, Israel and Palestine, is a hotbed of trouble and controversy. All the more reason for a railway trade union to steer clear of the subject and stick to its remit, which is trains.

Okay, the Palestinians have it bad. But what about frequent rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel? What about Palestinians killing Israeli civilians in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem? And, after 9/11, Palestinian men, women and children dancing in the streets celebrating the deaths of thousands of Americans and other nationalities by al-Qaeda.

As for history, the Jews were kicked out of Judea by the Romans 2,000 years ago, and their land given to the Arabs. The Jews, after centuries of discrimination and persecution, wanted a land of their own and, specifically, their original homeland back. The subject is complex. ASLEF is not going to do away with Israel. You are not going to push all the Israelis into the sea and reclaim the whole land as Palestine. So why not stick to what we, the members, pay you to do, which is to represent us in the UK rail industry. Why can’t ASLEF be for train drivers like BALPA is for pilots? We don’t hear them going on about global political situations which have nothing to do with railway matters.

I have written to Calum Wadge at GT R with a copy to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling. On a recent journey the driver requested the OBS to ring him. He repeated his request but then revealed there was no OBS on board and said as he was the only crew member if anyone required help to press the contact button. I could not find such a button but, on another journey, with an OBS on board, was told it is in a locked unit next to me in the disabled spot. The government says it’s dangerous to drive like this. If you are removing crew to retrain them what’s the point, anyway? We already have a system where one driver controls a string of vehicles. It’s well-established, under-utilised, does not rely on erratic wi-fi signals for its safety in complex ever-changing traffic situations, and is operated by experienced and professional personnel. It’s called a railway.

John Brooks, Canterbury

Who needs convoys when we have rail?

I read of insane proposals to trial convoys of driverless lorries on our roads, controlled by one driver using wi-fi. Why? Many of us have experienced the frustration, on a two-lane carriageway, of being stuck behind one lorry going just a little faster than another lorry it’s trying to overtake. Imagine the same lorry trying to overtake a convoy! And get access to adequate housing, basic sanitation, health care, food and water. We want to help realise their ambitions for a just and lasting peace in the region.

Farewell to Fratton

After serving this proud union for 43 years, a union of which my father was also a member for 48 years, I have decided to put my health first and take ill health severance after a tough five years. During those 43 years I served 25 years as an LDC rep and 22 years as health and safety secretary at my beloved depot Fratton where I have been since the day I joined the railway in 1974. Before I enter the RMS I would like to put on record my thanks to my colleagues at my depot, extend special thanks to current LDC members Mick Acton and Gary Trevenna for getting me over the line when I had a dark and uncertain future, and my biggest vote of thanks to company council rep Nigel Cummins who continued to support and reassure me over the last few months and represented me at my final interview. I look forward to a long and happy retirement in which I shall continue to follow the fortunes of our great union.

Gary Daish, Portsmouth & IoW branch

So very proud to be union

My dad, GW Lemar, joined ASLEF in 1949 as an engine cleaner at Dover loco, before being called up for national service. When he returned to Dover as a driver he became vice-chair and then chair of Dover branch. He was always, and still is, very proud to be a member of ASLEF – 68 years and still going! His family is also very proud of his commitment to ASLEF and the men he represented.

Cathy Carlin, Ashford, Kent

Questions for Southern

I have written to Calum Wadge at GTR with a copy to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling. On a recent journey the driver requested the OBS to...
I would like to say a massive thank you to Gary Comfort, ASLEF trains council. Gary was my guard on the Northern Line at East Finchley in 1995/96 before I moved lines; 22 years later, with a reputation for working extremely hard, and doing a fantastic job for ASLEF and ASLEF members, Gary represented me at my CDI. It was a stressful six months for me and my family but Gary went through everything with me. He didn’t gloss it up, he told me exactly what could happen, and that he would do his very best to get a good outcome. Gary did get me a good outcome. I have thanked him in person, at August’s Northern Line North branch meeting, but I wanted to write this letter to the Journal as another sign of my huge appreciation to him. Thank you Gary, you’re a legend.

