100 years on: Role of the railway in a world at war
tax free savings plans for
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Scandal of Carillion

OF a good start to the year for the government. Just as the dust settled on the East Coast debacle came the botched reshuffle and then Carillion, one of the biggest beneficiaries of public-private finance initiatives, goes into administration. In line with policy, and regardless of party, we have campaigned against PFI and PPP and other money-making vehicles which mean private profits at public expense and poor value for the taxpayer. It’s utterly wrong that such schemes offer profligate profits for private companies in the good times but need public bailouts when they fail.

Our first thoughts are with all those workers, in the public and private sectors, and their families who are fearful for their futures. How could the company pay massive bonuses to the directors despite a series of profit warnings and why did government departments – including the DfT – continue to dole out contracts worth billions of pounds like confetti without due diligence? There must be an urgent public inquiry into this scandal.

Outsourced public contracts must come back in-house and stay in-house, as Rebecca Long-Bailey has demanded. The government model – taxpayers fund the infrastructure, profits are privatised but losses are nationalised – is broken. I recently asked a group to name one privatisation that had worked for the benefit of the taxpayer, the consumer, or the passenger – and not just the City – and they couldn’t.

Chris Grayling kept awarding contracts to Carillion despite the profit warnings and hedge funds betting on the collapse of the company – they made £600 million gambling on its failure – and then on fare rise day says, from Qatar, it’s the fault of the unions for not using CPI instead of RPI in pay negotiations. I think it may be the failing model and would be happy to do a comparison with directors’ pay over the same period, including bonuses, stock options, and performance-related monies.

Finally, I would urge you to read the National Audit Office report on GTR (see page 4) to understand the role of the DfT and a company that bid to break our agreements. Apparently, and despite spending millions on bidding, no one knew how many drivers were needed? Not even a company already operating those services? And the DfT contracted services that Network Rail and GTR knew they couldn’t deliver? And set up the franchise so revenue was taken by the DfT so GTR had less incentive to avoid strikes and was protected by ‘force majeure’ meaning the company couldn’t be held responsible for the resulting poor performance? Sometimes, words are not enough.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
National Audit Office slams government on Southern Fail

ICK WHELAN, ASLEF’s general secretary, has welcomed the National Audit Office report on the involvement of the Department for Transport in the fiasco of the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise.

‘This damning report clearly holds Chris Grayling and his predecessor, Patrick McLoughlin, to account for their handling of the fiasco on Southern Rail,’ said Mick. ‘On their watch, as the Secretaries of State for Transport, they let the DfT get it wrong. Passengers have suffered, totally unnecessarily, and taxpayers have had to pick up the bill. The company got it totally wrong, too – with the connivance, of course, of the DfT – and we want heads to roll.

Starting with Chris Grayling and Peter Wilkinson.’

The report says: ‘The DfT did not seek sufficient assurance that Govia Thameslink would have enough train drivers when it took on the franchise.’

Mick said: ‘Charles Horton, the chief executive, blamed the previous franchisee. But he, like a lot of the senior management, worked for the previous franchisee. So he was blaming himself!’

The report says: ‘The DfT accepted GTR’s driver only operation plan [but] did not fully evaluate the possible effects on passengers of different scenarios of industrial action before awarding the contract, nor did it ask GTR to do so.’

Mick said: ‘The NAO report puts the blame for 18 months of industrial unrest squarely where it belongs – at the door of the DfT and the company, Southern Fail.’

The report says: ‘The DfT contracted GTR to deliver a specific level of increased services despite concerns from Network Rail and GTR that the network could not support the proposed timetables reliably.’

Mick said: ‘The NAO, quite properly, condemns the DfT and the company for promising a timetable they both knew they could never deliver.’

The report says: ‘The DfT recognised that this franchise contract, different from other franchises in that fare revenue was received by the DfT rather than the operator, meant GTR may have less incentive to avoid strikes than other operators. Industrial action is defined in the contract as ‘force majeure’ meaning the operator cannot be held responsible for the resulting poor performance.’

Mick said: ‘This is what we said all along, ever since Peter Wilkinson went public at a meeting in Croydon in February 2016. He said he wanted to break the unions and that is what he set out to do. Passengers and taxpayers have paid the price for his complete failure. Now it’s time for him to walk, along with the Transport Secretaries who backed him…’

Stepping up pressure for step-free access

Tube driver Julian Vaughan, of Northern Line North, who stood for Labour in North-East Bedfordshire at the general election last year, has ramped up the pressure for step-free access to trains. Julian, an h&s rep on London Underground, is holding Alistair Burt, the standing Tory MP, to account. The lack of step-free access at Biggleswade station was a hot topic during the election and the campaign continues, with an online petition approaching 10,000 signatures and a mention in the European Parliament. Julian discussed the problem, live on Three Counties Radio.

Julian Vaughan with Labour MEP Alex Mayer and has liaised with colleagues across Bedfordshire to campaign for step-free access at Biggleswade, Flitwick, Harlington, Leagrave, Luton stations.

Commuters’ paper slams rail firms, too

The Evening Standard, in a damning double page spread on Monday 8 January, under the headline ‘First they’re fleeced on fares, now commuters see parking fees soar’ took the TOCs to task, too, saying: ‘Thousands of commuters have been hit by a “double whammy” rise in costs after train companies increased station car park charges by up to 11%.’ Mick Whelan said: ‘Enough is enough. It’s time to stop squeezing commuters until the pips squeak. It makes a nonsense of park and ride schemes. It’s as if they want to drive people off the railways and onto the roads.’

COMMUNICating WITH THE ASLEF JOURNAL

QUOTE...

‘I am going to deliver on Brexit.’ – Prime Minister Theresa May

HANDY ANDY

Andy Hourigan, executive committee member for District 3, has been elected unopposed as District 3 Organiser to replace Colin Smith when he retires later this year.

QUOTE...

‘My presence in the country wouldn’t make any difference.’ – Transport Secretary Chris Grayling

TELEGRAPH TURNS ON TOCS

The Daily Telegraph, rarely a friend of the left, turned on the privatised train operating companies, and their chums at the Rail Delivery Group, with a front page splash in December headlined: ‘Passengers denied cheap Christmas rail tickets.’ Senior managers, worried at the hostile coverage in papers like the Sun, Mail and Telegraph, say the RDG is doing ‘a lousy job’ defending their lucrative vested interests.

500 CLUB: L Taylor, with number 41, won the January draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £388.

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

Tonight I put country and constituency before party and voted with my principles to give Parliament a meaningful vote.

Stephen Hammond

Quick reminder: There is no question to which ‘Chris Grayling’ is the answer.

Ian Dunt

No wonder @Theresa May’s struggling to negotiate #Brexit. She can’t even organise a reshuffle.

Stephen Kinnock
Mark time at comedy club in refugee camp

ARK THOMAS – comedian, social satirist and political activist – is going back on the road this month with a brand new stage show. And he’s offering ASLEF members a discount.

Mark, probably best known for his programmes on Radio 4 and Channel 4, is performing Showtime from the Frontline with Faisal Abueilhaja and Ala Shehada from the Freedom Theatre in Jenin on the West Bank of the River Jordan. The show – which Mark describes as ‘funny, moving and necessary’ – tells the story of the struggle to do ‘socio-political stand-up comedy’ in a Palestinian refugee camp.

‘Dodging cultural – and literal – bullets, Israeli incursions and religion, we set out to run a comedy club – in Arabic – for a couple of nights in Jenin only to find it is not so simple to celebrate freedom of speech in a place with so little freedom. It’s the nearest I’ll ever get to Fanne…”

The 59-date tour starts in Hove in East Sussex on Tuesday 30 January and ends at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, in London on Saturday 21 April. You can see a complete list of gigs at www.markthomasinfo.co.uk.

Mark is making discounted tickets available to ASLEF members at some shows including the Bristol Old Vic (ASLEF code STFL1&ASLEF); Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh (show proof of membership on collection); Sherman Theatre, Cardiff (code Showtime); MAC Birmingham (MTASLEF); Liverpool Playhouse (ASLEF); Lowry Quays Theatre, Salford (Union); West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds (Freedoom); The Tron, Glasgow (Frontline17); the Dukes, Lancaster (TU Supporters); Gala Theatre, Durham (ASLEFSTFF); Gulbenkian, Canterbury (ASLEF); Stables, Milton Keynes; The Junction, Cambridge (ASLEF18); and Theatre Royal, Stratford East.

See the advert on page 18 for more details.

CONFERENCES & RALLIES

The Scottish Labour Party conference is at the Caird Hall in Dundee from Friday 9 to Sunday 11 March. The Scottish Trades Union Congress is at the Macdonald Highlands Hotel, Aviemore, from Monday 16 to Wednesday 18 April. The Welsh Labour Party conference is at the Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Friday 20 to Sunday 22 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. The STUC women’s conference Monday 29 to Tuesday 30 October.

Homeless sleeping on subway trains in New York

Homelessness in the US is out of control under President Trump with numbers at their highest since the Depression – 45 rough sleepers were seen on the E train in New York as temperatures plunged this winter.

MEL THORLEY, Longsight legend, recalls the high days at the Holiday Camp. ‘When we were spare in the mess room, along with the shed men, we had a panoramic view of the carriage wash road. We would sadistically look out for any empty stock coach window which had been left open, so we could daub the driver to the cleaning staff (all good clean fun). One day, watching the Mark 3s glide through the brushes, one of us noticed a woman calmly sitting there thinking she was on her way to Euston. Never seen the mess room empty so fast! Mass exodus to the boards at the south end, where a pair of stepladders helped the young lady on to the ballast. Adorned with a sparkling orange vest, she was escorted to the waiting staff van which whisked her back to Piccadilly. The pay was poor, but, oh! the fun we had…”

PRIVATE SATION has proved such a fiasco that the return of the railways to public ownership is now a vote winner not just with Labour voters, but with Conservative voters, too. So pity the poor (well, very highly paid, actually) spin doctors who toil for the privatised TOCs. After @nathand1993 tweeted ‘The new @LNRailway is absolutely rubbish. I haven’t been on a train yet which isn’t cancelled, delayed or short formed. Shambolic’ the duty PR at London Northwestern gamely replied ‘I am sorry that you have not had go.of.experience (sic) so far – it is the case though that the only way is up from here.’ Dave Caile, executive committee member for District 6, and EC vice-president, dryly observed, ‘Ah, the art of positive thinking’

JEREMY HUNT has an eye on the succession when Mother Theresa suffers the fate of Julius Caesar on his way to the Senate. ‘So he has adjusted his natural Remain credentials to Leave,’ says Anne McElvoy in the Evening Standard.

‘Slippery, it surely is. But being bi-curious about Brexit is now a cunning hedge, enabling the Health Secretary to stay in contention for the top jobs whichever way the wind blows.

NADINE DORRIES is not one of our usual friends. But wait. After Captain Edmund Blackadder (not, we think, his real name) tweeted ‘ASLEF are the real problem. The RMT are relatively moderate; ASLEF is a protection racket for £55k+ drivers’ Nadine tweeted: ‘I don’t regard 55k as unreasonable for a job with such a high level of responsibility and fraught with the emotional distress that job often is.

MICK BROWN, reviewing Michael Wolff’s Donald Trump biography Fire and Fury in the Daily Telegraph describes it as ‘more The Sopranos – with a dash of Kafka – than The West Wing’ and adds wickedly: ‘Swathes of it you read peeping disbelievingly through splayed fingers, staggered at the chronicle of rank incompetence and mendacity. Trump’s definition of “fake news” is anything he doesn’t want to hear.’
**Passengers pay penalty fare for privatisation**

**M**ick Whelan condemned the sharp rise in rail fares at the start of the year – when the privatised train operating companies put up fares by 3.6% at a time when wages are rising by just 2.6% – saying hard-pressed passengers are paying, again, for rail firms to line the pockets of their shareholders.

‘The privateers are laughing all the way to the bank,’ said Mick. ‘They treat passengers as sheep to be fleeced.’

The TOCs were condemned – by commentators as well as by passenger groups – for putting up prices by more than wages have gone up.

‘After years of austerity, when workers have not achieved pay increases at or around inflation, it is unfair that the industry they subsidise creates transport poverty and hurts the communities and industries that they should be supporting,’ said Mick. ‘This is, of course, without the scandalous cost of parking at certain key stations which is not taken into account.’ He added: ‘Passengers are paying the penalty fare for privatisation, a flawed and failing model that everyone in the rail industry can see doesn’t work. Hundreds of millions of pounds are haemorrhaging from our industry every year – money desperately needed to improve our infrastructure, to continue with electrification, and to reduce passenger fares which are among the highest in the world. Commuters in Britain now spend up to five times as much of their salary on rail fares as passengers elsewhere in Europe, according to new research by the TUC. Someone on an average salary travelling from Chelmsford to London will have to fork out 13% of their pay on a season ticket (£381 a month). By contrast, a comparable commute would cost a mere 2% of the average salary in France, 3% in Italy, 4% in Germany, and 5% in Spain and Belgium. ‘Another year, another price increase,’ said Frances O’Grady, general secretary of the TUC. ‘Many commuters will look with envy to their continental cousins, who enjoy reasonably-priced journeys to work. The government needs to take our railways back into public hands. That will stop hundreds of millions being siphoned off by private rail firms, and allow us to put passengers first.’

**Where’s Wally?**

Chris Grayling, already facing a barrage of criticism after the hefty New Year rail fare rises trumpeted by the train operating companies and defended – rather ineptly – by the Rail Delivery Group, face the music here at home. His department insisted he wasn’t on holiday – he was, they said, ‘hard at work promoting Britain in the Middle East’ – but the Transport Secretary was promptly accused of ‘running scared’ of passenger anger over the biggest rail fares rise in five years.

**TOUGHER RESTRICTIONS ON DANGER PENS**

Mick Whelan has welcomed government plans for tougher restrictions on the import of high-powered laser pens which have been used in attacks on trains and planes. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has announced it will clamp down on laser pointers following a call for evidence into the issues they cause for pilots and train drivers. ‘Lasers being deliberately and maliciously shone at trains and aircraft has been an issue for us for many years, as well as for others in the transport sector,’ said the GS. ‘ASLEF has been campaigning for stronger control over the sale of these pens, as well as higher penalties for offenders.

**HARRIET DEMANDS GTR ACT ON OVERCROWDING**

Harriet Harman, Labour MP for Camberwell & Peckham, met Network Rail and GTR managers on 24 January to demand action over the ‘terrible overcrowding’ at Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye Overground stations in London.

**JOHN MOVES FROM GBRF TO HECTOR’S HOUSE**

John Smith, founder and managing director of GB Railfreight, has been appointed CEO of parent company Hector Rail. ‘John will help us become the leading independent pan-European rail freight operator,’ said Bo Lerenius, chair of the Swedish firm.

**Body neutral Virgin**

Virgin Trains has issued new ‘body-neutral’ uniforms designed by Gerardine and Wayne Hemingway for staff on its East and West Coast routes. Train companies have been criticised for coming up with unsuitable uniforms, and forgetting to consult the people who have to wear them. ‘We ran an extensive employee-wide survey and trialled initial versions on the job for two years,’ said Jessica Kelly-McKay, Virgin’s uniform delivery manager. Old uniforms are being recycled at HMP Northumberland and turned by prisoners into coats and blankets for the homeless. ‘The launch of our striking new uniform is another milestone on our journey,’ said Jessica, adding, perhaps optimistically, ‘Customers can expect to see an extra spring in the steps of our staff as we roll it out.’

**SCOTRAIL OFFERS STAFF CAMERAS TO WEAR**

ScotRail staff have been offered CCTV cameras to wear on duty in a bid to improve the behaviour of passengers. The cameras – marked ‘video badge’ so people know they are being filmed – can be clipped on uniforms or worn on a cord around the neck. ASLEF has backed the initiative – as have the RMT and TSSA.

**QUOTE...**

‘Donald Trump is the most pernicious exponent of fake news as a catch-all for something you don’t like.’ – Damian Collins, Conservative MP for Folkestone & Hythe and chair of the Culture, Media & Sport Select Committee

...UNQUOTE
Grayling Tory Party chair for 27 seconds

HRIS GRAYLING, the Secretary of State for Transport, was chair of the Conservative Party last month – for less than half a minute. Grayling was tipped as new party chair on Twitter at 11.40am on Monday 8 January. At 11.40 the BBC confirmed the appointment. At 11.43 Conservative Campaign Headquarters tweeted his appointment from the @Conservatives account; The Times reported the tweeter as CCHQ political director lain Carter, who also sent a Grayling graphic round the Tory MPs’ WhatsApp group. Many retweeted the appointment but, 27 seconds later, the @Conservatives tweet was deleted and, at 11.47, Number 10 said no appointment had been made. At 11.48 Tory MPs deleted their tweets and, at 11.57, Brandon Lewis arrived in Downing Street to be appointed party chair. The right-wing website Guido Fawkes dryly observed: ‘This is going well.’

Two reasons for the shambles have been offered. Some Tories say ‘there was pushback’ against the appointment, as Grayling is not popular with influential cabinet colleagues, while others say wearily ‘it was just another CCHQ cock-up’.

The only Wones

Nick Wones started on the railway on 5 June 1978 as a second man at Parkeston depot. He passed as driver in 1984 and stayed at Parkeston for nearly 30 years, until in 2007 he moved to Ipswich and joined Freightliner. Nick decided it was time to hang up his railway keys and retire on 31 August 2017 after nearly 40 years’ service. Ipswich branch members wish Nick all the best for his retirement.

Lee Barber, branch secretary

PAUL SWAPS TRAINS FOR WHIPS AT WESTMINSTER

Paul Maynard, Conservative MP for Blackpool North & Cleveleys, who replaced Claire Perry as Rail Minister in July 2016, was replaced by Nusrat Ghani as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport in the Prime Minister’s reshuffle last month. Maynard, 42, has become a government whip.

DRIVERLESS TRAIN RAMS INTO WALL DURING TRIAL

A driverless Delhi Metro train, running on the Magenta line, rammed into a wall at Kalindi Kunj depot during its trial run, when the brakes were not applied in time. The company said there were no passengers on board at the time.

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Looking for Gwilym

EOFF COURTNEY, a freelance journalist who writes about rail, is trying to trace Gwilym Roberts, the former Crewe fireman who was on the footplate of a Britannia class steam locomotive when a severe blowback enveloped him and his driver, Wallace Oakes, in flames.

They were working the Firth of Forth, a BR Standard Class 7 loco, from Crewe to Carlisle, on 5 June 1965 when the fire blew back from the smokebox as it entered Winsford station at 55mph, filling the driver's cab with smoke and flames. Gwilym managed to climb out of the cab, but Wally remained on the footplate to close the regulator, open the blower valve, and apply the brakes, bringing the train to a halt and averting a major accident.

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

The National Railway Museum bought his medal for £60,000 at auction last September and it is now on display in York.

Geoff, who led a successful appeal for funds to pay for a memorial headstone at Wally’s previously unmarked grave near Crewe – which will be dedicated on Thursday 1 February – believes that after the incident Gwilym transferred to King's Cross, where he became a driver. If you can help Geoff his email address is geoffcourtney@btconnect.com.

The empire strikes back

Tejinder Sharma, a former Silverlink/London Overground driver, who has written several critically-acclaimed collections of short stories, and was made an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours list for his contribution to Hindi literature and community cohesion in London, picked up his medal from Prince Charles in an investiture at Buckingham Palace.

Salman Rushdie, VS Naipaul, Vikram Seth and Anish Kapoor have all been honoured, but Tej is the first Hindi writer to receive this honour for his contribution to Hindi literature.

Tej worked as a flight purser for Air India for 20 years before settling in the UK in 1998. He worked for All India Radio, Doordarshan, and the BBC World Service in London – and acted in Annu Kapoor’s film Abhay with Nana Patekar – before becoming a train driver.

Fewer HGVs means fewer deaths and less pollution

New research shows that just 2,000 fewer HGVs on Britain’s roads would result in a dramatic 10% reduction in air pollution. The research, by consultants MTRU for the Campaign for Better Transport, found that switching more freight over to rail on four of England’s most heavily congested routes has the potential not just to reduce air pollution but to improve road safety, too.

Removing 2,000 lorries a day from four specific roads would result in a 10% reduction in NOx and a 7% reduction in particulates from all road traffic in each of the four routes studied, with a 2.5% reduction in carbon emissions. And 18 fewer people would be killed or seriously injured in crashes involving an HGV on these routes every year. The research examined the pollution and safety benefits of upgrading existing rail lines on four routes: the A14 between Felixstowe and the Midlands; the A34 from Southampton to the Midlands; and the M6 and M62 motorways, which together carry around 37,500 HGVs every day.

Philippa Edmunds, Freight on Rail Manager, said: ‘This research shows that by upgrading existing rail lines which run parallel to these motorway routes would allow large numbers of lorry loads to be transferred to rail, easing congestion, improving air quality, and reducing road collisions.’
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Mind the gap gag!

ROGER GALLOWAY-SMITH, Black & Ethnic Minorities’ Representatives Committee member for District 3, reports on ASLEF’s Mind the Gag! campaign

Mind the Gag! – a campaign challenging offensive banter in the workplace – was launched at ASLEF’s annual assembly of delegates at Bristol in May 2017. A joint initiative between ASLEF’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender; Women’s; and Black & Ethnic Minorities representatives committees and the newly-formed Young Members’ Forum, Mind the Gag! was designed to create a buffer between staff and management; to provide guidance for colleagues; and provide a mechanism for dealing with issues raised. Hopefully reaching a resolution before any escalation to a company’s disciplinary procedure.

Mind the Gag! is also designed to make people think before we say or type something that might be seen as offensive by others. Mind the Gag! isn’t intended to prevent debate, or to stop people having fun at work; it’s designed, quite specifically, to protect all members from bullying, harassment and upset.

And to prevent disciplinary action – and possible dismissal – due to someone misreading their audience or being overheard making offensive comments. This applies equally to social media; most companies now operate a social media policy with which they can take disciplinary action.

Mind the Gag! encourages a self-policing approach to workplace banter, where everyone can feel confident in challenging offensive language, teasing and jokes. This may involve others stepping in on behalf of those who feel unable to challenge. Mind the Gag! empowers people to stand up to offensive banter, and encourages them to speak to a rep before talking to management.

Banter is often regarded as a bit of fun, with no hurtful intent, but it can also be used as a cover for bullying and harassment. When a comment is offensive a person will often say, ‘Oh, it’s just a bit of banter’. In effect saying it is not their fault someone has been offended but, rather, the fault of the person who has taken offence.

Banter is described as the playful and friendly exchange of teasing remarks. The problem is in identifying when that friendly exchange becomes offensive. If you follow these rules you should stay on the fun side of banter:

- You know your audience.
- Is what you’re about to say actually funny?
- Will you offend anyone?
- You’re happy to receive as well as to give.
- You are participating on the basis of equal standing.
- The language used does not cause offence, upset or distress. Nor does it intimidate, belittle or ridicule.

- You stop immediately if someone tells you that you’re causing distress or offence.
- Be prepared to examine your own language and behaviour, and reflect on how it might impact on your colleagues. Use Mind the Gag! to challenge offensive banter in the workplace should you come across it; a word in the ear could help someone who is upset and save someone else his or her job.

If you don’t feel you can directly challenge someone then please contact your union reps who will be happy to provide confidential support and advice. Or email equalities@aslef.org.uk.

Hilda and the Hazards Centre life savers

ALAN MOSS, of ASLEF’s Longsight branch, celebrates 30 years of the Hazards Centre in Manchester

It was an honour and a privilege to be invited to a very special event on Friday 29 October to mark 30 years of the Greater Manchester Hazards Centre because the work they do truly is life saving work.

Colin Smith, my district organiser, and I attended the event and it was so humbling to be amongst giants in the field of trade unionism and health & safety.

A number of the guests were members of Families of Corporate Killers, a group of people who have lost partners or children due to the negligence of employers in their quest for corporate greed and flagrant disregard for health & safety. FACK is a group of which they would much rather not be members. But they campaign effectively to highlight the problems and ensure that

and comrades old and new gathered to commemorate the outstanding work that the Hazards Centre does.

The centre is run by a small but dedicated team, but it would be remiss not to mention the tireless and utterly selfless work of one individual, my friend and comrade Hilda Palmer. Hilda works around the clock campaigning against cuts to health & safety, giving advice, and passing on her wealth of knowledge to the fraternity.

She is an outstanding individual and someone I have turned to many times for guidance and advice. We truly stand on the shoulders of giants in the trade union movement and to be a guest at this event never was that so true.

The Hazards Centre requires support to undertake the outstanding work it carries out and I would encourage all safety reps and branches to support them and their work; they truly are life savers.
Next month is the first anniversary of the Tories’ anti-Trade Union Act being in operation. GREGOR GALL, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Bradford, examines the impact of this nasty piece of ideological legislation

T’S THE first anniversary next month of the Tories’ Trade Union Act (2016) being in operation. Just to recap, when it went live on 1 March 2017, the most important changes the Act brought in were that for (compulsory) ballots for strikes and industrial action to have a lawful mandate, they must meet the following thresholds: (i) at least half of eligible union members are required to vote, so a minimum turnout is established; and (ii) in a selection of ‘essential’ public services, like transport, there is also the requirement that at least 40% of all those entitled to vote must vote for action (meaning non-voters are treated as ‘no’ voters).

The Act’s other main measures concerning industrial action are reducing the validity of mandates from being open-ended to six months (unless extended to nine months with the agreement of the affected employer) and increasing the period of notice to employers of action from seven to 14 days.

DISASTER FOR UNIONS?
So has the Trade Union Act 2016 been the disaster for unions that its many critics said it would be? Although we will not know its full impact on the number of ballots held until the government produces the figures for 2017 this summer, it does not seem that unions have been cowed by the threat of not passing the new thresholds into not holding ballots.

However, there may have been fewer national ballots than might have been expected – with just the CWU, UCU and Unison holding them. Unite, the largest trade union in Britain, seems to be undertaking more ballots than it did previously and the RMT has held as many ballots in 2017 as it did in previous individual years.

But what has been the outcome of these ballots? The overwhelming majority have been won – although there have been a few high profile and damaging failures amongst unions like the RMT, Unison and Unite to pass the new thresholds. It is for this reason that some unions are using consultative ballots on industrial action prior to holding the statutory ballot. Unions such as the PCS and UCU have used these to identify the areas of strength and weakness of membership (like not voting and voting ‘no’) so that, come the statutory ballot, they can put extra resources into the weaker areas to make sure they win the ballot.

PACK A BIGGER PUNCH
As expected ASLEF had no problems surpassing the thresholds – as highlighted by its ballot results on London Underground, Croydon Tramlink, and Southern.

When we look at when the mandates are implemented, two new features stand out. The first is that many unions are now giving employers notice up front of a whole raft of action – most obviously strike days. Unlike before, when unions would give notice of the first few days of action, they are now giving notice of action for many, many months ahead.

The second is that most unions have moved from predominantly using relatively infrequent one day strikes to strikes lasting many days – and even, in some cases, all-out strikes. In other cases, when one day strikes are still used, they are concentrated together so that they now pack a much bigger punch.

Both are the result of the reduced mandate length and the increased notice period to employers.

Without unions responding in this way, employers could string out negotiations past the length of the mandate, forcing a re-ballot, as well as making contingencies to undermine the potency of one-day strike actions.

However, it should be said that just having more strike days and longer strikes is no magic panacea for, in a number of cases, like British Airways, Southern Rail, Mears housing maintenance and the Picturehouse cinema chain, strikes have gone on for many, many months.

CHALLENGING TASK
This heads up the issue of whether the chosen strike tactics are able to not just disrupt but sufficiently disrupt or stop an employer’s operations and to do so at a significant cost to the employer. On the railways, this can be an especially challenging task because some franchises effectively indemnify the employer from losses as a result of strikes.

As with the publication of the statistics on balloting, we will not know the number of strikes for 2017 until the summer so we won’t be able to make a full assessment of the situation until then. That said, the figures we do have for 2017 so far do not suggest much of a change.

It is an irony of the Tories’ Trade Union Act that it has not so far proven to give employers any more leeway to gain injunctions to stop strikes and industrial action than before. The number of injunctions and threats to apply for injunctions in 2017 was pretty much the same as in previous years.

In the one case which specifically related to the new Act – concerning the pilots’ union, BALPA – the judge rejected the argument of the employer, Thomas Cook, that BALPA had not furnished sufficient information to members with the ballot paper. On picketing, there have been some cases where unions have been cautious about how many sites to have when they could not provide the newly-required picket supervisor. Elsewhere, though, picketing carries on as before – not much used but more than the numbers allowed by the Tory Acts of the 1980s.

PLUS CA CHANGE
It will be interesting to see where we are this time next year when the Trade Union Act has bedded in more. Certainly, the experience so far is that unions have successfully risen to the challenge and there’s a sense of plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose (‘the more it changes, the more it stays the same’). This is because workers will still strike when they have manifest grievances even though unions are still prevented in law from undertaking solidarity action.

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The Great War of 1914-18 was certainly the first and probably the last railway war. On the 100th anniversary of the German spring offensive which almost succeeded in breaking through the Allied lines after three and a half years of attrition on the Western front KEITH RICHMOND looks at the role of the railway in a world at war

It was the historian AJP Taylor, in his book *War by Timetable*, who famously put forward the idea that the world – well, Europe – went to war in the summer of 1914 because, in the weeks between the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June and Britain’s declaration of war on Germany on 4 August, mobilisation of the Allied and Central Powers armies, mostly by railway timetable, led inexorably to conflagration.

‘All the great powers heavily depended on railway timetables,’ says Michael Portillo, who presented *Railways of the Great War* on BBC2. ‘The Germans were mobilising from mid-July. The Russians were mobilising, too. Once you’d set the thing in motion, there was actually no way of stopping it. The First World War was, pre-eminently, a railway war.’

Trains took troops from all over Europe – and later from right around the world – to Western and Eastern frontlines. Then, for four enormously destructive years, trains brought more men, followed by munitions and supplies, to the various theatres of war while transporting the wounded home.

Sir Eric Geddes, Inspector General of the British Expeditionary Force, established a network of narrow gauge railways to move millions of shells the last few miles up to the trenches to feed the insatiable appetite of the artillery for their daily bombardments.

Many railway workers were recruited – as *The Locomotive Journal* recorded at the time, and as 100 Years of Union on page 17 recalls each month – and many died. The Great Western railway memorial at Paddington station pays tribute to 3,312 men from that company who were killed, just a fraction of the 20,000 railway workers from Britain and Ireland who died during the conflict.

It was entirely appropriate that the armistice was signed, on 11 November 1918, in a railway carriage.

‘If I should die, think only this of me: That there’s some corner of a foreign field That is forever England’
– Rupert Brooke, *The Soldier*

‘Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew Your cosmopolitan sympathies’
– Isaac Rosenberg, *Break of Day in the Trenches*
An Austrian armoured train in 1915.

‘If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gurgling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori’

– Wilfred Owen, Dulce et Decorum Est

The Royal Army Medical Corps help an injured soldier off a British ambulance train and into a Canadian Red Cross ambulance at Le Tréport.

A labouring party travels by train through the barren landscape of Flanders, devastated by shell holes and hell holes, in January 1918. A member of the 5th (New Zealand) Light Railway Operating Company described the devastation around Ypres in Chronicles of the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces on 30 January 1918: ‘We crawl around the outskirts of the shattered city, and its battered walls and empty streets look hopelessly desolate and forlorn in the light of the rising sun. Now and then a shell burst sends a fountain of bricks and dust into the air... The country here is a dreary desolation. It has been shelled until it resembles the scene of a recent volcanic eruption.’

‘It’s hard to know if you’re alive or dead
When steel and fire go roaring through your head’

– Robert Graves, It’s a Queer Time

The armistice between the Allies and Germany was signed at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918 by Marshal Ferdinand Foch, supreme Allied commander, Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss, Britain’s first sea lord, and Matthias Erzberger, Count Alfred von Oberndorff, General Detlof von Winterfeldt, and Captain Ernst Vanselow, in a carriage of Foch’s private train in the Forest of Compiegne.
Another brick in the wall

WULLIE SIMPSON, ASLEF Education’s project worker in Scotland, reports on the Scottish Union Learning conference in Edinburgh

The 10th annual Scottish Union Learning conference, held on 15 November at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities centre in Edinburgh, was attended by District Organiser Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF Education project worker Wullie Simpson, and the Scottish ULR education team.

The conference, with its theme of ‘the demands of a changing labour market’, was opened by Peter Hunter, chair of the Scottish Union Learning board, who gave a warm welcome to all in attendance and thanked the Scottish Qualifications Authority and Skills Development Scotland for their support.

Suzie Bowman, from SDS, spoke about design and innovation, the advance of artificial intelligence in the modern workplace – and the perils we face in the future – followed by a panel session about the demands of a changing labour market.

The Helen Dowie Award for Lifelong Learning was presented to Brian Ronald of Unite at Rolls Royce at Inchinnan, and the STUC Award for Equality was made to Sharon Sweeney, UCU equality rep at Dundee University.

Jamie Hepburn, Minister for Employability and Training in the Scottish government, said it was ‘a great opportunity to recognise and celebrate the invaluable work that the SUL education programme does to support workers across Scotland.’

Jamie presented the Scottish Union Learning award 2017 to Priscilla Maramba, a member of Unison, who works with Stirling council. Priscilla completed an HNC in Business Studies as well as gaining a masters in Law and is now doing a Chartered Management Institute Certificate.

We moved onto a workshop session where ULRs chose between four subjects: organising union learning to tackle inequality; the gig economy – empowering workers; cyber resilience and personal cyber security; and apprenticeships and trade unions. All the workshops were warmly greeted by the ULRs.

Our next invited speaker was Atta Yaqub, the revered actor and community activist, who has appeared in such films as Ae Fond Kiss by Ken Loach. He spoke about his learning and acting journey since leaving school, and about his charity work and work with minority ethnic communities.

Graeme Smith, STUC general secretary, spoke about the fair work agenda in the workplace, applauded the award winners, and thanked everyone for their contribution to the STUC learning programme in 2017.

Conference was closed by Wendy Burton, director of Scottish Union Learning, who thanked the Scottish government and trade unions and supporters for their input to Scottish Union Learning.

Airdrie branch reborn

In this sad era of branch closures in Scotland, due to the decline of freight, it is heartening to announce the reopening of ASLEF’s Airdrie branch.

On Sunday 12 November we had the pleasure of District 2 Organiser Kevin Lindsay attending Airdrie Working Men’s Club to formally open Airdrie branch and officiate the election of branch officers. Kevin also updated us on current developments affecting drivers on ScotRail and also the referendum result on Southern Rail.

The original Coatbridge branch closed in May 1987 with the opening of Yoker depot and, upon the reopening of Airdrie as a booking point in May 2003, Airdrie drivers remained part of Yoker branch until now.

With over 50% of the depot in attendance for our inaugural meeting this can only bode well for our future.

Ivan Wilson, branch chair

Spread a little stardust on your CV

HE redundancies at DB Cargo meant that some drivers were displaced, while some opted for voluntary redundancy (and severance packages) while others were supported by ASLEF to find employment with other train and freight operating companies.

The process highlighted the fact that some drivers need support with their job application skills after doing the same job for many years and not having had to apply for other positions, create a CV, or prepare for a job interview. As a response to this, ASLEF Education funded two job application seminars in Doncaster and Birmingham for train drivers.

The jobs market is increasingly competitive, so getting an interview, and being successful with a job application, requires more thought, time, and some knowledge and advice about what is required. To illustrate this point, when one TOC advertised 78 driver positions it had more than 15,000 applications. Some drivers with many years’ experience and excellent driving records did not get past the first stage because they did not submit an appropriate application with relevant information.

The one day seminars set up by ASLEF Education were designed to be informal and to provide relevant advice and knowledge for drivers who are considering a job change or looking for new employment. The sessions covered: how to write an effective CV, discussing layout and analysing what to include in the different sections; how to navigate the modern job market; how to find a new job via applications to job adverts and direct approaches, etc and, finally, how to excel in interviews, covering some of the basics of interview technique, common mistakes, and how to prepare effectively.

The DB drivers who attended found the course very useful and informative. All those attending had worked as train drivers most of their working lives, between 25 and 39 years, and most had not had to apply for a job since starting on the railway.

Shirley Handsley, ASLEF Education
KEITH RICHMOND talks to a man who wants to change the perception of travellers in this country.

HEN Roger Galloway-Smith, a driver with Northern Rail, was elected to ASLEF’s Black & Ethnic Minority Representatives’ Committee, it raised a few eyebrows in the industry. Not in District 3, where he’s well-known, but elsewhere. Because, self-evidently, Roger isn’t black. But Roger was elected to our BEM committee because he’s a member of an ethnic minority – one that has been persecuted for many years, and not just in this country.

It is worth remembering that when the Nazis were rounding up men, women and children to be sent to the death camps in Eastern Europe, although most of those killed were Jewish, many were socialists, communists, trade union activists, and gypsies. Socialists, communists and union activists were deported to die because of their political beliefs and industrial muscle. Jews and Roma were killed because, the Nazis claimed, they were ‘racially inferior’. A quarter of a million Romanies were exterminated on Hitler’s orders.

That was Europe under the Nazis in the 1930s and ’40s. In the British Isles we didn’t have deportations and death camps, but we have had a couple of centuries of prejudice and discrimination. The words ‘gypsy’ and ‘pikey’ – from pike, which means road, or highway, hence turnpike (toll road) – are often used pejoratively.

ROMANTIC FIGURES
And while travellers have, in fiction and on film, on the page and on the stage, been seen as romantic figures – Joe Boswell in DH Lawrence’s novel The Virgin and the Gypsy; Carmen in Bizet’s opera; Gypsy Road by the heavy metal band Cinderella – in real life they have often been treated very badly.

‘I define myself as a traveller,’ says Roger, 49. ‘To me, it means freedom. I like to get up, get out, and go. I love travelling, being able to go wherever I want. I don’t like being stuck in one place, I find it claustrophobic. But I know people think of My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding and all that crap. Bare knuckle fighting, and “We’ll tarmac your drive”, it all perpetuates the stereotype.’

Roger was born in 1968 in Armagh in Northern Ireland. His mum Linda was an Irish traveller while dad Geoffrey was a Romaney – two distinctly different travelling traditions – who met, when he was in Ireland buying horses, fell in love, got married, and then moved to England, because of the Troubles, in the early 1970s. They initially lived near Aylesbury, in Buckinghamshire, but moved around, ‘ending up in the wilds of Cumbria’.

‘We had an Eldiss Super Typhoon caravan, and Land Rover, and moved between plots of land my father owned around the country, I liked it. But schooling was difficult. You’d be in one place for a few months and then, when you’d started to make friends, you’d be moving on again. Education was a problem because I was always behind everyone else.’

TRIGGER HAPPY AMERICANS
Some children didn’t want to know him because he was a traveller but Roger learned to cope. ‘You have to be self-reliant as a traveller and you have to stand up for yourself.’ He loved the life – ‘Out and about all the time’ – and looking after the animals. Not just horses, which his father bought and sold, but chickens, sheep (his mum used the fleece to make wool), a Jersey cow, and a pig.

Roger left school at 16 and joined the RAF Police as a dog handler. ‘I signed on for five years and ended up doing 10’. Their job, with the RAF Regiment, is to secure the airfield. His most testing time was at Greenham Common in Berkshire. ‘Based in a prefab, we were caught, literally and metaphorically, between Cruise missile protesters and trigger happy Americans’. He sustained a bad knee injury in Belize and, after six months at a military hospital in Ely, left with Dylan, his German Shepherd. ‘I’d had enough. I had long hair, I wouldn’t wear my uniform properly, but I was a good dog handler’.

He did private security work for a while, then spent six years with Sussex Police at Horsham and Crawley. ‘It was a nightmare. There were constant altercations with colleagues, and I wouldn’t let remarks go.’ Then he joined the prison service – ‘For the money; a secure job with pay and pension’ – at HMP Whitemoor, a high security dispersal prison near March in Cambridgeshire. But he felt, ‘There were a lot of people who shouldn’t have been there – they should have been in hospital, they were mentally ill’ – so after four years, ‘I went my own way and went back on the road’ in another Eldiss Super Typhoon with his wife Rosie, two sons and a daughter. ‘I did building work – I did a course in Cornwall on lime plastering and restoration – repointing old buildings in Cumbria.’

But it was cold and wet and when he saw an advert for a train conductor’s job with Northern, ‘I thought I’d give it a go’. He worked out of Longtown, on the Anglo-Scottish border, and, after a year, ‘I decided to go to the other end of the train’.

‘A train driver’s job is a really good job – hard work but a good job – and I was stressed for months because I was in competition with all these young guys and thought, not a cat in hell’s chance!’ He passed out in August 2014 and works 156s, 158s, 153s, and 142s to Newcastle, Leeds, and Dumfries. ‘I love it. It’s a great job. Sitting at the front, fantastic views – the routes we drive, anyway – and you’re left to get on with it!’ He joined the union – ‘I was given an application form and told to “F***ing fill it out”’ – but, because of my past, and the jobs I’ve done, and how I grew up, I know that you’ve got to stand shoulder to shoulder in order to achieve anything. If it’s just you, on your own, you can’t do anything. As a group we have a louder voice’.

IT’S A HATE CRIME
Roger had encountered prejudice in the RAF, in the police, and in the prison service. So he was disappointed – but not surprised – to find it in the rail industry, too. ‘I sat down at a table one lunchtime, back to the blokes behind me, and the man in front of me was Indian, and the blokes behind were saying, “My son can’t get a house, because of all the bloody Pakis,” and I said, “You F***ing what, this bloke’s having his lunch here!” In the prison service, and the police, if you’d actually said that, you’d have been out of the door with your P45. It was covert. But I was surprised by how overt it was in the rail industry.’

People sometimes hide behind ‘freedom of speech’ but this isn’t a question of freedom of speech. It’s racism; xenophobia; and, now, a hate crime.

Roger, his wife and daughter now live in a house, not a caravan, in Cumbria. But he still loves travelling and still sees himself as a traveller. He stood for the BEM committee to dispel some of the myths about travellers – Romany gypsies and Irish travellers were protected from discrimination as an ethnic group under the Equality Act 2010 – and to increase the levels of recruitment and retention of black and ethnic minorities in the rail industry.’
Standing on the shoulders of giants

ONSIGHT’S well-attended December branch was a special evening for two of our loyal and respected comrades. We were privileged to be joined by CrossCountry council and one of our esteemed RMS members, a former branch secretary and local level stalwart, Paul ‘Wacko’ Jackson and Dave ‘Richie’ Richardson are the kind of individuals who are the backbone of ASLEF. They come in each day, do their job, are an integral part of the workforce, and when called upon by our union they rise like lions and stand shoulder to shoulder with comrades to achieve our goals. Both men have achieved 40 years’ membership of our union; Dave started in the rail industry in 1974 and joined the footplate in 1977, while Paul came straight onto the footplate in 1977. Dave’s badge was presented by his close friend Fred Sullivan, Paul’s by council rep Lee Stevenson as, over the years, Lee has spent a considerable amount of time skilfully manoeuvring Wacko back under the radar! Wacko and Richie, it’s at times like these that we truly do stand on the shoulders of giants. Congratulations on your achievement, comrades. Alan Moss, Longsight

Bolder to Birmingham

A packed branch room welcomed GS Mick Whelan, EC vice-president Dave Calfe and full-time officer Dicky Fisher to the Birmingham New Street presentation and AGM.

Mick spoke passionately about ASLEF’s role in our industry and how previous negotiations with train operators were concluded; the state of freight and the way forward; and about the union’s political agenda. Mick was clear that change only comes by talking to the decision makers and getting the truth out to those who can influence them. Then Mick presented long service badges and retirement certificates to Brothers Steve Felton, Steve Watts, Sid Saeed, Jim Moloney and Jeff ‘One Notch’ Mathers. Thanks to all who made it a very memorable event. Angie Geddes-Smith, Birmingham New Street

The GS presented Martin Ward with his 50 years’ membership medallion (Martin also managed 50 years’ service in the grade), retired member Neil Davis with his 50 years’ medallion, and chair Pete Elston, standing down after 20 years at the helm in Ramsgate, and a mere 47 years’ service! Nik Fetherston, branch secretary

Upcoming events

- **CRICKLEWOOD – FRIDAY 2 MARCH**
  Cricklewood reunion from 12.0 at the RAF Association Club, Ashburnham Road, Bedford, MK40 1EA, opposite the station.

- **EASTLEIGH – SATURDAY 10 MARCH**
  Annual reunion 12.0 to 16.00 at the Eastleigh Railway Institute, 2 Romsey Road, Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO50 9FE. All welcome. Buffet provided. Hope to see you there.

- **BRIGHTON & SUSSEX – TUESDAY 8 MAY**
  Informal open afternoon for all retired and working members of Brighton or any of the Sussex ASLEF branches from 14.00 at the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont, off Dyke Road. If you want further details please call Paul Edwards (07402 478278) or Paul Horan (07868 757492).

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**TAKING THE WATERS:** Many thanks to EC3 Andy Hourigan for attending our AGM. Andy spoke about the latest contract talks with DB Cargo and Cemex plus the ongoing situation at Northern. Afterwards Andy presented retirement certificates to DBC driver Simon Nuttall (30 years) and Arriva Northern driver David Nevell (44). A buffet and a few drinks followed to give them a good send-off.

Paul Costello, Buxton & Peak Forest

**GLASS HALF FULL?** District 1 council – an equalities and diversity themed meeting – on 4 December started with a show of support for CWU members at Royal Mail over attacks on their pensions, terms & conditions and aspects of their pay. Our speakers included Dan Glass from Never Ever Again/The Glass is Half Full; Zita Holborne from Black Activists Rising Against the Cuts; Niki Adams and Laura Watson from the English Collective of Prostitutes; and Ron Douglas, president of the National Pensioners’ Convention. Whilst they came with very different campaigns and aims, the common thread that ran throughout the day was how austerity, and treating people as scapegoats, has helped the rise of the far right. Austerity divides communities, and is especially harmful to the most vulnerable in our society. I would like to thank district council secretary Steve Richardson for arranging such an informative and enjoyable day.

Angela O’Sullivan, Guildford Electric

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SCHOOL’S OUT: It was back to school when District 6 visited the National College for High Speed Rail in Birmingham for our district council meeting in December. We saw a little of what the next generation of railwaymen and women will be learning before embarking on their careers on the high speed railways of the future. The delegation is pictured next to the aptly-named *Brumstar* – ex-Eurostar power car 3012 – which is used to give people a cab experience on simulators. Thanks go to DC6 secretary Elizabeth Cocks, DO Dicky Fisher and EC vice-president Dave Calfe for a great day out.

David Poynter, h&s rep, DRS Willesden

Three generations of drivers on track in war and peace

STEVE GOOCH grew up in a railway (and seafaring) family, all connected with Parkeston Quay, either working on the ferries, the railway, or on the quay itself. His mum’s side were mostly seafarers (his grandad was boson on the railway ferries, his uncles ship’s engineers and able seamen) while Uncle Wills was a railway guard. On his dad’s side, his grandad started at Parkeston loco in 1911, working his way up from cleaner to driver (and working on the footplate through two world wars).

Steve’s dad Maurice started on the footplate in 1944, initially at Colchester. After the war he returned to Parkeston but was called up into the army and posted to Germany where he worked on German steam locos for two years. Steve’s dad did it all – steam, diesel, electric – before retiring on ill-health in 1990.

Steve started at Parkeston on his 16th birthday in 1971 and worked as second man to his dad on many occasions, sometimes with Uncle Wicks as guard – one family working a train! – a family tradition as Steve’s dad had fired for his father when he was a second man. Steve passed as driver in 1976, was made up in 1978 and eventually joined his father in the main line link at Parkeston.

In 1994, under redundancy (privatisation pending) Steve moved to Colchester where he remained for 10 years, moving in 2004 to Freightliner at Ipswich and the West Coast main line link with jobs to Crewe and the longest and heaviest freight trains. For the last couple years he’s been in the local link for personal reasons.

Three generations have collectively and safely carried millions of passengers over millions of miles and moved millions of tons of freight in war and peace and all weathers, often at very unsociable hours. And all three of them with unblemished service records. They played their part in the story of Parkeston Quay, with its links to the continent, and its rich railway and maritime history.

Steve said he feels lucky to have worked in this industry for 47 years, although it’s no longer the railway he knew, ie the one big railway family that was BR when there were true railwaymen managing it and running the railway. Steve finished by saying that things have changed with new technology, and it’s a new era perhaps better suited to those who have been brought up with new technology, but could they control a loose-coupled heavy spoil train with just the locomotive brake? Have a great retirement, Steve.

Lee Barber, Ipswich branch secretary

Go WEST: Colleagues and friends of Dave Rutter, many who travelled a long way to the Great Western Hotel in Exeter, said farewell to a good friend, respected driver and ASLEF stalwart on his retirement. We all wish him and his family well for the future. Dave started on the railway in 1974, becoming a traction trainee at Bescot, and moving to Saltley, then Wimbledon, to get his driver’s job, then back to Saltley, where he was branch chair. Dave moved to Exeter in 1995, held many positions in the branch over the years and was an excellent LDC rep until his retirement on 27 November 2017.

Brian Corbett, DO7

Mick Holder turns back time to February 1918

Conscription to the colours and excessively long turns were hot topics in the Journal 100 years ago

POSITION IS AT DANGER POINT

The editor reports on the subject of a further comb out of men from industry for Army and Navy service: ‘The conferences, two of which were attended by the Prime Minister, were attended by our general secretary and members of the EC. While it is said to be requisite that 420,000 more men should be found for the Army, we feel it is impossible for one other man to be taken from the footplate of our railways, as already, with 11,000 less than were employed at the end of 1913, the footplate staff has been worn to the bone, the position having reached, if not passed, the danger point, not only to our members, but to the travelling public.

‘We feel confident that with the case presented on behalf of our members it will be unthinkable for more men to be released, and as substitution on the footplate is out of the question for any sane nation, we are very hopeful no complications will arise. Should anything of the kind take place, the results which are likely to follow would be disastrous, and the blame would be entirely on the authorities who have had the case of the locomotivemen’s position clearly and definitely laid before them.’

TURNS OF DUTY OF 30 HOURS

‘The Society has quite recently submitted thousands of cases of excessive hours at nearly 200 loco depots on all companies to the Board of Trade, showing that our members are working turns of duty of anything from 12 hours up to 30 hours, with the majority of cases ranging between 15 and 20 hours on duty, while a very large number are over the latter figure. Our members are working weeks from 70 up to over 120 hours, young boys are being employed on the footplate, and many men long past the retirement age. This cannot be allowed to go on.’
**MARK THOMAS**
Showtime From The Frontline

With Faisal Abualheja and Alaa Shehada | Directed by Joe Douglas

DODGING CULTURAL AND LITERAL BULLETS, Israeli incursions and religion, Mark Thomas and his team set out to run a comedy club for two nights in the Palestinian city of Jenin. Only to find it’s not so simple to celebrate freedom of speech in a place with so little freedom.

Jenin refugee camp, home to Jenin Freedom Theatre and to people with a wealth of stories to tell. Mark tells this story alongside two of its actors and aspiring comics Faisal Abualheja and Alaa Shehada. A story about being yourself in a place that wants to put you in a box.

With sell-out shows, non-stop awards, the highest critical acclaim, his own TV and radio shows, numerous documentaries, published books, Guinness World Records, influencing changes in the law, creating manifestos and exposing arms trade dealers, it’s no wonder that Mark is one of the UK’s most recognised performers and influential activists.

**Marks’ book, Liar’s Quartet, is out via September Publishing.**
www.markthomasinfo.com / TWITTER: @markthomasinfo

PRESS ON A SHOW THAT GAMBLES ON THE FUTURE
“As ever Thomas is quick on his feet” THE TELEGRAPH
“An hour of cathartic entertainment” THE INDEPENDENT

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**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. Once 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

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**ASLEF RMS 500 Club application form**

Name:........................................................................................................................................
Address........................................................................................................................................
Telephone No..................................................
email:...........................................................................................................................................

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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**JANUARY TOUR DATES**

Tues 30th **HOVE**, Old Market 01273 201 800
Weds 31st **COLCHESTER**, Arts Centre 01206 500900

**FEBRUARY TOUR DATES**

Thurs 1st **READING**, South Street 0118 960 6060
Sat 3rd **OXFORD**, Old Fire Station 01865 263980
Mon 5th **GLASTONBURY**, Red Brick 01458 899564
Tues 6th **EXETER**, Phoenix 01392 667080
Thurs 8th **NORWICH**, Playhouse 01603 598 598
Fri 9th **FOLKESTONE**, Quarterhouse 01303 760750
Mon 12th **BRISTOL**, Old Vic 0117 987 7877
Wed 14th-Sat 17th **EDINBURGH**, Traverse 0131 228 1404
Wed 21st **CARDIFF**, Sherman Theatre 029 2064 6900
Thurs 22nd **SWANSEA**, Volcano Theatre 01792 464790
Fri 23rd **OXFORD**, North Wall 01865 319450
Mon 26th – Tues 27th **NOTTINGHAM**, Lakeside 0115 846 7777
Weds 28th-Sat 3rd March **BIRMINGHAM**, MAC 0121 446 3232

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**STANDING ORDER MANDATE**

To Bank
Address

Please pay

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Note: The Bank will not undertake to:
(i) make any reference to Value Added Tax or other indeterminate element
(ii) advise payer’s address to beneficiary
(iii) advise beneficiary of inability to pay
(iv) request beneficiary’s banker to advise beneficiary of receipt

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

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Signature(s) __________________________ Date ____________

Note: The Bank will not undertake to:
(i) check your reference
(ii) advise beneficiary of inability to pay
(iii) advise beneficiary of receipt

* Delete if not applicable

If the amounts of the periodic payments vary, they should be incorporated in a schedule overleaf
COLIN HOLROYD
THE FILM STAR

Another passing from The Gang of ’92, the 184 Longsight drivers who welcomed 25,000 people to the Holiday Camp open weekend in April 1992.

Colin was born in Ardwick close to Manchester city centre. He started as a clearer aged 16 at 9A Longsight MPD. The following year he met Audrey at the local youth club. Called up for national service, he joined the Manchester Regiment, having to leave firing the 6148 steam loco to be sent to Malaya.

Whilst there, he was offered a post in the Singapore Police. Young, tanned and good looking, some thought he should go for a casting at Elstree or Pinewood, but all Colin had in mind was going home to Audrey and picking up his firing shovel again. They married in 1956 and made their home in Denton, Colin eventually becoming a driver at Longsight.

He also offered his services as a ‘Redcoat’ at the Camp, deputy foreman at the dispensary window. When on a spare turn, he never ‘mixed you up a bad bottle’ which would leave a nasty taste in your mouth. (Quite a few depots used to refer to TCIs at the window ‘mixing you up a bad bottle’ meaning that when you were spare, but never by Colin. Off the job, he was a keen gardener, producing excellent vegetables and award-winning roses. In July 1994 when the BOP closed at Longsight, he opted for the West Coast main line link which he served until retirement in 1997. He and Audrey celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary in 2016.

Colin was as nice a bloke to work with as any you would find on the railway. When I was informing people of his passing, one former trainwoman asked, ‘Was he the handsome devil who was also a deputy?’ Longsight’s gain was Hollywood’s loss!

Mel Thorley
Longsight

BRIAN SHEAD

I regret to inform you of the recent sudden loss of Caterham and ex-Selhurst driver Brian Shead at the age of just 62. Born in Hayes, Kent, he attended local schools, beginning his working life in the construction industry prior to joining the railway as a trainee driver in March 1999 at Selhurst.Passing out in June 2000 he spent the next 15 years as a Selhurst driver, then moved to Caterham in November 2015. Married on 6 November 1976 he and Sue celebrated almost 41 happy years together. Brian was a devoted family man who enjoyed making things with wood, fishing, and gardening and would give anyone who asked a good game of chess.

He would always make time for a chat and was the first to help out a work mate. He leaves his loving wife Sue, and four grown up children, Mark, Ross, Joseph and Sophie, and two recent grandchildren, Millie and Elliot. Brian, you will be remembered by all of us at Caterham and Selhurst as a good friend and colleague. Rest in peace.

Trevor Hallett
Caterham

BARRY FOSTER

Our dear friend and colleague Barry Foster passed away on 30 October 2017 at the age of 65 leaving his courageous and loving wife Viv, daughter Hayley and son Adam.

Barry was a long time railwayman, joining the railway in 1967 at 15 as a box boy in Guildford signalbox, transferring to motive power in 1970 as a second man at Waterloo manning the steam heat boilers on the Class 42 warship diesel hydraulics on the West of England services. He moved to Woking mixed traction depot in 1974, passing to drive diesel locomotives and electric multiple units, spending 27 years on mixed traction and as a part-time train crew supervisor.

In 2001 Barry joined his brother Kevin and came to Farnham on the juice, following in their dad’s footsteps; he was a driver at Farnham in days gone by. For the past ten years Barry was part of the great team on the LDC at Farnham, until poor health forced him into the sidings. In mid-

Barry Foster began as a box boy in 1967.

2016, Barry bravely endured a year of intensive treatment at the Royal Marsden Hospital but, unfortunately, in the end was overwhelmed.

The magnitude of the affection for Barry was shown at his funeral in Aldershot when hundreds of railway mates from all over the country, some arriving on a double decker bus provided by South Western Railway, paid their respects to a much-loved railwayman and all-round great guy.

Steve West
Farnham

ROBIN (JOCK) FORBES

Robin Forbes, known to his family as Bob and to workmates as Jock, passed away in August after a long battle with cancer. He started as a fireman at Hither Green, moved to Slade Green, and finished his career at Victoria South Eastern. He lived in a small village near Gravesend where he once said he was able to leave his front door, cross the road, and be in his local within a minute, which was nice. He is survived by his wife and sons. Rest in Peace Bob/Jock.

Jeff Veale, Battersea RMS

DAVID PRYKE

Further to Dave Pizzie’s obituary (Journal, December) my good friend, retired Stratford 30A driver David Pryke, who had been poorly for some time, passed away on 6 October. Dave started at Stratford in 1954 and remained there until he retired 46 years later. Dave was a big, but quiet, man. I never saw him flustered. Our paths first crossed when I went second man for him in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He was a good engineman. I got to know him better when I moved to a house just around the corner from him. He was very knowledgeable on a variety of subjects, particularly gardening, the Great War, West Ham United, steam locos, and coin collecting. His big passion was Essex tokens (trade tokens, similar to coins, used in the 17th century), his knowledge about these was immense, and he spent countless hours trying to explain the finer points of the pieces he had purchased for his collection. His wife Beryl pre-deceased him, but he will be greatly missed by son Kevin and daughter Claire and all his old mates, too.

Keith Maer, RMS

February 2018 | The ASLEF Journal 19
The In response to Edward Pearce’s letter (Journal, December) I would like to say how sorry I am to read about the upset he has experienced after comments from his colleagues or, as he has been told by friends, the ‘quite nasty’ comments they have heard. Having volunteered to be on the admin team of the Lost Boys 1968-88 group I can assure Brother Edward that any bad feeling or upset are certainly not the aim of the group. Whilst the comments may have just been banter, which used to be a huge part of the mess room environment and experience, I appreciate that, in this day and age, banter of any sort is probably best avoided.

With this said, I was deeply offended by Brother Edward’s comments. The Lost Boys group was formed over 20 years ago by Nick Edwards and four colleagues to celebrate the history and comradeship of the unique second man/driver’s assistant role. With the advent of social media the group has expanded to over 1,300 members and aims to pursue the social activity and companionship of members in line with railway history.

To this end the group has a very active Facebook page and well attended social functions enjoying pictures, stories and, occasionally meet socially. And our assistant admin, a unique grade, have a Facebook group, and members in them pass!

Majority of members
I feel I must respond to the claims made by Bro Chase (Journal, January) regarding EJRA. He is over 65 but works on a part-time agreement, yet harps on about not achieving 40-year pension contributions. Does he seriously expect people to work into their 70s and 80s to achieve this? Perhaps he should have joined the railway when he was younger – or was the salary not good enough, then? Drivers in the grade. Why does it attract such interest? Jealousy? Disgust? Who knows, all I know is that my wife corrected my neighbour and said I actually work for Southeastern, not Southern, which is annoying as the neighbour has lived next to a railway line for over 40 years, and for 12 of them has seen trains with Southeastern on them pass!

Lewis Philpott, Faversham
how democracy is achieved, not through mess room barristers!

He also talks about free travel in retirement. ASLEF has tried to join up the facilities in pay talks, to achieve reciprocal travel when a company runs more than one TOC, but when ATOC refuses to come to an agreement are you going to take industrial action against them? With the recent Trade Union Act you would be laughed out of court – if you managed to get near it.

Bro Chase has obviously got issues with ASLEF but he should remember it is the union that fights for good salaries, good working conditions, safe working environments and encourages continual recruitment, not the employer, and without that we have a lot of pensioners stifting potential job vacancies for people like him when he gained employment at the age of 49. I do not agree with everything ASLEF does but what they do they do with the majority of members in mind.

Finally, some drivers may want to retire to get over a lifetime of work and maybe even enjoy their remaining years, hopefully in good health, with our loved ones. Maybe he should put down his Daily Mail and think about it.

Jim Hopkins, Longsight branch secretary

Corporate greed to blame

It’s 16 years since the Potters Bar train crash left seven people dead and 76 injured. The tragic loss of life could have been avoided if safety, rather than profit, had been the priority of the railway. Basic failures of inspection and maintenance, driven by corporate greed, and the fragmentation of our railway after privatisation, were the cause of the crash. Andy Gibson, the driver, was a workmate who worked out of King’s Cross. He used track circuit clips to stop other trains hitting the obstruction, saving further loss of life, and helped the injured passengers.

P Begley, Bedford

How accommodating

As a rep, one question I’ve often been asked of late is why some ‘accommodated’ colleagues who, having negotiated for themselves, directly with management, far superior rosters through flexible working legislation, are then permitted to regularly work voluntary overtime over the hours and even days that they have said they need to be away from the workplace.

I have long held the belief that our grade is very supportive of colleagues in genuine need of accommodated shifts – and quite rightly so. After all, nobody knows what’s around the corner. At the same time, our members naturally look to the union to ensure a fair and equal workplace and this is borne out by the number of queries I have had on this matter. It would appear that colleagues who have mutually agreed a change of employment contract under the legislation still have the right to work as much overtime as they want even if this impinges on the hours and days they have specified they cannot work. An absurd situation.

There needs to be more control over these arrangements, with staff side drawing up an ‘accommodation agreement’ with management, allowing reps’ involvement from the start, and alleviating the need for any binding changes to contracts. This way, should an employee demonstrate that they no longer need to be accommodated, it would be far easier to curtail such abuses.

Ken Goldsmith, Marylebone LDC

GS Mick Whelan says: ‘The flexible working legislation doesn’t work for everybody as it’s a right to request and the greatest problem is for those who need it and can’t achieve it. It is illegal to prevent those accommodated from exercising their right to work overtime when it is available. We would prefer everything to be negotiated – for transparency and parity.’

Thank you and goodnight

After more than 26 years as a member of this proud union, I’m having to retire due to ill health. I would like to thank Steve Burgess (company council) for representing me during negotiations with HR, and all our reps who give up their spare time to work on our behalf. I’ve seen a few changes since I joined BR as a ‘boil in the bag’ (had to get that one in) in 1991. Working 13 out of 14 days for around £200 a week, now £51k for a four day week – you have done well for us, ASLEF! Thank you. I wish everyone who reads this all the best.

Simon Jackson, Tonbridge and ex Orpington and Norwood

Thanks for the memories

May I, through the Journal, express my sincere thanks to all my friends and colleagues at Exeter, and those who came from far and wide to join me for my retirement, and for all the good wishes I have received, following my 43 years on the footplate and as an ASLEF member. I was totally overwhelmed by the messages I received and by those who joined me to celebrate my retirement. I enjoyed my career very much, and worked with so many wonderful people from all grades. Whilst I wish you all well for the future, I thank you all for the memories I am taking away with me.

Dave Rutter, RMS

Thank you, Thompsons

I would like to use the pages of the Journal to thank Thompsons solicitors for the successful conclusion of my injury compensation case. I was knocked from my bicycle in July 2016 while commuting to work. There were minor injuries to me and my bicycle. Through the work of Thompsons I was able to obtain compensation from the driver of the car involved. I am very pleased with the outcome and would recommend the services of Thompsons to all.

Paul Greensmith, Prestwich, Manchester

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 111 ASLEF branch 111 is 111 years old and has a limited edition numbered badge to celebrate the introduction of the Class 387 on KJ services. Proceeds to the King’s Lynn branch welfare fund. £7.50 inc p&p from Mark Steele, J Rosecroft, South Wootton, King’s Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 3WX.

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

CLASS 40 Preservation Society high quality enamel badges £5.50 each or £10 for both (50p inc 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.

CLASS 3U/Brush type two 60 year badge at £6 inc p&p with £1 going to the repaint of the last Phase One CIG 1753. Send cheques payable to Dave East, 41 Highfield Road, Suffolk, IP1 6DD.

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

PROFESSIONAL ENGRAVING at sensible prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on the pint tankard. Contact Paul Potts by email at ppotts1969@hotmail.co.uk

BESPOKE CUSHIONS Hand made 40cm square cushions of railway engines and carriages. £50. Call Abi on 07954 659849 or email me at adm.uk.me@btinternet.com

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

KIRKDALE 121 limited edition centenary badge 1917-2017 price £7.50 inc p&p from branch secretary Keith Devling. Call 07933 144768 or email kdevling@aol.com

To advertise please phone 020 7324 2400 or send an email to journal@aslef.org.uk
**On your Marx, get set, go!**

**KEITH RICHMOND** on a new play about the author of the *Communist Manifesto* when he was young, gifted and broke; restless, horny, living in London and dreaming of joining the railway.

The centenary of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia has been marked by a plethora of new books, exhibitions, newspaper articles, academic essays, radio features, television programmes, podcasts, analysis, comment, conferences, rallies, marches and meetings. But one of the most enjoyable and imaginative responses to the events of October 1917 is a new play by Richard Bean, who worked as an occupational psychologist and stand-up comedian before becoming a playwright, and who enjoyed a massive hit with *One Man Two Guvnors* at the National Theatre in 2011. Bean, with co-writer Clive Coleman, a barrister and comedy writer as well as the BBC’s legal correspondent, wrote *Young Marx* which opened at The Bridge Theatre in October.

‘It [the wedding] was a traditional Prussian affair – military uniforms, guard of honour, firing squad.’

They brilliantly pull the rug from under the image of the author of the *Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital* as an old man, with long white hair and a beard, by setting the play in 1850. Karl Marx is 32 and living with his wife Jenny, their children, and Nym, their maid, in Dean Street in Soho where his friend Friedrich Engels is a frequent visitor. ‘He was broke, restless and horny,’ says Bean. ‘A frothing combination of intellectual brilliance, satiric wit, and child-like emotional illiteracy. Creditors, spies, and prospective seducers of his beautiful wife circle like vultures. His writing blocked, Engels in despair at his wasted genius, his only hope is a job on the railway. But there’s no one in the capital who can show you a better night on the piss.’

It’s a clever, funny farce – shades of Stoppard with the wit, and Feydeau in the pratfalls – but, as Francis Wheen, whose biography of Marx won the Deutschner Memorial Prize in 1999, makes clear in a note in the programme, it’s all true. Including the bit about thinking of becoming a railwayman.

Engels: What’s this?
Jenny: His letter applying for a job, on the railway.
Engels: It only takes one intellectual to bugger up the railway.
Jenny: This is not an act of revolution!
Engels: He’s Europe’s most wanted terrorist, no one’s going to put him in charge of a train.
He’ll never get past the interview.
Jenny: Oh, he’ll have an answer for everything. Do you have a criminal record? Not in Canada. What was your first job? Rejecting Feuerbach, Hegel and God. And he’d make them believe that it was railway related.
Engels: No, he won’t get an interview. They won’t be able to read his handwriting. He can’t read his own handwriting.

When Engels dryly suggests, ‘Although you killed him, God put you on earth to explain capitalism’ Marx replies: ‘I’ll explain capitalism. The railway pays fifteen shillings a week, and the rent is only eight. What are the proletariat complaining about? We have a surplus of seven bob to spend on claret, and cigars. I shall steal it from the cash box at Ermen & Engels, and then we’ll have all the food, and all the doctors, we need, won’t we, Fawksey!’

Marx offers Engels a cigar admitting – in a politically incorrect moment – that he gets them ‘From a shyster Polak in Holborn, one and six a box, that’s eight pence cheaper than my usuals, so every time I smoke a box, I’m saving eight pence. If I smoke three boxes a week I can live on my savings.’

When a Prussian spy asks Marx if he’s going to a meeting of exiled revolutionaries at the Red Lion he says: ‘I’ve seen the light, given up revolution. Start work Monday, with Great Western. I tried to change the world. I failed. But I will transform Paddington station. Tell your boss that he needn’t worry about me in future. He can focus fully on his haltosis.’

And, towards the end of the play, after they bury their three-year-old son Fawksey, Marx becomes wistful.

Marx: I could’ve got a job on –
Jenny: – the railway?
Marx: Yes! Why not?
Jenny: That was never an option.
Marx: It’s good enough for everyone else. And those people, they don’t sacrifice their children.

In the end Engels says he will go to work at his father’s cotton mill in Manchester and will sub his mate some money.

Engels: I will send you a £5 note every week.
Jenny: And where will you get this £5 note?
Engels: I shall steal it from the cash box at Ermen & Engels, risking dismissal by either Ermen or Engels.

Nym: You’re Engels.
Engels: Which is why I might get away with it. And I will do this partly because I believe his writing will contribute to the progress of mankind but, more importantly, because there is another soul out there more in need of the job of railway clerk at Paddington...

**Young Marx**, written by Richard Bean and Clive Coleman, and directed by Nicholas Hytner, opened at The Bridge Theatre in London on 18 October and ran until 31 December. It starred Rory Kinnear as Marx; Oliver Chris as Engels; Nancy Carroll as Jenny; and Laura Elphinstone as Nym. The text of the play is published by Oberon Books ([www.oberonbooks.com](http://www.oberonbooks.com)) at £9.99.
On Track Prize Crossword

BUCCANEERS

BUSINESSMEN are curious coves. Many prefer, these days, to style themselves as entrepreneurs, even though most self-evidently lack any semblance of entrepreneurial zeal, and those who do would be more accurately described as buccaneers, having much in common with Edward Teach and Henry Morgan; they talk about free markets, even when those markets are manifestly rigged, and they want a private monopoly; and they bang on about ‘risk and reward’ when, as with the privatised train companies, there is no risk, it’s all reward.

Take Tony Fernandes. He made his fortune with the airline Air Asia, and ran the Caterham team in Formula 1, but is best known in Britain as the chairman of Queen’s Park Rangers.

At the start of the year he issued a stark warning that one of the capital’s biggest regeneration plans could be stalled for a decade because of poor infrastructure ‘according to Jonathan Prynn who interviewed him for the Evening Standard. ‘The vast Old Oak scheme will fail to provide the thousands of homes expected without major investment in a new bridge connecting it with Willesden Junction station.’

You will not be surprised to learn that Fernandes has a vested interest. He is looking for a site for a new stadium for QPR and intends to fund the move from Loftus Road by developing housing at Old Oak which will become, over the next ten years, one of Britain’s biggest transport hubs. And you will also not be surprised to learn that he wants the government to cough up £250 million of infrastructure funding for that bridge from Old Oak North to Willesden Junction. Nothing wrong with that, in principle. ASLEF, like most people in the labour movement, and Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party, believes in public spending. For public services.

But it reveals remarkable chutzpah – as well as a stunning lack of self-awareness – for a buccaneering businessman who extols the virtues of private enterprise to demand public money to make a bigger private profit.

Keith Richmond

Prize Crossword 142 by Tom Williams

Across

1 Suspended canvas bed
5 Chickens
7 Old horse
8 The outside
9 Curved
10 Constant
13 A break in friendly relations
14 Defrost
18 Fix with a stud
19 Flower
21 Main body of an aircraft
22 Unwell
23 A drama
24 Woman who receives and entertains guests

Down

1 Girls-only night out (3, 5)
2 Conjurer
3 To cook too long
4 Young cat
5 One who cultivates the land
6 Driving club in golf
11 Addictive tobacco substance
12 Incentive
13 Insipid or weak
16 Household or industrial whitener
17 Buildings inhabited by monks
20 Contest between two people

Solution to Crossword 141

Across:
1 Wanted 4 Grout 7 Topsy-turvy 8 Loud
9 Solve 11 Pendant 13 Drought 15 Colic
17 Sour 18 Decoration 20 Repel 21 Region

Down:
1 Wallop 2 Trod 3 Descend 4 Gates
5 Oar 6 Thyme 7 Tunnel 10 Lagoon 12 Tractor
14 Tarzan 15 Cedar 15 Coral 17 Song 19 Cap

Congratulations to Martin Palmer, of Weston-super-Mare, 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 141st prize crossword in the January 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 February.

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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