Power to the people – Labour in Brighton
railway enginemen’s tax free saver plans

tax free savings plans for
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UCH has been made of recent comments made in or around the Tory Party conference in relation to rail, particularly in the media. But they raised more questions than answers. The announcement of £300 million for connectivity from the Trans Pennine region to HS2, for example. Not sure this is new money? More likely it was made to offset all the criticism of the culling of electrification across the East Midlands and Wales.

After the second announcement, of a national train drivers’ school, some said it’s an initiative for full employment, which this trade union has strived for decades to achieve. More sinistery, though, others saw it as a strike breaking entity based on the very poor and redacted Gibb Report. The truth is that the DfT and the TOCs have not delivered the establishments we agreed, and demand, for a safely operated railway. If we do agree a national school, then it will be based on agreed requirements and because the trainees will get the route training at the company. There will not be a scab force to hand. More importantly, they will, of course, be our members and, as trainees dedicated to the company, will be balloted in accordance with legislation. But if the government wants to scupper our buy-in to any proposals they are the right way and, let’s be clear, any attempt to introduce the HGV model to our industry will be met with total resistance.

This trade union was formed on democratic principles 137 years ago after splitting from the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. Those principles still apply today; to use every tool at our disposal to fight and campaign on behalf of our members as an industrial and political pressure group. That is how we achieve our aims and have our voice and, after the core work on terms and conditions, safety and wages, we campaign on all the things that impact on our members and their families. Then we battle for workers in other industries at home and abroad as part of the great trade union tradition we were established to carry out. Every year more and more items come to your parliament, AAD, for discussion to be the policy platform for this generation to proudly take forward. It is not enough to affiliate and donate; we have to stand up for what our members tell us to do.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary

Mick: ‘Comments at the Conservative conference raise more questions than answers’

No scab force here
TfL axes plan to upgrade Tube

The next planned upgrade phase for the Northern and Jubilee lines on London Underground has been cancelled. The plans – originally said to be vital to the success of the network – involved buying more trains to increase capacity. Now, officially, these plans have been put on hold. They have, publicly, in the euphemism employed by LU, been ‘paused’. But senior managers admit, privately, that the project has been ‘dissolved’.

Finn Brennan, ASLEF’s organiser on London Underground, said: ‘It is deeply disappointing and looks like a classic example of making medium-term savings that damage the long-term ability of the Tube to cope with London’s growth. As TFL board papers make clear, any delays to this project weaken the business case and make outright cancellation more likely.

The upgrade involved the purchase of 17 trains so the Northern line could run a 30 trains per hour service. The Jubilee line would have had 10 new trains to operate a 36 TPH service.

‘The Northern line is one of the most overcrowded parts of the Underground and passenger demand is projected to grow by a further 25% by 2023’, said Finn. ‘Without new trains, overcrowding will get worse and the Northern line risks returning to the days when it was known to millions of Londoners as the “misery line”.

‘The removal of LU’s operating subsidy by George Osborne and the continued government squeeze on TFL’s budget is having a devastating impact on future investment. Short-term savings damage the long-term future of the Underground and risk the prosperity of our capital city. LU cannot afford to return to the decades of stop-start investment that did so much damage in the past. If we are to have a safe and efficient public transport system, these cuts need to be reversed’.

ASLEF has suspended its strike action on LU. Finn explained: ‘I am pleased to say that our negotiating team believes we have made sufficient progress in talks at ACAS to recommend to the EC that the strike be suspended. We have always been prepared to keep talking to resolve this dispute but ASLEF always has, and always will, insist that management stick to agreements they make with us. Our ballot remains live and we will not hesitate to call action in the future if needed to ensure all the commitments made are fully delivered.’

WELSH GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO WALES & BORDER STAFF

The G5 has welcomed the Welsh government’s commitments to rail staff in Wales and called for similar consultation across the industry. Mick said: ‘We commend the Welsh government for recognising the importance of consulting with the rail unions. Our members are the people who deliver the service on a daily basis and their voice must always be heard when deciding how the industry moves forward.’

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.

Hopes and dreams

Socialism & Hope (Luath Press, £12.99) is a cracking political and personal memoir of the turbulent last six years, since Neil Findlay, a good friend of ASLEF, was elected to Holyrood as MSP for Lothian in 2011. A review will appear in the Christmas Journal but you can get a copy now by visiting www.luath.co.uk

RADIO ON


VIRGIN SOLDIERS

Richard Branson has never been short of chutzpah but this takes the custard cream. Rail staff got a message saying ‘Virgin Atlantic needs your help in the fight to cut air passenger duty’. Of course they do. But, funny enough, no one was killed in the rush to make a multi-billionaire – who plunders the public purse with VTEC and Virgin West Coast and pays as little tax as possible – even richer.

Buggy rolls into freight train

Dramatic CCTV footage of a child’s buggy rolling across a station platform, being sucked into the slipstream of a freight train passing through, before smashing into the side of one of the wagons, has been released by the R5SB.

No child was in the buggy on Nuneaton station in July but the R5SB says it’s a stark warning to parents to keep a tight hold of pushchairs at all times.

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

Excellent speech by JC. The centre ground has moved and is being shaped by Labour. Great platform on which to build.

Ed Miliband

Huge blocks of empty seats at the Con conference, sections closed off for want of bums on seats. Labour was packed.

Kevin Maguire

As general rule Foreign Secretaries should not be egomaniacal, lying, puerile, disloyal, total twats. I suggest @theresa_may finds a new one.

Alastair Campbell

Hi @BorisJohnson, I gave Theresa her P45 just like you asked.

Simon Brodkin

She’s been given a P45 and a cough sweet. She’ll get a pizza delivered soon. What a mad conference speech this is. #CPC17

Pete Wishart

CWU members vote massively for strike but Royal Mail still obtains high court injunction! Ludicrous!

Tony Burke

Judge Supperstone also found against ASLEF in #SouthernFail dispute. British judiciary anti-union non-shock.

Simon Weller
Thomas gets a refit for the 21st century

LL change for Thomas the Tank Engine. The popular children’s TV series based on the books by the Rev W Awdry – condemned by parents and teachers for being sexist, irredeemably middle-class, and environmentally unfriendly – is being brought bang up to date with two new female engines.

The new series, to be broadcast next year, will feature Nia, an orange engine from Africa, and Rebecca, a bright yellow engine, in place of Henry (the green engine) and Edward (the blue engine) and half of the 26 episodes will take place abroad. ‘We’ve listened to parents, carers, and children’ said series producer Ian McCue. ‘They said trains can go places but Thomas never goes anywhere.’

‘The Fat Controller stays, but is to become ‘less gruff and more endearing’. There’s a lesson, there, for Chris Grayling, the DfT, and the TOCs…

Nia, one of the new locos, is ‘an adventurous and fun engine who teaches Thomas the Tank Engine a lesson in the meaning of friendship’ according to makers Mattel.

Slogans around the Labour Party conference hall summed up what this year’s bash was all about. They included: extending democracy; healthcare for all; a more equal society; creating an economy that works for all; and, of course, for the many, not the few.

CONFERENCES & RALLIES

The Scottish Labour Party conference is at the Caird Hall in Dundee from Friday 9 to Sunday 11 March. The Welsh Labour Party conference is at the Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Friday 23 to Sunday 25 March. The Scottish Trades Union Congress is at the Macdonald Highlands hotel, Aviemore, from Monday 16 to Wednesday 18 April. Workers’ Memorial Day is Saturday 28 April. 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. The 150th Trades Union Congress is at the Manchester Central convention complex from Sunday 9 to Wednesday 12 September. The Labour Party conference is at the Arena & Convention Centre in Liverpool from Sunday 23 to Wednesday 26 September.

Off the rails

MEL THORLEY, Longsight legend, fondly recalls a warm Sunday evening in Greater Manchester, in 1991, his first summer as a driver. ‘I was working 2K22, the 18.19 stopper from Stockport to Crewe. I’d tipped off a few mates who would be enjoying a pint in Cheadle Hulme. It was lovely to see them on the up tarmac as I ran in. They’d even brought their pint glasses onto the platform to remind me how un-social this turn was. Around 7pm my guard and I rolled into platform 1 at Crewe. Not due to leave until 22.30, working 2H29 back to Stockport, we made our way to the chip shop. Consuming the contents of our greaseproof paper bags, sitting on a wall, we then retired to the Royal Hotel on Nantwich Road for two and a half hours of story sharing about football matches we’d seen. Whilst my mates back in Cheadle Hulme were shelling out for their beer, my three pints of cider were “paid for” by London Midland Region! Cracking little job that, mixing business with pleasure…’

ANGIE DOLL, head of service quality and passenger service director at GTR – it’s a bit like being head of values at the Beeb in W1A – does not suffer from shyness and is not burdened by an excess of humility. She’s upset other senior managers by asking minions, much too loudly and much too frequently, ‘So what are we doing for Brand Angie today?’ And at a recent presentation she chose to write just three words on the whiteboard before getting up to speak: ‘Fuck the unions.’ With this sort of attitude, it’s no wonder passengers, other TOCs – and even the DfT – all refer to the company as Southern Fail.

