So here it is, Merry Christmas
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Mick: ‘You are the future of rail in this country’

Look to the future now it’s only just begun

I WRITE this column after another week travelling the country where members told me we are entering an era of uncertainty in our industry. We go from a proposal for an all-Wales operation, with the wheels and steel back together, to the current franchisee leaving the bidding process. Renewed calls for a Scottish-controlled railway not rejected but not given the courtesy of a response by those currently in power. And the Conservative government reneging on promises of electrification at TPE, the East Midlands, and Wales, and seeking to regurgitate old money under the guise of new investment about connectivity to HS2. Then news – that is not news – of the break-up of the GTR franchise.

I have an apology to make. I did what we advise you not to do; respond to provocation on social media. But, when the RDG put out a tweet about how successful the freight sector is, it had to be shown for the lie that it is. Success? Tell that to the hundreds of drivers made redundant, displaced, or forced into premature retirement, and the many others who fear for their futures. The freight sector is in managed (or mismanaged) decline with no long-term strategy by the FOCs or DfT. We await final decisions on control period six and the Network Rail budget; and fear more cuts, in real terms. Will there be a commitment to do all the works deferred in the last five years first, as indicated in the Hendy report? If there is, look forward to lots of temporary and permanent speed restrictions!

Despite all the negativity swirling round our industry I remain upbeat because of the unity and solidarity shown by you, the ASLEF members, the backbone strength and protectors of the future of rail in this country. In all sectors – passenger, freight, Underground, light rail and other undertakings – there have been many challenges in the last year and, thanks to you, we stood our ground. To all the branch secretaries, local representatives, company councils, and equivalent, our deepest thanks. To the executive committee and officers, again, when difficult decisions needed to be addressed you stood firm. So, to all in ASLEF, thank you for everything you do and, in the hope of a brighter and safer future, here’s to a great Christmas and a prosperous and peaceful New Year.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
ASLEF drivers vote yes to Southern deal

ASLEF drivers have overwhelmingly voted yes to a proposed resolution to the long-running industrial dispute with Southern Railways – 731 (79.1%) voted yes and 193 (20.9%) voted no on a turnout of 87.1%

Mick Whelan, general secretary, said: ‘Our members on Southern, after careful consideration, and long and hard negotiations, have voted to accept this resolution to our industrial dispute with the company. We are pleased with a resolution which, we believe, works for the staff, and the company, and we now look forward to working with Southern Rail to restore good industrial relations and deliver the service passengers in the region deserve.’

The resolution to the dispute, which began in April last year, dealt with three different issues – driver only operation, terms and conditions, and pay.

‘The agreement means we will have a second safety-critical person on every train covered by this agreement except in exceptional circumstances. That person will have all the relevant safety competence – including the skills to evacuate passengers in an emergency.’

‘The agreement also confirms the terms and conditions under which our members at Southern are employed.

‘And the agreement gives our drivers a 28.5% increase in pay over the next five years. It covers the October 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 pay settlements, dealing with our outstanding pay claim, and provides a structured five-year deal through to the end of the franchise.’

The resolution accepted by our drivers on Southern applies only to that company and that franchise.

‘It’s important to stress that this deal is company-specific and does not have implications for any other train operating company on Britain’s railway network,’ said Mick. ‘Since the break-up of British Rail, and the privatisation of our railway, we have negotiated on a bi-lateral basis with each company and that is what we have done here.

‘After one and a half years of industrial strife we wanted to find a way forward for our members who work on the railway in this region, for the passengers who use Southern trains, and for the businesses which depend on the service. This deal is a resolution to a dispute, not a template for Britain’s railway in the 21st century.’

Urgent review needed after assault on driver

ASLEF has demanded an urgent review of security at depots where Underground trains are stabled overnight after an assault on a Night Tube driver on the Jubilee line. When the driver, taking a train into sidings at Stanmore, responded to an automatic alarm after the rear cab door was opened, he was confronted by a group of thugs who took his radio and sprayed him with paint. When he tried to escape he was tripped, beaten and kicked.

‘This incident highlights our concerns about the security of depots where trains are left overnight,’ said DO8 Finn Brennan. ‘There have also been incidents on the Victoria line. If graffiti vandals can access these locations, there is a real risk that those planning serious violent attacks may also do so with dreadful consequences.’

‘This is just one in a series of incidents where Night Tube drivers have been attacked. When the service was introduced, we were promised that additional staff and police resources would be in place to make sure it would be safe to operate. Instead, staff have been left alone and vulnerable in dangerous situations. This cannot be allowed to continue.

‘Health and safety reps are insisting that security arrangements at all depots be reviewed. We also want immediate action at locations like Stanmore where drivers are particularly vulnerable. Management need to act now. Drivers, and other staff, cannot be expected to go into situations where they are vulnerable to serious assaults.’

QUOTE...

‘Boris Johnson is like a puppy. The grown-ups have to follow him around, cleaning up where he last crapped.’ – Jolyon Maumgh QC

Just champion

Tosh McDonald

President Tosh McDonald has been asked by the Mayor of Doncaster and the NUM to be the champion for Doncaster’s mining heritage. ‘Basically this consists of working with the community, and the artist Lawrence Edwards, to design a statue for the town centre to celebrate our mining heritage,’ says Tosh.

Speakers’ corner

In another sign of ASLEF’s growing influence in the labour movement, general secretary Mick Whelan and executive committee president Tosh McDonald gave major speeches at different events on Saturday 4 November. Mick spoke at Justice Now: Make it Right for Palestine, a rally in Parliament Square organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the Palestinian Forum in Britain, Friends of Al Aqsa, the Stop the War Coalition, and the Muslim Association of Britain; while Tosh spoke at a conference at Congress House in London to mark the centenary of the Russian revolution.

WOMAN TOLD TO PICK UP SUSPICIOUS BAG

A passenger who reported a suspicious unattended sports bag – which she thought might contain a bomb – on her journey from Bishop’s Stortford to London was told by Greater Anglia, via Twitter, to ‘hand it in to one of our staff’. Georgia Stone, shocked by the TOC’s advice, said she wouldn’t dare touch it ‘in this day and age’.

QUOTED

‘Boris Johnson is like a puppy. The grown-ups have to follow him around, cleaning up where he last crapped.’ – Jolyon Maumgh QC

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

Rail operators told by @UKLabour it will halt future plans to extend driver only operation if it wins the next election.

Alan Jones

£37bn dividends paid to shareholders of privatised firms since 2010. Yes @johnmcdonnel1MP @UKLabour it’s time for public ownership!

We Own It

Taxi for Uber. Cabs are queuing up for the US corp with the employment appeal tribunal-upholding the right of drivers to paid hols, min wage, breaks, etc.

Kevin Maguire
Is Scandinavian model the future for ScotRail?

RAIN fares in Scotland could be cut by 25% if a Nordic-style state-owned company took over ScotRail services. That’s the conclusion of a new report – A Public Future for ScotRail services.

Scotland’s Railways – to be published this month by the Common Weal think tank in Glasgow. It would be achieved if the Scottish government embraced the system used in Finland, which has a publicly-owned rail firm running a service rated as one of the best in Europe. The findings in the report, commissioned by the TSSA, puts more pressure on the SNP government, which has been in power at Holyrood since 2007, to deliver a publicly-owned railway for the people of Scotland.

The Finnish model would slash fares for passengers in Scotland

Strike threat forces Tramlink agreement

Strike action on Croydon Tramlink was suspended after the company agreed to commission a fully independent review into the safety of the Guardian device in tram cabs. Drivers have complained that the new technology, which uses infra-red beams, and is designed to reduce the risk of micro-sleeps, causes headaches, dry eyes and blurred vision. Drivers are concerned about the long-term impact of exposure throughout the working day. ‘We welcome this independent review which we hope will deal with our members’ concerns,’ said DO8 Finn Brennan. ‘The health and safety of our passengers and members is always our first priority. Discussions with the company on dealing with the underlying issues that cause fatigue and tiredness will also continue.’ ASLEF wants TfL to commit to introducing a modern automatic tram protection system to prevent accidents by automatically applying the brake if a tram over speeds. The Guardian device does not do this.

CONFERENCE & 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.

Questions and answers:

**Q:** What is the main finding of the new report on ScotRail services?

**A:** The main finding of the report is that a publicly-owned rail firm running a service in Scotland is rated as one of the best in Europe. The report, commissioned by the TSSA, puts more pressure on the SNP government, which has been in power at Holyrood since 2007, to deliver a publicly-owned railway for the people of Scotland.