Gary Pipe, train operator, Neasden, Metropolitan line

Three Musketeers: Gary, Terry and Gary

Safer, sustainable choice

With almost 30% of lorries on our roads totally empty and average HGV loading only around 50%, sorting out freight transport can be part of the road transport solution. In order to get better efficiency from HGVs, instead of the current old-fashioned time-based system which neither measures the actual miles driven nor the full economic, safety and environmental impact of HGV traffic, the government should introduce a distance-based lorry charging system. This could incentivise better utilisation, thus reducing lorry miles, crashes and pollution. It would also make it easier for rail freight, the safer, sustainable alternative, which reduces road congestion, to compete; one large freight train can remove up to 136 HGVs.

Phillippa Edmunds, Freight on Rail manager

Thanks, Tosh

Many thanks to all who were able to attend either the funeral or the memorial at the Civic for Dave Gibson, campaigner, trade unionist, good person, and one of the founding fathers of the Freedom Riders in South Yorkshire. Tosh McDonald, ASLEF’s president, wearing his Freedom Riders tee-shirt, spoke very movingly at the crematorium about Dave.

George Arthur, Barnsley

Hungered to death

We should not forget those who died in the Featherstone massacre in September 1893 when soldiers fired on Yorkshire miners attempting to prevent the movement of coal during a dispute – the last time British citizens were killed by British troops on English soil. At the inquest it was reported that when the magistrate announced he was about to read the Riot Act and the crowd must take the consequences, someone shouted: ‘Read it, you old bastard, and don’t talk so much about it.’ When the crowd was told the soldiers were about to open fire, there were cries of: ‘We’d rather be shot down than hungered to death.’

Tony Hufton, Norwich
Russia’s revolution

A year of events to mark the centenary of the Russian revolution – which culminates in a conference at Congress House on 4 November – was launched at the Marx Memorial Library on Clerkenwell Green where Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known by his nom de guerre, Lenin, published the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party’s newspaper Iskra (‘spark’) at the start of the last century. MARY DAVIS reflects on the political fires sparked by the Russian revolution.

He surprising thing about the October revolution, 100 years ago, was that it occurred. 80% of Russia’s population were peasants. Russia was embroiled disastrously in World War One. Even in February 1917, the Bolsheviks were a minority. Yet, in eight months, everything changed. And in just ten days in October 1917 the world was shaken on its axis.

There were two revolutions in 1917. On 23 February under the Julian calendar – 8 March on ours – women factory workers replacing conscripted men launched strikes and demonstrations in Petrograd and Moscow. This led to the overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II and the establishment of Alexander Kerensky’s bourgeois provisional government.

Peace, Bread and Land

Lenin and his wife Krupskaya returned from exile in Zurich in April, travelling through Germany on a ‘sealed train’ to Finland station in Petrograd. The day after his arrival, Lenin published his April Theses, outlining the tasks for a socialist revolution. He called for Russia’s withdrawal from the war, nationalisation of landed estates and banks, and for production and distribution to come under the control of workers’ soviets (councils). The Bolshevik programme was summarised by the slogan ‘peace, bread and land’. It was the popularity of this programme which led to revolution in October.

The period of ‘dual power’ between the two revolutions of 1917 saw a clash between the provisional government and the increasingly influential soviets of workers, soldiers and peasants. The government continued to support the war despite its unpopularity among workers and soldiers. The Bolsheviks’ call for an end to the war resulted in their growing authority within the soviets and the army and, as the conflict intensified, the Bolsheviks urged the overthrow of the provisional government. At this critical time the actions of Russian railworkers proved decisive in preventing a military coup by General Lavr Kornilov, commander-in-chief of the Russian army.

On 27 August the Petrograd soviet issued an emergency appeal to soldiers, telegraph operators, and railway workers to defend the revolution and ignore military orders. The All-Russia executive committee of the Union of Railwaymen sent telegrams up and down the rail network, demanding the stoppage of ‘suspicious telegrams’. Rail workers delayed and halted troop movements, sending troop trains into sidings, abandoning their posts, blocking and dismantling tracks. Combined with the formation of workers’ militias – the Red Guards – the actions of railway workers proved decisive.

Long live the revolution

In late October, a blank shot from the Russian naval cruiser Aurora signalled the storming of the Winter Palace, the final offensive against the provisional government. The remaining officials surrendered to the Red Guards. Despite mythology, the revolution itself was almost entirely peaceful. Posters were distributed across Petrograd declaring ‘the provisional government is overthrown’ and ‘Long live the revolution of workers, soldiers and peasants!’. Opponents of the revolution inside and outside Russia mobilised against it. Forces hostile to socialism – the White Armies – abetted by 14 countries, including Britain, initiated a civil war resulting in the deaths of 10 million men, women and children.