DAVID LAWS, the investment banker turned Liberal Democrat MP who lost his seat in 2015 and is now executive chairman of the Education Policy Institute, a neoliberal right-wing think tank, recalls a Conservative-Lib Dem coalition cabinet debate about the honours system, with a presentation by Bob Kerslake, head of the civil service. ‘Even Bob Kerslake must admit that civil servants get far too many honours,’ complained Nick Clegg. The official glanced up. ‘It’s Sir Bob Kerslake, actually,’ he said.

ARMANDO IANNucci, the man behind On the Hour, The Day Today, Alan Partridge, The Thick of It, and The Death of Stalin, thinks we’ve forgotten, collectively, about the importance of voting. ‘It’s not a telly game,’ he says dryly. ‘That came home with Brexit. Which is why a lot of young people voted at the last general election. They didn’t vote in the EU referendum, and then woke up thinking, “Ah, I see. It does matter. Can I vote, please?” Er, no. That was yesterday.’

NO L!? Time to put our cards on the table or, as Brucie used to say, play your cards right. Because the Old Ship left a card on every guest’s bed during conference asking: ‘Can we help you whilst you’re here?’

500 CLUB: D Piggott, with number 117, won the October draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £390.
A giant of our movement

EC president TOSH MCDONALD pays tribute to Rodney Bickerstaffe, left-wing firebrand and general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees (1981-1993) and then Unison (1993-2001) after NUPE merged with NALGO and COHSE

ODNEY Bickerstaffe, who died on 3 October at the age of 72, was a great friend, comrade and inspiration. He was, in fact, an inspiration before I even met him because trade unionists in Doncaster were so proud to have one of our own leading the fight for workers, not just locally, but on the national and international stage, too.

As a young rep I first met Rodney in the 1980s and, from then, he would always make time to talk if our paths crossed, either at meetings, rallies, or a chance encounter at Doncaster station, outside the Cumberland (our local pub) or in town.

He often joked he was the only person in the world with a holiday home in Doncaster and this was typical of his sense of humour as anyone who had the privilege of hearing him speak will know. A fantastic orator who could captivate large crowds or small groups with words that would make serious points with passion, always championing the cause of working people.

Rodney was GS of Unison when it was the largest trade union in Britain and, prior to that, GS of NUPE. On the international stage he showed support for workers around the world. He had a real passion for the brave men and women who went to Spain to fight fascism in the 1930s and was a founder member of the International Brigades Memorial Trust and, like our GS Mick Whelan, a patron of the IBMT.

Rodney was a great friend of Jack Jones (also an honorary ASLEF member) and veteran of the Battle of the Ebro and we will commemorate the 80th anniversary of that fight next year. Jack’s son Mick painted the ASLEF triptych that hangs in reception at head office and, when Mick died a few years ago, Rodney sat with him in hospital to the end.

Our RMs had Rodney as a speaker at their weekend forum two years ago and they were captivated by his contribution. Not one to rush off, he stayed to watch the Ken Loach film The Spirit of ’45 with us and talked about it afterwards. Next morning RMs members were buzzing that Rodney joined them in the village pub in Scabby. Our contingent was in two groups on different tables and, Rodney being Rodney, he spent time with each group, captivating all around the tables and others in the pub, as well.

Rodney was also a good friend, from childhood, of former ASLEF president Martin Samways. He was a freem an of Doncaster and, on the day of Rodney’s funeral, all the public buildings flew their flags at half-mast. Our thoughts now are with his widow Pat, always a tower of strength for him. We have lost a giant of our movement. No pasaran!

NR’s top 20 firms

Network Rail has revealed where it spends most of its money, listing the top 20 companies that get their private snouts in the public trough. They include Costain £541 million; Carillion £372m; Siemens Rail Automation £289m; EDF Energy £287m; ABC Electrification £206m; Colas Rail £204m; Balfour Beatty Rail £204m; AMCO £184m; J Murphy & Sons £175m; Amey Rail £174m; Alstom Transport £143m; BAM Nuttall £133m; Babcock Rail £131m; Morgan Sindall £110m; Ameylnabensa £100m; Capita Business Services £95m; Geoffrey Osborne £90m; Atkins £83m; VolkerFitzpatrick £83m; Skanska BAM Nuttall JV £79m. These 20 firms together account for 50.1% – £3.6 billion – of Network Rail expenditure.

LORRY PLATOONS NOT THE ANSWER

Philippa Edmunds, manager of Freight on Rail, has condemned proposals to give lorry platoons the green light. She said: ‘It’s hard not to be sceptical about the marginal pollution benefits of lorry platooning when rail freight is so much cleaner and greener. Lorry platooning, with driverless rear trucks, might cut costs for road hauliers but putting more freight on the railways would bring bigger and quicker reductions in congestion and pollution.’

SNCF SELLS 50% OF ORIENT EXPRESS

SNCF has sold half its stake in the Orient Express to French firm Accor Hotels. Announcing the deal 134 years since the first trip was made between Paris and Istanbul, the state French railway said it was time for fresh ideas to develop ‘this historic brand’.

TRUMPETING THE PRESIDENT

Donald Trump, unimpressed by media coverage of his presidency, has launched his own news service to trumpet his triumphs. ‘Want to know what President Trump did this week?’ asks his Facebook page. ‘Watch here for real news!’ A list of his achievements follows from his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump.

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The ASLEF Journal | November 2017
All the young dudes

SLEF set up a Young Workers’ Forum in January – with one elected member from each of our eight districts – to promote the voices of our younger drivers and encourage them to get involved, industrially and politically, in our union.

‘Given that the age demographic of train drivers is, typically, older than in most industries, ASLEF classes anyone aged 35 or under as a young member, in line with International Transport Federation organising structures,’ said Lee James, ASLEF’s equalities officer. ‘About one in eight – 12% of the ASLEF membership – fit this category.’

November has been designated Young Workers’ Month by the Trades Union Congress. ‘The purpose is to promote trade unions to young workers and to highlight the issues they face,’ said TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady. ‘It’s an opportunity for reps to reach out and inform young workers about unions and ensure there are sufficient opportunities for young people to get involved and play an active role in shaping the movement.

‘It’s also a chance for unions to demonstrate to young people that we are campaigning on the issues they care most about and are relevant to their lives – in the workplace and beyond.’

ASLEF is holding its first young members’ conference at the International Transport Workers’ Federation offices in Borough Road, London SE1, on Tuesday 28 November. Speakers include Danielle Rowley, who took Midlothian from the SNP in June and is, at 27, the youngest Labour MP; Craig Dawson, chair of the TUC’s Young Members’ Forum; Deniz Akdogan of the ITF; and some of the McStrike workers who organised to take on the fast food giant that likes to pay employees as little as possible.

‘Every young member has been sent an invitation to attend,’ said Lee. ‘It would be great to get a good turnout.’

DFT TO TRAIN DRIVERS
The Department for Transport, with the help of the National Skills Academy for Rail, the Rail Supply Group, and the Rail Delivery Group, is to set up a new national driving school for train drivers. The college will establish an apprenticeship equivalent, according to the DfT, of an A-level, that will offer ‘basic tuition in the skills needed to drive a train’. Classroom courses using simulators will be followed by on the job training at one of the train operating companies. The DfT has briefed journalists that the failure of the TOCs in England, Scotland and Wales to recruit enough drivers has forced it to act.

BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE OFFICER RAPPED
A British Transport Police constable has been found guilty of gross misconduct and given a final warning after BTP officers attacked a peaceful demonstration by South Yorkshire Freedom Riders on 23 June 2014. ‘PC Stefan Money was in breach of standards of professional behaviour and discreditable conduct’ and a statement he provided was ‘misleading and inappropriate’.