**Q:** How does the Finnish model work in terms of rail fares?

**A:** The Finnish model, which is embraced by the system used in Finland, would slash fares for passengers in Scotland. The report suggests that a state-owned company would be able to achieve this by cutting costs.

**Q:** What are the drivers’ concerns regarding the Guardian device in tram cabs?

**A:** Drivers have complained that the new technology, which uses infra-red beams, causes headaches, dry eyes and blurred vision. They are also concerned about the long-term impact of exposure throughout the working day. The company on dealing with the underlying issues that cause fatigue and tiredness has not been satisfied.

**Q:** What is the Scottish Trades Union Congress?

**A:** The Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) is the largest trade union organisation in Scotland. It represents over 150,000 workers and is the umbrella body for the major trade unions in Scotland.

**Q:** What is the Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival?

**A:** The Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival is an annual event held in Dorchester, Dorset, to commemorate the Tolpuddle Martyrs, a group of farm labourers who were tried and transported to Australia for setting up a trade union.

500 CLUB: J Robson, with number 85, won the November draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £390.
Mick condemns superficial RDG

ICK Whelan has slammed a superficial Rail Delivery Group initiative launched to counter the fears of the train operating companies about the popularity of the Labour Party’s plan to bring Britain’s railways back into public ownership.

The GS said: ‘This is another typically tendentious piece of twaddle from the Rail Delivery Group, an organisation set up not to deliver rail for passengers, staff and businesses in Britain, but to protect the interests of a select club of privatised train operating companies who have their snouts deep in the public trough.

‘The RDG exists solely to rip off taxpayers and the sooner we have a Labour government committed to bringing Britain’s railways back into public ownership the better. Better for the people who work hard every day to provide a

Train narrowly misses wood laid on the line

A train narrowly missed hitting old sleepers laid across the track in two places – near Coopersale Common Bridge and Station Road, North Weald Bassett – on the Epping Ongar Railway. The driver managed to stop just short of the sleepers and removed them from the track. A group of teenagers was seen near the railway line earlier in the day.

GBRf orders 50 new wagons

GB Railfreight is leasing 50 new lidded biomass wagons, each with a 70 tonne payload, compared with the current hopper’s 53 tonne capacity, from NACCO. They will run in two sets of 24 wagons, delivering 1,680 tonnes of auto-loading and discharging biomass per train.

ATW pulls out

Arriva Trains bails from the rails in Wales

Arriva Trains Wales has withdrawn from the bidding process for the Wales & Borders franchise. The decision by the incumbent operator leaves Abellio, Keolis Amey, and MTR in the running. TFW said: ‘It is clear they [ATW] have done this for their own commercial reasons’ adding, ‘With final tenders due later this year, we have three companies with world-class credentials each putting their own distinct cases for how they will deliver the ambitious objectives we set with the goal of delivering a step change in rail services for passengers across Wales and the Borders.’

AI RISKS GM-STYLE BACKLASH

Experts say the growing influence of artificial intelligence risks provoking a backlash on the scale of the public distaste for genetically modified Frankenstein food. Ian Sample, writing in The Guardian, said: ‘AI risks provoking a public backlash as it increasingly falls into private hands, threatens people’s jobs, and operates without effective oversight or regulatory control.’ Wendy Hall, Professor of Computer Science at Southampton University, said: ‘We have to think about all the issues. When machines can learn and do things for themselves, what are the dangers for us as a society?’

BOTCHED TRAIN-TRAM PROJECT HELD AT RED LIGHT

Network Rail chief executive Mark Carne says there are no more train-tram schemes in the pipeline after the failure of the botched £75 million pilot project in Sheffield. Carne told the Commons Public Accounts Committee, ‘I don’t think there’s anything on the slate to be delivered, but I think we have learnt a lot, and we have developed technology that would enable us to move ahead more quickly if people did want to pursue this.’

WOMAN JAILED AFTER MAN DIES WHEN HIT BY TRAM

A woman who pushed a stranger off a station platform and a moving tram. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jailed for five years. Charissa Brown-platform, causing him to be fatally injured, has been jail...
From Russia with love

As Donald Trump puts America first, China can seize its global moment.’ – Larry Elliott in The Guardian

Reopen Beeching lines

The Campaign for Better Transport has urged Transport Secretary Chris Grayling to reverse dozen of the infamous Beeching cuts – which closed 18,000 miles of track – to be reversed ‘to benefit local communities’. They include Ashington-Blyth-Newcastle; Portishead to Bristol; the Worcester to Derby main line between Stourbridge and Burton; the Leamside line; Lewes to Uckfield; Skipton to Colne; Leicester to Burton-on-Trent; Fleetwood to Preston; Wisbech to March; Totton to Hythe; Bere Alston-Tavistock-Okehampton; and the east-west rail link between Oxford and Cambridge.

Trainy on track

When we revealed (Journal, September) that MTR Express had named one of its new high speed trains Trainy McTrainface many readers checked it wasn’t 1 April. But the Swedish operator did ask passengers to name four trains on the Gothenburg to Stockholm line and, when the most popular suggestion proved to be Trainy McTrainface, went along with it.

‘We have listened to the voice of the people,’ said chief commercial officer Peder Osterkamp as it left Gothenburg central for the capital. When Boaty McBoatface won a poll in the UK to name a new polar research vessel the Natural Environment Research Council, cursing the day it embraced democracy, chose Sir David Attenborough instead.

PIGGIES AC/DC

South Western Railway has commissioned Kiepe Electric to refurbish 18 Class 442 Piggies, stabled at Bournemouth and Eastleigh, for services between Waterloo and Portsmouth via Guildford, Haslemere and Petersfield. The current DC traction equipment will be switched to AC and a new Knorr-Bremse braking system fitted. The interiors will also be refreshed, with charging points, customer information screens and new seats and carpets.

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Mick slams DfT’s ‘catastrophic’ decision on rail safety

ICK Whelan has written to Rail Minister Paul Maynard; Ian Prosser, chief inspector of railways and director, rail safety, at the Office of Rail and Road; and Mark Carne, chief executive of Network Rail, expressing our concerns at the Conservative government’s decision to shelve the Law Commission’s report on level crossing closures.

The GS wrote: ‘I am writing to express our disgust at what we believe could turn out to be a catastrophic decision in relation to railway safety – your decision to put aside the Law Commission’s report on level crossings and the plans to close many, if not all, level crossings.

‘We were told about this move by Mr Norton of the DfT at a recent ORR rail industry health & safety advisory committee meeting. He explained that whilst this was not the end of level crossing closures it was the end of technology had advanced significantly and Network Rail has a greater understanding of their work which, when combined, will allow for better outcomes when risk assessing level crossings and gaining suitable improvements without the need for closure. He also cited Brexit as an issue.

‘We would like to express our gravest concerns on this move as we do not think the assessments or technological solutions will be robust enough to achieve what closure would. I must therefore inform you that where we have concerns we will either not operate in those areas or operate at decreased speeds to protect our members, the travelling public, and other stakeholders.’

Swanage-Wareham success

The first regular passenger services to run between Swanage and Wareham in Dorset for 45 years have exceeded expectations. The original line, which opened in 1885, was closed by British Rail – and ripped up – in 1972. But in June the first timetabled trains ran along the full 10 mile route as part of a trial.

Swanage Railway said its target footfall was 12,000 passengers but it attracted 13,020. Volunteers built a five mile stretch from Swanage to Norden and started running it as a tourist attraction in the 1990s. The section from Norden to Wareham was completed this year and the trial, using upgraded 1960s diesel locomotives, began this summer. Mark Woolley of Swanage Railway said the trial showed ‘trains are the transport of the future’.

More trains will run next year, between May and September, and the aim is to make the service permanent.

Stuck in cattle class

RAIN companies have been ordered to use retention tanks rather than flush toilets onto the railway track. ‘It’s disgusting,’ said Mark Carne of Network Rail. ‘I’ve been out with track workers and you see it coming, like a plume of steam. You quickly learn to turn your back and close your mouth when you’re trackside and a train is passing. As I know first hand. It’s totally unacceptable and I’m pleased we’ve got government agreement.’ By the end of the decade TOCs will not be allowed to dispose of waste on the track; carriages will have to hold onto waste water until it can be emptied at the depot.

SEVERED HEAD IN QUARRY WAS MAN KILLED BY TRAIN

A mysterious decapitated head discovered in a quarry in Mepal, Cambridgeshire, in May last year, by officers from Bedfordshire Police says it may have been lodged in a bridge for 10 years, before coming loose when the structure was cleaned, put with debris into a skip, and dumped in the quarry.

BREXIT GOOD BECAUSE YOUNG CAN WORK LONGER

Lord Philip Harris of Peckham, the Tory peer who made his money in Carpetright, ‘the company that always has a 60% sale’, says Brexit is ‘a good thing’ because ‘it will allow younger people to work longer hours’. Harris, who lives in Cannes, in the south of France, and is worth £110m, said retailers ‘can only employ staff for 35 hours under EU laws’.

WE’RE RIDING ON THE MARRAKESH EXPRESS

Engineers in Morocco are testing trains capable of reaching 200mph – the top speed of Eurostar – ahead of the launch of a new high-speed service from Casablanca to Tangier. The service, which is scheduled to launch next summer, will cut the 215 mile journey between the two ports from five to two hours.
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.
A voice for the voiceless

ASLEF’s EC has made a donation to the Miscarriages of Justice Organisation in Glasgow. PAUL McLAUGHLIN, MoJO’s project manager, explains what they do

MoJO is a unique human rights organisation dedicated to assisting innocent people in prison, and helping them on release. MoJO was founded in 2001 by Paddy Hill, one of six innocent men wrongly convicted in 1975 for the Birmingham pub bombing. The Birmingham Six convictions were eventually quashed, and they were released in 1991. Paddy made a pledge then to campaign for those he left behind, to bring a voice to the voiceless. MoJO’s aim is to carry on his work.

We deal with hundreds of inquiries each year. Many people thought the problem of miscarriages of justice in the British judicial system were resolved after several high profile cases in the 1980s and ‘90s. This is, sadly, not the case. There have been more than 6,000 miscarriages of justice in the UK since the release of the Birmingham Six. But the subject has faded from the political agenda.

Our work falls into two categories. Supporting those in prison fighting to clear their names, and supporting those who have had their convictions quashed and are trying to put the pieces of their lives back together.

We offer those who have successfully overturned practical support after their release from prison, assisting in their reintegration back into their communities. We run an after care project which provides help with legal issues, benefits advice, and housing needs; as well as support addressing medical needs funded by the Scottish government.

We want the government to live up to its duty of care to those whose lives have been destroyed because of the inadequacies of our judicial system. Successive governments have accepted they have a duty of care but have failed to provide the services or resources required to meet the needs of victims of miscarriages of justice.

We have launched a campaign – Say I’m Innocent – in conjunction with film maker Mark McLoughlin and the Sunny Centre as a result of a powerful documentary – Fall out – made by Mark which highlights the failure to provide aftercare support to those who have suffered wrongful incarceration.

We are campaigning on four specific issues in the UK and Ireland: all services available to guilty prisoners are made available to exonorees on release; a public announcement of innocence is made on release; a transition centre is set up to give exonorees time and help to reintegrate; and a fully independent criminal case review commission is established to examine cases with the power to find new evidence if required.

Unfortunately, we receive only partial funding from the Scottish government to carry out our work so require your support to ensure we can provide the best service possible to the victims of miscarriages of justice.

Please get your branch or district to affiliate to MoJO. And if you would like to arrange a viewing of Fall out, in conjunction with speakers from Say I’m Innocent, please get in touch. Call 0141 552 0009 or email info@miscarriagesofjustice.org

Keeping Palestine on the agenda

ASLEF’s EC has made a donation to Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East which campaigns for peace and justice in the region through the implementation of international law and respect for human rights. SHAZIA ARSHAD reflects on a busy year for the organisation

His year is a year of significant anniversaries in Palestine – 50 years of occupation, 10 years of the Gaza blockade and 100 years since the Balfour Declaration.

There is an increasing need for the international community to push for stronger action against human rights violations by the Israeli government. Illegal settlement activity across the Occupied Palestinian Territories has not only continued but increased. We are pushing the Labour Party to take a strong stance on illegal settlement activity and, earlier this year, scores of Labour MPs spoke at a backbench business debate on the issue in Parliament. Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry said the settlements ‘are a roadblock to peace and a violation of international law’.

LFPM continues to push for the government to review its position on Israeli settlement goods and we have been supported in this by many MPs. LFPM vice-chair Richard Burden says ‘UK businesses should not collude with illegality through any financial dealings with settlements or through the import of settlement goods to the UK’. And in this year’s manifesto the party again supported the call for an end to settlements.

LFPM continues to support addressing medical needs funded by the Scottish government.

It’s not just parliamentary work and debates that keep us busy. In April we took Iain McNicol, Labour Party general secretary, to Palestine to meet NGOs, community groups and residents; visiting houses subject to demolition and witnessing first hand the separation wall that cuts through so much of Palestine. He used the visit to strengthen ties between the Labour Party and Fatah and reaffirmed the party’s commitment to recognition of a Palestinian state.

As we move forward we are faced with the reality of a worsening humanitarian crisis. The 10 year blockade on Gaza has led to NGOs classing the Gaza Strip as unlivable. Human rights violations across Gaza and the West Bank continue and we raised these at our events at the Labour Party conference (kindly supported by ASLEF) and in the campaigns we are leading, as LFPM works towards a just and equitable solution for the Palestinian people.
Let me tell you something

ELLEN MELLINGTON, interim head of CIRAS, the Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis Service set up in 1996, reveals why train companies should listen to the concerns of railway staff.

UCIRAS of what we do at Confidential Reporting for Safety is about listening, without judgement, to the health and safety concerns of people in safety-critical roles.

Health and safety reports typically arrive at CIRAS carrying a level of dissatisfaction with previous responses. In a recent survey of more than 1,000 workers in the UK transport industry, 43% said that when they reported a safety concern they did not get good feedback.

I spoke to an operator who no longer felt like speaking up in the workplace. He had seen a decade of industry change resulting in lower wages and felt his status as a respected member of the workforce had been diminished. Once he had vented his long-standing frustration, he began to talk more freely about some of the genuine health and safety issues he had concerns about.

He held a perception that raising a concern internally wouldn’t make any difference. Whether this perception was true or not, it contributed to a feeling of disengagement at work. He felt he was primarily there to drive, but that his concerns for safety would fall on deaf ears. I listened as best I could without saying too much. Those untapped health and safety issues began to surface after a while as he became more comfortable.

Listening always plays a pivotal role in establishing a good health and safety culture. If there is a listening deficit, either at a personal or organisational level, it is likely to negatively impact on the organisation.

Authentic listening, where both managers and employees can express themselves freely, is a need to report a concern confidentially if individuals feel listened to in their own organisations. In an ideal world, confidential reporting would not be necessary. But if the listening breaks down somewhere, or a listening culture isn’t present, confidential reporting can bridge the divide. Retrieving the intelligence that might otherwise be lost requires skilled listeners and CIRAS prides itself on its ability to listen in these circumstances.

Placing the emphasis on listening, rather than asking questions, and impartiality, rather than establishing responsibility, allows the reporter to describe openly what the concern is. The tips below can help foster a better listening environment:

Avoid giving advice. Giving advice is largely incompatible with good listening. Although well-intentioned, it can disrupt the flow and may inhibit further dialogue. 

Sit with them in their cave.

We’re here to listen to what you have to say hard to achieve in practice. It requires both parties to put aside their agendas and really focus on what the other is trying to say.

Listening more authentically is likely to lead to far fewer health and safety concerns remaining unaddressed. But this only works if managers respond empathically and act on the information entrusted to them at an early stage. Training managers with the right interpersonal skills to listen more effectively can therefore play an important role in ensuring concerns are not stymied.

Confidential reporting has an important role to play. Of course, there is normally less of a need to report a concern confidentially if individuals feel listened to in their own organisations. In an ideal world, confidential reporting would not be necessary. But if the listening breaks down somewhere, or a listening culture isn’t present, confidential reporting can bridge the divide. Retrieving the intelligence that might otherwise be lost requires skilled listeners and CIRAS prides itself on its ability to listen in these circumstances.

Placing the emphasis on listening, rather than asking questions, and impartiality, rather than establishing responsibility, allows the reporter to describe openly what the concern is. The tips below can help foster a better listening environment:

Avoid giving advice. Giving advice is largely incompatible with good listening. Although well-intentioned, it can disrupt the flow and may inhibit further dialogue. 

Sit with them in their cave.

The best station pubs in Britain

SIMON JENKINS, author of Britain’s 100 Best Railway Stations (Viking, £25), reveals his favourite station taverns.

The finest must be the three Great Northern spectacles – the Sheffield Tap; the art nouveau York Tap; and the magnificent Centurion in Newcastle; the last two designed by William Bell. Up with the best down south is the warren of bars and sitting rooms of The Parcel Yard at King’s Cross where you can disappear for hours. Lesser stations can seem like pubs with platforms attached – such as the

Beer on tap at Sheffield station

Phoenix at Denmark Hill in south London where, until recently, the beer was brewed on the premises. For subtle charm, few can beat Lady Foley’s Tea Room on the platform at Great Malvern, where tea comes with fruit cake and whisky, if you ask nicely.

common tendency to want to take someone out of their dark place. But attempting to cheer somebody up can be the equivalent of shutting them up if they are not in right frame of mind. Allowing an individual to vent and express negativity is an important part of the listening process.

Be a calm presence. This provides the environment for someone to trust and feel confident in opening up to you. It helps here if one’s body language looks engaged.

Learn the art of silence. Silences are often felt to be awkward. And where there is awkwardness, there is anxiety. But silence, properly respected and utilised, allows us the time to think and process thoughts and emotions.

Allow anger to be heard. As a rule, allowing someone a safe space to be angry without any acting out is therapeutic. Wait until any tirade is over before asking questions on what may have triggered the anger. The anger can be effectively contained this way, allowing any underlying feelings to emerge.

Encourage dialogue on mental health. Authentic listening is especially important when it comes to breaking down the barriers to talking about mental health, thus reducing the associated stigmatisation. The removal of hierarchical boundaries by using informal dialogue can be the stepping stone to open communication about mental health.

You can contact CIRAS by phone (0203 142 5369); by post (Freepost CIRAS); or visit the website (www.ciras.org.uk). The report hotline is 0800 410 1101 and the report textline is 07507 285887.

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SNOW TRAIN COMING UP AROUND THE BEND

To celebrate the release of Murder on the Orient Express we take a look behind the scenes of this new version of Agatha Christie’s classic murder mystery and remember other trains – in fact and fiction – working their way through snow in winter

The new big budget version of Agatha Christie’s 1934 novel Murder on the Orient Express is playing to packed houses in cinemas around the country. Directed by Kenneth Branagh, and produced by Ridley Scott, it stars Branagh, wielding ‘the finest moustache in Belgium’, as detective Hercule Poirot, and Johnny Depp as Ratchett, a businessman murdered in the middle of the night on the famous long-distance train running from Istanbul to Paris.

This classic whodunnit – there are 14 suspects in rail carriages rather than a country house – co-stars Penélope Cruz as the missionary played by Ingmar Bergman in Sidney Lumet’s 1974 film; Derek Jacobi as Ratchett’s valet; Willem Defoe as an American professor; Michelle Pfeiffer as a seductive widow; and Judi Dench as a Russian princess with Olivia Colman as her maid.

When the train is marooned in an avalanche – a snowdrift in the book – Poirot interviews each of the passengers in his hunt for the killer.

‘I like the train being enclosed in snow, the claustrophobia,’ says Branagh. ‘It’s a tale set in the golden age of travel; a world in which you feel the miles under your feet. Agatha Christie described her work as entertainment but she leaves holes, invitations to go a little deeper. She asks whether revenge is worthwhile – can you forgive, when do you stop hurting? – and suggests that loss has to be acknowledged or it can provide a poison that can create another crime.’

Murder on the Orient Express was filmed at Longcross Studios, between Virginia Water, Chertsey and Cobham in Surrey, where the Bond film Skyfall and the Marvel movies Thor: The Dark World and Doctor Strange were made.

Istanbul station – with two tracks and a platform on either side – was recreated on one of the studio’s enormous sound stages, as was the train itself, a majestic 30 tonne locomotive with four carriages running along a mile of track, plus a second version with moveable walls for interior shots. A rig of hydraulics and air bellows beneath the carriages, as well as virtual scenery, shot in New Zealand, moving on LED screens, helped convince the cast they were riding on a real train.

A viaduct, and a 35ft high mountainside stretching for several hundred metres, were also built. ‘The special effects team put in a lot of work,’ says executive producer Matthew Jenkins. ‘There were all sorts of different types of snow, from powder to snow candles to smoke. They also had to devise a way of having snow move past the windows without making any noise.’

It might, or might not, be a white Christmas this year, but to celebrate the festive season, and the release of the film, here are some cinematic moments – and some real scenes – of snowbound trains.
Snow trains

**BEND**

Tom Courtenay as Strelnikov standing by his armoured battle train during the Russian civil war in *Doctor Zhivago*.

The Elizabethan, a BR Class 2MT, withdrawn in 1966, sat at Severn Valley Railway for more than 20 years, and finally returned after restoration to steam with the Great Central Railway in 2004.

Kenneth Branagh as Hercule Poirot in *Murder on the Orient Express* and the crew shooting another scene.

The Pere Marquette loco, which was the inspiration for the train featured in the movie *The Polar Express*, makes one of its runs from Owosso to Ashley, Michigan, after a heavy snowfall.

A Canadian Pacific freight train runs by the side of a snowy river in a majestic winter landscape.

A *Cumberland Christmas* by John Winfield. Crew change at the Queen City Hotel in Cumberland, Maryland. A helper engine is added to aid the E8 loco climb the Sand Patch grade.
Get your motor running

East Midlands Trains ULR
CHRIS NUTTY reports on a recent study visit to see an iconic British motorbike being built at Donington

The history of the Norton motorcycle company, founded as a manufacturer of fittings and parts for the two-wheel trade in Birmingham in 1898, could well have ended in the 1970s with the demise of Norton Villiers Triumph but, after a number of false starts, the Norton name is back on track. The firm goes from strength to strength, with new models, and their racing exploits at the Isle of Man TT races. A sixth place for Josh Brookes in the Senior TT at this year’s event is no mean feat when you consider that they were up against the likes of Honda, Suzuki, BMW, and Kawasaki. There is still a lot of prestige to manufacturers in winning a TT, despite the event losing its world championship status back in 1976. Brookes also set the fastest lap, for a Norton motorcycle, of 130.88mph during this year’s Senior TT.

It’s four years since I last visited the Norton factory; then it was based in a building in the paddock of the Donington Park race circuit. The new factory is housed in Donington Hall, once the home of British Midland. The two sites could not be more different, and the move demonstrates the growth of the company. It has allowed the firm to expand its workforce and develop the next generation of motorcycle engineers by offering apprenticeships to young people. In the assembly section we saw bikes being built for customers in India, America and, of course, the UK. Our visit coincided with that of Norton’s Japanese distributor. Talk about taking coals to Newcastle!

We were shown round the factory by Andy, who gave us the lowdown on Norton’s Isle of Man exploits, with many of the race bikes on display. In the fabrication section Andy explained the amount of work that goes into one of their alloy petrol tanks: five pieces of aluminium are cut and shaped to make a tank; this, and the high spec equipment, like suspension and electrics, all put together by hand, is reflected in the price, but quality, of course, has never come cheap.

The star exhibit of the visit was the company’s new V4 superbike, a 200mph missile that looks absolutely stunning. While it is still in development the feedback from the test rider, former British Superbike rider and sometime TV commentator Steve Plater, is very good.

Such is the popularity of these factory visits that when I first tried to book a group visit for 10 people, back in May, the first date I could get was September. The group was made up of ASLEF members from East Midlands Trains and CrossCountry, plus friends and family.

East Midlands Trains driver Tim Waterhouse, who was on the trip with his wife Nancy, said, “The new Norton is a small company compared with Norton past, building bespoke motorcycles and a racing department concentrating on the Isle of Man TT Races. It was a pleasure to see, close up, their beautiful machines, handcrafted and assembled by graduates from Norton’s own apprenticeship scheme."

The study visit was well received, and we are looking to organise another trip soon. For more details or to register please contact ASLEF ULRs Nicola Davis at ulr.nicolad@gmail.com or Richard Swain at richaydan44@gmail.com

Wear a white ribbon

RICHARD MURGATROYD, trade union campaign manager for White Ribbon UK, explains what it’s all about – and why you might like to wear a ribbon this month

WO women are killed each week by a male partner or former partner and one in four will suffer domestic violence at some time in their lifetime; wrecking families and lives. But this isn’t just a personal tragedy. Because violence and discrimination against women impacts on all parts of society, including the workplace.

The White Ribbon campaign was set up by men who believe this isn’t just a women’s issue. Men have to be part of the solution.

Every year on White Ribbon Day – 25 November – and for the next 10 days trade unionists in workplaces across the UK show support to women experiencing violence, sexual harassment or bullying. Thousands of people wear the white ribbon, take part in workplace-based educational events and pledge not to commit, condone or remain silent about the issue.

It is very much a trade union issue that directly impacts on female colleagues. We need to challenge the idea that violence against women is just physical – because discrimination, emotional abuse and sexual harassment at work are all aspects of the problem, too.

That’s why we have produced a campaign pack for branch officers and workplace reps which gives you all the ideas and info you need to really make a splash on White Ribbon Day.

Our vision is that trade unionists will actively support this day throughout the country, so it becomes a national demonstration of solidarity – but in offices, factories, work sites, staff canteens and cafés, instead of the streets. And, with your help, drivers’ rest rooms, too! Please visit www.whiteribbon.org.uk to see how you can get involved and order campaigning material.
Remember days of skipping school racing cars and being cool

When GWR driver Tom Taylor isn’t taking a Class 180 into Paddington, he likes to throw his Renault Clio around the demanding corners of the Nürburgring in Germany. KEITH RICHMOND talks to him about racing cars, flying gliders and driving trains.

The legendary Nürburgring, which dips and rises 300m through the breathtaking forests of the Eifel mountains, is, with Silverstone, Spa, Monaco and Monza, one of the great grand prix motor racing circuits. Just outside Nürnberg, in Rheinland-Pfalz, it’s also one of the most challenging, whether it’s the original 17½ mile gesammtstrecke, the 13 mile nordschleife, or the 3 mile grand prix course built for modern Formula 1 cars in 1984. Drivers who mastered the original prodigiously long and perilously narrow track, with its blind crests and 73 bends, such as Tazio Nuvolari, Alberto Ascari, Juan Manuel Fangio, Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart, were dubbed the ringmeisters.

LORDS OF THE RING

By a quirk of history, and highway regulations, the nordschleife has always been a one-way public toll road on which, when there is no racing, anyone with a street legal vehicle and valid driver’s licence can ride the ring. These touristenfahrten days – a snip at €35 a lap – are enormously popular with petrolheads.

Which is why Tom Taylor, 26, a driver with GWR, and secretary of our Oxford branch, has for the last four or five years headed off with his mate to race around the track. ‘I drove a Renault Megane Sport and got a real buzz out of it,’ says Tom. ‘I did some track days at Bedford Autodrome – a good starter circuit where you can spin and not do much damage – and Anglesey and then decided to have a crack at Nürburgring where, unfortunately, there are no run off areas and, if you spin, you go into the barrier and it’s very expensive as there charge you for every metre of Armco you damage.

‘I bought a Renault Clio, which is road legal, but stripped out, with a roll cage, harnesses and bucket seats, and I get a real rush out of it. Track days are not competitive, you’re not racing against the other cars, but you are really buzzing when you finish.’

Tom was born in 1991 and brought up in Oxfordshire. His dad Grahame served for many years in the RAF as an engineer – ‘It was an RAF household, because mum was a medic in the WRAC’ – at Brize Norton and then at RAF Lyneham in Wiltshire. When Grahame left the RAF he worked as an engineer servicing the machines that put straps around bundles of newspapers to be sent, often by train, around the country, before joining the railway as a driver.

At one stage it looked as if Tom would follow his father into the RAF. He was a member of the Air Training Corps in Witney from 13 to 20 and went on camp to Ramstein in Germany and Akrotiri in Cyprus and, at 16, won a gliding scholarship to learn to fly on a Grob Vigilant T1 powered glider.

‘You’d take off with the engine, get up to 1500 feet, then shut off the power, and glide back into land. It was a fabulous feeling flying up there in the sky but funny because I could take off, do a circuit, and land a glider before I learned to drive.’

MINIMUM WAGE

He left school ten years ago, in 2007, did an engineering course at college, and worked at the Co-op, before going into catering, ‘starting on minimum wage, doing 12 hour shifts at a pub in Woodstock, ending up as a duty manager.

‘Then, when I was 21, my dad, who’d been a driver for a couple of years by then, came home one day and said they were looking for trainee drivers, why not go for testing? Initially I laughed but, the more he talked about it, the more interested I became.

‘I didn’t really know what to expect. I had an inking from dad, but they’d changed things, a lot of it was new, and there was a lot to learn. A six week rules course back in college, then Paddington, Bristol, Reading and Swindon. It took me 18 months to qualify. I passed out two years ago, on 26 October 2015, and felt relieved. And excited! My first job was Banbury to Oxford, then Oxford to Paddington. And I remembered everything! I signed for Class 165 turbo and Class 180.

‘Two of my best friends, Rory and Dec, used to say the trouble with train drivers is they get paid too much and do nothing all day. Of course it’s not like that. I’ve put them right and, ironically, Rory is now a trainee driver!’

‘I’m really happy I became a train driver. I really enjoy the job. I’ve always done – and loved – shift work, it’s good money and you get good rest days and annual leave, and it doesn’t affect my social life.’

Grahame, 58, is chair of ASLEF’s Oxford branch, and encouraged his son to attend meetings as soon as Tom joined the union. ‘Dad dragged me down,’ laughs Tom. ‘I thought I’d see what it was like and I really enjoyed it and decided to get more involved.’

It was, he says, quite daunting at first but he soon got the hang of things, was elected branch secretary, and, earlier this year, attended the TUC young workers’ conference at Congress House in London with Antony Holdsworth (D6) and Matt France (D8). ‘Lee James from head office was a great help. She sorted everything out and encouraged us all the way along the line.

‘The union is important – for train drivers and for the railway – and the branch structure is at the heart of this union. We need strong branches to go forward to make a strong union. We need more young members, too, and it’s good that EC7 Andy Hudd and EC1 Marz Colombini are encouraging young people to get involved.

INSURANCE POLICY

‘If we all stand strong behind the people who negotiate our pay deals then it helps them deliver. I know some people see it as taking out an insurance policy in case you have a SPAD. But the truth is that, if ASLEF wasn’t a strong trade union, then our pay and our terms and conditions, wouldn’t be anywhere near as good.’

And what do people of his age say when they learn how he earns his living? ‘Some say it’s easy – monkeys could do it – but many more are interested in what a train driver does, why I’m so young, and how they can apply to do it!’
Poldark – The Angry Tide

ASLEF supported the Cornwall Trades Council rally in Truro on 21 October. Cornwall Needs a Pay Rise was organised to highlight the pay disparity between a county where the average weekly wage is £344.50 – almost £100 less than the national average – and the rest of the UK.

The event had to be moved inside due to high winds and Storm Brian, giving Tosh a chance to joke that ‘I haven’t brought my indoor voice with me’ as he boomed out a speech, like an old time preacher, in support of the movement. Making comparisons between the now-defunct Cornish tin mines and the coal industry the crowd was moved by his genuine emotion, empathy and hatred towards the Tories. Despite not being from the area, people said he wouldn’t look out of place in Poldark.

He received a standing ovation after arguing for better transport links for the region, an end to zero hours contracts in all industries, and bringing in EJRA so older workers make way for younger people. Other speakers included TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady and representatives from Unite, PCS, NEU and USDAW.

Kerry Cassidy, D7 women’s rep

Upcoming events

- **RIPPLE LANE – THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER**
The Ripple Lane Christmas soirée is from 13.00 at the old LT Club in Hornchurch. Party hats and poppers are optional.

- **WILLESDEN – THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER**
The 22nd Willesden 1A reunion will this year be held from 14.00 to 18.00 at Watford Ex-Services & Social Club, 12-14 St Albans Road, Watford (5 minutes walk from Watford Junction). All ex-railway personnel and partners with an association are welcome. Contact Mick Humphrys 07771 672992 for details.

- **NORWOOD JUNCTION – SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER**
Our branch meeting and AGM starts at 12.30 with the retired members’ buffet beginning at 14.00 at Selhurst Railway Club. This year with actual food! Details from Daniel Bound.

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

Bathgate: Starting from scratch

As a relatively new depot, and recently reformed branch, Bathgate 018 has had to start again from scratch. So after our latest branch meeting Bathgate drivers show off our newly purchased branch banner which, it’s hoped, will be used for many years to come, celebrating, and proudly showing our identity, and presiding over our meetings.

Graham Bell

Glory days

Driver Freddie Wells, second man Kevin Mitchell, and signalman Pete Kellett on a 6000 Locomotive Society trip to Lostock Junction. Love this one. It’s how we remember the glory days.

Mel Thorley, Longsight

Happy birthday, Lee

Lee James, ASLEF’s equalities adviser, celebrated part one of her 20th birthday second time around at the Piano Works in Clerkenwell on 20 September. In attendance was the General, Mick Whelan, district officers, EC members, ASLEF branch members, friends, comrades and colleagues, all helping to make a great time. The RMS national secretary Les Muir, Tony West and I had the pleasure of presenting Lee with a small token of our appreciation for the work she does on behalf of the retired members and wish her a very happy birthday.

PJ Smith, RMS

It was great to meet up with everyone again at the Fratton train crew railway reunion which is going from strength to strength.

Gary White, Fratton

Wednesday night fever for PJ, Lee, Tony and Les at the Piano Works in Clerkenwell

D ece m ber 2017
Give rail freight a level playing field

PHILLIPPA EDMUNDS, manager of Freight on Rail, is lobbying the Treasury, and the Department for Transport, pushing for a proper market place and a fair deal for freight in the UK.

REIGHT on Rail continues to make the case for rail and road to be treated equitably while the government makes its rail funding decisions for the next five year period from 2019 to 2024. We believe that the government needs to recognise road costs – such as road congestion, road collisions, road damage and carbon dioxide and air pollution – in any discussion about rail freight costs because HGVs only pay 30% of these costs imposed on the taxpayer.

Therefore, there is a strong case for equivalently supporting rail through lower rail freight access charges and continued upgrades to the strategic rail freight network and other key routes in order to allow rail to compete more fairly with HGVs.

At the moment the system is far from fair – as the following points demonstrate.

Unlike lorry operators, rail freight operators pay separately for the use of the rail network. Lorries do not pay a charge – except in a very few specific cases – for use of the road network; the road network is, in effect, free at the point of use. Furthermore, fuel duty for HGVs has been frozen since 2011 whereas access charges have increased by more than 20% over RPI over the same period.

And yet rail freight projects have high benefit cost ratios compared to other transport projects; the gauge upgrades out of Southampton port increased rail’s market share from 29% to 36% within a year and had a benefit-cost ratio of 5:1.

That is why we are campaigning for parity between the modes. We are pressing the Treasury and the DfT to introduce a distance-based lorry charging system in its forthcoming review which could measure the full impact of trucks on the economy and on society instead of the existing old fashioned time-based system.

In order to highlight the extent of the market distortion between the two modes, Freight on Rail commissioned research, using the DfT’s own mode shift benefit values, which confirmed that HGVs receive an annual subsidy of around £6.5 billion, a figure in line with two other independent pieces of research. As a result, the DfT’s rail freight strategy recognised this distortion in September last year: ‘[W]e recognise the positive benefits of rail freight for the UK – including its environmental and air quality benefits relative to road freight and its impact on reducing road congestion. These benefits are not currently recognised in the track access charging.’

The socio-economic costs of HGVs will continue to be a huge problem to society, the economy, the taxpayer and the government. The largest HGVs, which make up more than half of all HGV traffic, will continue to use the current engine technology well into the next decade, according to the DfT.

Whereas rail freight offers a safer and cleaner alternative to these large HGVs; currently a quarter of the largest HGVs (by which I mean 5 axles +) are doing journeys over 300km so some of this traffic should be captive to rail – if it is fairly treated.

Britain needs a fairer marketplace with distance-based lorry charging so freight on rail can properly compete.

CATERHAM MILESTONE

I am trying to find out when Caterham opened as a drivers’ depot so I can make some commemorative badges – the 90th and 100th, as well, if it is confirmed I have the right date. What I know, so far, is that there was a depot when the station opened in 1856. That it was closed and moved to Purley around 1899. The Caterham line was electrified in 1928. And the motorman’s depot – Caterham depot as we know it today – opened on Sunday 17 June 1928. If anyone can confirm 17 June 1928 as the date when Caterham depot opened, they can email me at thedeano66.d@goolemail.com or call me on 07930 911619. Dean Anderson, Caterham depot
Paul Keenan loved Le Mans

After a long battle with cancer, Paul Keenan passed away in the early hours of Thursday 19 October. He fought his illness with strength, courage and dignity and kept his sense of humour right to the end. Paul loved his family and it was extremely difficult for them, too, but they were brilliant, and there for him, throughout his illness. Their laughter kept his spirit up and he will be looking down on him with pride.

Paul started on the railway at Woking in 1980, running his MP12 at a young age and taking a driver’s job at Effingham Junction. After an enjoyable time on the cocoa shift he decided it was time for a change and moved to Newcastle, but never forgot his southern roots, keeping in touch with friends down south, and always looking forward to his annual trip to France, to see the Le Mans 24 hour sports car race. At Newcastle he worked on local services for a few years before moving onto the intercity links, ending up driving for Virgin East Coast before taking ill health retirement earlier this year.

Paul was an active member of ASLEF and well known and respected throughout the country. He was a local, branch, district and national officer responsible for educating young people about the railway, and its dangers, in all 32 London boroughs. In retirement he was very active in the 1A club and, with wife Doreen, attended numerous trips as well as our regular monthly get togethers.

Yours fraternally, Mick Whelan, general secretary

Ron Bradshaw

Ron Bradshaw passed away on 14 September after a short illness. He started on the footplate as a cleaner at Bank Hall (Kirkdale) Liverpool in 1948. After national service he answered a call for volunteer firemen and cleaners and moved south on loan to Willesden 1A steam shed. Ron moved to Stonebridge Park and retired in 1996. A highly respected and skilled loco man, Ron was also a first aid instructor who took part in many first aid competitions, leading his team to national level under the auspices of the St John Ambulance. He was a leading figure in the railway first aid world, and for more than 40 years a member of British Rail District No 1 based at Willesden. Ron’s people skills took him beyond locos and first aid when he became a school safety liaison officer responsible for educating young people about the railway, and its dangers, in all 32 London boroughs. In retirement he was very active in the 1A club and, with wife Doreen, attended numerous trips as well as our regular monthly get togethers.

Mick Humphrys and Janie Euston, ex-1A

The 500 Club

The 500 Club is a fundraising venture for ASLEF’s Retired Members’ Section. Numbers in the draw cost £4 each and, to begin making payments into club funds, all you have to do is complete the standing order form and return it to your bank. Alternatively, you can pay by cheque a year in advance; the cheque should be made payable to ASLEF RMS 500 Club.

Payments need to reach the club account by 1st of every month and the draw takes place on 12th of every month – with the winning number, name, and prize printed on page 5 of the ASLEF Journal. If you have arranged your method of payment just complete the form and return it to the Admin Department at head office. The Retired Members’ Section committee would like to thank you for your support and wish you luck in the draw!

Yours fraternally, Mick Whelan, general secretary

ASLEF RMS 500 Club application form

Name...........................................................................................................................................
Address........................................................................................................................................
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........................................................................................................................................... Telephone No. ...........................................................
e-mail........................................................................................................................................

Each number costs £4. You can purchase as many numbers as you like. I confirm that I wish to purchase ______ numbers as part of the 500 Club.
A) I have set up my standing order (£48 per annum or £4 per month)
B) I enclose a cheque for advance payment (£48 per annum)

Signed .................................................... Date .................................................

Please return to: Andrea Weston in the Administration Department, ASLEF, 77 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 4NN

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We were so sad to lose Martin – fondly known as Mick – on 9 August at the age of 77. Born in Crieff, Perthshire, Mick had a happy childhood and left school to work as a roofer and chimney sweep. At 16 he joined the railway at Perth as a cleaner, moving through the ranks to fireman on steam engines. He married Mary in 1963 and they settled in Crieff where Mick worked the Crieff line to King’s Cross in 1968. Transferring from Perth many colleagues resulting in Mick and Mary, their driver covering to King’s Cross in 1968.

Mick worked the Crieff line to Perth line. Mick was very proud to be a railwayman and was a staunch member of ASLEF, always supportive of fellow workers, but his family was his life and rest days and holidays were spent happily with them which always included lots of train journeys! He loved watching football, especially Celtic, and was involved with many youth teams, spending many Saturday and Sunday afternoons watching his sons, grandson and, finally, great-grandson play.

Following retirement Mick liked the quiet life but enjoyed his grandchildren and great grandchildren who would run through the door and head for his knee. He looked forward to visits to his beloved home town of Crieff and loved his days at Hatfield Social Club putting the world to rights with old comrades. Mick was very well liked and left behind many wonderful memories.

Mick Moran 1940-2017

Stan Selwyn has died at the age of 90. He was born in Hornsey, north London, left school at 14 to work in a newspaper office, later joining his dad at King’s Cross top shed, working his way up to become a main line fireman, then driver. He retired after 48 years’ service. Stan met and married his wife Vera in 1953 and they moved to Luton in 1956. She died just a month before Stan, an easy going chap who liked a flutter on the horses.

Stan Selwyn 1927-2017

I’m sad to announce the death of JH James, my father-in-law, on 13 October. John worked on the railway for 49 years, starting as a fireman and working his way up to driver. He was an ASLEF member for over 50 years, carrying on after retirement, and will be missed by his wife, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

John James

Retired driver Albie Walker Upton passed away on 4 October. Albie started his life on the railway at Cambridge before moving to Saffron Waldon, then Bishop’s Stortford, and then Stratford to become a driver. He came back to Bishop’s Stortford where he remained for the rest of his working life. As with all the older drivers in the steam era this was his life. He loved it, and when, in 1995, just before he retired, they held a steam weekend here his son David said he was so excited and thoroughly enjoyed the weekend. As a young fireman I worked with Albie and he was a pleasure to be with, always encouraging and helpful. He is survived by his wife Hazel and children.

David Clark, Bishop’s Stortford

Edward ‘Ted’ Hickling (7 December 1917 to 14 September 2017), formerly a driver at Sheffield Midland station, will be very badly missed.

Sheral Jones

Retired driver Albie Walker Upton passed away on 4 October. Albie started his life on the railway at Cambridge before moving to Saffron Waldon, then Bishop’s Stortford, and then Stratford to become a driver. He came back to Bishop’s Stortford where he remained for the rest of his working life. As with all the older drivers in the steam era this was his life. He loved it, and when, in 1995, just before he retired, they held a steam weekend here his son David said he was so excited and thoroughly enjoyed the weekend. As a young fireman I worked with Albie and he was a pleasure to be with, always encouraging and helpful. He is survived by his wife Hazel and children.

Dave Pizzie, RMS

Stratford stalwart Dave Pryke, a big man in every way, was a good trade unionist, manning the picket lines in 1982. He was a no nonsense sort of a guy; if he thought you were wrong he would not hesitate to let you know. Well-liked by the Stratford community, he will be missed by all who knew him. RIP Dave. Gone but always remembered.

Dave Pizzie, RMS

Alex Townsend, 25, was found dead in his bed on Monday 4 September by his partner. He passed out a few months ago, but was very fit, with an active lifestyle, which has left his northern even more shocked.

Richard Sullivan, King’s Cross

Edward ‘Ted’ Hickling (7 December 1917 to 14 September 2017), formerly a driver at Sheffield Midland station, will be very badly missed.

Sheral Jones
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.

Lost Boys and second men and boil in the bag drivers

I am writing concerning the Lost Boys which recognises the ex-British Rail grade of second man. Whilst I am sure this group was set up with all good intentions, and as a bit of fun, I have noticed that certain members seem to look down at others in the driving grade. I have also been informed by drivers, at other TOCs, with whom I am friends, that certain members of this Lost Boys group have got quite nasty regarding being an ex-BR second man and not a boil in the bag.

My question is this, does it really matter what sort of training one received to become a qualified driver? I started my railway career on the platform, and worked up through various grades before becoming a driver. I have nothing against anyone who comes straight into the industry as a trainee driver. This is the method of recruitment for the driving grade in place today, and there is nothing that a so-called Lost Boy or I can do about it. Indeed, we should be welcoming new starters into the grade rather than alienating them with rude comments such as ‘anyone who did not undertake MP12 is a boil in the bag’.

I also feel that the advertisement in last month’s Journal for the Lost Boys group should not have been allowed, seeing as the group is so divisive, and that certain individuals in this group persist in ridiculing other colleagues in the driving grade with this childish nonsense.

Edward Pearce, Marylebone

No one left to speak for me

Thinking about DOO, as someone new to the industry, I thought of Martin Niemöller, the Lutheran pastor who spoke out against the Nazis.

First they came for the metro guards, and I did not speak out, because I was not a metro guard. It was nothing to do with me, but I did get more money. Then they came for the platform staff, and I did not speak out. I did not need them, as I had cameras to see with. Then they came for the ticket office staff, and I did not speak out, because it was nothing to do with me. I did not need them, they had machines to collect the money. Then they came for the rest of the guards, and I did not speak out, because I was not a guard, but I did get more money. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me.

It’s only a matter of time before they want to replace train drivers; our turn will come, and those who say they will not be able to replace train drivers should look at all the different industries that now have automated systems. Many of us came into this trade because of automation taking our old jobs. I came from the print trade, and can remember when computers first came in, and we said they could never replace what we did, as it was all done by hand and so skilled. Within 10 years, we were all unemployed and now every house has a computer that can do page makeup and print anything you want. Who needs printers?

We are not just fighting for our jobs, but the jobs of our children and grandchildren. Taking the money is a short-term solution. We may benefit, our children will not. Automation will slowly be rolled out to replace all working-class employment. We are looked upon as an expensive commodity, which they would like to do away with. We cannot stop it, but we can slow it down and should resist wherever and whenever we can.

We must all wake up and say no to DOO, support the guards, and take action to stop this automation. It may cost us in the short run, but in the long run we might keep our jobs and secure jobs for the future for everyone.

Steve Cresswell, Norwood

Long line of incompetents

Further to my letter (Journal, September) about why Chris Grayling is short-sighted in postponing or cancelling several important rail electrification projects – a decision that is clearly fundamentally flawed – the battle continues. I have had a positive response from the mayor of Manchester. The current Secretary of State for Transport is a menace and obviously has no grasp of railway operations, technologies, traction systems or capabilities. He is just another on a dreary list of incompetents. And the whole bi-modal option is a nonsense dreamed up by meddling civil servants at the DfT.

Phil Mortimer by email

What planet is judge on?

Re the story (Journal, October) about the judge at Chelmsford crown court who wondered if fare evasion is really criminal,
what planet is this judge on! Be it fare evasion, shoplifting, carjacking, bag snatching, etc, it is still stealing from others and, therefore, a criminal offence.

What sort of message does this send to the travelling public? This judge should go back to law school ASAP. Or perhaps, with comments like this, he never went in the first place.

David Rollins, Brisbane, Australia

The side of discrimination

Mick Whelan, in his response to Brother Tyrrell’s communication regarding EJRA (Journal, November) says, ‘The government took away the agreed retirement age. So where does it stop? Where indeed? I mean, really, they’ll be allowing people who are openly homosexual to drive trains next. Oh, but hang on, they already do.

Following legislation in 1967, homosexuality is, thankfully, no longer a crime. Maybe back then, however, those individuals leading and shaping union policy had a progressive approach, and accepted and fully supported the joys of having a diverse range of individuals carrying the union card, in the same way that progressives today, no matter what their political outlook, enjoy working with colleagues from across the spectrum, including those whose age is above the magic number 68. This number merely represents the age at which the state pension will become payable for most of us. Beyond that it is, in law, a completely meaningless number.

As Brother Tyrrell succinctly argues, there is now a conflict of interest between the abolition of the retirement age and EJRA. It beggars belief that ASLEF should come down on the side of discrimination.

Jonathan Beckett, Machynlleth

GS Mick Whelan says: ‘An EJRA is not discrimination. It is the choice of the members involved, in line with the policy made by the members of this trade union.’

Rest day work and EJRA

I read the letter by Andrew Tyrrell (Journal, November) with interest and, whilst he has a point about rest day working, and I am a rest day worker, I would like to point out that people who are driving trains beyond their official retirement age are also blocking places in their links.

No doubt when Brother Tyrrell was a young second man he was waiting for a driver to retire, as drivers were forced to at 65, or die in service (dead man’s shoes, as it was then known) in order to progress to driver himself.

If Brother Tyrrell wishes to continue driving trains well into his 60s, as he is now quite entitled to do, that is his prerogative, but he has no right to criticise those of us who work rest days, or the union for sanctioning rest day working.

Tony Emptage, Ramsgate

Workers ‘paid too much’

Philip Hammond, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and a multi-millionaire, reckons that public sector workers are ‘paid too much.’ Does this also apply, I wonder, to MPs, high-ranking civil servants, and the royal family? The comments of Mr Hammond and his ilk would be laughable is we didn’t know that they mean what they say. These pronouncements, from a man who accumulates more personal wealth in a year than most people do in a lifetime, are utterly galling!

Jeff Morgan, Ipswich

Taking toilets off our train

Southern Rail say they are trying to ‘improve the service’. Let me remind you what Southern’s idea of improving the service for passengers is. They now run trains between Brighton and Portsmouth with no toilets on them. When challenged they said people can get off the train and use the toilets at stations. But most stations have locked their toilets because of vandalism. Southern say ‘ask a member of staff to open them for you.’ Unfortunately, another of Southern’s great ideas for improving the service is to remove staff from lots of stations.

Keith Wells, Brighton

Reports of my death…

I recently received news from Graham Force, ex-ASLEF Huddersfield, that while on a tour of Britain he was asked when and how I’d died. Several ex- and current drivers asked the same question. Well, I can assure members that I’m still alive, and still annoying rail management, as my company Aurizon has sold my department to rivals Pacific National, the deal’s passing through the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, and it’s a fight to keep our current conditions.

I have an idea who started these malicious rumours, but can’t prove it, but I am very much alive!

Nick Clarke, Rockhampton, Queensland

Remembering times past

Thank you for printing my letter in the Journal (November) about preserving the Saltley MPD past on Facebook. The response to the videos has been extraordinary, one clip getting 7,300 views at the time of writing. My fear was that this footage would be lost and I am delighted that families are now able to see many of those in the top link again.

Dennis Herbert, retired driver

ASLEF – small craft union

What an interesting letter by Liam Mariscotti (Journal, October). ASLEF is a small craft union, and should concentrate more on things that directly affect their members.

David Douglas, retired driver

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

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. £5.50 inc p&p from Mark Steele, J Rosecroft, South Wootton, King’s Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 3WX.

SOUTH WESTERN

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

CLASS 40 Preservation Society high quality enamel badges £5.50 each or £10 for both (50p p&p for one badge or £1 for both) email sales@cfps.co.uk or text 07788 240088. All funds raised will go towards the maintenance of our three Class 40 locos.

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WOKING branch 50 year commemorative badge. Slam door & Class 455. £6 + £1 p&p each. Contact Chris Smith, branch secretary, on aslefwoking235branch@hotmail.co.uk

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December 2017 | The ASLEF Journal 21
Are you hanging up a stocking on your wall?

It’s the time that every Santa has a ball. Does he ride a red-nosed reindeer? Does he turn up on his sleigh? Keith Richmond looks at a few of the books that have dropped on the ASLEF Journal desk in time for Christmas.

India was the jewel in the crown of the British Empire and the railway – 41,000 miles of it laid by 1929 – was the glue which largely held this sub-continent of several castes, lots of religions and many different languages – and which would, after independence, split into the states of India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh – together.

Christian Wolmar has written a dozen critically-acclaimed books about the railway. Some of them – like Are Trams Socialist? and his forthcoming paperback about driverless cars – are political manifestoes and some of them – like Fire & Steam, a history of the railway in Britain, The Great Railway Revolution, the story of the American railroad, and To the Edge of the World, about the Trans-Siberian Express – are histories of the iron road.

In Railways & the Raj: How the Age of Steam Transformed India (Atlantic Books, £25) he traces the story from before the first train clanked and puffed its way along the 21 mile track from Bombay to Thane in 1853 to independence in 1947, with a final chapter on Indian Railways today. ‘The British,’ he concludes, ‘never really conquered India. But the railways did.’

‘Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life … as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragon’s teeth.’ – John Milton, Areopagitica

In Middlomerch, arguably the greatest 19th century English novel, published in installments in 1871-72 but set forty years earlier, in the turbulent early 1830s, George Eliot observed that ‘railways were as exciting a topic as the Reform Bill or the imminent horrors of cholera’. As Juliette Atkinson, lecturer in English at University College, London, writes in her new edition of George Eliot, Silas Marner (Oxford World’s Classics, £5.99) Eliot’s novels are, famously, profoundly concerned with historical change ‘and this one – at 150 pages, as good an introduction to the author as any – analyses the effects of industrialisation on the working-classes, particularly weavers, the struggles between the powerful and the powerless, and the plight of the poor.

Those are subjects which have also exercised Neil Findlay, MSP for Lothian, since he was elected to Holyrood in 2011. Socialism & Hope (Luath Press, £12.99), is a thoughtful and entertaining personal and political memoir of the turbulent last six years. As Jeremy Corbyn writes in his introduction: ‘He is a thinker and someone who has the heart and the imagination to lead people out of drudgery and isolation to a better society.

‘Books are a uniquely portable magic.’ – Stephen King

Mistakes Were Made (Some in French) by Fiona Lewis (Regan Arts, £14.95) is part autobiography, part philosophy, and part how to tart up an old house in a foreign country. Notionally, it’s in the well-trodden tradition of Peter Mayle’s A Year in Provence; an innocent abroad falls in love with a crumbling château set in seven and a half acres near Montauban in the south of France and spends a small fortune restoring it to its former glory with the help of local craftsmen who, perhaps inevitably, come straight from central casting.

But it’s also, more interestingly, the story of a life and loves. A middle-class convent-educated Essex girl – born in Westcliff-on-Sea in 1946 – Fiona shared a flat in London with Jacqueline Bisset when they were both models, and then actresses, at the height of the swinging ‘60s.

Fiona candidly admits she was a ‘lousy’ actor – ‘my enthusiasm outflanked my ability’ – but featured in a string of cult movies – including The Fearless Vampire Killers, Dracula and Lisztomania – ‘due to the fact I was willing to take off my clothes’. She writes about her husbands – Bill Hayward, Peter Fonda’s best friend, then Art Linson, who made Fight Club – famous friends – such as Cary Grant, Laurence Olivier, Orson Welles, Oliver Reed, Sam Spiegel, Richard Burton, Ken Russell, and Roger Daltrey – as well as the passionate affairs with Roman Polanski, Roger Vadim, and Lord Lichfield.

The Unstill Ones, the first collection of poems by Miller Oberman (Princeton University Press, £14.95) is an unusual but powerful mix of translations from Old English, such as Caedmon’s Hymn, The Ruin, The Grave, and various riddles from the Exeter Book, and original poems drawing on the rhythms, as well as some of the subjects, of Anglo-Saxon verse. The 26 poem sequence at the heart of M by Antony Rowland (Arc Publications, £9.99) was written in the shadow of the death of Kieran Crump Raiswell in a random knife attack in Manchester. Rowland, like Oberman, has dug up some Old English words, and writes movingly of ‘sky blues dawn against Trafford reds’ and ‘poets of the ringway / bushing over the violence.

‘Books were his brothers.’ – Patrick Gale, Rough Music

Memories of West Country Railway Journeys 1960-1962 by Peter Barnfield (Wild Swan Books, £14.95) is a companion piece to Memories of the Withered Arm, about the southern lines west of Exeter. Narrow in scope, but an elegant exercise in nostalgia. The Golden Age of Yorkshire Railways by Peter Tuffrey (Great Northern Books, £19.99) is a collection of 300 photographs, most of them taken before the outbreak of the Second World War, and many from postcards printed before the First World War.
A GREAT DEAL OF SABBATH TRAVELLING

fear there is a great deal of Sabbath travelling here, said Obadiah Slope. ‘On looking at the Bradshaw, I see that there are three trains in and three out every Sabbath. Could nothing be done to induce the company to withdraw them? Don’t you think, Dr Grantly, that a little energy might diminish the evil?’

‘Not being a director, I really can’t say. But if you can withdraw the passengers, the company, I dare say, will withdraw the trains,’ said the doctor. ‘It’s merely a question of dividends.’

– Anthony Trollope, Barchester Towers

Alan Rickman dazzled as the oily and ambitious Reverend Obadiah Slope in the BBC version of Anthony Trollope’s Barchester Chronicles

The yet unfinished and unopened railroad was in progress; and, from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilisation and improvement. But, as yet, the neighbourhood was shy to own the railroad. One or two bold speculators had projected streets; and one had built a little, but had stopped among the mud and ashes to consider farther of it. A brand new tavern, redolent of fresh mortar and size, and contrast 14 founder 16 Tea bag 18 Stir 20 Hoe 21 Excessive desire for food

Solution to Crossword 139
Across: 1 Smallholding 7 Order 8 Purr 10 Dance 11 Tache 13 Effort 15 Artist 17 Untie 18 Spain 19 Shut 21 Drawl 22 Refrigerator
Down: 1 Shortcakes 2 Abdicate 3 Larders 4 Orange 5 Dupe 6 Nor 9 Rottweiler 12 Contrast 14 Founder 16 Tea bag 18 Stir 20 Hoe

Congratulations to Derek Lindsay, of Liverpool, 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 139th prize crossword in the November 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 December

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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