The October revolution was the first time in human history that the working-classes – factory workers and peasants – had defeated the capitalist class – those who owned the factories and the land – and began to build a socialist society. The success of the revolution resulted in a new state – the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic – the first workers’ state since the Paris Commune of 1871. Russia’s revolution has been subject to systematic misrepresentation in Western countries – and in post-Soviet Russia – by those who fear the power of the people. That is why we must not only celebrate it, but learn from it. In Britain today, where poverty and inequality are fast approaching Victorian levels, Tsarist Russia does not seem so far away. More than 1 million Britons are using food banks and working under zero hours contracts. Radical solutions to political problems are again being talked about, in communities and in the labour movement.

Power of the people

To encourage discussion and debate about the legacy of the Russian revolution the centenary committee has organised a programme of events including a festival of revolutionary film from 24 September to 12 November at the Rio in Dalston and the Phoenix in East Finchley featuring classics of early Soviet cinema by Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov and Esfir Shub.

And on 4 November we welcome speakers from around the world to a major international conference at Congress House to discuss Russian revolutionary history, politics and culture and its relevance today. Among the speakers are ASLEF’s president Tosh McDonald and, from Cuba, Aleida Guevara March, daughter of Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara.

Mary Davis is Visiting Professor of Labour History at Royal Holloway, University of London, a former Professor of Labour History at London Metropolitan University and a trustee at the Marx Memorial Library. Her books include Comrade or Brother? A History of the British Labour Movement 1789-1931; Marxism & Struggle; Fashioning a New World: A History of the Woodcraft Folk; Sylvia Pankhurst: A Life in Radical Politics; and Class & Gender in British Labour History.
ELECTRIC SHOCK HORROR AT DAFT

The fortnightly paper Private Eye has long been a thorn in the side of the establishment. For 56 years, since 1961, this satirical magazine has broken stories, offered (often acerbic) comment on current affairs, and poked fun at the great and the good. Despite its deliberately amateur look – as if it was laid out with Letraset, which it was in the early days – it sells 250,000 copies of every issue. Remarkable, in the age of the internet, when people say ‘dead tree publishing’ is finished. In fact the Eye outsells the UK edition of The Economist (235,000) and The Week (206,000), and is way ahead of Time (92,000), The Spectator (82,000), New Statesman (34,000) and Prospect (32,000).

PRIVATE EYE

Signal Failures, a column by the well-informed Dr B Ching, is always worth reading. Unless you are Chris Grayling or work at the DfT which the pseudonymous doctor always refers to as DaFT.

“We will only electrify lines where it delivers a genuine benefit to passengers,” said Transport Secretary Chris Grayling as DaFT ditched the electrification schemes the Tories had, until the election, dangled before the electorate. But DaFT, living up to its name, has never allowed “genuine benefit to passengers” to guide its rail policies and is not about to start.

‘Grayling tried to kid the public that all of a sudden electrification won’t deliver its long-established benefits – extra capacity and trains which are faster, cheaper, less polluting, more reliable and more comfortable – because we now have “new bi-mode train technology”’. But the concept of trains running on electricity for only part of a journey has been familiar since Metropolitan Railway trains alternated between steam and electric power more than a century ago, and it is still an inadequate substitute for main line electrification.

‘Grayling didn’t mention the real reason for dumping electrification: the shambles arising from his government’s dogmatic insistence that the rail system must be fragmented, lack overall leadership and abound with conflicting interests...’

No wonder those toiling at Great Minster House have been warned that being seen reading a copy of the Eye will seriously blight their prospects of promotion.

Keith Richmond

Solution to Crossword 137

Across:
1 Chess piece or clergyman
7 Track step by step
8 Chinese meat and bean sprout dish (4, 4)
9 Zodiac sign
10 Cashews and pecans
12 Solid square
13 Rapid whirling sound
14 Handle on a door
15 Secured floating marker
17 Censor or amend
19 Din
20 Minister’s residence

Down:
1 1 Coffee
2 Failings or defects
3 Dive or jump into water
4 Type of fashion
5 Starchy food that provides energy
6 Mend
11 Advance payment
13 Misery
14 Dog’s house
15 Trouser supports
16 Number of deadly sins
18 Tune linked to a television series

Congratulations to Steve Gibson, of Bristol, 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 137th prize crossword in the September 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 October

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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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