ACCIDENT WAITING TO HAPPEN
A Network Rail whistleblower has described the Wallows Lane level crossing near the Bescot stadium in Walsall where a 14-year-old schoolgirl was killed on 26 September as ‘an accident waiting to happen – it dates back to Victorian times and there is no safety system in place.’

QUOTE...
‘Throughout speech after lethargic speech, the hall at the Tory Party conference was devoid of energy, of spirit, of life.’ – Michael Deacon in the Daily Telegraph

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By the light of a thousand candles

NICHOLAS HOURIGAN reviews a new book about a key moment in labour movement history

LAN Gallop’s new book *Six for the Tolpuddle Martyrs* – the title is a line from the subversive left-wing folk song *Red Fly the Banners*, O sung to the tune of the old English ballad *Green Grow the Rushes*, O – gives us a detailed and fascinating account of the lives and the legacy of the six men from Dorset whose names are now synonymous with the fight for justice for ordinary working people in England.

They were charged by the authorities with making an illegal oath but their real crime was forming a trade union to protest about their pay being cut from nine to six shillings a week.

They were sentenced at Dorchester Assizes to seven years’ transportation for having the temerity to stand up for themselves – for standing together and forming a Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers – to fight against poverty and austerity and to argue for better terms and conditions.

Gallop vividly describes their years as farmworkers and the destitution to which they were reduced by the rich and powerful people who owned the land, their decision to form a trade union and ‘swear an illegal oath’, their arrest and sentence to transportation, the fight for their liberation and justice, their release and return home, and how their efforts live on in the labour movement in the 21st century. He also gives us the background to the arrest of the martyrs, the Swing Riots and Luddite movement, and the fear which these events inspired.

The Tolpuddle Martyrs is a name which still resonates in the minds of trade unionists. There is the lively festival held annually in their home town of Tolpuddle – or Tolpiddle, as they knew it – but you would be forgiven for not knowing the full story of their struggle. The men – and they were mostly men, then – who owned the land, and the MPs they controlled in Parliament, and the magistrates and judges who represented their interests in the courts, were determined to make an example of the six agricultural labourers who had the brass neck to challenge the status quo. That’s why they were arrested, found guilty, and sent to the other side of the world in 1834.

Their story is inspiring and, here, entertainingly told, with illustrations used to aid our understanding of the lives and the legacy of those six radical Dorsetshire farmworkers that we have come to affectionately call the Tolpuddle Martyrs.


Crossrail named and shamed in blacklisting storm

Workers are still being blacklisted at one of Britain’s largest construction sites – but ministers refuse to hold a public inquiry. Chuka Umunna, Labour MP for Streatham, said he has ‘compelling evidence’ that blacklisting is ‘still going on’ between ‘Crossrail and three of its contractors’.

Chuka told MPs emails proved that workers had been ‘closely watched’ and sub-contractors had been discouraged from employing union activists. He said the ‘very strong inference’ of the documents was that the companies were operating ‘some kind of vetting operation.’

Last year a raft of major construction companies were forced to apologise in the High Court for using an illegal database of people in England.

Crossrail is running a blacklisting operation, says Streatham MP Chuka Umunna – more than 3,000 workers. Some files ran to dozens of pages and included personal details that Chuka said had clearly been gathered with ‘the collusion of the police and/or the security services’.

LORRY DRIVER JAILED FOR CROSSING CRASH

Tencho Hristov, 30, a lorry driver from Immingham in Lincolnshire, has been jailed for eight months after crashing through the barriers of a level crossing near Roydon station in Essex – causing £23,000 worth of damage – and then fleeing the scene. He was found guilty of obstructing an engine or carriage using the railway, wilful omission or neglect, and failing to report a road accident.

INFRASTRUCTURE SURVEY ‘GAME CHANGER’

Plowman Craven says its revolutionary new drone-based Vogel R3D rail survey system will prove to be a ‘game changer’ for the rail industry as it can comprehensively examine the busiest and most inaccessible rail infrastructure safely during traffic hours.

CHARITY NIGHT IN DONNY

A great evening of entertainment is promised by EC president Tosh McDonald at a cancer charity night in the concert room of the Trades & Labour Club in Doncaster from 7pm on Saturday 11 November. Tickets are just £5 per person and available from ASLEF reps Mark Wright (07825 955831) and Andy Rowley (07791 159360). ‘Everyone is welcome,’ said Tosh. ‘It’s a good cause and is going to be a very good night.’

MARK IN THE MONEY

Network Rail chief executive Mark Carne is set to pocket a bumper bonus this year despite the company’s poor punctuality record over the past twelve months. He’s in line for a £50,000 bonus, on top of a £683,000 salary, according to the company’s annual report. This despite NR admitting it must up its game with so much dissatisfaction from commuters.

ISIS SUPPORTER JAILED FOR PLANNING TO BOMB RAILWAY

Zahid Hussain, 29, a supporter of the radical Sunni group the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, has been jailed for life for planning to blow up railway lines in Birmingham.

QUOTE...

‘Vince Cable, as Business Secretary, introduced the Bill raising tuition fees. Videos of him making that speech in Parliament will kill any chances of the Lib Dems breaking through to the young.’ – Baghat in The Economist...

UNQUOTE

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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.

Why? They’re prioritising #FeedingFatCats

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

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

#FeedingFatCats is a campaign run by Thompsons Solicitors. Thompsons is proud to stand up for the injured and mistreated.
Matt Wrack, general secretary of the
Fire Brigades Union, who electrified
the Labour Party conference when he
spoke about the fire at Grenfell Tower,
says the tragedy was the result of
political decisions made by people in
power locally and nationally.

Wednesday 14 June 2017 is a dark
day in modern British history. A
nightmare date of death and
destruction. I am sure everyone reading this
will share my sense of horror at the appalling
loss of life at Grenfell Tower that night.

The accounts of the victims are painful to
read and listen to. Accounts of loved ones
speaking to their families for the last tim e
knowing whether their friends and family
made it out of the building in tim e.

But how was this atrocity allowed to	happen in one of the richest boroughs in the
heart of the capital of one of the richest
countries in the world? We appear to be a
country unable to keep people safe in their
own homes. Now it’s time for the tough
questions.

We demand a vigorous, thorough, and
robust public inquiry with the survivors,
victims and local residents all involved to hold
to account the people who made the
decisions which allowed this atrocity to occur.
They say don’t politicise this fire, but behind
Grenfell lies a chain of political decisions made
by people in power, at local and national level,
who deregulated public housing and the fire
and rescue service, creating a perfect storm for
the atrocity we now call simply ‘Grenfell’.

Firefighters were sent to fight a fire that
should never have happened. The normal
procedures they would follow for a tower
block fire, developed over decades in order
that firefighters can deal professionally and
effectively with this kind of fire, could not be
put into practice as the magnitude of Grenfell
was unprecedented.

Firefighters became split from their
teammates whilst navigating the burning
building, with fire crews re-entering the
burning building multiple times, breaking
procedure at great personal risk to themselves.
They did this to save as many lives as possible.

I am proud that practically every firefighter
who responded to Grenfell is a member of the
FBU and I am honoured to represent them.
The next time trade unions come under attack
by the press and politicians for the audacity of
asking for a fair pay rise, we need to remind
people of the queues of firefighters in
breathing apparatus waiting to be sent into
Grenfell Tower. Because that is what a trade
unionist looks like.

This could be Rotterdam or anywhere

E3 ANDY HOURIGAN reports on a
joint D3 and D8 council meeting in
Manchester on 4 September

On a predictably grey and
wet day in Manchester, two
district councils who have never
combined before
met in a unique
event and location. District 3, who
usually have council
meetings in Liverpool, and
District 8, who meet
in London, met at
the outstanding
People’s History
Museum on the
bank of the River
Irwell which divides the cities of
Manchester and Salford. The museum is a
monument to the history of working
people in the UK. It highlights how we
fought for
democratic rights, and for equality, and
traces the rise of
trade unions in the
19th century. The museum has proud
displays about the
Peterloo Massacre, the women’s
suffrage and co-
operative movements. And
there was a feeling of
real pride when we

saw ASLEF’s first
LGBT flags on
the top floor of the
museum.

After the
museum tour, we
walked across the
bridge over the
Irwell into Salford to
the King’s Arms
which is owned by
ex-Housemartin and
Beautiful South

singer Paul Heaton,
no stranger to
socialist politics. The
bar staff were
outstandingly
friendly as our group
gathered to escape
the weather.

After lunch in the
King’s Arms, DOB
Finn Brennan spoke
about how much he
had enjoyed his visit
to the museum; Matt
Collins of Hope Not
Hate spoke about the strike at

McDonalds; and
Afzal Khan, Labour
MP for Manchester
Gorton, spoke about
Brexit, Jeremy
Corbyn, and what a
privilege it is to be
Shadow Immigration
Minister in the
Shadow Home
Office team.

Both Matt and
Afzal stayed behind
after speaking and
spoke to everyone
individually. And our
very own evergreen

GS Mick Whelan
gave his speech with
the passion and
verve we have all
come to expect.

The occasion was
a huge success –
thanks to the hard
work of the two
district council
secretaries, Darran
Brown and Debbie
Reay, who organised
it all – and it was
suggested that, next
year, District 3 visits
District 8.
Brighton beat

ASLEF sent four delegates – Mick Whelan, general secretary; Tosh McDonald, EC president; Andy Botham of Derby branch; and Mark Daniels of Barking main line – to the Labour Party conference in Brighton from Sunday 24 to Wednesday 27 September. Simon Weller, assistant general secretary; Dave Calfe, EC vice-president; executive committee members Marz Colombini and Howard Kaye; district organiser Dicky Fisher; and local reps Tom Corbin (Salisbury) and Julian Vaughan (Northern Line North) attended as visitors. Dave Bowen was a delegate for Henley-on-Thames constituency Labour Party; Phil Graham for Islington South & Finsbury CLP; Andy Hudd for Bristol North-West CLP; Becky Kaye for South Weston Surrey CLP; and Nikki McDonald for Doncaster Central CLP. Ed Mayne, of Waterloo Nine Elms, attended as ex-officio Labour councillor for Hounslow.

Collette Gibson of Shenfield branch, who works for Crossrail, and Angela Geddes-Brown, of Birmingham New Street, who works for East Midlands Trains, attended the Labour Party women’s conference in the Oxford room of the Hilton Metropole on Saturday 23 September where Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said he wanted a ‘more open, more democratic, party’ with the ‘widest possible participation’.

The mood at conference – the biggest in Labour’s history – was distinctly upbeat after the gains at the general election in June and delegates were delighted that the signage was in iconic socialist red rather than the washed out pink – optimistically described by Labour Party press officers as a ‘contemporary colourway’ – we have seen in recent years.

QUOTE...

‘What a difference a year makes. Labour wants to fight the Tories, not each other. The general election dramatically changed the mood among Labour MPs. Jeremy Corbyn isn’t going anywhere. Alongside the traditional fish and chips, the sea front cafés of Brighton ought to be serving up large helpings of humble pie to Labour MPs.’ – Jon Craig of Sky News in Politics First

...UNQUOTE

Changing the world

Tosh McDonald made a typically passionate speech on the steps of the Friends Meeting House at the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy fringe meeting on Saturday night. ‘Hasn’t it been an amazing couple of years?’ he asked rhetorically. ‘Haven’t we come a long way? When I joined the railway in 1979 I looked up to a comrade in ASLEF called Bill Ronksley who told me, “It can take a long time to change the world but, when change comes, it comes very quickly.” And he was right!’ Tosh, wearing a ‘Davey Hopper working class hero’ t-shirt, was asked to entertain all those who couldn’t get into a venue packed to the rafters. Steve Turner, assistant general secretary of Unite, also came out to talk on the steps and began by joking, ‘I was told I was coming out to shut

Russell Brand, speaking at Momentum’s The World Transformed festival on the fringe of this year’s Labour Party conference, observed: ‘In a way, addiction is just amplified consumerism. The idea that you can make yourself feel better by buying something…’

Tory austerity is so last year

Tosh McDonald spoke at a Labour Assembly Against Austerity rally in the Charlotte room of the Grand Hotel on Sunday afternoon. He was on a panel, chaired by Unite AGS Steve Turner, which included Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell; Shadow Health Secretary Diane Abbott; Shadow Justice Secretary Richard Burgon; Shadow Business Secretary Rebecca Long Bailey; Shadow Fire Minister Chris Williamson; and Cat Smith, Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement and Youth Affairs.
Power to the people

ICK WHELAN set out the importance of the Labour-trade union link at the annual reception given by TULO, the Trade Union Group of MPs, Unions Together and Thompsons solicitors in the Viscount room of the Hilton Metropole on Sunday night.

The GS said: ‘The trade union movement has always been an anchor for the Labour Party – the party grew out of the union movement – and I believe Labour’s affiliated unions should and will remain an anchor for the party.

‘Because the link between the Labour Party and the trade union movement is one of our most precious assets. It’s the channel through which the views and experiences of millions of working men and women are heard across the party. From the branch to the GC to the shadow cabinet to the leader. The Labour-union link keeps all of us rooted in the issues which matter to working people.

‘Jeremy's election as leader was a landmark for the Labour Party and for British politics in the 21st century. It’s led to a re-energisation of Labour’s grassroots and a re-alignment of the national debate. The result of the general election in June gives us a platform on which to build for the future. Colleagues, we stand here together to secure a Labour victory at the next general election, whenever it comes.’

Tories always break promises

OSH McDonald damned this Conservative government – and previous Conservative administrations – by telling conference ‘The Tories always break their promises.’

The EC president, speaking from the platform on Tuesday afternoon, on a contemporary motion, composite 7, about rail, moved by Doncaster Central CLP and seconded by Peterborough CLP, said: ‘The Tories always break their promises. Talk to people at the Department for Work and Pensions. Talk to people on Southern Rail, and talk to people on Northern Rail. Talk to the people in the north of England and the Midlands and Wales who are promised electrification and whose economies are significantly dependent on an improved, electrified, railway network. The truth is they lied. And they always lie. You can tell they’re lying because you can see their lips moving!’

Ethical foreign policy

Mick Whelan spoke at a Palestine Solidarity Campaign fringe – marking 100 years since the Balfour Declaration – chaired by Hugh Lanning in the Renaissance suite of the Jury’s Inn Hotel on Sunday night. Mick said it was time to deliver an ethical foreign policy for Labour – and Britain – in the Middle East which recognised the rights of the Palestinians as well as the rights of Israelis.

QUOTE...

‘Not for more than 20 years can I remember a Labour conference where there was such a sense of optimism, and even excitement, among delegates.’ – Nigel Morris, political editor, The Independent
A railway fit for the 21st century

Mick Whelan, in a carefully considered, thoughtful, and well-received speech at the Labour Party conference, called for joint-up thinking, long-term planning, and a modern, properly integrated transport policy for 21st century Britain.

The GS, speaking from the platform during the debate on the economy on Monday morning, said: ‘Investing in infrastructure is essential for the economic success of a nation. Britain needs significant investment because the ability to move people and goods around the country is the way to deliver employment, growth, and national prosperity.’

‘The Labour Party is committed to the nationalisation of the railways and that is the right thing to do. Because at the moment investment in our railways – in infrastructure, innovation and rolling stock – comes from the government. The taxpayer makes the public commitment, while the company takes a private profit. And that is wrong. We need to put the wheels and steel back together and create a vertically integrated railway fit for the 21st century. Bringing the railway back into public ownership will mean we have secure investment, a secure railway, and a secure future. It will be the foundation on which we build our economic success and a country fit for everybody. Let’s do it!’

The new centre ground

Jeremy addresses conference
was 20 or 30 years ago. A new consensus is emerging from the great economic crash, and the years of austerity, and people have started to find a political voice for their hopes for something different and something better. ‘We need to build a still broader consensus around the priorities we set out at the election, making the case for both compassion and collective aspiration. Because this is the real centre of gravity of British politics now: We are the political mainstream.’

As delegates in the hall rose to give Jeremy a standing ovation, John Lennon’s top ten hit ‘Power to the People’ was played through the speakers and activists sang along, clapping their hands and stamping their feet in time to the music. ‘Well get on your feet / And out on the street / Singing power to the people . . .’

Off message

Labour met this year in Brighton, a place which, according to the journalist and author Keith Waterhouse, ‘looks as though it is a town helping the police with their inquiries.’ The ASLEF crew stayed at the Old Ship on the seafront, where our annual assembly of delegates was held in 2014. In Vanity Fair, William Makepeace Thackeray has his main characters escape from London to what he calls the Ship Inn at Brighton – actually the Ship Tavern when he was writing his novel in 1847 – and now the Old Ship Hotel. Why? Because, as the feisty Becky Sharpe tells her husband Rawdon Crawley, ‘A comfortable inn in Brighton is better than a spunging-house in Chancery Lane.’

Delegates played a new parlour game this year – conference bingo! The idea was to tick off, one by one, the conference clichés trotted out by speakers at fringe meetings as well as in the conference hall including: thought leadership; cutting edge; starting the conversation; going forward; fully funded; blue sky thinking; connectivity; direction of travel; the digital future; boom and bust; evidence-led; and addressing the real issues. Bingo!

Rachael Maskell admitted she’s suffered a ‘JC experience’ on VTEC because, ‘on principle, I always travel standard class’ and there have been times, on overcrowded trains between London and York, when she has had to sit on the floor of the carriage.

Christian Wolmar confessed over a coffee that he’s writing a new book about driverless cars and autonomous vehicles – ‘one of the great scams of the 21st century.’

Seema Malhotra, the Labour MP for Feltham & Heston, parodied the Labour Party’s love of initials by thanking, for their support, ‘the CLPD, the LRC – [and after a Paucisque pause] – MFI, KFC . . .’

Boutique, a bar just round the corner from the conference centre, hung a bright red neon sign above its door: ‘No drugs or nuclear weapons allowed inside.’

Quote...

‘It is not anti-Semitic to criticise Israel!’ – Mike Katz, Jewish Labour Movement

Unquote

Mick Whelan wrote an article – under the headline ‘ASLEF calls for investment in infrastructure’ – on Tuesday in the Yellow Pages, a daily conference briefing produced for delegates by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Left Futures and Labour Briefing, ahead of the debate that morning on investing in infrastructure and the composite motion on rail in the afternoon.
Rail at heart of Labour’s transport strategy

Rachael Maskell, the Shadow Rail Minister, says: ‘I believe that major rail routes should be at the heart of our transport strategy.’ She was speaking at a breakfast round table discussion on the future of rail and wider transport policy chaired by Stephen Joseph of the Campaign for Better Transport in the Kielder room of the Hilton Metropole Hotel on Monday morning. ‘We will promote rail because we know that rail is so much safer than road. We need to have a focus on freight because the free market approach to freight hasn’t worked. There has to be a better way to meet business demands for delivery around our country. As for DOO, we know that a guard is not just to see the safe dispatch of the train but is what I call a passenger champion, to look after the safety and security of passengers.’

Manuel Cortes, general secretary of the TSSA, argued, ‘New technology is being used to boost profits and cut staff and that’s not what passengers want. We want a railway that meets the needs of passengers, not shareholders.’

And Tony Berkeley of the Rail Freight Group, attacked the DFT, saying, ‘All they do is give a great deal of money to consultants to tell them what they should already know.’

New ideas

Mick Whelan told a Campaign for Labour Party Democracy fringe meeting in the Queen’s Hotel on Monday night that, under the dynamic leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, the party is moving in the right direction. ‘It’s Theresa May and the Tories who are in disarray,’ said the G5, just ahead of the disastrous Conservative Party conference in Manchester. ‘While we have a Labour Party responding to the real needs of people and the real problems of this country with new ideas and the real answers and solutions we need.’

● Overheard at the CLPD fringe before Mick got up to speak: ‘This isn’t the Momentum meeting, is it?’ ‘No, it’s CLPD. But you’ll only be upset if you thought it was Progress.’

QUOTE...
‘There’s far too much month left at the end of my money.’ – Unison delegate
...UNQUOTE

Time to party – Mick Whelan

‘Because we wanted live rather than recorded music, but weren’t allowed drums, so it was, basically, a singer with a guitar, and Johnny Cash is rather more upbeat than Bob Dylan.’

Peace in our time

Mick Whelan spoke at a Justice for Colombia fringe meeting in the Wye room of the Hilton Metropole on Tuesday evening. The event – called Imagining Peace in Colombia – celebrated the landmark deal between the government of Colombia and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia aka FARC). He was joined on the platform by Tim Roache, general secretary of the GMB, Jo Stevens, Labour MP for Cardiff Central, and Steve Cavalier, chief executive of Thompsons solicitors.

Following the election in June, the party is being taken more seriously by business than it has been for years. The number of businessmen and women attending conference has leapt by more than 50%.

Comrades in arms – Mick and Kelvin (left); while Jon Trickett waits in the wings listening to Mick speak (above)

Niamh Sweeney, joint president of the National Education Union, tweeted a picture of Mick Whelan with a new NEU tote bag: ‘So cool seeing our amazing new logo all over #Lab17 & #Brighton @NEUnion great modelling @MickWhelanASLEF’
Why I’m standing to be leader of the Scottish Labour Party

RICHARD LEONARD is one of two candidates – Glasgow MSP Anas Sarwar is the other – standing to become leader of the Scottish Labour Party. Here Richard, who has been endorsed by ASLEF, reveals what he will do if elected on 18 November to replace Kezia Dugdale.

I AM standing to be the leader of the Scottish Labour Party because we have an opportunity to change our party and, through that, to fundamentally change our society in favour of the many rather than the privileged few.

In Scotland today the richest 1% own more personal wealth than the whole of the bottom 50% put together.

RADICAL AND REAL CHANGE
That is wrong and, if I am elected to lead the Scottish Labour Party, it will be my mission to make our society more equal, to redistribute wealth and power, tackle poverty, inequality and injustice, and to promote public ownership. It is only that wholesale, radical and real change that will help Scottish Labour regain the faith and trust of people in Scotland and so win power again.

For too long politicians have tried to position themselves according to focus groups, honing and managing the message until it becomes so bland that voters don’t know what they stand for.

I do know what I stand for. I stand for public ownership – state ownership – of both our rail infrastructure and operation of our rail network. I was the secretary of the Scottish Save Our Railways campaign when we opposed the Railways Act in the 1990s. Today we do not need to speculate about the disadvantage of privatisation of the rail network. We see it daily – the never ending attack on the terms and conditions of staff, the above inflation increase year on year of fares for passengers, the reduction in the quality of service, and the starvation of investment which inhibits the role our public transport infrastructure could play in supporting sustainable economic development.

FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM
The problem is fundamental. The duty of these private companies is to act in the interests of shareholders – that is the primary duty of the directors of those companies, too. So as long as this service sits in the private sector, directors will put the interests of shareholders – not those of passengers, or freight users, let alone those who work in the service – first.

So Scottish Labour, under my leadership, will bring our railways back into public ownership.

I am also clear that our rail network has a major role to play in tackling climate change. If we are serious about getting cars off our roads and freight off our motorways then we need to drive the public and freight users on to the rail network. This has the advantages of maximising the use of our rail infrastructure, and helping our roads last longer, so saving on road maintenance, improving road and rail efficiency, and increasing jobs in the rail industry.

The UK and Scotland need governments that are bold and radical – which believe in, promote and deliver public ownership for the common good. We have had enough of the privatisation agenda. We have seen the success of the re-opening of the Borders rail link. This is carrying twice the number of passengers predicted and helping to support sustainable local rural communities and halting depopulation. Our ambition must not simply rest on maintaining what we have – we must seek ways to replicate the success of the Borders rail link.

A SENSE OF HISTORY
Amongst the greatest achievements of the 1945 Labour government was the creation of the National Health Service, the construction of tens of thousands of council houses, the creation of the welfare state, and the nationalisation of the mines and the railways.

I want to build a Scottish Labour Party with a sense of history, an understanding of where we came from, and who we are, again. If Labour is to win again we need vision in our politics and the restoration of trade union values and democratic socialist principles consistently applied.

People like principles and idealism in politics – and I believe they will also vote for it.
Branch News

Beer and badges

ROVE PARK had the pleasure of welcoming GS Mick Whelan, AGS Simon Weller, DO1 Graham Morris, EC1 Marz Colombini and Southeastern DCC Martin Brooks to our long service/beer & badge evening. Thanks to the usual poor Southeastern service our guests were delayed en route, which gave us a chance to get the local business done and dusted, giving Mick the floor on arrival for a passionate address to the packed room. After questions it was time to celebrate long service. Mick presented badges to Michael Taylor (5 years); Chris Warrell and Colin Sparrow (10); Andy Bishop (15); and Ray Garland (25). Thanks to all our guests and members for making it a special evening. Ray Garland, branch secretary

Thanks, Hoppy

Leamington Spa branch was very surprised at our latest meeting to learn of the upcoming retirement of our branch chair Richard Hopkins. Anyone who has been on the railway in the Midlands in the last 40 years will know Richard. He started in September 1978 as a driver’s assistant and relief driver at Saltley until 1985, moving to relief driver at Euston until 1986. He then Leamington Spa in 1996, becoming LLC, branch secretary and, finally, branch chair. All your colleagues want to thank ‘Hoppy’ for hisavetless work towards the success and security of our little depot, and hope he enjoys his well-earned retirement after almost 40 years on the footplate. More time to spend on his extensive Range Rover collection now! Nick Walker, branch reporter

Cutter and clan

A good turn out for the King’s Cross 2017 reunion at Hatfield Social Club. Branch secretary Richard Sullivan and RMS national secretary Les Muir got the show on the road before we were joined by Nigel Gibson, district 5 officer, and Howard Kaye, EC member for district 5. There were retirement presentations to Felix Gomes (GTR GN); Adam Farmer (GTR GN); and Nigel Elston (VTEC); 40 year badges for Keith ‘Blackadder’ Maidment (GTR GN) and Mick then Leamington Spa in 1996, becoming LLC, branch secretary and, finally, branch chair. All your colleagues want to thank ‘Hoppy’ for hisavetless work towards the success and security of our little depot, and hope he enjoys his well-earned retirement after almost 40 years on the footplate. More time to spend on his extensive Range Rover collection now! Nick Walker, branch reporter

Farewell, brother!

Graham Russell, VTEC KX LLR rep presents Tony Kocks with his 15 year union service badge. Well done, Tony! PJ Smith, branch reporter

At a standing room only September branch, Hammersmith & City 267 said a fond farewell to long-standing ASLEF activist, Lee Darnton, who has been heavily involved with the union as a local rep, regular at district council, and also chair at AAD. From all your colleagues, Lee, we say ‘farewell, brother’! Keith Dale celebrated 28 years in our union; George (Alex) Mayers 25 and Lee 29. All three were presented with their awards by our very hard working DO Finn Brennan.

AN EVENING WITH TOSH MCDONALD, PRESIDENT, ASLEF

Fundraising event, supported by Hartlepool TUC, organised by Hartlepool CLP at South Durham Steelworks Club, Westbourne Road, Hartlepool from 7pm on Friday 10 November. Mike Hill, MP for Hartlepool, will be in attendance for a Q&A. Tickets are £5 which includes refreshments, quiz, bingo and raffle from Chris Simmons (cjs@talktalk.net); Carl Richardson (carl.richardson@ hartlepool.gov.uk); Edwin Jeffries (ejeffries73@gmail.com). Come along and bring your friends for a good socialist night out with like-minded colleagues.
Mick Holder turns back time to November 1917

New technology Great War style and protecting members were hot topics in the Journal 100 years ago

PASSING SIGNALS AT DANGER

‘We are trying to remove a long-standing grievance,’ writes the Slade Green branch secretary, ‘namely, the signal locking apparatus being pitted against the corroborated evidence of driver and fireman re alleged passing of signals at danger. The men welcome rather than condemn any apparatus that tends to safe working, but they are not prepared to admit the locking apparatus as being infallible, or to be the deciding factor at inquiries where it is alleged that signals have been passed at danger.’

ERRORS MADE IN THE BOX

The editor reports on the reliostop, a mechanical device which turns a stop signal into a fact by stopping the train at danger. It would not, however, operate in the case of a signalm an giving a ‘clear’ line when he should not have done so. It would correct errors due to a driver’s oversight, but not protect the driver or passengers from errors made in the box. ‘It is a mechanical contrivance placed at the side of the line, near to the metals, and made to come into contact with an apparatus clamped to the engine. These engage each other according to the signals, and a train can be brought up by the brake application. It would be of special value during fogs but, as stated, only confirm s the state of the signals. It would not rectify errors for which the driver was not responsible.’

OUR MEMBERS NOT TO BLAME

Organising Secretary A Mason reports looking out for ‘the interests of two of our Staveley Central members who were concerned in a fatal accident to a female painter employed by the Great Central in the wagon shops at Staveley. At the early stages of the inquiry it became evident that our members were in no way to blame for the sad occurrence and were consequently dismissed from the inquiry.’

Picture this

I am writing about classic steam push-pull operation in the UK and someone kindly sent this photograph. In my many years, I have seen thousands of railway pictures, mostly three-quarter front shots, the vast majority showing just the railway. This goes high on my list of top 25 railway pics. It’s different. It’s animated. It shows the train in its urban setting. You can almost feel you are there, waiting for the train to cross, the gates to re-open, to get over the crossing. The pic is of the Selby-Goole push-pull train crossing Boothferry Road, Goole, en route for Selby. The fireman is alone in the cab, as the driver is up front of the train, which the loco is propelling. He is driving the train in co-operation with the driver and looking forward to note progress. The exhaust is drifting backwards. From the BT logo, pedestrians, and car, I think it was taken in the early 1950s.

Eric Stuart
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Join lost boys 68 88
GLEN SOUTTHALL  WIRRAL LEGEND

Glen Southall died on 1 August. He was 80. Glen was born and brought up in the county town of Cheshire, and began his career as a cleaner at 84K Chester West. In 1958 the depot moved into the Chester group, which was given the new code 6E, and the glorious Swindon machines were removed and replaced with ex-LMSR stock. When the shed closed in 1960 Glen transferred to 6A, the LMSR stable, on the other side of Midland station. In the early hours of 8 August 1963 Glen was firing south on the WCML when a red signal finished his shift. A bobby said he couldn’t tell him what it was (the mail robbery) but he wouldn’t be going anywhere anytime soon.

When Chester closed in 1967 he moved to 8H Birkenhead Mollington Street on the Wirral peninsular which was right up his street. He said you could judge how good a depot was by the drivers’ golf handicap - Glen’s was eight! When Mollington Street closed in 1985 he became one of the boat people of Ellesmere Port. His final move was to Liverpool Lime Street.

I met Glen on a Sprinter course at Ladywell House, Preston, in 1991. Our tutor was Potter legend Arthur Pepper, there were lots of brew breaks, and plenty of humour. Glen was funny, and the more we laughed, the funnier he got. One day we broke for lunch 30 minutes early because, after a Class 31 was mentioned, he shouted out, ‘A tharty-one wouldn’t pull a soldier off a prostitute!’

Glen had a deep affection for the Great Western. His favourite engines from the halcyon days of Chester West were 1022 County of Northampton; 6817 Gweddwr Grange; 7922 Saloonhall; and 5061 Earl of Birkenhead, ‘the finest locomotive in the world.’ When I wound him up about the LMS replacements he had to suffer his replies were waspish. ‘Stanier 2-6-2 tanks wouldn’t boil an egg.’ Derby Fours? ‘Station pilot.’ Stanier 5X Jubilees? ‘You can get more steam out of Val’s iron.’ Class 90s? ‘Ah, the Skoda. Come out of Euston in the wet, wheels screeching like an Argentine football crowd.’

DVTs? ‘Skoda estate. Like driving a bus with no seats, rear engine, and a 750ft throttle cable.’ Glen always said he was ‘a plastic Scouser, a wollyback from the Wirral!’ He had a railway career of 50 years, less two for national service, then 20 cruising the canals with his wife Val on their narrow boat and playing golf. A Wirral legend. Mel Thorley, RMS

RAY WORTHY  THE MANNEQUIN

Ray Worthy, affectionately known to colleagues as the Mannequin because of his immuculate appearance, and as the Jailer due to his trademark shoe segs and keychain, started his railway career at Leicester Beal Street in 1964; working his way from cleaner to fireman, passed fireman and, finally, registered driver in 1984. Ray was an active member of ASLEF and served on the LDC at Leicester for many years. During the 1980s he was also a JP at Leicester magistrates’ court, finally relinquishing these duties when he was made redundant and moved to Rugby depot in 1988. Ray was immensely proud to have been selected to drive the royal train in the late 1980s.

He spent over 20 years at Rugby, finishing his career in 2009 with early retirement at the age of 60. Ray became a member of the Syston model railway club, helping to run numerous exhibitions. He and his wife enjoyed many foreign holidays and also tried to visit as many Wetherspoons pubs around the country as they could, managing to tick off more than 230. In retirement Ray remained an avid ASLEF supporter and played his part in organising regular get togethers, including the annual reunion and in June 2015 received his award for 50 years membership of ASLEF.

Ray sadly passed away on 17 March at the age of 67 and will be sorely missed by his wife Chris, children Laura and Scott, and all who knew him. Si Goode, Virgin Trains West Coast company council

ERNEST WHITE

Retired Redhill driver Ernest White passed away on 28 July at the age of 97. Ernest was born on 8 July 1920 and started cleaning at Dorchester in 1937. He was stood off the first winter and then called back. After a spell cleaning at Weymouth and Bournemouth he transferred to Three Bridges in 1941 as a fireman and then became a driver there. He passed for driving on what was meant to be D-Day (put back a day because of bad weather) making him one of Britain’s youngest drivers at the time. In 1958 he moved to Redhill from where he retired in 1985.

He was a great gentleman and was at the retirement of his son Steve White at Three Bridges. There are not many fathers and sons who are both retired train drivers (although I have hopes of joining the club in around four years!)

David Heydon, Redhill

FRED KETCHER

Fred Ketcher was born in Edmonton, north London. He was called up to serve in the army and, on being demobbed, joined the railway at Hornsey loco. While travelling home on the Tube from a day out to the Festival of Britain in London in 1951, he struck up a conversation with a young lady called Betty Hicks. When Fred got to his stop she got off as well; when Fred boarded his bus she got on as well; and when Fred got off at his stop she got off as well. It turned out she lived not far from Fred, so he walked her to her house, and while standing talking outside her father came out and invited him in. In due course Betty Hicks became Betty Ketcher. They were building lots of council houses at Hatfield in Hertfordshire, so Fred applied for a transfer to Hatfield loco. I had the pleasure of working with Fred in the Leeds link. In retirement he met up regularly with his old colleagues at the Royal British Legion club in Hatfield where they became known as the railway children. Betty predeceased Fred. Their daughter Debby and grandson Rob invited us to celebrate Fred’s life at a committal at Harwood crematorium and afterwards at the Horse & Groom in Hatfield, where they thanked Geoff Fitzjohn, Fred’s old second man, who continued to visit him.

Fred Ketcher 1928-2017

PJ Smith, RMS

TONY LYFORD

Sad to report the sudden passing of retired Didcot driver Tony Lyford on 11 July at the age of 83. Tony was an active ASLEF member, secretary of our annual reunion, and a steam enthusiast, driving many steam specials from Didcot. Tony spent most of his career at Didcot, apart from a spell at Old Oak Common, and his popularity was shown by the number of colleagues who attended his funeral at Garford crematorium. He will be much missed on Thursday afternoons when the retired section meets to reminisce and enjoy a wee dram.

Alwyn Evans, Didcot RMS

TONY LYFORD

FINA L JOURNEYS

Bernard ‘Crazy Horse’ Davies has died aged 88. He began his career at 98 Stockport Edgeley shed in 1946 as an engine cleaner, retiring from Longsight in the early 1990s. And Brian Perrin has died at 77. He started on the railway as a cleaner at 24B Rose Grove (Burnley) in 1955. He went to Blackburn station BOP, then Longsight, retiring from Virgin West Coast. Had both pals as my driver when I was a ‘slop coat’ at the camp; good memories.

Mel Thorley, Longsight
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.

Palestine – what about the two state solution, Nigel?

Winston Churchill, addressing the apparently intractable problem of the Cold War in 1954, observed that ‘jaw-jaw is better than war-war’ and he was right. So it was very disappointing to note that Nigel Gibson’s report (Journal, August) after a fact finding mission to Palestine failed to mention the two state solution. Because jaw-jaw is the only way this equally intractable problem will be solved without resort to war-war. The two state solution – one for Palestinians, one for Israelis, two states for two groups of people – is what right-minded people worldwide support.

The question, of course, is how we get from where we are to where we want to be. I do not doubt Nigel’s sincerity. I do not doubt his shock. But there was nothing in his emotional descriptions of razor wire and shortages that even a quick look at the PSC website wouldn’t have told me. I read the article again, to make sure I hadn’t missed something, and came away even more disappointed. Disappointed that the Journal would print a piece of propaganda, so one-sided, it reads as if it emanated from the PSC press office.

No mention was made of the fact – and it is a fact – that Israel is the only recognisably functioning democracy in the Middle East. No mention was made of the fact that Israeli citizens can vote every few years for a dove like Shimon Peres as easily as a hawk like Benjamin Netanyahu. No mention was made of the innocent Israeli children dying every day like their Palestinian counterparts. Nigel, and the Journal, failed to tell me which parent I should feel sorrier for. The mother of the 11-year-old Palestinian whose death was described, or the mother of an 11-year-old Israeli child killed by a random rocket attack or bus bomb in Tel Aviv.

No mention was made of the fact that the state of Israel was created by the United Nations, and as such has a right to exist. No mention was made of the fact that the first duty of every government is the defence of its citizens who are under attack every day. And no mention was made of the fact that Israel – uniquely – is surrounded by nations constitutionally committed to the annihilation of the state of Israel and the genocide of the Jewish people.

Palestine has become a cause célèbre for Western European progressives, a politically expedient mechanism for lazy virtue-signalling among the Islington dinner party classes.

Tom Burns, Perth

Waving a magic wand

I write in support of train operator Liam Mariscotti and his letter (Journal, October) regarding how ASLEF should be more focused on train driver issues in the UK rather than constantly involving itself with ongoing complex global issues such as the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. In nearly every copy of the Journal space is dedicated to various global political struggles in countries as far afield as Cuba, Sri Lanka and Palestine. I am all for keeping abreast on global politics and if I could wave a magic wand to make the world a better place I would but the vast majority of drivers pay their dues so ASLEF can carry out its fundamental role of protecting and improving train drivers’ pay and conditions in the UK.

Steve Hill, Manchester Piccadilly No 1

GS Mick Whelan says: ‘This is the policy of our trade union – which members make each year at AAD – in which every member can have his or her say. Getting active internationally, supporting workers in other countries in their fight for the things we fight for here, is what we do after we have done the day job – looking after our members, industrially, in the workplace, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year.’

Missed opportunities

Employer Justified Retirement Age agreements appear, to me, to be at least a third missed opportunity to drag ASLEF closer to the 21st century. The first being the failure of one man one vote in this era of electronic communications, and continued use of branch meetings to formulate local policy – a system clearly no longer fit for purpose, considering that many employees do not live close to their workplaces and cannot easily attend meetings, especially when there is only one, when they are operating a three shift system.
THE TRUE VALUE OF OUR SUBS

Lindsay and I would like to say a sincere thank you to my local reps Dave Shannon and John Swain for all their help and support throughout the last year while suffering with a personal illness which caused much stress and anxiety, especially waiting six months for my pension to be agreed. After nearly 30 years on London Underground I was retired on ill health in January. Without Dave being present at meetings and fighting my corner I would, basically, have been sacked! Being a member for 30 years, and a rep for 10, I saw the true value of our subs and representation. I would also like to thank EC8 Terry Wilkinson who has always been there for me, whatever the situation, and was there, until the last, at my leaving do! Apologies for slow thank yous but I needed you to be in a better place.

Andy Butler, train operator, Edgware Road

or similar. The second is failure by management and ASLEF to consider introduction of part-time working for those who want it, except for ‘trials’ that seem to last indefinitely.

What is to be celebrated about the curtailment of individual freedom of choice? Why should not someone who is fit and able and capable of performing a particular function be free to choose to work beyond some arbitrary age imposed by guesswork (because that is what it is)? I chose to work beyond 65. At that time, it was necessary to apply to stay. I wrote a six-page paper explaining the benefits not just to me but to the company and stayed for five years. I retired last April. There are many drivers in the company where I was employed who can’t wait to retire. That is as it should be.

My message is simple: do not oblige able, competent people to retire when they do not wish to. The waste to businesses and the nation is calculable – and enormous. No EJRA is set in stone. An EJRA is an EJRA only until it has been challenged and either struck down or reinforced by an employment tribunal or court of law. So if you don’t want to be forced to do something you would rather not do – challenge it. Remember, justifying an EJRA is extremely difficult. Choosing a retirement age the same as the state pension age is not sufficient justification. Not only must the employer justify the particular choice of retirement age, it has also to explain why some other age was not chosen; and whatever the decision, to show that the decision is a ‘proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.’

Philip Baxter, RMS

Time to stop rest day work

As ASLEF has allowed members to vote to bring back forced retirement, against the Equality Act 2010 (ageism), there is now a conflict of interest. Members belonging to a TOC or FOC that has an EJRA agreement with ASLEF cannot contest being told to retire, because he or she would not have access to our solicitors. You also imply (Journal, October) that drivers of a ‘certain age’ are not capable, and I quote; ‘which will sustain a driver workforce that can maintain the levels of professionalism and competence to the highest standards required by the rail industry’ – I find this statement personally quite insulting. What could be done is to stop rest day working – to which you have been agreeing for years – and stop TOCs and FOCs under manning depots, then perhaps you would get somewhere.

Andrew Tyrrell, Gillingham

GS Mick Whelan says: ‘The government took away the agreed retirement age. So where does it stop? If we want to achieve our aims? We have to have a policy on this. Every day of every week your elected officers carry out the policy of this trade union created by members at AAD.’

Preserving the Saltley past

I retired from Saltley motive power depot, Birmingham, in 1993 after a lifetime on the footplate. During the last two years of service I took a video camera to work and captured many of my colleagues. Included are supervisory staff, drivers, guards, LDC, storemen and cleaners at what was a huge depot. Shots of men at Tyseley, New Street and Snow Hill are also included. I also recorded an ASLEF retirement presentation for 40 drivers at Highfield Road social club and the Saltley welfare fund dinner at Villa Park. Footage of the 1997 Great Western MAS reunion at the BR Tyseley staff association club is also on record. To me, these recordings are priceless nostalgia and I was concerned that, at my age, they may get lost. I have, therefore, uploaded short videos onto a Facebook page. As time allows, more will be added, as the footage includes so many friends and colleagues I worked with, sadly, are no longer with us.

Dennis Herbert, retired driver

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ASLEF BRANCH III ASLEF branch 111 is 111 years old and has a limited edition numbered badge to celebrate the introduction of the Class 387 on KL services. Proceeds to the King’s Lynn branch welfare fund. £7.50 inc p&p from Mark Steele, I Rosecroft, South Wootton, King’s Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 3WX.
I met a gin-soaked bar room queen in Memphis

GREGOR GALL, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Bradford, on the challenges of unionising sex workers

SLEF created controversy at this year’s Trades Union Congress when, with the GMB, the union put forward a motion on rights for sex workers. Essentially, and notwithstanding those who have been physically coerced, the motion argued that providing sexual services is an act of labour and, as such, these workers should be accorded the rights of workers like other workers. The motion was defeated.

If sex workers are designated as workers, the next logical step is to consider how they can be unionised so, like other workers, they can come together collectively to advance and defend their interests.

TAKE ME UPSTAIRS FOR A RIDE

Before looking at attempts to unionise sex workers, it’s worth noting that how ‘best’ to regulate the sex industry is a frequent topic of discussion. Some focus on abolition but most recent discussion focuses on moves by governments to criminalise people who pay for sex. France recently joined a long list of countries, including Sweden, Iceland, Norway and Northern Ireland, in making it illegal to purchase a sexual service.

Yet this runs contrary to the views of many who work in the industry. If their voices were listened to, we might see a very different approach to regulating sex work. In France, the representatives of sex workers campaigned against criminalisation, saying it endangers the safety of sex workers, as the selling of sex will continue but be driven underground. Their slogan is ‘nothing about us without us’; no policy should be devised without the full and direct participation of the workers involved and their representatives.

Forming unions is one of the ways that sex workers are attempting to challenge the way the industry in which they work is regulated. Activists favour decriminalisation and a large number have sought to create a representative body to campaign for this.

Unionising sex workers typifies many of the sharpest challenges facing the labour movement. These include organising self-employed workers with no regular or fixed place of work, high levels of turnover and, effectively, zero hour contracts – in a labour market expanding due to migration. And, unlike other workers, sex workers also face moral opprobrium from inside and outside the labour movement as a result of the work they do.

Yet, despite these challenges, sex worker activists have succeeded in persuading fellow workers to unionise (either by joining existing unions or creating new ones) in 30 countries including Australia, Britain, Cambodia, Germany, India, the Netherlands, and the United States. They have been spurred on by their realisation that sex work is work much like any other, and that sex workers want and need rights.

GIMME THE HONKY TONK BLUES

In common with other workers they have problems over holiday pay, fines for bogus infractions at work, being compelled to do unpaid overtime, bullying by managers and being forced to work long hours without breaks. And there are different problems such as having to pay fees to work and purchasing items from their bosses.

Sex workers want to add a political voice to their economic voice and have used unionisation to amplify their public position on the legal status of sex work. But unionisation is not an easy task. The numbers involved have been small, progress in making substantive gains has been limited, and many unions have folded. Notable highlights have been collective bargaining over contracts for terms and conditions of work (remuneration, working hours, grievance and discipline procedures, and so on) as well as representation.

Formal collective bargaining has taken place in Australia, Britain, Germany and the US, while individual representation has also taken place through the sex work establishments’ grievance procedures as well as through legal action in many more countries. Political representation has involved campaigning and lobbying to reform the legal regulation of sex work. Informal collective bargaining, assisted by legal recourse, has also taken place, especially with regard to fees levied to work for exotic dancers and their campaign to be accorded employed status in the US.

After initial successes, energy levels have waned. Organisational development has stalled and many sex worker unions have folded. Along the way, there have been some bitter disputes among sex workers over whether managers should be members and which groups of sex workers (men, women or transgender) should be prioritised.

Yet, despite these problems, when one organisation folds another often emerges to take its place. This demonstrates the continuing demand for collective representation and the willingness of activists to step up to the plate to provide it. Unionisation is a work in progress and a battle being fought across the world.

AND THEN SHE BLEW MY MIND

My research – in the form of three books on the matter – suggests that developing an occupational form of labour unionism is the best way forward. Instead of trying to gain bargaining rights in each individual sex work establishment, which is an arduous process, sex workers should seek to regulate their industry as a whole by controlling the standards and practices within it, as well as entry to it. One way to do this is by creating a sense of industry identity, at the same time as organising through their union. It will be a difficult task but, potentially, more rewarding in the long run.

Gregor Gall is the author of Sex Worker Unionization: Global Developments, Challenges and Possibilities (Palgrave, 2016).
FEUDS, FRAUDS, DIRT AND DEATH

If you can get over the (admittedly high) hurdle that Dangerous Days on the Victorian Railways (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £9.99) has been written by Terry Deary, author of the Horrible Histories series, in the same jokey style, with some God-awful puns and dreadful jokes, then this is a bloody good read for anyone interested in industrial or, specifically, railway history.

A warts and all (mostly warts) account of the first hundred years of Britain's (steam) railways, it attempts to put our history straight. George Stephenson (who stole ideas from his competitors) traditionally gets far too much credit while Richard Trevithick (robbed by guess who) usually gets too little credit and Robert Stephenson (son of George) emerges as the real father of the railway.

The story runs from steam engines pumping water down tin mines in Cornwall to a national railway network in less than 100 years. Not many of the early rail entrepreneurs come out smelling of roses. In fact, they quickly made the term 'entrepreneur' a dirty word. The boom and bust bubble of the first hundred years of the railways to be remembered are all (mostly) account of those who built the railways, the navigators, or navvies, are described in detail. As are the so-called accidents, with thousands of men killed building the railways to be remembered alongside those killed working on the permanent way as well as the drivers, firemen, guards and passengers killed in train crashes.

There are lots of fascinating facts, too. Signallers used to be called policemen. And being a shunter was the most dangerous job in Victorian Britain, as being crushed between wagons or stepping into the path of an oncoming train were all too common events. Like I said, a bloody good read about the dirt and deaths, feuds and frauds, robberies and riots of the Victorian railway.

Mick Holder

Prize Crossword

Crossword

Across
1 Mini farm
7 Request for a restaurant meal
8 Contended cat sound
10 Sedate disco
11 Military-like facial hair
13 Exertion
15 Skilled painter
17 Unfasten
18 Country with capital Madrid
19 Closed
21 Speak in a slow sleepy manner
22 Domestic food-cooling appliance

Down
1 Rich crumbly biscuits
2 Renounce the throne like Edward VIII
3 Pantries
4 Citrus fruit
5 Trick or deceive
6 Neither
9 Large black German dog
12 Television adjustment for variance of light
14 Person who establishes a society
16 Beverage pouch (3,3)
18 Move around with a spoon
20 Long-handled weed remover

Solution to Crossword 138
Across
1 Bishop 7 Trace 8 Chop suey 9 Libra
10 Nuts 12 Cube 13 Whir 14 Knob 15 Buoy
17 Edit 19 Noise 20 Vicarage 21 Eagle 22 Severe

Down
1 Bacon 2 Shortcomings 3 Plunge
4 Style 5 Carbohydrate 6 Repair 11 Sub 13 Woe
14 Kennel 15 Braces 16 Seven 18 Theme

Congratulations to Mark Thompson, of Sittingbourne, Kent, 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 138th prize crossword in the October 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 November.

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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