Wales on the Rails

Inside this issue: A special report on the state of the railway in Wales plus join us for the big march and rally in London on Saturday 12 May

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GS Mick Whelan

We will not be shy

WANT to thank our members at Acton Town for the unity and solidarity shown in the action taken over the abrogation of recognised and agreed process and procedure and virtual blackmail of a colleague into another role. This is not, as misrepresented in the press, about defending the indefensible, and poor safety of the line, but ensuring the methodology for dealing with such issues is the agreed and tested one. We are ballots elsewhere on imposition rostering and hope that common sense prevails because we will not be shy in responding when companies refuse to honour agreements and operate in bad faith.

We attended the STUC and Welsh Labour Party conferences at the end of April, speaking out on issues – such as freight, DOO, infrastructure, and affordable housing – that impact on our members, their families and futures. The decision on the future of the East Coast franchise will be made soon. We know what we would like to see but, whatever happens, the uncertainty for those employed and who use it must end.

Trade unions are internationalist and, while it is right to challenge countries that use chemical weapons, we must be sure of the facts and a vote of Parliament, before taking action, is part of the democratic process. The Prime Minister may think this is her ‘Maggie and the Falklands’ moment but being a puppet of the US, and staying silent about Yemen, is not a good look.

We are gearing up for our annual assembly of delegates when members analyse what we are doing and create the policies, based on items from branches, that drive our agenda. We have 176 branches and will have 100 representatives present – it is worth reminding each other that we carry out the policy of the trade union – and look forward to the Young Members’ fringe and their growing voice in ASLEF. It is appropriate that AAD is in Liverpool where we will say goodbye to District 3 Organiser Colin Smith and thank him for his long service to the union and its members and the movement as a whole. He will be greatly missed but I am sure Andy Hourigan will fill those large shoes and make the role his own. We are replacing an Evertonian with a Man City fan but this has not seemed to impact on their abilities in the past (joke!) and wish both of them the very best.

Finally, I hope to see you at the TUC’s march and rally in London on 12 May. Please come and join us!

Yours fraternally

Mick Whelan, general secretary
Fog on the Tyne is all mine, all mine

A SLEF’s Tyne & Wear Metro branch secretary, Jonathan Doughty, and colleagues helped raise £6,500 for good causes when they gave 128 passengers a special tour of the light rail system serving Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland and Tyneside. Passengers – all members of the Branch Line Society – got a complex tour of the Metro, completing a series of unusual moves not normally visited by passenger trains, such as the stock transfer line typically used for empty coaching stock.’

‘Michael Darling and I took the BLS group around the system, going into many different sidings, avoiding lines, talking them through the history of the system, and taking them to places where usual passenger service isn’t allowed,’ said Jonathan. ‘It was a very enjoyable day for both staff and passengers and it’s the first time in my 15 years as a train driver that the train has come back cleaner than it was when it went out!’

The trip raised £6,500 for the St John Ambulance, Mind and the North Tyneside Steam Railway Association. Kev Adlam of the BLS said: ‘We are indebted to the professionalism and dedication of the on board team of Hazel Mitchell, Jonny Doughty, Michael Darling and Simon Whiteley who did an excellent job looking after us and liaising with control to ensure there was no impact on day to day operations.’

The BLS: ‘The Metro Meanderer tour was led by 4060’

The Branch Line Society, founded in 1955, is the largest amateur railway study group in the UK. Membership costs £12 per year and you can visit the website at www.branchline.uk

Join us on the march

The TUC, which represents 5.5 million workers in 49 trade unions in Britain, is organising a march and rally in London on Saturday 12 May to demand a new deal for working people. ASLEF activists are invited to join GS Mick Whelan, AGS Simon Weller, executive committee members and district organisers on Victoria embankment, between Hungerford Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge, at 11am.

‘We’re marching because real wages are still lower than before the financial collapse of 2008,’ said Simon. ‘Because three million workers are stuck on zero hour contracts, in agency work, and in low paid, and artificial, self-employment. Because hardworking public servants haven’t had a proper pay rise for eight years. Because our NHS is at breaking point. And because years of cuts have led to poverty, homelessness and despair.’

Mick said: ‘Please come and join us on the march, and at the rally, to show solidarity with every other worker in Britain:’

Give me Monet – that’s what I want

The Gare Saint-Lazare, painted in 1877 by Claude Monet, is on display at the National Gallery until 29 July as part of the Monet & Architecture exhibition. It is one of four surviving canvases – ‘interior landscapes’ with smoke from the engines treated like clouds in the sky – of the station in the 8th arrondissement of Paris.

SHARKS CIRCLING FIRST

FirstGroup, which runs Great Western, TPE, Hull Trains and South West Trains, as well as Greyhound coaches in the States, is fending off a takeover bid by the aggressive private equity group Apollo. First, from its head office in Aberdeen, described the bid as ‘opportunistic’.

ANGIE, YOU CAN’T SAY WE NEVER TRIED

AGS Simon Weller went head to head with Angie Doll of GTR on BBC Sussex last month on Southern Rail’s recent – and indecently hasty – pledge to recruit more women to work on the railway. A common aim, of course, but we’ve heard it all before and Simon won the bout on points.

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QUOTES

Forgive me if I do not join in with the comparisons between Russia and Nazism. They are not accurate. Nazism was a hateful ideology that sought the death of millions. We are not dealing with that in today’s Russia.’ – Tom Tugendhat, Conservative MP for Tonbridge & Malling

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

A concept doomed to failure from a bunch of millionaires, pushed by a failed leader of a party he left in ruins, a smokescreen purely designed to try and split the Labour Party. Mr Clegg supported & propped up a disastrous Tory coalition of doom. I don’t fear any ‘new party’. Angela Rayner

At least these people are honest that the sole aim of a new party isn’t to win power – they know it never would – but just to keep the Tories in power. Owen Jones

Hundreds attend Westminster service in memory of union legend Rodney Bickerstaffe, with speeches by @johnprescott @DavePrentis @jeremycorbyn @MPeakeOfficial Alan Jones

Strong trade unions are the key to delivering decent pay and conditions. Finn Brennan

The ASLEF Journal I May 2018
Time for national transport strategy

ILIAN GREENWOOD, Labour MP for Nottingham South, and chair of the House of Commons Transport Select Committee, has called for a national strategy for transport. Writing in Politics First magazine, the former Shadow Transport Secretary said: ‘The UK’s transport infrastructure is set to benefit from investment worth several tens of billions of pounds. But is that going to produce the outcomes which the government wants – rebalancing the economy; enhancing productivity; better reliability and less congestion; improving global competitiveness and encouraging foreign investment; and supporting wider social benefits, such as new jobs and housing?

‘The decision to implement partial electrification – announced on the day the Commons rose for the summer recess in 2017 – was sold to the public as a boon to passengers. But, after questioning the Secretary of State, and failing to get straight answers, I can only assume that the problems arise principally from a failure to understand and manage the costs of the large scale electrification projects that were considered essential only a few years ago. ‘We need to see action by the Secretary of State, and failing that, the government to improve its understanding of costs and value, better manage large complex schemes, accelerate delivery of projects which are underway, and better manage project risk. All delivered within the framework of a national strategy.’

‘30 YEARS AGO WOMEN DIDN’T DRIVE TRAINS’

Pauline Cawood, of Leeds branch, is a featured member as part of the TUC’s 150 year celebrations. ‘I came into the rail industry 22 years ago very quiet, very nervous, and now I’m a completely different person.’

CONFERENCES & RALLIES

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 is at the Caird Hall, Dundee, from Monday 29 to Tuesday 30 October.

500 CLUB: M Joyce, with number 133, won the April draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £380.

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Off the Rails

MELTHORLEY, Longsight legend, reflects on the way things were: ‘You’ve done your rules, passed out on basic traction, the doctor gives you the all clear. You’re presented with a detailed sectional appendix to aid your route learning, on which you are then tested, and you sign your card. You get a glossary of terms covering all the railway speak you will encounter, whatever the accent or dialect. So what’s the problem, driver? I signed the Potts which meant, as a starter link driver, I could drive from Cheadle Hulme via Macclesfield to Stoke where I would finish and start my journeys in the down bay. One evening, not long into my new career, I approached Stoke to see a unit already in the bay, and was being signalled the up main platform. I ran in and brought my unit to a careful stand, on a rising brake, and lowered my window to greet the platform staff. “Owdup, youtha, dunnah shut’er down. Bobby’s ‘avin you up the glebe. Al stick your guard in the back end. Dunna’ ang abart, got the Dawby up yer orse.” OK. With face pressed against the windscreen of the 304, I headed south. Within a few chains I was swinging left into a sidings and, in no time, I got two on the bell to say I was behind the dummy. Now, why didn’t I know all that in the first place?’

STEVE RICHARDSON, Waterloo Nine Elms branch secretary, and District 1 council secretary, wrote a nice, witty – and honestly pragmatic – letter to the EC in April. ‘Thank you for your kind donation of £250 towards my campaign in the London local elections,’ wrote Steve, who lives at Orpington in Kent. ‘Whilst the ward of Chelsfield & Pratt’s Bottom is not one of Labour’s targets, its name, as I am sure you would agree, is a source of much amusement. That said, it is important that ASLEF candidates are seen to be able to run effective campaigns. Your donation, along with others, has been a great help.’

ANDREW BRIDGEN, Conservative MP for North West Leicestershire, told MPs how proud he is of having no rough sleepers in his constituency. Jeremy Corbyn offered to send up some of his from Islington by train. ‘I’ve no railway station, either,’ said Bridgen smugly. ‘There you have it,’ says Nigel Nelson, political editor of the Sunday Mirror and a columnist on the Sunday People. ‘North West Leicestershire is not only devoid of rough sleepers, but railway sleepers, too.’

KEVIN MAGUIRE, associate editor (politics) of the Daily Mirror and a frequent face on television, is presenting a naughtily subversive new Not the Royal Wedding podcast for the Mirror, interviewing prominent republicans as Harry and Meghan plight their troth. First up, naturally, is his old republican mate, the Beast of Bolsover, Dennis Skinner.

SOVIET intelligence officers, at the height of the Cold War, were known to observe to their opps in Mi5 and Mi6: ‘Any fool can commit a good murder; but it takes a real artist to commit a good natural death.’
Tarancón – No pasaran!

ANDY JONES, Motherwell branch secretary, reports on a trip to Spain to remember the men and women who fought and died at Tarancón during the Spanish Civil War

N 16 February my wife Gillian and I had the privilege of attending the 7th annual commemoration to the memory of Scottish members of the British battalion of the International Brigades and locals from Tarancón who were victims of General Franco. This was our third trip to this event, which is held in the cemetery at Tarancón, just south of Madrid.

A good crowd of local residents and visitors from overseas gathered on a gloomy morning to remember the victims of Franco’s fascists during the Spanish Civil War. Speakers included Mike Arnott from the IBM, Maximó Molina Gutierrez from the Asociacion para la Recuperacion de la Memoria Historica, and Almudena Cros from the Asociacion de Amigos be las Brigadas Internacionales who spoke movingly of the courage of the Brigades and local Republican residents.

John O’Neill from Perth read a poem The Graves of Spain then Maximó Gutierrez and Kirsty Robbins read the roll of honour of the names on the memorials. The ceremony ended with a minute’s silence, a rendition of the Internationale, and the laying of red roses on the memorial.

The attendees then toured the town, visiting four Republican hospitals from the war. We then shared lunch, and some comradesely chat, at Restaurante Toscana with attendees from Ireland, Wales, the USA and the Netherlands.

The previous day Maximó had arranged some ‘guerrilla gardening’ at the now abandoned Hospital No 2 to highlight the neglect of the building by the local council. A group of us from Scotland joined locals and members of the ARMH to tidy the grounds. The ARMH want to preserve the building as a memorial to those who fought and died in the civil war as well as those who were victims after the war. An incredibly worthwhile event I would encourage ASLEF colleagues to attend.

Solidarité avec la CGT

GS Mick Whelan has sent a message of solidarity to Gilbert Garrel, secrétaire général de la Fédération Nationale des Cheminots CGT, in their struggle with SNCF and President Macron’s attempts to take away their t&cs to ‘ready the French railway for privatisation.’

Mick told French television and radio: ‘I urge France not to make the same mistakes that were made here in Britain. Privatisation hasn’t worked; privatisation doesn’t work; and privatisation will not work. It was an ideological, not a practical, decision here in Britain, and we are suffering the consequences with the highest fares in Europe, and the oldest rolling stock, and we see millions of pounds haemorrhage from the railway system every year in profits and dividends for the privatisers.

‘Public utilities – such as gas, water, and postal services, as well as the railway – are natural monopolies which should, obviously, be run in the public, not the private, sector. For the public good – not for private profit. Especially as tens of millions of pounds goes from the Treasury – from the taxpayer – to subsidise the running of the railways every year.’

Mick added: ‘The neoliberal agenda is a busted flush – the global economic collapse ten years ago proved that – and here in Britain most people – even Conservative voters – now want to bring the railways back into public ownership.’

Val Shawcross, the Deputy London Mayor with responsibility for transport, attended a Croydon Tramlink branch meeting on 27 March to hear from the drivers who keep the system moving safely.

Fury at rail awards mock terror attack

Rail Technology magazine has been forced to apologize after the rail industry awards ceremony it organizes featured a bizarre mock terror event on the first anniversary of the deadly attack on Westminster Bridge. Rail industry executives sat open mouthed in shock at the lavish black tie awards ceremony and Network Rail and Chiltern Railways returned their awards in disgust.

The magazine and event organisers were also criticised for employing women in ‘inappropriate’ skimpy outfits at the UK Rail Industry Awards hosted by comedian Rufus Hound in Battersea, south London. After attendees complained about ‘the casual sexist portrayal of women’ and ‘the mock terrorist attack’ the magazine tried to laugh off the spoof killings as ‘a joke’ but then changed tack saying the event ‘does not reflect the values and opinions of UKRIA, Rail Technology, and Cognitive Publishing.’

QUOTE…

‘I use the Overground if I can. I like the 24 bus for Westminster but generally I get the Tube. I was 60 last May so I got my free Oyster pass. Ridiculous, but bloody handy.’

– Alastair Campbell

…UNQUOTE

Aslef sent a message of solidarity to the CGT

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DfT’s ‘smoke and mirrors’

The National Audit Office investigation into the Department for Transport’s controversial decision to cancel three major rail projects, published on 29 March, suggested that the Secretary of State for Transport had not told the truth about the reasons for cancelling the work.

GS Mick Whelan said: ‘We welcome the results of this investigation into the DfT’s decision to cancel electrification of the Great Western main line in South Wales, the Midland main line, and the Lakes line between Windermere and Oxenholme, because the decision to renegotiate on this Conservative Party pledge was as pernicious and ridiculous as it was indefensible.

‘This country needs a modern railway, and a proper infrastructure, fit for the 21st century. But it is clear from the conclusions of the NAO investigation that Chris Grayling lied. The truth is that the government didn’t want to find the money and made up a story about “sudden improvements” using “state of the art bi-mode trains”. It’s a fantasy, an exercise in smoke and mirrors, and Mr Grayling has been rumbled by the NAO.

‘The Prime Minister’s fingerprints are all over this, too. The NAO says she took the decision to cancel the Cardiff to Swansea scheme in July last year. So the Prime Minister, the Transport Secretary and the DfT are saying that the people of South Wales don’t count. They should do the right thing and electrify the line to Swansea; address the historical underfunding of the Welsh rail network; and honour the agreement made with the Welsh government to secure a new and sustainable franchise for Wales and the Borders. And, after this damning report, electrify the Midland main line and the Lakes line, too. Which is what they promised at the general election.’

Mick added: ‘How many failures can one man take and still be in position? Mr Grayling was condemned in another NAO report in January over his handling of GTR. He clearly has to consider his position.’

DIY down under

Cliff Blackwell, Ripple Lane RMS, sent the Journal this wicked image of a spoof ad after Aussies David Warner, Steve Smith and Cameron Bancroft were caught cheating by using sandpaper to tamper with the ball during the third test against South Africa in Cape Town.

RIDERS BANNED FOR LEVEL CROSSING BREACH

Thirty-five riders – including Ian Stannard of Team Sky – in the second peloton were disqualified from the Scheldeprijs cycling race in Belgium in April after riding across a level crossing as the gate was closing. Union Cycliste Internationale road race rules say riders must stop at a rail crossing when warning lights are flashing.

SMILE, PLEASE: AGS Simon Weller, EC1 Marz Colombini and Kat Cuss from the finance department at head office join branch secretaries for the traditional team pic at Wortley Hall (see course report on page 17).

QUOT... ‘When the Tube is rammed it is frightening. I prefer the little underground in Glasgow. It used to be painted orange – hence its nickname, the Clockwork Orange.’ – Kirsty Wark
...UNQUOTE

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Mind the pay gap – train drivers are best of British

EW figures show that the job with the smallest gap in wages between men and women working in any occupation in the UK is that of driving trains. Statistics compiled by the Government Equalities Office reveal that while the overall gender pay in Britain is 18.4%, for train drivers it is just 0.7%.

Mick Whelan, general secretary, said: “I am delighted that train drivers have the lowest gender pay gap of any job in the UK because ASLEF has been at the forefront of promoting diversity in our industry, working hard to encourage train companies to ensure that train drivers are more representative of the communities they serve. ‘As a trade union, we can only recruit as members people who have been selected, and trained, to work as drivers by the train and freight operating companies. But we work with these companies, every day of every week, to ensure they encourage women, as well as men, to become train drivers.’

Mick added: ‘Train drivers are highly unionised and covered and protected by strong collective bargaining agreements – factors which have helped deliver this success story. However, while this news is welcome, we know the rail industry needs to do more to improve its recruitment policies and we will work with the FOCs and TOCs to make sure this happens.’

Equal pay is the right in Britain for men and women to be paid the same for doing the same, or equivalent, work. It has been part of sex discrimination law for more than 40 years, and was enshrined in the Equality Act 2010.

But a significant pay difference still exists in many industries.

There are no sanctions against companies which pay men more than women for doing the same job. Firms which are named and shamed – they have to publish their gender pay gap on their website as well as reporting it to the GEO – are able to carry on after the bad news hits the headlines.

Grayling sneaks in more privatisation

GS Mick Whelan has condemned the dangers of further privatisation of Britain’s railway after the Secretary of State for Transport invited bids to run a new West Coast partnership.

Chris Grayling unveiled a ‘new vision that could see HS2 become a fully integrated railway, with a single organisation running all aspects of the service – the tickets, trains, maintaining the track and other infrastructure like signalling – ensuring a single joined-up team will deliver the best possible passenger service.’

‘We would welcome that,’ said Mick. ‘But only if it is in the public sector, which is what the vast majority of passengers now want. We have always argued that the fragmentation of our railways after privatisation has been bad for our industry, and bad for Britain. We want to see the wheels and steel put back together. ‘But not in the private sector.

And, at the moment, and I know the government doesn’t like it, but Network Rail is wholly publicly owned. This plan will see part of our vital infrastructure hived off into the private sector, where profit, not safety, is the name of the game.

‘Those of us in the rail industry remember the disaster of Railtrack which shows what happens when a private company runs a safety-critical industry. We cannot jeopardise our safety record by returning to the bad old days when private companies cut corners and put passengers at risk.’

Tosh McDonald, Marz Colombini, Hugh Bradley, Andy Hudd, Mick Whelan, Andy Hourigan, Dave Calfe, and Howard Kaye celebrate the solidarity of the labour movement – and the TUC’s heart unions week – on the steps of head office in Smithfield.
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It’s a grand old team to play for it’s a grand old team to support

District 3 Organiser Colin Smith retires at the end of this month after AAD in his home city of Liverpool. KEITH RICHMOND listens as Colin looks back on life as a train driver, ASLEF rep, rugby player (and rugby coach), fervent follower of Northern soul and, as the theme tune from Z Cars booms out across Goodison Park, as a life-long Everton fan in the blue heart of Merseyside.

There is a famous rugby adage – common to both codes – often attributed to Willie John McBride, a powerful lock for both Ireland and the British Lions who was a key part of the side that beat the All Blacks in 1971 and then, as an inspirational captain, led the Lions to victory over South Africa in 1974. He had a simple instruction for his teammates on tour – ‘Get your retaliation in first’ – and pursued a policy of ‘One in, all in’ meaning that when one Lion ‘retaliated’, every other red vest on the pitch would join the melee or simply take out the nearest Springbok.

It is, perhaps, instructive that Colin Smith, who retires from his post as District 3 Organiser at the end of the month, after AAD, which is being held on his home patch of Liverpool, has played or coached rugby for much of his life. Although, as a fleet-footed inside centre, and an exponent of what he has always believed to be the real beautiful game, Colin has never been a thug either on or off the pitch. But he does understand the importance of standing up for yourself, and the value, in a trade union as well as a team, of solidarity. And, of course, of the value of one out, all out’ when it comes to industrial action.

Machin: ‘We don’t have stars in this game, Mrs Weaver, that’s soccer.’
Mrs Weaver: ‘What do you have?’
Machin: ‘People like me.’
– This Sporting Life

Colin was born at Sefton Park, Toxteth, in 1953. His father Freddie was a fitter, who worked for a time on the railway, at Brunswick during steam, while his mother Lillian was a seamstress and cook. He had two brothers and a sister – Colin was the youngest brother, the third child of four – in a sporting family. ‘Mum was a swimmer, and Dad had been a PT instructor in the Parachute regiment, and both believed in playing sport and keeping fit.’ Their children – two rugby players and a boxer, while Jane competed as a pentathlete – kept up the family tradition. ‘I loved it. I loved the camaraderie and the discipline, and it taught me lots – about respect, and teamwork.’

At school he played rugby union – playing at 12, inside centre – and was a strong, dynamic runner, a creative player with an eye for the try line, good enough to play for Merseyside schools and have trials for Lancashire. ‘I was reasonably good; says Colin modestly. ‘I had a bit of pace, a good sidestep, and decent ball handling skills.’ He adds, laughing, ‘Barry John would have been proud of me’.

It’s only a game, old sport. It’s all a game.’ – Phillips, a sports reporter, in This Sporting Life

An Achilles heel injury at 22 meant he had to give up rugby for a while. When he started to regain fitness, he joined Liverpool Harriers, one of Britain’s best known athletics clubs, and took up running. Colin loved what Alan Silittoe famously described as The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner, won the 1,500 and 3,000 metres at the British Rail championships, represented Britain’s railway workers in Europe, and turned in a very impressive time of 2 hours 37 minutes at the Liverpool marathon.

When he went back to playing rugby, he opted for league rather than union. The 13-man game – celebrated in David Storey’s novel This Sporting Life, and turned into a film starring Richard Harris as Machin; Rachel Roberts as Margaret; Alan Badel as Weaver; and Leonard Rossiter as the sports writer, Phillips – is famously strong in its northern heartlands, and attracts a different group of people, as players and fans, from rugby union. ‘You never get many academicians going to rugby league – it’s train drivers, coal miners, and labourers – getting paid in vouchers for Dewhurst the Master Butcher,’ says Colin, who spent a year playing – as a centre – for Rochdale Hornets.

‘It was daunting knowing people were turning up on Saturday and paying to see me play. If you made a mistake – if you knocked the ball on – the fans would come down on you like a ton of bricks. It was like This Sporting Life – professional rugby league is a rough, tough old game. There were half a dozen players on really good salaries and then there were the rest of us, not knowing where the next wage packet was coming from.’

He had twelve good months before a serious knee injury put paid to his career in professional rugby league. Colin got his coaching badges and began coaching Liverpool Polytechnic rugby league team, and then Birkenhead. ‘I had to stand there and let them hammer me; he recalls, ‘pretending not to mind and trying not to limp.’

‘My love of New York is something to do with Liverpool. There is the same energy in both cities.’ – John Lennon

Colin had left school at 16 to become an apprentice fitter and turner at an engineering firm – ‘which I hated’ – and worked for a year as a butcher – ‘top meat for a protein diet!’ – before joining the railway, and the union, in 1971. ‘My father said “the railway isn’t bad” so I went to Garston on the Cheshire lines and worked myself through the grades.

‘I drove electrics, and DMUs, mostly passenger, for British Rail, and Merseyrail, out of Chester. I remember once at Hoylake, driving past into West Kirby, I was stopped at a signal and got carried away. It was a lovely day, so I stepped off the train, and was keenly watching the golf, and eventually they sent an inspector

No Pasarán! The Spanish Civil War 1936-39

The International Brigades Memorial Trust commemorates the battle against fascism in Spain where, in the 1930s, the democratically-elected left-wing Republican government introduced social and economic reforms to improve the lives of industrial workers and peasant farmers. Conservatives – the rich, the powerful and the Roman Catholic church – were furious and in July 1936 the army, led by General Francisco Franco, tried to overthrow the government by force. Tens of thousands of Spaniards rallied to the Republican cause, the coup failed, and the country was plunged into a bloody civil war. Franco's Nationalist army was backed by right-wing Falangist irregulars as well as troops from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as Hitler and Mussolini used Spain as a testing ground for the weapons and tactics with which they would fight World War Two. The governments of Britain and France,wedded to an ill-conceived policy of appeasement of the great dictators, pursued a cynical line of non-intervention because, cabinet papers subsequently revealed, they feared socialism, and the power of the workers, more than they feared the Nazis and the Fascists and their rich friends in England. But, on the Republican side, volunteers in the International Brigades answered Joan Miro's call to Aidez L'Espagne, many of them living, fighting and dying under a slogan used by anti-fascists ever since: 'No Pasarán!'
down to see if the driver was still alive! Passengers were banging on the windows and I was told they’d pulled the signal 20 minutes earlier. But I got away with it…’

He went to college – to what was then Liverpool Polytechnic and is now John Moores University – to study part-time, three days a week, for four years for a diploma in Labour History under Professor Tom Kearney, a leading light in the CP: ‘I learned about the history of the labour movement; how to protect workers’ rights; what it means to be progressive; and about leading the way. Tom opened my eyes to a lot of things.’

‘When I’ve got nothing better to do, I look down the league table to see how Everton are getting along.’ – Bill Shankly

Colin served as a local level rep, branch chairman at Birkenhead, company council and as a delegate at three AADS before running for district organiser. ‘I became a rep to defend people. The end of BR was on the horizon and everyone was concerned because the railway was being fragmented and nobody knew where they were going to end up or what company they would be working for. Privatisation was designed to undermine the workforce and undermine collectivity.

‘It was a challenge, but I enjoyed it, and I was fortunate to have some very experienced reps – like Lenny Halliwell and Bob Jones – who trained and nurtured me.’ Then Lenny, LRC chair, had a major row with management about the imposition of MFA. Colin was waiting for Lenny, who suffered from angina, in the local reps’ room. ‘When he came back I could see he was upset. He had a massive heart attack and died in my arms. It was a terrible tragedy but it only strengthened my resolve to keep on carrying the light in the CP. ‘I learned about the history of the movement, especially in the International Brigades in Spain; This Sporting Life; Richard Harris as Machin in Lindsay Anderson’s film of David Storey’s novel; and Joan Miró’s celebrated poster of a Catalan peasant raising a leftist Republican salute against Franco’s fascists.

‘I am joining the people’s football club.’ – David Moyes

Although he’s retiring, Colin is not exactly the retiring sort, and will continue to be active in the movement, especially in the International Brigades Memorial Trust, which is particularly close to his heart. ‘My father fought the fascists in the Second World War but many historians think that if Franco had been stopped in his tracks – if the British and French governments had defended the democratically-elected left-wing Spanish government – we would not have had to fight a Second World War.

Colin – who looks a lot younger than 65 – admits he will miss the hard work he has been doing for the union. ‘Well, some of it! I will miss having a good heated debate, then walking out and having a drink. And pouring it over someone’s head…’

‘Seriously, I will miss the camaraderie. Especially here on Merseyside where, with ASLEF members, it’s like playing rugby union, or rugby league, knowing you can implicitly trust your teammates, that they’re right behind you, and ready for a fight.’

The two general secretaries he talks about most fondly are Mick Whelan, the current GS, and Mick Rix. ‘Mick Whelan has really raised the bar; he’s taken us up the ladder, politically and industrially, while Mick Rix created a professional atmosphere – Mick Whelan and I both served under him as officers – before he lost to Brady.’

Colin’s a lifelong Evertonian though, ironically, his mum and dad were both Liverpool fans. ‘My mum’s brother was a blue and he took my brothers and me to Goodison Park. I think I was six the first time I went, to see either Aston Villa or Wolves. I remember the greats – Alex Young, the golden vision; Alan Ball; Colin Harvey; Howard Kendall; Bob Latchford; and I did like Duncan Ferguson’s aggression. When I stopped playing rugby I bought two season tickets – one for Everton and one for St Helens – and I still go to Goodison. There are two teams in the city – they’re red, we’re blue – and there’s nothing red in my house! Well, for football. My politics are red – I’ve always been a member of the Labour Party, never voted Tory, and find Jeremy Corbyn, who has promised to renationalise Britain’s railways, an absolute inspiration – and I will always be red.’

The DO in action for ASLEF; Brothers in Arms: GS Mick Whelan gives Colin a comradely hug as Birkenhead branch celebrates 130 years; spot the young rugby star (front row, in front of the head); running a marathon on Merseyside; silverware for the mantelpiece; muddied and bloodied after scoring a try; that tie celebrates the Toffees, not the Tories; Colin with Jack Jones, of the Transport & General Workers’ Union, who fought with the International Brigades in Spain; This Sporting Life; Richard Harris as Machin in Lindsay Anderson’s film of David Storey’s novel; and Joan Miró’s celebrated poster of a Catalan peasant raising a leftist Republican salute against Franco’s fascists.

The ASLEF Journal | 1 1

May 2018
Everybody wants to know the truth

BRIAN CORBETT, District 7
Organiser, reports on the state of rails – including the Transport Secretary being called out by the National Audit Office on electrification, and the plight of freight – in Wales

Hat a sad indictment of this government it is that, at a very senior level, they lied so openly to the electorate. The National Audit Office has made it clear that three major electrification projects were scrapped for financial reasons, and not the nonsense arguments put forward by Transport Secretary Grayling, who claimed that electrification was no longer needed due to the ‘new state of the art trains’ we have!

Main line electrification between Cardiff and Swansea has now been totally pulled, at the direct request of Prime Minister Theresa May. This is a complete disaster for South Wales, and torpedoes efforts to economically regenerate West Wales. The sad irony is that when you enter Swansea by train you can see that the new depot has all the stanchions and posts, etc, in place, ready for the wires to be hung.

I am left wondering whether the Tory government is using this as an excuse, or is really attempting to undermine the Welsh government’s whole transport strategy.

Colleagues have mentioned in their articles our involvement with the Welsh government and Transport for Wales; this cannot by stated often enough, particularly where we secured a guard on the train protecting drivers’ long-term interests when it comes to light rail. Our drivers in North Wales and the border depots, and our company council representatives, are always pushing behind the scenes for colleagues not to be left behind and always encouraging more investment.

What is a long-term worry is, of course, the freight industry. We have sadly lost Barry branch, which has now closed, due to the loss of work and contracts. This now leaves just Port Talbot and Newport branches for all of Wales.

Freight on rail still has a major role to play, in the economy and environmentally. Moving traffic from road to rail should be a permanent strategy for every government. Freight drivers are also maintenance staff, with ballast and infrastructure projects, which is not understood by many people in the industry, even those who are supposed to be in charge of these companies. We have for a long time called for the TOCs to be brought under public ownership. It must now be a priority to do the same for the FOCs.

Whilst the outlook may appear bleak, the view long-term should be seen as positive, particularly with the support from various transport groups, local councils (of all colours), the Wales TUC, the Welsh Labour Party and the Welsh government.

Franchise fiasco

ANDY HUDD, executive committee member for District 7, on lobbying the Welsh government, commitments made by First Minister Carwyn Jones, and the problems with bidders for the Wales & Borders franchise

Very the last couple of years, ASLEF representatives have been actively involved in consultations with the Welsh government on the options for the new franchise for Wales. The general secretary, district organiser, company council members and I have attended campaign meetings, given evidence to transport committees, and lobbied AMs, ministers and stakeholders, putting forward ASLEF’s position on everything from the relationship between train and track, driver only operation, and freight on rail.

The Welsh government had previously petitioned hard for the same powers over railway infrastructure and services as has been devolved to Scotland – but with little success. They are now looking to take ownership of certain assets from Network Rail which they wish to improve. This includes the Valley lines which (dependent on an agreed valuation of assets by Network Rail and the Welsh government) would transfer to the Welsh government through Transport for Wales.

Whilst we wait for the outcome of this process, and the news as to whether the Valley lines are to be light or heavy rail, we can look to the positives contained in the First Minister’s statement. He provides commitments and protection to Network Rail staff who may be displaced if TfW takes the light rail option, as well as protection of pay, terms and conditions for any drivers or guards who are transferred. He also commits to ‘keep a safety critical conductor (guard) on all of the Wales & Borders trains and services, including heavy rail Metro services, and the trains will require this second person to operate’. We can, then, be cautiously optimistic about the future of rail in Wales. We welcome the commitments from Carwyn Jones but realize there is a long way to go to secure all this, against a backdrop of uncertainty in the franchising process.

Abellio recently announced it has pulled out of the bidding which, added to the early withdrawal of Arriva, brings some doubt into the whole process. Whilst Abellio withdrew because its major partner – Carillion – went into liquidation you can’t help but wonder if there is something else at the heart of these decisions. This leaves only MTR and Keolis Amey in the running and one wonders if this provides the competition the franchising system is supposed to promote.

It is sensible for ASLEF, in the light of these developments, to continue to campaign for a publicly-owned railway in Wales as well as in the rest of the United Kingdom as the only way to bring stability and long-term investment back into the railway.
Wales

**Welsh Labour is strong**

**IAN THOMPSON**

**Shining example**

HE Wales TUC, established as a region of the Trades Union Congress in 1974 to co-ordinate Welsh unions, is now the voice of organised labour in the Welsh government’s social partnership structure. It represents 52 trade unions and around 400,000 members in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Recognised for the first time in statute – in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 – it is a major partner in the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. With no affiliation to any political party, it is the collective voice of Welsh unions.

The Wales TUC has been recognised by UK unions as devolution within the TUC, alongside devolution of Welsh government. This recognises the rights of Welsh trade unionists to have their own democratic structure and decide what is best for Wales and also that it operates in the context of a separate national legislature. It has full devolved responsibility within the TUC for matters which are within the powers of the Welsh government and matters which are wholly specific to Wales.

In these areas the bi-annual conference, at Llandudno this month, decides policy and the Wales TUC general council decides implementation.

ASLEF proudly holds a seat on this general council – currently Ian Thompson – and has previously been pleased to offer its expertise to the Wales TUC, its general council, and Welsh government, and is eager to continue to be involved with all parties in the future establishment of the Welsh railway franchise.

The Wales TUC has devolved responsibility for making policy on matters which impact substantially differently on Wales than elsewhere in the UK; but not autonomy. One such area will be that for which the recently formed Transport for Wales has responsibility, and ASLEF is ready to stand up and offer its railway knowledge and expertise in this hugely important development for Wales and railway transport to assist the development of a different form of franchise which, along with the involvement of the Wales TUC, could be a shining example of what can be achieved with union co-operation.
We’re driving hire trains

STEPHEN AUSTIN, company council secretary, reports on IETs and HSTs on Great Western Railway

Throughout Newport and Cardiff and on to Swansea, there are several other issues currently keeping the GWR DDC busy.

Along with a number of other councils there is a fight with Network Rail to stop the emergency alarm wires being removed from the Severn Tunnel, as well as the ongoing issues and problems caused by the ever-changing Western region electrification programme.

Talk of a new GWR driver depot at Cardiff could be interesting, but at the moment it’s just at the ‘possible’ stage, unlike at Swansea where, very soon, the replacement of all HSTs in GWR (the last one is due to leave in March 2019) will result in the closure of Landore depot.

The new IET trains will, instead, work out of the new Hitachi depot at Maliphant, with drivers using a hand over/hand back procedure – in effect we’re now driving ‘hire trains’ with them being checked for damage when returned!

Of course, with new trains comes training for drivers. This itself has not been without a great number of problems, and a great deal of time and effort has been put in by local reps at Bristol, Paddington, Swansea and Worcester. They’ve done a great job and deserve a lot of credit for dealing so well with a company which always seems to operate reactively, rather than proactively!

Finally, for the sentimental amongst us, HSTs will not fully disappear. A number of short-formed HSTs are being retained in 2+4 formation to run between Cardiff and the West of England.

Arriva Trains fails

IAN THOMPSON, company council secretary, reports on the problems of Arriva Trains Wales in the age of social media

Arriva Trains fail. That’s not just a headline. It’s the name of a Facebook page set up to allow disgruntled passengers to express their opinions of the service they get. And boy do they use it! Fair play, the founder is also a member of Arriva’s customer panel and they say they use feedback from the group to monitor customer concerns and make improvements.

The company’s twitter address is also a well-used hashtag, although it is pleasing to see complimentary comments on there when a colleague, or the company, have done a particularly good job. Sometimes that’s just being cheerful or wearing a smile. But such comments are in the minority, unfortunately.

The other side, of course, is that it’s very easy to report when something goes wrong or the driver does something wrong. The social media age is not the best friend of a train driver.

But the site will soon need its name changed. If things go to the Welsh government’s plan, come October we’ll have a new brand name. We know it’ll be different because Arriva has pulled out of the bidding process. The four horse race is now down to two and the winner should be revealed this month. With radical plans and hopes for the franchise it may be more than a different coloured shirt this time…

WHERE ARE YOU WOUNDED, SON?

While the patients are being entrained the examiner makes his final inspection to see if the train is in proper order and fit for running. Eulogy of the examiner is superfluous. He is a man who knows that the lives of many depend on him, and his patriotic spirit renders him trustworthy.

The train is now loaded and steams out of the station en route for some place in the north. The orderlies make the patients comfortable for their journey, and then collect the labels attached to each patient and hand them in at the office where a record is made.

The medical officer comes round to each one with his cheery smile and jocular manner, dieting them according to their complaints. ‘Where are you wounded, sonny?’ ‘Left thigh, right hand and right foot.’ ‘You’ll only get one gold stripe for that, you know; why couldn’t you have been satisfied with one wound?’ And so he goes on with a pleasant word for everyone.

Sesquicentennial celebrations in the Heart of Wales

WAYNE HURLOW, company council rep, reflects on 150 years of the picturesque Heart of Wales line

HE Heart of Wales line celebrated its 150th anniversary on Friday 23 March. The line runs for 121 miles through uns spoilt landscape, stretching from the coastal city of Swansea to the agricultural town of Shrewsbury, passing through the counties of Carmarthenshire and Powys and the once-fashionable spa towns of Llanwrtyd Wells, Builth Wells and Llandrindod Wells.

The line is a single-track construction controlled via electric working, no signalman token remote, overseen by Pantyffynnon signal box. It maintains the bloodline through the heart of Wales, marvelling on its picturesque route and striking architecture, notably its numerous tunnels and viaducts, which are impressive feats of Victorian engineering only surviving the Beeching cuts of the 1960s thanks to the fact that it carried freight from South Wales through several marginal political constituencies and pulling it would have been political suicide! Tragedy struck in 1987 when, following heavy flooding of the River Towy, the Glanyrd bridge near Llandeilo collapsed and an early morning northbound passenger train plunged into the river, killing four people, including the driver. This tragedy, along with the cost of repairs, was deemed to mean the demise of the route, but, once again, political focus ensured the line survived. En route driving the train, I question if there is a nice line to be working on a crisp spring morning – and the answer, for me, is no! Finally, as a train driver and ASLEF rep, I must say that, thanks wholly to the hard work and determination of ASLEF reps, First Minister Carwyn Jones has specified to the next franchise provider that there must be a guard on every train – something that, as an ASLEF member, I’m very proud of and, as a driver, I’m grateful that my colleagues’ safety critical role has been secured.

OLD KING SOL NOT GONE TO REST

Patients have to be fed, and feeding patients is an art in itself when the train is travelling at the rate of 50 to 70 miles an hour. The carrying of soup in basins on trays, especially, necessitates a good deal of juggling. The orderlies delight to display their skill. Jam sandwiches go down with a relish, and there are many Oliver Twists among the patients.

When all are fed and warm, inside as well as out, cigarettes are distributed, and some smoke while others sleep. Those who remain awake look out of the window as if old King Sol has not yet gone to rest. They gaze in awe and wonder at the stately grandeur of the northern ranges or admire the placid rivers and woodlands of the south.

The fields are white with daisies, or perhaps nature has clothed herself in a mantle of snow. Sometimes she has dressed herself in a drab...
brown, and the farmer ploughs his land and sows his seed, and hopes that she has not discarded her bridal dress for ever, but will appear in due time as fresh and gay as before.

Some of the patients are fond of passing away the tedious hours in recounting their experiences. Invariably they make light of their wounds. ‘There was a careless chap in our company,’ says one, ‘and the night I got hurt he was eating oranges and throwing the peel all over the battlefield. So when I went to see Haig to ask if it was dark enough to have some fireworks, blow me if I didn’t slip on one of them bits of peel and cut me fingers on a salmon tin.’

YOU ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO THINK

‘How many Germans did you shoot?’ asks Joe of Charlie. ‘I never shot one, and I had a good chance, too. The Huns were charging in close formation. “Shoot at will,” shouted the captain. “Which one is he?” I answers, and before anyone could tell me I got it in the chest.’

The idea that the average soldier is unintelligent is quite wrong. Most of them know what they are talking about. These men who come over and travel in our ambulance trains we find to be, as a rule, men who think as rational men should think. The drill sergeant may tell us, ‘You are not supposed to think in the army.’ If the British soldier refused to exercise his mental faculties failure would be inevitable, whereas we have reason to believe that victory is imminent.

The agricultural and horticultural areas are left behind, and we pass into an industrial area, where smoking chimneys rise skywards and grime and dirt replace the grass and flowers, and we stop at one of our great railway centres. A large crowd of women and children and businessmen peer in at the windows, handing in gifts for the patients or wishing them good luck. A nursing orderly hands out some postcards and letters with the request that they be posted, most of them being roughly pencilled lines to relatives and friends. The VAD nurses, who come on the train with refreshments, endeavour to make the men happier than ever, and their services are much appreciated.

WAITING TO ENTER THE WARDS

The train moves on once more, and the next stop is at our destination. There we find motor ambulances, drawn up in readiness, with patriotic women of the WAAC standing beside them to drive away as soon as they are loaded. Men of the RAMC, St John Ambulance Corps, and Red Cross stretcher-bearers are waiting to enter the wards. The medical officer and the sergeant alight. ‘Boards out!’ roars the sergeant, and the orderlies adjust the boards at the doors so the bearers may avoid the step. The stretchers are carried into the wards, and the work of detraining begins.

Tommy and Jack and Bill and Bob bid each other farewell and go to join the sick and wounded in our hospitals, to be taken care of by our efficient staffs of doctors, nurses, and orderlies. There we must leave them while we get to our work, roll up our sleeves, change the linen, make the beds, and with brush and soap and water and elbow grease make our train spick and span for the next convoy, as we return to the disembarkation port.
Ship shape

HE GS, EC president, and DOs from Districts 5, 6 and 7 all made valuable contributions at Bristol branch’s long service awards meeting. Mick gave a state of the nation speech reporting on various topics, including Southern, and other potential DOO disputes, the state of the rail freight sector, and the importance of the ASLEF fighting fund.

Tosh reported back on the Labour Party conference and recent publicity. Nigel Gibson reported on freight, specifically Freightliner Heavy Haul; Dicky Fisher on the current situation at Colas; and Brian Corbett on GWR and other issues in District 7. Long service badges were presented to Andy Saville (10 years); Ian Arkley and Paul Belton (15); Garry Payne, Dave West and Rich Mackie (25); and Brian Hellyer (30). Other badges were sent to depots for a less formal presentation.

Branch appreciation certificates were presented to Chris Windsor and Dave Stitfall for their valuable contributions to Bristol branch. Steve Harling, who retired through ill health, was presented with his retirement certificate. It was a great turnout; thanks to everyone who made it such a memorable evening. Bernard Kennedy, branch secretary

Branch News

Upcoming events

- **BRIGHTON & SUSSEX – TUESDAY 8 MAY**
  Informal open afternoon for all retired and working members of Brighton or any of the Sussex ASLEF branches from 14.00 at the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont, off Dyke Road.

- **HITHER GREEN – WEDNESDAY 9 MAY**
  From 11.0 at the Richmal Crompton at Bromley South station.

- **NORWICH – FRIDAY 11 MAY**
  Norwich loco welfare fund reunion for footplate staff past and present from 19.00 at the Canary Social Club, 104 Thorpe Road, Norwich, NR1 1RT. Free buffet.

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

Making plans for Nigel

Along with EC member Andy Hudd, I had the pleasure of presenting Nigel Mack with a glass plaque which depicts six King’s Cross members on the picket line. One of which was Nigel, back in the 1980s. The plaque is a copy of the inspiring triptych at head office painted by Mick Jones (son of T&G leader Jack Jones). Nigel was branch secretary and LDC rep at Didcot, who decided to leave after being told by DBC to get a driving licence, which he didn’t, as a supporter of public transport, wish to do. He was also disgusted at the way management has operated at DB over the years. Nigel was one of the boys, and was behind making the iconic Loyal to ASLEF badge back in 1982.

DO7 Brian Corbett

Is that a Tory tie, Colin? Or a tie for the Toffees?

GS Mick Whelan celebrates 130 years of our Birkenhead branch on Sunday 18 March – and gives DO3 Colin Smith, who is retiring this month, an emotional hug.
Velvet snow

PAUL MORRIS, of Airdrie branch, reports on this year’s branch secretaries’ course

W e reopened Airdrie branch in November 2017 and, so far, it’s been a great success – but a steep learning curve. We’ve had high attendances and lively and thought-provoking debates. We’ve even sent down a handful of resolutions to head office in St John Street.

But by reforming an old branch we’ve subsequently, and sadly, lost a wealth of union knowledge and experience (which remains at Yoker) and, essentially, we’re building from the ground up. Solid foundations are a vital component in making our branch effective and our branches effective in making our union effective, as branch secretary and the branch, the branch secretary and the union during these interesting times.

Kat Cuss briefed us on branch finances and showed us how to tackle the dreaded annual branch statement and Keith Richmond highlighted the need for good PR and media relations as well as reiterating the importance of our Journal and how not only does it provide a direct dialogue with senior union members but also educates and informs rank and file members.

GS Mick Whelan gave a powerful speech, which was very well received, touching on industrial issues, politics, society, and the part that trade unions in general, and ASLEF in particular, have played in the labour movement. It was superb to have direct access to the upper echelons of our union and to be able to ask questions about a variety of matters that directly and indirectly affect our working lives. The course was very well attended and it was great to meet 22 other men and women from all over the UK doing the same job for members. A sound bunch – we had a great time bonding! – and the calibre of branch secretaries bodes well for the future of ASLEF.

The course gave us a chance to share our collective knowledge, ideas, experience and solutions on how to solve specific problems as well as an opportunity to debate the bigger issues and where direction our union should take on a national level.

I’d like to thank all the attendees, especially the senior union members, who helped contribute to a highly informative and enjoyable few days. I feel better equipped to carry out my duties as branch secretary and look forward to the challenges ahead.

ASLEF’s in-house training courses cover a wide range of subjects, preparing and assisting our members in carrying out roles including being a delegate to AAD, public speaking, standing for political office, chairing branch meetings, and the popular course for ASLEF branch secretaries. Having used various venues over the last ten years – including the Marx Memorial Library, IFT, Stoke Rochford Hall and Unite’s Esher Place – this year we held our three day residential course at Wortley Hall. Known as the workers’ stately home, Wortley Hall has been associated with the trade union and labour movement since the 1950s when local activists set up a co-operative to purchase and run the place as an education centre. We have always had close ties with Wortley Hall, which boasts an ASLEF meeting room laid out in traditional boardroom style, and an attractive piece of ASLEF stained glass artwork.

Marz Colombini

Hard biscuit, high prices, and long hours, together with our war chest, were all hot topics in the Journal 100 years ago. MICK HOLDER turns back time to May 1918

FOOD RATIONING ON THE PLATE

On food supplies, our general secretary has been in negotiation with the Food Ministry and pointed out the hardness and unsuitability of the biscuit supplied, and made a request that the charge made for the meat ration should be brought within the controlled price of such food. The result of his efforts is that meat prices have been brought down from 6/6d to 6d for 4oz or 2d off the lb. With regard to the biscuit, we are informed that a more suitable biscuit cannot be obtained at present, and it is pointed out that, while the biscuit is hard, it is nutritious, and of the same quality as supplied to the troops.

It is hoped members will be able to obtain sufficient bread without having to purchase the biscuit. The increased food ration to our members which the GS has continually pressed for is now in operation, and the fact that the long hours worked each week require an extra allowance is receiving the further attention of the EC.

FOR WIDOWS AND LITTLE ONES

F Noble, Cudworth branch secretary, reports: ‘We are pleased to add to the orphan’s fund, for the benefit of our deceased comrades’ widows and little ones, the sum of £7 2s 11d, being half of the proceeds of a concert held on Good Friday and given by H&B Railway employees for the benefit of the ASLEF & NUR orphan funds.’

£250,000 IN OUR WAR CHEST

The Society closed 1917 with a membership approaching very closely to 37,000, since when to the time of writing over a thousand new members have joined our ranks, and several new branches have been opened. We should close the year 1918 with well over 40,000 members and £250,000 in our war chest.

BEANS, CARROTS AND TURNIPS

Tips in Gardening Notes for Allotment Holders include information on dwarf beans, runner beans, garden beet, carrots and turnips.
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 fracternally, Mick Whelan, general secretary

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**ASLEF RMS 500 Club application form**

Name...........................................................................................................................................
Address.......................................................................................................................................
__________________________________________________________________________________________
Telephone No.................................................
email.............................................................................................................................................

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

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

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

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**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS**

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*Delete if not applicable

If the amounts of the periodic payments vary, they should be incorporated in a schedule overleaf
MARTIN WARRICK
TOP NOTCH RAILWAYMAN

It is with a heavy heart that I report the death of our dear friend and faithful ASLEF stalwart, Martin Warrick, who died on 25 February at the age of 59.

Martin was old school, starting his railway career at the top shed, working his way up to become a driver, and was a staunch union man, branch activist, and served as a local level rep. Ron and his wife Marlene, like many colleagues, moved to Southend where a house was within their means. Ron, a member of the Labour Party, stood as a councillor and won a seat on Southend council, and then a seat on Essex County Council. He also served as a JP and on the children's adoption board. When Ron retired he continued his good work by serving on the Southend Hospital board and was given the freedom of others above his own. He was our district council rep for many years and represented us at AAD. Martin was passionate about our union, West Ham, and the Isle of Wight!

He planned to move to the island upon his transfer to Fratton in June 2014, but was dealt a cruel hand when he was diagnosed with cancer. Martin underwent complex surgery and chemotherapy treatment, forcing him to retire from the railway that he loved in January 2017. He spent the following summer and autumn taking it easy on the island.

His funeral was held at Reading on 12 March with his family and many railway friends in attendance. Martin arrived, uncharacteristically, on time in a coffin painted in his beloved West Ham colours of claret and blue that we all know and love.

Martin was a top notch railwayman, an excellent staff rep, a good friend, and a fantastic family man and church elder, who will be greatly missed.

Steve West. Farnham Branch

RON KENNEDY

Ronald John Kennedy was born and grew up near King's Cross. He started his railway career at the top shed, working his way up to become a driver, and was a staunch union man, branch activist, and served as a local level rep. Ron and his wife Marlene, like many colleagues, moved to Southend where a house was within their means. Ron, a member of the Labour Party, stood as a councillor and won a seat on Southend council, and then a seat on Essex County Council. He also served as a JP and on the children’s adoption board. When Ron retired he continued his good work by serving on the Southend Hospital board and was given the freedom of others above his own. He was our district council rep for many years and represented us at AAD. Martin was passionate about our union, West Ham, and the Isle of Wight!

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WILLIAM McLEOD

William McLeod, who has died at 87, was an Aberdonian. He loved the railways and joined up as soon as he could, serving on the railway all his working life. He did two years’ national service in the Royal Signals, and then, in the 1950s, was sent on loan to Kentish Town. With the introduction of diesels in the 1970s he transferred to King's Cross, where he remained, taking up residence in Hatfield with his wife Irene and family. He slotted in well and was respected by all. Highlight of his career was driving a royal train down the main line. Towards the end he developed a medical condition and took a green card job at Ferme Park, and in 1994 he retired. His Daughter Fiona would like to thank all those who turned out on a wet and windy morning to support the family at William's funeral.

Peter Smith. King's Cross

DENNIS PATTENDEN

Dennis Pattenden has passed away. He was a very loyal ASLEF member. During the 1982 strike he, with other members (Ray Cooper being one) held the line against Dick Huntley who was encouraging drivers to cross the picket line. But Dennis and others held firm while his wife Milly was making the tea for the pickets. What a man and what a lady! God bless you both.

Dave Weddle, Tonbridge RMS

DONALD MacPHERSON

The railway was his pride and joy. I am sad to report the death of Donald MacPherson, who started on the railway at Yoker steam depot in Glasgow before moving to Helensburgh in 1954. He worked there until it closed in 1987, moving to Yoker TMD until he retired in 1992. Donald was an active member of ASLEF and liked by all; a family man, and church elder, who will be much missed.

D Lowrie, Yoker branch chair
We stand with Jeremy, the Palestinians, and Jewish people everywhere who are victims of anti-Semitism

The smears against Jeremy Corbyn, claiming him to be a racist anti-Semite, are absurd and designed to be divisive. Jeremy, of all the MPs in Parliament, can hold his head high when it comes to his record on anti-racism, from the anti-apartheid movement to defending ethnic minorities and protesting against wars of intervention in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere, wars which left hundreds of thousands of people dead and countries in ruins. The MPs lining up to attack the Labour leader are often cheerleaders for military intervention, although it should be noted that they very seldom volunteer to be on the frontline themselves in these ‘humanitarian’ operations.

Three different forces are at play here. A majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party have never and will never accept Jeremy (or any other man or woman on the left) as party leader. They reject the huge mandate he received from the membership and trade unions. Anti-Semitism is a convenient stick with which to publicly and self-righteously beat the man, who many have to thank for retaining their seats in 2017. The shallowness and insincerity of their new found concern is clear when we see them on demonstrations with such noted anti-racists and progressives as Norman Tebbit and Ian Paisley Jr. And there was Chukka Umunna standing shoulder to shoulder with Sajid Javid, architect of the new anti-unions laws.

Second, mainstream media have gleefully used this story to continue their campaign against Jeremy Corbyn and the policies he represents: peace, social democracy, and trade union rights, etc. That the Labour Party is apparently ’mired in the filth of anti-Semitism’ is now – albeit incorrectly – part of the mainstream narrative. The Jewish Board of Deputies is presented as representative of Jewish people in general when some are Tory donors. Counter balancing voices of Jewish socialist groups within the labour movement who reject the smears and support Jeremy are given very little coverage.

Third, an aggressive pro-Israel lobby wants to delegitimise criticism of Israel’s treatment of the Palestinian people. That the possible next Prime Minister has spent his life drawing attention to the plight of the Palestinians is anathema for this section of the pro-Israel lobby. But support for the Palestinian people is not anti-Semitic.

Northern Line North is proud to affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and feels the trade union movement must not be cowed into meekly accepting the situation in Palestine for fear of being labelled anti-Semitic. This is especially important now as, on 30 March, 16 Palestinians were killed and more than 750 injured for daring to protest at the fence that effectively makes Gaza an open air prison.

This branch stands united with Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, with the Palestinian people in their struggle, and with Jewish people everywhere who are the victims of anti-Semitism.

Northern Line North branch

Join the conversation! Send letters by email to journal@aslef.org.uk or by Royal Mail to the ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN

I’m after memories of the original high speed train

I’m a producer working with Windfall Films looking to get in touch with British Rail staff who worked on Inter City 125 trains, especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s. We are working on a new two-part documentary for Channel 5 and looking for contributors who can tell us what it was like working on the railway as trains were modernised and upgraded and the popularity of the railway increased exponentially.

As the 125s are now being phased out in favour of the new Hitachi models we aim to pay homage to the original design that revolutionised high speed travel in Britain before it leaves our tracks, and personal memories and recollections of this period would really bring the story to life for our audience.

Channel 5 uses a diamond system which aims for more diversity in television, to reflect society and enhance creativity, so ideally we would be looking for more women to be involved, in the spirit of diversity, but it would be great to hear your thoughts and we would love to work with you to honour the history of this pioneering British train as its heyday comes to an end and a new generation arrives.

Windfall is an award-winning television production company, with a reputation for creating innovative and distinctive documentaries that are strong in storytelling and embody the company’s core values – integrity and respect.

Windfall works with broadcasters such as the BBC, C4, PBS, the Discovery Channel, National Geographic, and the History Channel. One of our most recent shows was The Fifteen Billion Pound Railway about the Crossrail construction project for BBC2.

Frances Kendall, Windfall Films, One Underwood Row, Hoxton, London, N1 7LQ

Wellington was just as bad

I have just read Keith Rich mond’s article about Winston Churchill (Journal, March) who was comparable with the Duke of Wellington. Both were members of the aristocracy and both had nothing but utter contempt for the ordinary citizen. The so-called hero of Waterloo, who described his own soldiers as ‘scum,’ would have lost that battle had the Prussian army not turned up at the last moment. On the opening day of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, the world’s first passenger line, Wellington, now Prime Minister, was met in Manchester by a hostile crowd, who rightly considered him a tyrant standing out against the most basic rights for ordinary people. Fearing for his own safety, Wellington, an aristocrat opposed to ordinary people being taught to read and write, remained on the train.

Denis A Lewis, retired Exeter driver

Take not His name in vain

I am appalled at your vacuous excuse to Eric Stuart’s complaint about the ASLEF Journal quoting the Holy Name of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus as a swear word or exclamation in an Off the Rails item in March quoting Elton John: ‘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 ****ing golf!’ This is a serious violation of the Third Commandment and comes with the following warning – Thou shalt not take the name of the
**Remembering Wally Oakes**

With reference to the article about Wally Oakes and Gwilym Roberts (*Journal, February*) I knew Wally well. He was a real treasure, an inspiration to all who knew him, a lovely lad, the only George Cross holder with not one but two medals, and we should all be proud of his memory.

Wally was lying in an unmarked grave at St Matthew’s Church, Haslington, Cheshire, until a headstone, paid for by a group of railwaymen, was dedicated on 1 February this year. Photographs of Wally are very rare; this one I enclose for the *Journal* shows Wally on his wedding day.

Phil Pepper, Nantwich, Cheshire

Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Exodus 20:7). I am sick of the rabid anti-Christian, anti-Israel, pro-abortion, pro-Palestinian leanings – you’ve lost your focus – Palestinian is not one but two medals, and we should all be proud of his memory.

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**Pop in to see Tommy Farr**

Irene and I managed to catch up with retired Euston driver Rodney ‘Tommy’ Farr for an hour during our recent visit to the UK. He is now in care at Room 14, Blowerfield Court, Broadwood Close, High Lane, Stockport. Tom does not have a phone (the care home number is 01663 721464) or computer, and is not independently mobile. He has an eye operation planned and told us that Virgin trains had visited him and taken his first class pass off him. Tommy would welcome visitors if you have the time.

David Rollins, ex-top shed driver, and a friend of Tommy Farr since 1956, Brisbane, Australia

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**Toton fireman Cecil Rooke**

I have been doing some research into my maternal grandfather, Cecil Wilfred Rooke, a fireman at Toton, and ASLEF official. He was born at Long Eaton, in Derbyshire, in 1902 so probably entered railway service at Long Eaton/Toton between 1916 and 1919. By 1927 he was a fireman. There are references to him in the *Locomotive Journal* between September and December 1927 when he exchanged arguments with Labour MP Walter Monslow. Any information would be gratefully received. My email address is glyn.a.roberts@btinternet.com

Glyn Roberts

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**Thank you for your help**

Ian Beecroft and his family would like to say a massive thank you to all the branches up and down the UK who contributed to his appeal and to the GS Mick Whelan and the EC for help from the hardship fund. Ian would also like to thank DOS Nigel Gibson and Steve Wilson, business council rep, Freightliner Intermodal, for their professionalism and help through a difficult time.

Lee Barber, Ipswich branch secretary

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**Memories of Parkeston**

This photo shows Dick Hardy on his last visit to the Parkeston branch lunch at Parkeston Railway Club on 12 August 2015. On the left is Sid Pease, then Dick, and David Lubbock. I am not an ASLEF member – I just went along to take a picture – but our number two son is now a senior driver at Clacton. Dick entered the plant as part of the 1940–41 entry; I was in the 1943–44 entry and somewhere in between was Peter Townsend.

Douglas Brown, Harwich, Essex

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Douglas Brown, Harwich, Essex
Thatcher sank the Belgrano to stay in power

KEITH RICHMOND looks at some of the books for spring that have dropped on the ASLEF Journal desk at head office

PY novels and political thrillers are ten a penny – look along the shelves at Waterstone’s, WH Smith or your public library – but very few are as good as South Atlantic Requiem (Arcadia, £14.99) which is especially thoughtful, elegantly written, thoroughly researched and, at times, brutally realistic. That might be because Edward Wilson has an interesting background. He was born in Baltimore, served with the Green Berets in Vietnam, where he won a Bronze Star, after which he renounced his US citizenship and worked as a labourer at a shipyard in Germany before moving to Britain, where he taught at Lowestoft College and was an active trade unionist, and Anti-Nazi League member, before becoming a writer.

He has written a well-regarded novel about Vietnam, A River in May, as well as five first class Cold War thrillers – The Envoy, The Darkling Spy, The Midnight Swinger, The Whitehall Mandarin and A Very British Ending – and now turns his attention to the months leading up to the war and the Falkland Islands, which the Argentinians call Las Malvinas.

‘Stories of her appalling rudeness, often whisky-fuelled, were common currency in Whitehall’; ‘The PM had been told there were two options – do a sovereignty deal with Argentina or budget to defend the Falklands. Thatcher had chosen to do neither’; and ‘Thatcher needed to sink the Belgrano to stay in power’.

‘Shakespeare wasn’t above ye olde cut and paste job – witness “Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes” in The Tempest, a straight steal from Arthur Golding’s much-consulted translation of Ovid’s Metamorphoses’ – Dominic Cavendish, Sunday Telegraph

Arthur Conan Doyle is best known for the four novels and 56 short stories he wrote featuring the pipe-smoking Baker Street ‘consulting detective’ Sherlock Holmes but he knocked out more than 200 books – about pirates, boxers and imperial adventures – as well as poems, plays and pamphlets in a prolific career.

‘It ain’t whatcha write, it’s the way atcha write it.’ – Jack Kerouac

Tell me what you eat,’ wrote the French lawyer, politician and philosopher Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, ‘and I shall tell you what you are.’ What She Ate by Laura Shapiro (4th Estate, £14.99) examines the lives of six women – Dorothy Wordsworth, Rosa Lewis, Eleanor Roosevelt, Barbara Pym, