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Universal suffrage: ‘Use the voice they gave us’

The fight for rights

The fight for rights

T IS right that we highlight in this edition of the Journal the centenary of votes for women and the often violent struggle that went with it. The irony of Magna Carta, and the associated freedoms achieved for the barons, is not lost when used in the context of Brexit and other debates. A world war, the growth of the Labour Party, and the immense fight by the Suffragettes led to the legislation that, in 1918, not only won the vote for women of property over the age of 30 but for 42% of men who had been up to then excluded. Those over 19 who had been in the armed forces also got the vote as you were not eligible if you had not been in the country for 12 months; odd, when we were engaged in a war abroad? At least in 1928 everyone over 21 got the right to vote; in 1969 it became 18, the next debate is votes at 16? It may have taken the best part of 2,000 years but, in Switzerland, women did not get the full vote until 1971! Out of respect for all those who fought for universal suffrage we must use the voice they gave us.

There are days when I wonder if what happens on our railways was put into a script for Yes Minister or House of Cards it would seem too far-fetched? We said East Coast, successful under DOR, should remain as a comparator but dogma dictated it had to be let out to fail for a third time. There was talk of some sort of public-private partnership so virgin and Stagecoach did not have to pay the millions they committed? Then, more confusion, as Chris Grayling said they might renationalise it – and we had to point out the law would have to be changed as it is now illegal for the government to run our trains. Then they announced that the very people who have reneged on that contract are, without competition, to be given a direct award to run the West Coast for a few more years! No penalty for failure and, unlike the past, they are allowed to bid for other franchises.

Then Jo Johnson, the new Rail Minister in a government that lied about and then cancelled electrification, announced that diesel trains should be banned by 2040. Bi-mode was on the original trains for GWR, the diesel engines were removed for the promised electrification, and then retrofitted at great cost! If it wasn’t so sad it would be funny…

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
How is Grayling going to bring East Coast back into public ownership?

ICK WHELAN has queried Chris Grayling’s assertion that he might bring the East Coast main line back into public ownership. The GS said: ‘While I welcome the Transport Secretary’s remarks – because we want all our rail services brought back into public ownership as that’s the best way to run a modern railway – he seems to have forgotten that he can’t actually do it’.

The East Coast returned £1 billion to the Treasury in the five years it was run by Directly Operated Railways, a public body. But in November 2015 the Conservative government wound up DOR and transferred its function – ‘to run rail franchises should it be necessary to bring them into public ownership’ – to a private partnership consisting of the Arup Group, a private services firm; accountants Ernst & Young; and consultants SNC Lavalin. Lilian Greenwood, Shadow Transport Secretary at the time, said it was utterly absurd to contract out our in-house capacity. But that’s what the Tories did.

‘So when Chris Grayling told the House of Commons that “the current franchise holder will collapse in a couple of months”, and replacing Virgin-Stagecoach with a public operator was “very much on the table”, what did he mean?

‘If he wants to bung his chums at Arup, EY and SNC a shed load of money for doing work that could and should be done in-house, then that’s scandalous! But this is the man, remember, who kept giving work to Carillion when he knew it was about to go bust! Grayling’s track record is appalling.’

BRANSON ‘CANNOT DELIVER’

Chris Grayling told the Transport Select Committee that Virgin’s East Coast bid was ‘over ambitious in what they thought they could deliver’ yet insisted he had to accept the highest bidder. ‘The natural conclusion of Grayling’s evidence is that the DfT is happy to offer franchises to over ambitious bids, knowing the contracts won’t be met and the taxpayer will lose out on billions,’ said Mick Whelan. ‘Offering deals worth billions to a bad bid because you have “little alternative” shows how fundamentally flawed the privatised franchising system is.’

MICK SLAMS WEST COAST DEAL

GS Mick Whelan has condemned as ‘outrageous’ the Transport Secretary’s decision to extend Virgin Trains’ contract on the West Coast main line. ‘It is outrageous that Virgin has been handed a lucrative new contract to run services on the West Coast despite serious criticism of its handling of the East Coast franchise. And it is disgraceful that this government – committed, it says, to free and fair competition – doesn’t go through a proper tendering process but hands a contract extension to its friends.

Step up for access

Shadow Transport Secretary Andy McDonald, Shadow Rail Minister Rachael Maskell, Mohammad Yasin, Labour MP for Bedford & Kempston, and Emily Brothers of Disability Labour joined Julian Vaughan, ASLEF health & safety rep on London Underground and Labour candidate for North-East Bedfordshire at the general election last year, at Biggleswade station on 31 January to highlight the lack of equal access at railway stations across the UK.

‘We had a great turnout, including Great Northern rail reps and disability campaigners,’ said Julian. ‘It turned into an impromptu public meeting and Andy and Rachael heard from people affected by the inaccessibility of the station. The visit was a great boost for our campaign and, hopefully, helpful in shaping future Labour policy on equal access.’

TRAiN COMING DOWN THE RAILWAY TRACK

Political cartoonist Patrick Blower drew this wicked picture for the op-ed page of the Daily Telegraph on 7 February after the Transport Secretary’s hapless performance in the House. It shows Chris Grayling, still promoting the failed East Coast franchise, failing to free the Prime Minister, who’s tied to the railway line, as Jeremy Corbyn hurtles down the track on the cattle catcher of the Labour Party express. As disillusioned Tory Party activists say, ‘Every time Chris Grayling makes an announcement another commuter decides to vote Labour.’

A new Ad Hoc Group was set up on 21 May to focus on equal access at railway stations across the UK.

QUOTE...

‘It is time to call an end to the age when a private contract is the default solution to every public project. It is time to rethink the role of public provision so that it looks more like the rest of Europe.’ – The Guardian leader

…UNQUOTE

FREIGHT IS GREAT

Philippa Edmunds, manager of Freight on Rail, has welcomed Barnet council’s decision to give the go-ahead to build a modern rail freight terminal in Cricklewood, north London. ‘This planning consent sets a crucial precedent which demonstrates that local authorities should support local rail freight terminals based on the wider national and sub-regional socio-economic benefits of rail freight as long as there are adequate mitigation measures to handle local impacts.’
Eye told you so

T HE satirical fortnightly paper Private Eye has long been a thorn in the side of the establishment. Since it was founded by Richard Ingrams, Willie Rushton, Christopher Booker and Paul Foot in 1961, the magazine has broken stories, offered (often acerbic) comment on current affairs, and joked fun at the great and the good. Despite its deliberately amateur look – as if it was laid out with Letraset, which it was in the early days – the Eye now sells 250,000 copies of every issue and outsells the UK edition of The Economist (235,000) and The Week (206,000) and is way ahead of Time (92,000), The Spectator (82,000) and the New Statesman (34,000). Remarkable, in the age of the internet, when people say ‘dead tree publishing’ is finished.

‘Signal Failures,’ a column by the wickedly well-informed Dr B Ching, which takes Chris Grayling to task and refers to the DfT as Daft, is a special pleasure.

Under the headline ‘PF Eye Told You So,’ editor Ian Hislop writes: ‘First came the collapse of major PFI operator Carillion. Then the National Audit Office reported what the Eye has been saying for a couple of decades: financing schools and hospitals with private money is far more expensive than doing it publicly. If the game is up for PFI, the question is how it was allowed to mushroom under New Labour and why it went on so long. Much of the blame lies with the accountants and consultants who have earned billions from the swindle.’

The Eye ran a picture of Theresa May, sporting a Photoshopped hard hat, saying, ‘I’m outsourcing the blame!’ while one onlooker asks, ‘Is it Bob the builder?’ and another answers, ‘No, it’s Rob the Taxpayer.’

See ‘Theresa smirked like Severus Snape’ on page 10.

_eyespy200.jpg

Conferences & Rallies

The Scottish Labour Party conference is at the Caird Hall in Dundee from Friday 9 to Sunday 11 March. The 121st 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.

500 Club: D Turner, with number 58, won the February draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £392.

Off the rails

ROBERT ROGERS, a former Clerk of the House of Commons who now sits as Lord Lisvane, a crossbench peer, in the upper house, highlighted the issue of what to do with a democratic decision, once made, in a debate on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill in the House of Lords. He told peers he had once asked his three elderly aunts how they would like to spend their time. ‘They have a discussion and they arrive at a democratic solution, which is that they would like to go to the cinema. So I look in the local paper and discover that the only films on offer are Reservoir Dogs and The Texas Chainsaw Massacre. What am I then to say to my highly nervous and, indeed, squeamish, but much-loved, aunts? You must stick with your democratic decision? Or, do I say, now you know what’s on offer, what do you think?’

MEL THORLEY, Longsight legend, admits that after he acquired four diesel loco cabs for his back garden in 1994, they attracted a bit of attention – and comment. ‘I was driving a stopper from Deansgate to Crewe and called at platform 13, Manchester Piccadilly, and a chap in railway uniform came towards the cab window, so I opened the door. He said he was road learning and could he ride with me to Crewe? Conversation flowed, he told me his railway CV, and I told him mine. As we left Stockport on the up slow, the conversation went like this: “Where do you come from?” “Stockport, born and bred.” “Stockport? Do you know the barmy c*** who’s filled this garden with scrap?” “Er, yes, I know him very well. It’s me!” The poor chap was still apologising when we parted with a handshake on platform 1 at Crewe.

MARZ COLOMBINI, EC member for District 1, represented ASLEF at the Palestine Solidarity Campaign’s AGM at the London Irish Centre in Camden Square on Saturday 27 January. On the day, short of security, and worried about Mossad, or activists on the other side of the argument, the organisers cast around for someone suitable to work as a bouncer on the door and make sure no one undesirable got in. ‘Stereotyping,’ muttered Marz plaintively afterwards. ‘They ask the boy from south-east London to work the door.’

NILS PRATLEY, financial editor of The Guardian, was in wispish mood writing about the collapse of Carillion. ‘It’s often sensible to give the Financial Reporting Council a prod. The accountancy watchdog is not known for its electric speed and we’d all like to know more about why the auditor KPMG gave Carillion a clean bill of health in March last year.’

ELTON JOHN has announced, at 70, that his forthcoming world tour will be his last, albeit after 300 dates on five continents over the next three years. But asked, not long ago, about retirement, he laughed. ‘If I stop what the f*** am I going to do? Lionel Richie didn’t make an album or play a show for 10 years and I said to him once, “What have you been doing?” and he said “Playing golf!” Christ! That’s a lot of f***ing golf!’
I read the news today, oh boy

Paul Routledge, the son of a railwayman, and a journalist who, in a long and distinguished career, has worked for The Times, The Observer, the Independent on Sunday, Daily Mirror, and Huddersfield Daily Examiner, loves the railway. In a long, thoughtful, and typically well-informed piece in the Mirror, under the headline ‘How pledge to nationalise Britain’s railways could help Labour steam to election win,’ Paul reflected on the day, 70 years ago, that Britain’s railways were nationalised; John Major’s and Jeremy Corbyn’s pledge to ago, that Britain’s railways were Labour steam to election win’, Britain’s railways could help...
Training at Thompsons

STEWART DEAN of Shenfield branch reports on a District 5 industrial reps’ training day at Thompsons solicitors’ offices at Condor House near St Paul’s in central London

DISTRICT Organiser Nigel Gibson introduced Godric Jolliffe who gave us a very informative presentation. The main focus was representing members at discipline and grievance hearings, and Godric took us through the key stages of the disciplinary procedure. There was also an informative discussion on the ACAS code of practice followed by interviewing exercises.

Although we covered a lot of ground it was good to get a better understanding of a rep’s role in the disciplinary procedure as well as that of the employer.

We then got an insight from Karen Fleming into changes regarding personal injury and small claims and the effect this could have on all of us. Karen said that she and her colleagues would be happy to attend branch meetings and give a talk on the subject, an invitation we will be taking up at a Shenfield branch in the very near future. I would encourage others to do so, too. We finished the day’s training with Victoria Phillips taking us through recent changes to the Trade Union Act and how it will impact on us. Victoria’s passionate delivery ended the day on a real high.

We would all like to thank all the speakers from Thompsons for giving up their time and for a really informative training day.

Dining alone

Critics in the Conservative Party call Theresa May the ‘Maybot’ because of the Prime Minister’s robotic approach to people and problems – she doesn’t ‘do human’ and struggles when asked to work a room.

Stephen Bush, writing in the New Statesman, observes: ‘A frequent complaint from those who have worked with her, even for several decades, is that she has little in the way of small talk, and neither the ability nor the inclination to diverge from the party line. ‘One minister recently remarked that eating with Theresa May was like “dining alone”.

CROSSRAIL FEARS AFTER EXPLOSION

The £14.8 billion Crossrail project is at a ‘worrying stage’, according to City Hall officials, after two electrical transformers blew up at a sub-station in east London. The unexpected setback – promptly blamed on a ‘design error’ – prevented engineers switching on the overhead cables and halted tests on the new £1 billion train fleet.

Project managers have also flagged up concerns that the complex signalling software on the Elizabeth line – due to open in December – doesn’t work properly.

STUPID TRUCKERS

Network Rail has slammed the ‘stupidity of lorry drivers’ who crash into motorway bridges after four strikes in two days caused long delays. The bridges – at Erdington, Birmingham; Lichfield, Staffordshire; Langwathby, Cumbria; and West Ruislip, west London – are all clearly marked with the height of the bridge. NR has called for an end to the entirely avoidable stupidity of lorry drivers who crash into bridges because they don’t know the height of their own vehicles.

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TRAINING – NEGOTIATING

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QUOTE...

‘All politicians are failed actors and actresses.’ – Margaret Hodge, Labour MP for Barking

...UNQUOTE
FactCheck: Grayling’s been telling porky pies

HRIS GRAYLING, the beleaguered Secretary of State for Transport, has been caught out telling porkies by Channel 4 FactCheck. Grayling, who falsely blamed ‘militant unions for the vast majority’ of the disruption to passengers on Southern Rail, was exposed by investigative reporter Martin Williams on the TV company’s website.

Grayling, under pressure from cabinet colleagues who think he is doing a poor job, and from passengers fed up with his refusal to listen to their problems, or take any action against failing franchisees, panicked when forced to defend himself after a critical National Audit Office report condemned the Department for Transport’s handling of the Southern Rail fiasco.

‘It’s a fair cop, guv. You’ve got me bang to rights, like…’

‘It was the unnecessary action of militant trade unions that caused the vast majority of disruption for passengers,’ Grayling claimed on 10 January.

But C4 FactCheck reveals: ‘He has repeated this several times recently, in Parliament and in the media. But a FactCheck investigation has found that Grayling’s claim was not based on any statistical evidence.’

Grayling tried to muddy the waters by citing the two-year-old Gibb report, but Gibb offered personal opinion, rather than facts, and provided no evidence to back up his claims.

FactCheck concludes: ‘The [Gibb] report does not include any statistics. Instead, it is based on observations, interviews, and Gibb’s professional experience. FactCheck has confirmed that Gibb’s claim about unions was a personal judgement. When we contacted him, he was unable to provide any figures to prove it.’

FactCheck also revealed that, as managing director of an outsourced train catering company, his CV boasted that his business was ‘non-union’ and therefore Gibb is biased.

Channel 4’s full post can be found at www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/no-statistics-for-chris-graylings-claim-over-rail-unions.

Falling Standards

The Evening Standard, under the headline ‘TFL faces £400m budget hole as thousands stop using the Tube’ reports that Transport for London’s income from fares is set to fall £239 million in this financial year, with commercial income – from advertising, retail and property – set to drop £160 million. Tube income is currently £80 million less than planned.

‘This is especially challenging for Mayor Sadiq Khan,’ the paper reports. ‘As he has committed himself to a four year fares freeze and the Tube is the only TFL passenger service that makes a profit. Further problems will come in April when TFL loses the last of its government subsidy to help run the Tube and bus network. This was once worth £700 million a year.’

‘Yes, indeed. It was. And who was it when, in government, took away that £700 million? Step forward George Osborne, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, now editor of the Evening Standard, a post from which he drops daily piles of muck over the head of Theresa May, who sacked him.

Finn Brennan, ASLEF’s organiser on London Underground, said: ‘Strange that there’s no mention in this article that it was the current editor of the Standard that took £700 million out of the TFL budget.’

Andy calls for rail contracts to be brought back in-house

Shadow Transport Secretary Andy McDonald has called for rail contracts to be brought back in-house in the wake of the collapse of Carillion. He said: ‘Following the disastrous East Coast franchise decision, giving a contract to Carillion is yet another example of the negligent and carefree approach towards awarding contracts from Chris Grayling. The government should step in and take’

‘The government should step in’

over Carillion’s rail contracts to ensure rail renewal and enhancement work is brought in-house within Network Rail, along with maintenance work.

CHARGE LORRIES BY THE MILE

Charging lorries by how far they travel would improve air quality, reduce congestion on Britain’s roads, and dramatically cut the number of accidents, according to the Campaign for Better Transport. Philippa Edmunds, manager of Freight on Rail, said: ‘We need to incentivise more efficient use of the road network through an effective lorry road charging system. The existing time-based system has led to neither efficiencies – empty running stands at 30% – nor a reduction in emissions and collisions in the UK.

CATTLE PRODS FOR DRIVERS?

Melinda Pavey, Minister for Roads in New South Wales, has suggested that truck drivers should be subject to electric shocks. ‘Automated driving technology is now so advanced a driver can get an electric shock if they look away from the windscreen for more than two seconds,’ she told ABC Radio. The Transport Workers’ Union of Australia slammed her ‘offensive’ suggestion, said she was ‘heartless, arrogant and incompetent’ and added ‘We’re not cattle to be prodded by ADT equipment’.

NEW TRAINS FOR TYNE & WEAR

Nexus, the public body which owns and operates Tyne & Wear Metro, has begun the procurement process for its new £362 million train fleet – 84 carriages, 42 trains – to go into service at the end of 2021. A new maintenance depot will be built on the existing Metro depot site at Gosforth.

MORE SELF-DRIVE CAR COLLISIONS

Two more self-drive vehicles – a Tesla Model S and a GM Chevy Bolt – have been involved in accidents in separate car crashes in California while in self-drive mode.

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Theresa May smirked like Severus Snape

CHRIS PROCTOR looks at the collapse of Carillion and what it tells us about the Tories, New Labour, accountants who can’t read a balance sheet properly, and the Ponzi scheme they call PFI

When MPs were bellowing at each other about Carillion, Jeremy Corbyn asked Theresa May the traditional Labour question: ‘What about the workers?’ The Prime Minister took off her spectacles, did her celebrated owl impression, and affixed the superior smirk copyrighted by Severus Snape.

‘We were a customer of Carillion, not the manager,’ she declared. ‘And that’s a very important difference.’ And – this is a difficult sentence to write – she was right!

The government no longer manages public services. Upright firms like Carillion do that. So how do all those government ministers pass their days? Do they just hand out contracts and file the number of customer complaints? And, if that’s all they do, wouldn’t you think they’d at least have a close look at the people they are letting manage our public services? Couldn’t they get one of their accountant wallahs to look over the company records? That sort of thing...

BLIND PEW WITH A BLINDFOLD

If so, these hawk-eyed mathematical genii failed to spot some fairly glaring failings. Blind Pew with a blindfold could have seen that there was something the matter with Carillion. Or, in his case, sniffed something out.

The company had issued three profit warnings. Its share price was falling like a chimney with Fred Dibnah on the button. They dropped 90% between July and the end of last year. You couldn’t flog shares worth 240p at the start of January for 14p by December.

When Carillion expired, it had £29 million in cash. And it owed more than £1.3 billion to its banks. With bonding facilities and invoice finance it was in hock to the tune of £2 billion. But, what is worse, a Parliament report shows that in the five years from 2012 to 2016, Carillion paid out £217 million more in dividends than it generated in cash from its operations!

When Carillion expired, it had £29 million in cash. And it owed more than £1.3 billion to its banks. With bonding facilities and invoice finance it was in hock to the tune of £2 billion. But, what is worse, a Parliament report shows that in the five years from 2012 to 2016, Carillion paid out £217 million more in dividends than it generated in cash from its operations!

This must be deemed a tad suspicious, unless, I suppose, you’re a shareholder; an accountant getting paid by the other side; or St Francis of Assisi.

But what did the Tory government conclude? They stuck the telescope to Blind Pew’s bad eye and declared, ‘Seems in good shape to us.’ They wanted to keep it going to avoid being embarrassed if their top manager was exposed as a trickster.

Otherwise, they would have reviewed the other public services Carillion was ‘managing’ for them. But they didn’t. So when that firm breathed its last it left more than £2 billion worth of unfulfilled promises in the NHS (200 operating theatres, more than 11,000 beds, providing patient meals, answering helpdesks and carrying out engineering maintenance); building motorways; building schools; servicing prisons; constructing substations and installing overhead cabling for the National Grid; building Crossrail and HS2.

Call me alarmist, but it’s not exactly comforting to hear that the government isn’t managing any of our public services. And that it can’t see a dead duck.

Then there was the marvellous spectacle of Greg Clark stepping forward with his own powerful solutions. He was concerned, he said, about the 30,000 small firms plunged into financial crisis by the collapse of Carillion. So what measures did the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy take to alleviate the situation?

He ‘issued a plea’ to banks not to pull the plug on these victim companies. That’s right. He ‘issued a plea’.

Have you tried issuing a plea to a bank?

BONUSES FOR FAILURE

It’s no wonder ministers go mad. They have nothing else to do. Look at our own Transport Minister. He might have a leather chair and a ministry car, but now he’s leader he’s imposed his job as a ‘customer’. And his shop owner is a man with a ‘fly-tourists-to-the-edge-of-space’ habit to support.

‘Who’s going to come out of that one best? There used to be a shorthand view of political parties where Labour was for the working man and the Tories were smart with money. We assumed that was the case, because they had it all.

But when they can’t see financial conglomerates collapsing in front of their eyes, and let charlatans manage our services, and hand out bonuses for failures, you do start to wonder.

WHAT A WHEEZE

Politics has become an off-shoot of the Magic Circle. You have a national debt, and your instinctive reaction is to hide it. So John Major’s Conservative government came up with a wheeze called Private Finance Initiatives that stuffed the up front costs down the back of the sofa. The Tories loved it – and so did New Labour, who under first Tony Blair and then Gordon Brown expanded what is effectively a Ponzi scheme – where the national debt stayed the same.

I don’t know about you, but I don’t lose much sleep over the national debt. I’m more concerned with how to get Chris Grayling’s job. A hundred grand a year for being a tourist at the edge of outer space. In some ways he’s already there.

Meanwhile, planning and work on HS2 and Crossrail are slightly Numbed; uncertainty isn’t the best incentive. Emergency measures are needed to pick up Carillion’s service work. People worry about their jobs. Workers in the 30,000 firms dependent on Carillion contracts are unsettled or out of a job. Real human hardships result from the cold calculations of accountants, politicians and financiers. But they don’t care. Because, as Theresa May admitted, they’re just a ‘customer’.
Yes, I’ve paid the price
But look how much I’ve gained
If I have to, I can do anything
I am woman

JO STEVENS, Labour MP for Cardiff Central, and acting chair of ASLEF’s Parliamentary group, celebrates the centenary of women winning the fight for the right to vote at the ballot box in this country

T HIS year we’re marking 100 years since some women won the right to vote in the UK. It was, of course, 10 years later that full suffrage was achieved but the centenary of 1918 is no less important to celebrate.

I say the vote was won because it wasn’t an accident, or an unchecked forward motion that led to this change. It was a victory for campaigners. Many thousands of people who knew that participation in democracy mattered. Not just that people in the existing franchise took part, but that voting rights were extended so that everyone could have the right to decide who represents them.

Along with the vote, of course, came the right for women to stand for Parliament. Women could represent and stand up for their communities and become the decision makers as well as electing them.

“I incite this meeting to rebellion.’ – Emmeline Pankhurst at the Royal Albert Hall on 17 October 1912

The first woman to be elected was Constance Markievicz, a Sinn Fein member who didn’t take her seat. Subsequently, in 1919, Nancy Astor became the first woman to take her seat in the House of Commons.

100 years on there are many more women in the House, thanks to those early pioneers and the hard work of the women who came after them. But we still have more to do.

While the progress towards equality of representation in Parliament seems to be on the up, participation in democracy outside the walls of the Palace of Westminster is waning. There are many reasons for this, but I hope that one of the achievements of the Vote 100 celebration might be that more people, particularly women, are reminded of what was fought for, and how it was fought, to enable them to have their say today.

The campaign for the right to vote was, from the very beginning, led by working people who organised. The people on which our trade union and labour movement was built and is sustained and strengthened to this day.

I’ll always be a trade unionist first, and a Labour MP second. I’m incredibly proud to be an elected representative and stand on the shoulders of those who fought, and died, for my right to vote, to stand for election, and to represent Cardiff Central as a Member of Parliament.

“Remember the dignity of your womanhood. Do not appeal, do not beg, do not grovel. Take courage, join hands, stand beside us, fight with us.’ – Christabel Pankhurst

Today, too, our union movement is as vital in the campaign for democratic participation as it’s ever been. We know that only a Labour government can and will represent working people.

After nearly eight years of Liberal Democrat and Tory ideological austerity, our public services need rescuing and our economy recalibrating so they work for the many not the few. The uncertainty caused by Brexit and the government’s incompetent approach to negotiations adds to our problems.

It’s working people who have and will continue to bear the brunt of our broken system and it’s working people who must stand up and say no to it.

At the start of the last century working people’s living standards were unacceptable, wages were low, representation was hard to come by, and progressives knew that fighting for the vote was the way to change that.

So now, a century later, what should we be fighting for?

The Labour Party and the trade union movement are currently campaigning for votes for 16 and 17 year olds. Evidence from the Scottish independence referendum showed that when 16 and 17 year olds were given the opportunity to have their say, they took it. Young people across Scotland were proudly engaged in the debate, and turned out to vote in their thousands.

The Welsh Labour government has just announced plans to give 16 and 17 year olds the vote in future local government and Welsh Assembly elections. Labour is calling for votes at 16 for all UK elections. Today’s 16 year olds are growing up into a changing world, and when so much else is expected of them I believe it’s right that they should have their say.

“If I can’t dance, I don’t want to be part of your revolution’ – Emma Goldman

We can also make it easier for people to register to vote. I have introduced an Automatic Voter Registration Bill in Parliament, which would see people automatically added to the electoral register when they are issued with a National Insurance number. My opponents tell me registering to vote is an individual responsibility, but I believe we should be removing barriers to voting, not putting them up. Automatic registration would give many thousands more people the opportunity to have their say and I’m determined to continue fighting for it.

So, 100 years on from the first women winning the right to vote, I want to see us pulling together and encouraging all women – and men – to have their say, to participate, and to stand up for what matters.
Shout, shout, up with your song!  
Cry with the wind, for the dawn is breaking;  
March, march, swing you along,  
Wide blows our banner, and hope is waking

It’s 100 years since Parliament passed the Act which allowed some women, and all men, to vote for the first time. KEITH RICHMOND reports on the struggle of women for the right to vote

The Representation of the People Act, which came into effect on 6 February 1918, was a package of long-overdue electoral reforms that extended the vote to 12.9 million men and, for the first time, 8.4 million women over the age of 30. In addition to the age barrier, women also had to meet a property qualification. They had to be the head woman of a household and occupy property to the value of £5 or more – meaning one in five women over the age of 30 in Britain and Ireland were still denied the vote. The Bill was passed by 385 votes to 55 in the House of Commons on 19 June 1917, followed by a vote of 131 to 71 in the House of Lords. Women were able to exercise the right to vote for the first time and, after a quick change in the law, also to stand for election to Westminster, in the general election of December 1918 after the end of the Great War.

Suffragists and Suffragettes

Suffragists refers, generally, to advocates of suffrage for women; and, more specifically, to members of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies led by Millicent Fawcett. The NUWSS aimed to achieve the franchise by legal and peaceful means, such as bringing petitions to Parliament, lobbying, holding meetings, campaigning, writing articles in newspapers and magazines and distributing pamphlets.

Suffragettes, in contrast, believed in ‘deeds not words’. In 1903 Emmeline Pankhurst, with her daughters Sylvia, Christabel and Adela, frustrated at the lack of progress in getting women the vote, formed the Women’s Social and Political Union, whose members became known as Suffragettes after the Daily Mail coined the term in an article in 1906.

Chained to Railings

The government – and its friends in the press – said that women chaining themselves to railings was ‘silly’, to which Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence replied, ‘Doing something silly is the woman’s alternative to doing something cruel. The effect is the same. We use no violence because we can win freedom without it; because we have discovered an alternative.’

King’s horse kills Suffragette

Emily Davison, a member of the WSPU, staunch feminist, passionate socialist, and committed Christian, was arrested nine times, went on hunger strike seven times, and was force fed on 49 occasions, in the bitter struggle for the right of women to vote in this country. She died under the hooves of King George V’s horse Anmer at the Epsom Derby in 1913.

A world at war

The Great War of 1914-18 was a watershed for women. Hundreds of thousands took what had been, traditionally, men’s jobs because the men had been called up and were fighting – and dying – in their tens of thousands on the fields of Flanders. Campaigners – especially the WSPU – were quick to make the point that if women could do the work of men in factories and offices, on buses and on the railway, then they should be able to make their mark at the ballot box, too. The Tories and Liberals were, anyway, on the wrong side of history. The idea that women were second-class citizens who did not deserve the vote was simply not credible. By the time the armistice was signed in November 1918, only a few diehard misogynists in clubland held that view.

WOMEN’S WORK

Cleaners – all of them women, with so many men called to the colours – on a 4-4-2 High Flyer Class locomotive at Low Moor engine shed near Bradford, West Yorkshire, in March 1917.

Cat and Mouse Act

H. Asquith’s Liberal government was in a bind. It didn’t want to give women the vote. Nor, as a half-way house, did it want to quash the convictions of women campaigning for the right to vote. But it realised that the deaths in prison of dozens of martyrs would be a disaster. ‘We don’t want the blood of Suffragettes on our hands,’ old Liberal Party hands told the PM in private.

So the government introduced the infamous Cat and Mouse Act – the Prisoners’ Temporary Discharge for Ill Health Act – to facilitate the release, and rearrest, of women on hunger strike. The authorities, who were now not force feeding prisoners, would wait until a woman was critically weak before releasing her to get back to health. And then would rearrest her. Though that, in practice, proved much more difficult than the government had anticipated.

QUOTE...

‘The organised political work of women has grown since 1884 and become so valuable that none of the parties can afford to do without it or to alienate it.’ – Millicent Fawcett

...UNQUOTE
Slashing the Rokeby Venus

Many imprisoned Suffragettes went on hunger strike in protest. The iron will of the women was renowned, even though delicious dishes – one woman described ‘food such as I had never before seen’ – were left in the cell to tempt them. The government’s brutal response was barbaric – they force fed the women. They wanted to prevent the women dying and becoming martyrs to the course of women’s suffrage, but the strategy backfired.

Christabel Pankhurst said that from the moment that women had consented to prison, hunger strikes, and forcible feeding as the price of the vote, the vote really was theirs.

Emily Davison made a suicide attempt in Holloway in a bid to escape being force fed which meant having a ‘steel or wooden gag’ forced into your mouth so that your jaws were ‘forced painfully wide’, a large tube put down your throat, and food pored down it, which many women vomited right back up.

Sylvia Pankhurst, in a famous passage, described the process: ‘My gums, when they prised them open, were always sore and bleeding, with bits of loose, jagged flesh. Sometimes the tube was coughed up three or four times before they finally got it down. Sometimes, but not often – I was generally too much agitated by then – I felt the tube go right down into the stomach; a sickening, terrifying sensation, especially when it reached the breast. My shoulders were bruised, my back ached during the night. Infinitely worse than the pain was the sense of degradation.’

COURAGE CALLS TO COURAGE EVERYWHERE

Millicent Fawcett, who campaigned for women’s right to vote, is the first woman to be honoured with a statue in Parliament Square.

The Rokeby Venus, also known as Venus at her Mirror and Venus and Cupid or La Venus del espejo

Mary Richardson, a Canadian Suffragette, and later head of the women’s section of the British Union of Fascists, slashed the Rokeby Venus, a famous nude by Diego Velázquez, with a meat cleaver at the National Gallery in 1914. ‘I tried to destroy the picture of the most beautiful woman in mythological history as a protest against the government for destroying Mrs Pankhurst, who is the most beautiful character in modern history.’

COURAGE CALLS TO COURAGE EVERYWHERE

Millicent Fawcett, who campaigned for women’s right to vote, is the first woman to be honoured with a statue in Parliament Square.

QUOTE...

‘It was a scandal four of us should be serving five months in all for breaking one little £3 window. The government have had their pound of flesh, and far, far more. Oh, far, far more.’ – Sylvia Pankhurst

...UNQUOTE

VOTES FOR WOMEN: THE TIMELINE

1832 The Great Reform Act excludes women from the electorate by defining voters as ‘male persons’. The first petition for women’s suffrage is presented to Parliament.

1851 The Sheffield Female Political Association is founded and brings a petition to enfranchise women to the House of Lords.

1867 The Manchester Suffrage Committee is formed and the first debate on women’s suffrage, led by John Stuart Mill, is held in Parliament. The Kensington Society, established in 1865, becomes the London Society for Women’s Suffrage.

1871 The central committee of the National Society for Women’s Suffrage is set up.

1883 The Primrose League is established.

1884 Women campaign to be included in the Third Reform Act, which extended the franchise to (male) agricultural labourers, without success. The proposal was lost by 271 votes to 135 which Millicent Fawcett described as a ‘crushing defeat’.

1889 The Women’s Franchise League is formed to win the vote for married women as well as single and widowed women.

1897 The National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, led by Millicent Fawcett, is established. It draws together several hundred regional societies under one banner.

1903 The Women’s Social and Political Union, led by Emmeline Pankhurst, is founded in Manchester. It works closely with the Independent Labour Party.

1905 First arrests as Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney repeatedly shouted ‘Will you give votes to women?’ interrupting a speech by Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary in the Liberal government of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. When they refuse to leave the meeting, the women are brutally beaten by police.

1906 The National Federation of Women Workers is formed.

1907 The Women’s Freedom League breaks away from the WSPU.

1908 Marion Wallace-Dunlop goes on hunger strike in Holloway Prison when she is refused the status of political prisoner – a tactic adopted by the WSPU.

1909 The Liberal government of HH Asquith starts force feeding women in prison.

1910-1912 Parliament considers various conciliation Bills which would have given some women the vote, but none pass.

1911 Emily Wilding Davison hides in a cupboard in the House of Commons on census night.

1913 The Prisoners’ Temporary Discharge for Ill Health Act, known as The Cat and Mouse Act, is introduced to target Suffragettes on hunger strike.

1914 Britain declares war on Germany on 4 August. During the Great War (1914-18) 2 million women replace men in what had been traditionally male jobs.

1916 A conference on electoral reform, chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons, is set up and reports in 1917. Limited women’s suffrage is recommended.

1918 The Representation of the People Act is passed on 6 February giving women the vote provided they are aged over 30 and either they, or their husband, meet a property qualification.

1918 The Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act is passed on 21 November allowing women to stand for Parliament. Women vote in a general election for the first time on 14 December with 8.5 million women eligible.

1928 The Equal Franchise Act is passed giving women equal voting rights with men. All women aged over 21 can now vote. 15 million women are eligible.

1929 In the general election on 30 May, often referred to as the Flapper Election, women aged between 21 and 29 can vote for the first time.
The March of the Women

by Cicely Hamilton (words) and Ethel Smyth (music) 1910

Dedicated to the Women’s Social and Political Union

Shout, shout, up with your song!
Cry with the wind, for the dawn is breaking;
March, march, swing you along,
Wide blows our banner, and hope is waking.

Song with its story, dreams with their glory
Lo! they call, and glad is their word!
Loud and louder it swells,
Thunder of freedom, the voice of the Lord!

Life, strife – those two are one,
Naught can ye win but by faith and daring.
On, on – that ye have done
But for the work of today preparing.

Firm in reliance, laugh a defiance,
(Laugh in hope, for sure is the end)
March, march – many as one,
Shoulder to shoulder and friend to friend.

The March of the Women, the official song of the WsPU, became the unofficial anthem of the suffrage movement throughout Britain. Activists sang it at rallies and also in prison. The WsPU newspaper Votes for Women described it as ‘at once a hymn and a call to battle’.

Ethel Smyth (above) and Cicely Hamilton (inset) wrote The March of the Women

by the Suffrage Choir in Pall Mall, London, to celebrate the release of activists from jail. It was sung by many Suffragettes in prison, most famously at Holloway in 1912, when dozens of activists were imprisoned after a window-smashing campaign. Ethel was one of those arrested, after breaking the window of Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Sir Thomas Beecham, the conductor and composer (whose family home in Arkwright Road became ASLEF’s head office in 1921) visited her in prison and found activists ‘marching round the courtyard and singing lustily their war chant while the composer, beaming approbation from an overlooking upper window, beat time in almost Bacchic frenzy with a toothbrush.’

Emmeline Pankhurst, imprisoned in 1913, went on hunger strike and expected to die. She told Ethel that, at night, she would sing The March of the Women and another of her compositions, Laggard Dawn, to keep her spirits up.

100 years of women’s suffrage celebrated on the Underground

Transport for London is celebrating 100 years of women’s suffrage with a year-long exhibition on London Underground.

FL’s public art programme commissioned women artists from around the world to mark the anniversary. Heather Phillipson, a British artist, will fill the 80 metre long disused platform at Gloucester Road station with her work which TFL describes as ‘a hugely ambitious sculptural intervention of avian calamity.’ ‘My piece looks at the egg as representing reproduction and birth, and also overproduction and consumption,’ she says.

Njideka Akunyili Crosby, from Nigeria, whose work explores cultural identity, was commissioned to create a piece for Brixton station.

The work of Geta Brătescu, from Romania, and Marie Jacotey, from France, will be on the cover of Tube maps, while Linder, known for her subversive porn collages, performance art, and for creating the sleeve for Orgasm Addict by The Buzzcocks, will produce a piece at Southwark station.

‘The spaces of our cities are not neutral, and neither is space afforded to public art,’ says Eleanor Pinfield, head of art on the Underground. ‘Wider social inequalities are played out in the structures of urban life. Through 2018, art on the Underground will use a series of commissions to reframe public space, to allow artists’ voices of diverse backgrounds and generations to underline the message that there is no single women’s voice in art – there are, however, many urgent voices that can challenge the city’s structures of male power.’

‘We are here not because we are law breakers; we are here in our efforts to become law makers.’ – Emmeline Pankhurst …UNQUOTE
VOTES FOR WOMEN

DEBORAH REAY, a driver on London Underground, member of Northern Line North branch, and chair of our Women’s Representatives’ Committee, celebrates the centenary of women winning the right to vote

This year is the 100th anniversary of the successful campaign, led by the Suffragettes, which gave some women the right to vote in Britain. The campaign came at great personal cost to the likes of Emmeline Pankhurst & co – the women suffered beatings, ridicule, and imprisonment; they were brutally force fed and tortured.

So when I hear women say ‘I don’t vote’ it makes me cringe. The excuses – ‘I didn’t know who to vote for’; ‘they’re all the same, so what’s the point?’; ‘I couldn’t be bothered’; or, amazingly, ‘politics doesn’t affect me’ – are varied but, in my opinion, they boil down to either a lack of knowledge or, quite simply, laziness.

In the dim and distant past of my school years, I remember my history teacher speaking of kings and queens, world wars, and the British Empire. The Suffragettes were mentioned, in passing, but more as part of women’s contribution to the war effort than as a whole section of history on their own.

I don’t believe this has changed much today. Women make up 52% of the electorate, but women aged 18-34 are the least likely to vote, although there was quite an increase at the snap election called by Theresa May in 2017. I find this statistic astounding.

Why would this particular age group feel that their opinion isn’t important? Why do they feel so disenfranchised?

Austerity cuts have bitten hard and women, as the majority of care providers, have borne the brunt of many of these harsh cuts. Universal tax credit, which still includes the controversial ‘rape clause’, has pushed many women into poverty. Funding to women’s refuges has been slashed by a quarter since 2010 and, despite Theresa May pledging £20 million towards domestic violence projects, the money has yet to materialise. Last year, more than 1,000 vulnerable women and children were turned away from refuges.

With FGM – female genital mutilation – ‘honour’ killings, rape, domestic abuse, harassment, and misogyny around the globe, women’s human rights are abused on a daily basis. Governments can put a stop to many of these abuses, but people who vote are only ever going to vote for the party that is right for them. Whilst most men will abhor these abuses they are not, in general, directly affected by them. So unless we have more women involved in politics, these issues will always be pushed down the ‘to do’ list.

Women ceased to be chattels in this country many years ago, yet some women still choose to let others make life-defining decisions for them.

Women’s voices and opinions are just as valid as men’s. Our foremothers recognised this and fought for the right for the female perspective to be heard.

So, are we sure politics doesn’t affect us? Of course it does! It affects each and every one of us, both on a domestic and on a global scale. Whether it is a local depot ballot or a general election, what you think matters.

Men know their opinion is important. More women need to tap into that mentality and realise they have the power to make change, and one of the most important changes can be made by simply putting an X in a box on a ballot paper.

QUOTE...
‘Courage calls to courage everywhere, and its voice cannot be denied.’ – Millicent Fawcett

Don’t cry for me

Handkerchief embroidered with the names of Suffragettes jailed for breaking windows in the campaign for women’s suffrage

This handkerchief, probably embroidered during one of the women’s limited exercise periods at Holloway Prison, bears 66 signatures and two sets of initials. Most of the women were participants in the protests of March 1912. A few were well-known but most were rank and file members of the WSPU who came from all parts of the country to support the cause. The handkerchief is on display at the Priest House, an old Wealden hall house owned, in turn, by Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell, and Elizabeth I, in West Hoathly, Sussex.

QUOTE...
‘Deeds, not words, was to be our permanent motto.’ – Emmeline Pankhurst

Don’t cry for me

Debbie, with FBU GS Matt Wrack, on the platform at a Labour Representation Committee fringe at the TUC in Brighton; being interviewed outside ASLEF’s head office in London; and at AAD in Edinburgh

CUPBOARD LOVE

Emily Wilding Davison, the prominent Suffragette who died under the hooves of the king’s horse at the Derby in 1913, hid overnight in a broom cupboard at the House of Commons so she could use it as her address during the 1911 census.

Emmeline Pankhurst had called on women to boycott the census as the Liberal government wouldn’t give them the vote. ‘If women don’t count,’ she said, ‘then neither shall they be counted.’ She urged women at home on the night to refuse to complete the form – risking a £5 fine or one month in prison – or avoid the census by making sure they were out of the house.

Emily went to the Houses of Parliament so she could accurately and honestly record the ‘Palace of Westminster’ as her place of residence on census night. She was discovered by a cleaner, arrested, and released without charge. And recorded on the census form as ‘hiding in the crypt of Westminster Hall since Saturday’. Tony Benn set in place a plaque to commemorate the event in 1991.

QUOTE...
‘Then neither shall they be counted.’ – Emmeline Pankhurst

Don’t cry for me
Last train to Chingford

What a turn out for Trevor as he arrives at the end of his last turn

**OBITUARY: DAVE PIZZIE**

We were all stunned and saddened to hear of the passing of Stratford ASLEF stalwart Dave Pizzie at the close of 2017, following a short illness. His health finally had the last word, and the Big C has taken one of our most-respected friends and colleagues.

Dave started at Stratford in 1964, straight from school, as an engine cleaner, and worked his way through the ranks to driver, a position he held until retirement in 2008 after 43 years’ service. Much of his career was spent at Stratford, before partial closure meant a move to the intercity depot at Liverpool Street in 1994. Despite this, Dave always had a passion for Stratford, which was where his heart remained.

Having served as co-opted LDC at Stratford, with many of the Stratford greats, he became chair of the LDC on his move to Liverpool Street. He also served as chair of the Liverpool Street welfare & social club, organising social events for colleagues, including many 10-pin bowling fixtures, which was a great passion of his away from the railway.

Dave regularly attended the Stratford Old Boys’ Thursday Club and will be missed by all those with whom he spent the best part of his life. He often wrote lovely tributes in the ASLEF Journal when one of his former workmates passed on, and it is now our turn to return those tributes, saying farewell to Dave.

He was a loyal, respected and principled man, as well as being forthright and stubborn – with Dave, what you saw was exactly what you got – no messing, straight down the line! It is with great sadness that we shall no longer be able to share a memory, anecdote or tale with him, as well as – of course – his favourite tipple of whisky with lemonade!

Until we all meet again, in the top link, where I am sure Dave will be holding court and giving everybody his opinions, it has been a real pleasure knowing you, working with you, and being a close friend. From all of us, to you, of mate – best wishes.

**John Thorpe, Stratford branch reporter**

Bravo, brothers!

At the Hammersmith & City 267 Christmas branch, we were finally able to present a retirement certificate and 30 year badge to our much-respected former branch official Andy Butler. He received his badge and certificate from our hard-working EC member Terry Wilkinson, who also presented John Swain with his 35 year badge. Bravo, brothers!

**Gary Jarman, branch secretary**

**Badge of honour**

Ray Cooper, best known for his badges – and sideburns – sent us this mischievous green and white badge – for the Hither Green Old Farts’ Reunion – with his notice about the bash on 9 May. Ray often wears a fashionable denim jacket, covered in badges, which brings to mind the album cover for the original London cast recording of Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Go go go Joseph…

**The badge (inset) and Joseph’s denim jacket covered with patches and badges**
Leaving on a jet plane

Retired East Midlands Trains ULR CHRIS NUTTY reports on an educational study visit to the Rolls Royce Heritage Trust exhibition at the company’s state of the art learning and development centre in Derby

Today the name Rolls Royce is synonymous with luxury cars and jet engines, yet behind these world famous premium products is more than 100 years of history; a story of engineering excellence told at the Rolls Royce Heritage Trust.

The automotive and aero divisions of Rolls Royce were split in the 1970s, following the company’s collapse and subsequent rescue by the state. The motor company is now owned by BMW; the aero division returned to the private sector in 1987. Like the recent crisis in the banking sector, taxpayers’ money is good enough to run a business when it fails in the private sector, but not when it’s making a profit.

The firm’s downfall was over problems it had developing the RB211 engine for a new range of wide-bodied planes being developed by Boeing and Lockheed. The three-shaft turbofan engine formed the basis for a family of engines that would power generations of civil aircraft.

The exhibition tells how the company was founded by Henry Royce, who owned an electrical components business, and Charles Rolls, whose firm sold cars in London. In 1906 they set up Rolls Royce and launched the six-cylinder Silver Ghost, but in 1914 turned to aircraft production after the outbreak of the First World War.

Royce designed his first aero engine, the Eagle, which provided half the total horsepower used by the Allies in the skies against Germany. The Eagle engine also powered the first direct transatlantic flight, by British aviators John Alcock and Arthur Brown, in June 1919.

The exhibition is time-framed, and moves on through the inter-war years to the famous Merlin engine used by Spitfires and Hurricanes in World War Two.

The Trust’s extensive collection includes engines produced by companies such as Bristol Aero Engines, de Havilland and Armstrong Siddeley as well.

The exhibition then takes us through the early days of jet engines and Frank Whittle before moving on to modern day gas turbine engines, including the RB211, the Olympus engine used to power Concorde, and the Trent engine. There is also a display of vertical/short take-off and landing engines including the Pegasus used in the Harrier jump jet. As well as RR aero engines there are exhibits of their cars, and diesel engines for both land and marine application.

We were shown around by volunteers, former employees who give up their time to show groups like ours around. As engineers we have a mechanical knowledge and our guides were happy to give us all the technical information we wanted, and to explain the more intricate bits; at times it was like being back in an MIC class!

The company operates at the cutting edge of engineering technology, but is also steeped in tradition, with generations of the same family taking pride in what they do. I know from my own family, and contacts on the trades council, that unions still play a big part in how Rolls Royce is run day to day, especially in areas like training and development.

Our visits were organised by ULRs Nicola Davies (EMT) and Richard Swain (CrossCountry) and me. We arranged two dates, to help accommodate active members working shifts, although more than half of the 50 attendees were retired.

‘It was a fascinating tour, showing its early history, and innovations, and charting its rise to the present day, as well as its future aspirations,’ said Derby driver Graham Neely.

‘We were guided around original motor cars, engine designs through the years, and a variety of aeroplane engines from propeller to the present day, with its latest Trent 1000 fan engine. A great day enjoyed by all. Retired member James Abbot added: ‘It was a very informative visit. I learnt a lot about Rolls Royce jet engines – past, present and future – and would like to thank ASLEF Education for organising the visit.’

I would like to thank Rolls Royce, Ellie Mepstead for making the arrangements, and our very helpful guides Peter Barber, Malcolm Lowe and Peter Knight.

For more information visit www.rolls-royce.com/about/heritage-trust.

The ASLEF group visit on 16 November (top); the group on 21 November; a window from the original factory in Derby commemorating the Battle of Britain; and Peter Barber demonstrates a cut away Griffin engine

Mick Holder turns back time to March 1918

New members, many from the NUR, wages, medals and deaths were hot topics in the Journal 100 years ago

FIGHT TO RETAIN WAR WAGES

The editor writes: ‘The increase in members joining the Society during the last few months has been phenomenal. A very notable feature is the large number of men from the NUR who are at last enrolling in their proper union. It augurs well for the future.

‘After the war the age-long struggle between capital and labour will continue as merrily as ever, and we shall have to fight to retain our war wages, much less increase them. Mr Murray Smith, chairman of the Midland, addressing the annual meeting of shareholders at Derby on 14 February, said: “If after the war the railways were again privately owned, the wage question would require early and equitable settlement, so that rates of wages might bear some proper relation to the earning powers of the company.”

‘We agree with Mr Murray Smith as to the necessity of an early and equitable settlement of the wages question, and the hours question also, but there is little doubt that we shall disagree as to which has the right of first consideration: the workers or the shareholders.’

RETURNED TO DUTY AND DEATH

Grantham branch reports ‘The death of Bro A Mason, who was killed in action in France on 30 December 1917. Bro Mason, who was only 23, joined the Army in April 1917 and had previously been wounded in September, but returned to duty – and to death.’ Ince branch ‘Regrets to record the death of cleaner member Bro W Oakes, fatally wounded on 7 January while serving with the RHA in France. Oswestry branch ‘Extends its sympathy to the relatives of two of its late members, Bro TH Dykes, who died as a result of an accident whilst on duty on 18 January, and Bro JH Dyas, a soldier member, who died on a transport which was torpedoed, and is now reported missing, believed drowned.’

MILITARY MEDAL FOR BRO DURIE

‘Our heartiest congratulations to Bro J Durie, Royal Naval Division, and Motherwell Branch, on being awarded the Military Medal. Bro Durie joined the colours on 17 April 1915, and is still serving.’
Solidaridad! Why solidarity has been forgotten in Spain

DIEGO CASAR is a member of the taxi drivers’ section of his ATC trade union and met EC president Tosh McDonald, EC5 Howard Kaye and DO3 Colin Smith during commemorations to mark the courage and sacrifice of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War. Here he reflects on a tumultuous twelve months in Catalunya

LEASE let me tell you some details about our history. The dictatorship in España and the dictator – General Franco – died in bed in 1975, and a few years later democracy was a real fact in my country. Since then, and until now, the most important political parties in España have been the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español or Socialist Workers’ Party) and PP (Partido Popular, the right-wing People’s Party) and, in Catalunya, during the last 25 years, the CiU (Convergència i Unió or Convergence and Union). They have been serving the power and stealing our money instead of defending our rights.

FINANCIAL CRISIS

Before talking about the social and political situation in Catalunya and in España, we must know that not only is the establishment in Catalunya not better than the establishment in España, but also none used to talk about the independence of Catalunya, till the economic crisis started in 2008.

That was when the first symptoms appeared in España and also in Catalunya. Both governments had and have been involved in hundreds of corruption cases. Both did exactly the same things about social and economic policies to fight the crisis.

Cuts in education (food at schools, grants, books); cuts in the health care system; cuts in investigation and innovation; cuts to help people, and so on. Both governments protected the rich and powerful, and the banks, and did not do anything to help their citizens.

In 2006 L’estatut de Catalunya, a law to regularize the relationship with España, was approved in the Catalunya parliament. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court declared nine articles unconstitutional. It was a turning point in the relationship between Catalunya and España. The germ of independence feelings.

ECONOMIC ENGINE

As a result the President of Catalunya said España has been robbing our money and also our dignity. He carried on, the south and west of España do not work, they waste our money, if we were independent all our problems would disappear, we will be millionaires. If we were independent the EU would support us because we are the engine of España.

He managed to change the situation; since then many people who had been hostile to the government in Catalunya changed to support it. Independence was a very useful tool to hide the corruption and also an excuse for doing nothing to help the people. ‘We cannot because the government of España will not let us.’

On the other side was the government of España. They had problems, such as corruption, and the cuts, cuts, and cuts. With Catalunya working to get independence España said to us that our country never will be divided, and the rights of workers disappeared one by one. The rate of unemployed people got over 25%. Thousands of people lost their houses. They were not able to pay the mortgage, and as a result they lost their properties but they had to keep paying the debt. Many people decided to commit suicide. None remember them. Unfortunately, solidarity is not the only word that we have forgotten. Equality, fraternity, dignity, a dignity salary, a dignity job, a dignity house, education, public health care system, the spread of richness, and so on.

BORDERS AND WALLS

I believe we must change the system from inside. Nationalism is not a solution. In fact, borders are the walls of a prison country. The ideology of neoliberalism is happy witnessing how many countries have been divided, with a divided society, too. It is a guarantee of slavery in the 21st century.

Finally, we have new technologies to introduce modern slavery in rich countries. In the 19th century workers used to go to the door of the factory to be called by the owner to work, or not, without any rights. Now we wait at home for our mobile phone to vibrate to go to any factory to work without rights. We need real lefties, not separatists, and to rediscover the concept of solidarity. A brotherhood is possible.
FRANK HADAWAY
I regret to inform you of the sad passing of retired member Frank Hadaway, who passed away peacefully on 11 December, a week before his 95th birthday. Frank started on the railway at Ramsgate in 1946 after serving in the 14th Army in India and Burma during WW2. He joined as an engine cleaner before progressing to fireman and then, years later, driver passed man.

By this time Frank was married and had a daughter so the extra money was much needed. Staying at Ramsgate would have meant he would only be paid as a driver for the days he was able to get a rare driver’s turn, and a permanent driver’s job would only become available if someone retired or died.

Luckily, a transfer became available and Frank went to Hither Green in 1958 where, in his first week at the depot, he won the staff raffle. ‘Who’s that driver from Ramsgate – the one with the fur-lined flying boots he wears on his motorbike and sidecar?’ Not being able to put a name to the face they drew boots on the bag of groceries – the raffle prize. This tag – Boots – stayed with Frank until he retired and beyond.

After a few years at Hither Green he opted to go on the juice – electric passenger units – a much cleaner job. He had a short spell at Slade Green, then Orpington, and ended up at Grove Park which had main line work from London to Dover and Ramsgate and also DEMU work from London to Hastings. This suited Frank until he retired in 1987.

He enjoyed a long and healthy retirement. The photo shows Frank having a great day at the Marylebone centenary in 1999. For many years he attended railway reunions with his workmates. His last three years were spent in a Woking care home where he was happy and safe. He had many good memories of the railway, was a great dad, grandad and great grandad. RIP Boots.

Gary Hadaway, RMS, and son, aka Slippers

MICK CLIFFORD
I am very sad to report the death of Mick Clifford aged only 52.

Mick started work on the footplate with BR in London as a teenager in the early 1980s. He had a stint learning the ropes as a second man at Stonebridge Park, engaged as a driver’s assistant on mixed traffic work, before moving to Marylebone to gain promotion to driver. He enjoyed his time there on the old DMUs, with occasional loco work, and as a young driver got involved with ASLEF and on the LLC.

Around the time of the introduction of turbos in the early 1990s Mick moved to Didcot – an all-freight depot on the run up to privatisation – with his partner Ena and eldest daughter Martina. Mick was very interested in locomotive mechanics and became a loco instructor at Didcot and assisted many – including me – through their training and loco conversions. Mick had a period as a TCS at the start of the EWS days, and then in control for Freightliner at Euston before returning to the footplate for Freightliner at Eastleigh, working container trains to such far-flung places as Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds. He subsequently moved on to GBf in the early 2000s, leaving railway work in 2012.

Mick enjoyed having a detailed understanding of all aspects of the job and was an early user of computer based technology to produce diagrams and schematics. Mick also very much enjoyed the social side of the job with ASLEF and other colleagues, and I had many happy times in his company. Rest in Peace, Mick.

Dave Sullivan, DCC rep, XC Bournemouth

GAIL LESLIE
It is with great sadness that I am reporting the death from pancreatic cancer on 2 January of Sister Gail Leslie. After following her husband Gary’s forces postings around the world, Gail began her railway career 14 years ago as a conductor at Dundee. She was determined to get a driving job, though, and was delighted to achieve that in 2011 here at Perth, where she quickly settled in. Although never a very vocal member, she would always put her point across at branch meetings in a quiet and measured way.

In early 2016 Gail became unwell and doctors were unable to give her a definite diagnosis for many months. Despite her illness, she made a considerable effort to join us at the DOG protest at the Scottish Parliament in June 2016 as, coming from the conductor grade, DOG was an issue about which she was very passionate and she wanted to be part of the protest to preserve the grade.

Like everything else she did, Gail confronted her cancer in a pragmatic way. Unfortunately, she went downhill very quickly just before Christmas and passed away with her family beside her at the start of this year. Perth branch wishes to pass on their condolences to Gail’s husband Gary and daughter Nicole.

Grant Murchie, Perth branch secretary

STEVE BRADBURY
Steve joined the railway fraternity straight from school on a British Railway YTS scheme in Shrewsbury. After achieving promotion to traction trainee, and then second man, he passed out as one of the youngest-ever drivers. In 2001 he moved onto the Cambrian line, transferring to Machynlleth depot. Steve was a much loved and popular member of the mess room, and active in our social activities. His passions were rallying, supporting Manchester United, snooker, pool and playing his collection of guitars. He will be massively missed by his colleagues at Machynlleth and those he used to work with at the platform 3 mess room in Salop. Steve fought a stoic battle against cancer but eventually succumbed at the age of 47. He leaves behind his wife Simone.

SJ Powell, Machynlleth branch chair

DAVE ‘DINGO’ COWLING
Dave Cowling died, after a long battle with cancer, on 31 December at the tragically young age of 51. He leaves behind his wife Kathryn and two young children. Dave was a lovable character and everyone who knew him will never forget his jovial banter in the mess room. He was an activist, previously held the position of branch secretary at Preston, and will be very sadly missed.

Graham Fazackerley, Preston branch secretary

Dave Cowling at Arkwright Road

Steve: While my guitar gently weeps

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

**Accommodated drivers and flexible working**

I echo the thoughts of Bro Goldsmith (Journal, February) and offer him the reassurance that his depot is not alone in the issues he speaks of. As a local rep myself, arguably one of the biggest gripe of members is that of accommodated drivers or, certainly, the drivers who choose to continually change their arrangements to suit.

I must say I (and I strongly believe that I speak for my colleagues here also) wholeheartedly and unequivocally support the flexible working agreement. After all, it could just as easily be any of us requiring such help in the not too distant future.

What I cannot support, or indeed even begin to understand, are those drivers willing (and, on occasion, happy to clamber over others) to work overtime on days they have contractually negotiated as their time away from the railway. I’ve often wondered why nobody ever asks to be accommodated onto the back shifts, yet seem quite capable of working late when it’s voluntary overtime?

Again, I reiterate the absolute fundamental necessity for these flexible working agreements, but also the need for periodic reviews to these arrangements, even if only to protect the members involved and ensure their needs and requirements continue to be met by the TOCs and FOCs.

And whilst the GS is quite correct with legalities involving overtime being equally available to all, we are well within our rights to question the moral compass of the self-serving brigade. But it is also worth noting that they only make up a very small minority of drivers on the flexible working agreements today.

*Craig Beharrie, Edinburgh Waverley LLC*

**Staff travel facilities for all**

Staff travel facilities. Yes, that old chestnut again! It’s great that we now get discount on off-peak tickets rather than just on the full fare price. However, it remains grossly unfair that I get less facilities than somebody else in the same depot doing exactly the same job – just because they started on the railway before a certain date. I believe I can’t even keep the staff travel facilities that I’ve got after I retire!

It remains the policy of ASLEF that all members of staff in the railway get free and equal travel on trains during employment and after retirement. It has been talked about repeatedly for many years but it still hasn’t come about. Does the union accept defeat or can it toughen its stance to try and get this issue resolved?

I know a letter was written to the Rail Delivery Group’s predecessor, ATOC, to ask them about this and they referred ASLEF to the individual train operating companies. All the TOCs referred ASLEF back to ATOC. Individual train companies do not have the power to grant free staff travel on other train companies. It appears we are going around in circles!

Can the general secretary and the general secretaries of all the other rail unions meet with the RDG to ask them to meet with all the train companies to ask them to implement free staff travel across the board? I can’t see what the problem would be because they wouldn’t lose that much money and they can promote it as a green incentive because it would be in line with all of their environmentally friendly policies as it encourages staff to take the train and leave their cars at home when making leisure trips across the country.

Free staff travel should apply to freight train drivers as well, who mustn’t be forgotten.

*Patrick Houghton, Banbury*

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*Patrick Houghton, Banbury*

**GS Mick Whelan says: ‘We continue to campaign for free rail travel for all train drivers and all workers in our industry. It is the Rail Delivery Group and its members, the privatised train operating companies, which are the barrier to free travel for employees in this industry.’**

*Don’t let fear and loathing (or apathy) stop you voting* 

Finally at TransPennine Express, after years of industrial disputes and turmoil, the driving grade now has a chance to move forward and maybe – just maybe – enjoy a new dawn in relations with the company.

After 18 months of productivity talks the driving grade has voted to accept the latest offer from the company – having rejected the first offer in a referendum and our company council refusing to support a second offer to go out to referendum.

Even though I voted to accept the latest offer the cynical side of me dictates that our troubles at TPE are far from over as we appear to work for a company whose sole objective is to historically abuse and manipulate out rostering terms and conditions as and when senior management feel it necessary to do so.

My ultimate conclusion in voting for the deal was we may as well receive a significant increase in salary and continue to fight the battles we seem destined to have to fight working for TPE!

All that said there is a faint hope now the company has acquired the rostering flexibility and agreements it needs to meet franchise commitments we may enjoy a new working relationship with TPE management. Drivers voted 63.7% in favour of the deal with roughly 45 drivers choosing not to take part in the vote! Many drivers had conflicting points of view during the vote but the large number of drivers who opted not to vote is concerning, to say the least.

I wish to say to all my driver colleagues that when we have the chance to vote we must not allow apathy and resentment of the company to deter us from taking part in the democratic process of a referendum!

We are fortunate that, as a workforce, we have a voice through ASLEF and, on occasion, we even have the opportunity to vote whether it be during productivity talks or electing our representatives. So, I say again, please use your vote and don’t let apathy cloud your judgement when deciding whether to take part in something as important as a vote to...
Government is choking life out of West Country

Four years after the closure of the Dawlish line in Devon – when storms destroyed the rail line there – the government is still gambling with the economy of the south-west of England, which is still waiting for a resilient rail line.

The combined events at Dawlish, the closure of Cowley Bridge, and the flooding of the Somerset levels, devastated the peninsula, costing the economy of the region an estimated £1.2 billion.

Since Dawlish, the Peninsula Rail Task Force, a campaign group comprising Cornwall County Council, Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP, and the Heart of the South West LEP, has prepared, funded and submitted 'Closing the Gap', a 20 year plan for investment into the rail network, but we are still waiting for a response from the government.

The government has spent £35 million on essential repairs reinstating the sea wall. Another £15 million has been committed to development work at Dawlish but these funds are not enough to take work beyond the option development stage and the lack of investment for connectivity and resilience is choking our economy in the south west.

Geoff Brown, chair, PRTF

Railway wars

In the ASLEF Journal of February 2018 you posit that World War One was the first and probably the last railway war. I am afraid that, historically, this is completely untrue and a very little research could have indicated that.

The Franco-Prussian War between 1870 and 1871; the US Civil War between 1861 and 1865; and the Prussian-Austrian War in 1866 were all wars where efficient use of the railways greatly determined the outcome.

In fact, the use of railways during WWI was much influenced by lessons learned during those previous wars, as proves the use of shorter chimneys with a detachable extension on German locomotives in France and Belgium due to loading gauge issues experienced during the Franco-Prussian war.

Then again, during later wars, the railways still played a major role in logistical efforts. I am just now writing about how in the United States the Pennsylvania Railroad was notably more efficient due to its great extent of electrification around the large Atlantic ports on the east coast, thus taking care that delays due to non-available traction there were an unknown issue. Furthermore, even in the crew rooms here I distinctly remember strong stories about things that happened on the railway in the logistical run up to the Falklands War of 1982. I can still hear the bursts of laughter that accompanied them. So, please, a little more of research before publishing.

Peter van der Mark, retired, GWT Bristol

The railway played a part in conflicts before the Great War of 1914-18 and has played a part in subsequent conflicts, too. But never before – or since – has the railway played such a pivotal role in both the road to war – the mobilisation of armies on both sides – and as a vehicle to deliver men, munitions and ammunition to the front. In previous conflicts men marched on foot, rode horses, or set sail on ships; and in subsequent conflicts the aeroplane and then the helicopter played a more significant role than the railway.

Time to step up to the plate

Whilst Julian Vaughan’s campaign (Journal, February) for step free access is, sadly, still necessary, better access to the train once it has arrived is also in need of improvement. Assistance to board needs to be booked in advance and is often hit and miss, whether there’s a member of staff on duty at the station, meaning that the guard has to walk down and deploy the ramp, causing a slight delay. With the increase in DOO operations it can only get worse for those of us with relatives who need a wheelchair to get around. Surely new-build trains could be fitted with electric ramps at the appropriate doors operated by RADAR keys?

Malcolm Thorpe, RMS

Paris Metro lesson for London Underground

A friend of mine, living in France, sent me a link to a piece from a French TV station. I confess that my schoolboy French is not up to deciphering all of it, but he tells me that Paris Metro train crews are refusing to stop at certain stations for passengers’ safety due to drugs, crime, etc. I’m not sure our line controllers would be quite so understanding…

RJ Mansfield, ex-Northern line

Little pink plastic bags

Since we have finally realised the madness of our plastic throwaway culture, isn’t it time to post out our ASLEF Journal wrapped in something more sensible than throwaway plastic?

Jim North, Wimbledon Park

Thank you, Jo

I would like to thank Jo Kneller at Thompsons solicitors for sorting out my claim. I would also like to thank ASLEF for their help in this matter.

Retired driver Bob Perry, Wolverhampton

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 KL 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 wdrrailbadge@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.

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

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 adn.uk,me@btinternet.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 place a classified advert in the ASLEF Journal please phone 020 7324 2400 or send an email to journal@aslef.org.uk

March 2018 | The ASLEF Journal 21
The Darkest Hour paints a flattering portrait of Winston Churchill during what proved to be his finest hour. Keith Richmond looks at the bigger picture of a man to whom history – and this movie – have perhaps been over kind

ARY OLDMAN has deservedly picked up a hat-trick of best actor awards – at the Golden Globes, Critics’ Choice and Screen Actors’ Guild ceremonies – for his portrayal of Winston Churchill in The Darkest Hour. It’s a remarkable performance in a fine – if not entirely accurate – film about a period when, under threat of imminent invasion from German troops massing on the other side of the English Channel, the newly-appointed Prime Minister galvanised this nation against the Nazis.

It was, arguably, Churchill’s finest hour – a phrase he initially employed when, addressing the House of Commons in the aftermath of the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from the beaches of Dunkirk, he acknowledged that ‘the Battle of France is over,’ ‘the Battle of Britain is about to begin,’ and added, optimistically, that if we ‘brace ourselves’ and stand up to Hitler, and ‘the British Empire last 1,000 years, men will still say,’ ‘This was their finest hour.’

It was. But the problem is that there is more – much more – to Churchill than this, his finest hour in the face of Nazi aggression.

‘Mr Churchill, you are drunk.’ – Bessie Braddock.

‘Madam, you are ugly. But I will be sober in the morning!’ – Winston Churchill

In South Wales he is still regarded, as Nye Bevan once described the Tory Party, as ‘lower than vermin for,’ as Home Secretary in Herbert Asquith’s Liberal government, deploying troops – cavalry from the 18th Royal Hussars and infantrymen from the Lancashire Fusiliers – on the streets of Tonypandy to break a miners’ strike in 1910.

A year later he ordered soldiers from the Warwickshire regiment to shoot workers during the Liverpool transport strike, put a gunboat, the cruiser HMS Antrim, on the Mersey, and dispatched Scots Guards to end the siege of Sidney Street in the East End of London where Russian revolutionaries were holed up. ‘I told the Fire Brigade officer the house was to be allowed to burn down,’ Churchill cheerfully admitted, after troops set fire to the building ‘to smoke out the anarchists’ inside.

In 1919 he put tanks on the streets of Glasgow as a series of protests, marches, rallies and rent strikes on Red Clydeside threatened, he thought, a Bolshevik revolution in Britain and, when asked if Britain would recognise Lenin’s new Communist government in Russia, merely growled, ‘One might as well legalise sodomy as recognise the Bolsheviks.’

And as Secretary of State for War in David Lloyd George’s Conservative-Liberal coalition he created the Royal Irish Constabulary Special Reserve – the infamous Black and Tans – to fight a notoriously dirty war against the Irish Republican Army.

Churchill’s notoriously reactionary views – the result, perhaps, of a privileged upbringing, as he was born at Blenheim Palace, a descendant of the Duke of Marlborough, and educated at Harrow and Sandhurst before being commissioned in the 4th (Queen’s Own) Hussars – extended from the British Isles to the distant edges of the empire.

‘The best argument against democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter.’ – Winston Churchill

His attitude is encapsulated in remarks he made about battles he saw in his youth when he recalled, speaking to students at Bristol University in 1929: ‘I never myself had the advantage of a university education. I was not thought clever enough to profit by it to the full. I was put to be trained in technical matters of a military college, and almost immediately afterwards things opened out very quickly into action and adventure. In those days England had a lot of jolly little wars against barbarous peoples that we were endeavouring to help forward to higher things, and I found myself scurrying about the world from one exciting scene to another.’

When Arabs, out from under the heel of the Ottoman Empire, rebelled against British rule in Mesopotamia or – as it was known from 1920 – Iraq, he noted in a notorious memo: ‘I cannot understand this squeamishness about the use of gas. I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes.’

When Mahatma Gandhi began his campaign of peaceful resistance, Churchill argued that he ‘ought to be lain bound hand and foot at the gates of Delhi, and then trampled on by an enormous elephant with the new Viceroy seated on its back.’ And when, in 1943, there was a terrible famine in Bengal, Churchill allowed hundreds of thousands of people to starve to death, saying it was the Indians’ own fault for ‘breeding like rabbits’.

Not, then, a progressive. Many of his words and deeds put him on the wrong side of history. Churchill’s reputation rests on the leadership he showed as Prime Minister from 10 May 1940 until 26 July 1945. He took over from Neville Chamberlain, the discredited Tory who promised ‘peace in our time’ at Munich in 1938, was the architect of appeasement and, with Lord Halifax, argued for a ‘negotiated peace’ – ie, surrender – to the Nazis after the war began badly for Britain.

‘Socialism is the philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy.’ – Winston Churchill

But Churchill wasn’t a military genius – as First Lord of the Admiralty he was responsible for the disaster of Gallipoli during the Dardanelles campaign in the First World War – and he was supported, quietly but very effectively, throughout the Second World War by the Labour Party leader Clement Attlee.

It was Attlee’s refusal to serve in a coalition under Chamberlain that forced the Prime Minister’s resignation in 1940; and it was Attlee’s support for Churchill in cabinet after the fall of France that enabled Britain to fight on rather than seeking terms with Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, Himmler, Bormann, and von Ribbentrop.

Gary Oldman – as he usually is, whether playing Sid Vicious in Sid and Nancy, Sirius Black in the Harry Potter films or George Smiley in Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy – is magnificent, of course. And The Darkest Hour is a very fine film. It offers, however, only a partial portrait of Winston Churchill.
WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG

POLOGISTS for Toxic Tony and Mandy, et al, point to the landslide they won in 1997. True. But what they conveniently forget is that Labour was always going to win that election, partly because the Tories were up to their necks in sleaze, but mostly because, after 18 years of Conservative rule, voters had had enough. Proverbially, elections are lost by the government, rather than won by the opposition, and the Tories were on the way out.

So the inference that the Blairites in Progress draw from that result – that people, in their millions, endorsed the New Labour manifesto and its commitment to market mania, and Mandelson’s crass assertion that he was ‘intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich’ – has always been a fallacy.

Ian Bremmer and his new book

The Labour Party, in government from 1997 to 2010, achieved a lot. But the war in Iraq and the lies that Blair told Parliament, and the electorate, on the road to war are his enduring legacy, and cast a long shadow over the other, more laudable, achievements in office. Iraq was never about weapons of mass destruction – which, Blair knew, Saddam Hussein did not possess – it was, as Gregory Burke dryly puts it in his play Black Watch, ‘about petrol and porn’. Well, petrol, anyway.

In his new book Us vs Them: The Failure of Globalism (Portfolio Penguin, £14.99) Ian Bremmer, Global Research Professor at New York University, president of the Eurasia group, and Time columnist, exposes the fault lines in the neo-liberal political and economic experiment which – since it was enthusiastically embraced by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s – has caused such misery at home and abroad.

Bremmer analyses – clearly, concisely, and free of jargon – what went wrong and concludes, ‘There are choices to make. Build walls? Or rewrite the social contract? Necessity must again become the mother of invention.’

Keith Richmond

Solution to Crossword 142

Across: 1 Hammock 5 Fowl 7 Nag 8 Exterior 9 Arced 10 Even 13 Rift 14 Thaw 18 Nail 19 Bloom 21 Fuse 22 Ill 23 Play 24 Hostess

Down: 1 Hen party 2 Magician 3 Overdo 4 Kitten 5 Farmer 6 Wood 11 Nicotine 12 Stimulus 15 Watery 16 Bleach 17 Abbeys 20 Duel

Congratulations to SJ Masters, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, 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 142nd prize crossword in the February 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 March

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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Prize Crossword 143 by Tom Williams

Across
1 Roast beef sauce
8 Shopping trips run by children
9 The atmosphere
10 Metric unit of volume
11 Swamp
13 Upmarket
14 Adhesives
19 Not professional
20 This fruit sounds unsightly!
21 Ping pong (5, 6)

Down
1 Quality cigar made in Cuba
2 Transmits on
4 Active power
4 Fourth month
5 Sets on fire
6 Stockings and tights
11 Person who moves from country to country
12 Pie or fool fruit
13 Rough in texture
14 Harvesting season
15 Covering on fish
17 Remove lumps by sifting

Solution to Crossword 143

Across: 1 Roast beef sauce 8 Shopping trips run by children 9 The atmosphere 10 Metric unit of volume 11 Swamp 13 Upmarket 14 Adhesives 19 Not professional 20 This fruit sounds unsightly! 21 Ping pong (5, 6)

Down: 1 Quality cigar made in Cuba 2 Transmits on 4 Active power 4 Fourth month 5 Sets on fire 6 Stockings and tights 11 Person who moves from country to country 12 Pie or fool fruit 13 Rough in texture 14 Harvesting season 15 Covering on fish 17 Remove lumps by sifting
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

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

MARCH TOUR DATES
Weds 28th February – Sat 3rd March BIRMINGHAM, MAC 0121 446 3232
Tues 6th BELFAST, MAC 028 9023 5053
Thurs 8th – Sat 10th LIVERPOOL, Playhouse 0151 709 4776
Tues 13th – Weds 14th SALFORD, Lowry 0843 208 6000
Thurs 15th – Sat 17th LEEDS, West Yorkshire Playhouse Courtyard Theatre 0113 213 7700
Weds 21st – Sat 24th GLASGOW, Tron 0141 552 4267
Weds 28th LANCaster, Dukes 01524 598500
Thurs 29th-Fri 30th SHEffield, University of Sheffield Drama Studio 0114 2228888
Sat 31st DURHAM, Gala Theatre 0300 026 6600

APRIL TOUR DATES
Thurs 5th CANTERBURY, Gulbenkian 01227 769075
Fri 6th MILton KEynes, The Stables 01908 280800
Sat 7th CAMBRIDGE, Junction 01223 511 511
Tues 10th-Sat 14th LONDON, Theatre Royal Stratford East 020 8534 0310

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08-60-01

For the credit of
ASLEF RMS 500 CLUB ACCOUNT

The sum of
£

AMOUNT IN FIGURES
AMOUNT IN WORDS

Commencing
and thereafter every
1ST OF EVERY MONTH

DATE AND AMOUNT OF FIRST PAYMENT
DATE AND AMOUNT OF LAST PAYMENT

My/Our address to Beneficiary

Please cancel any previous standing order or direct debit in favour of the beneficiary named above

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

ACCOUNT TO BE DEBITED ___________ ACCOUNT NUMBER ___________

Signature(s) _______________________________ Date _____________________

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

* Delete if not applicable

If the amounts of the periodic payments vary, they should be incorporated in a schedule overleaf!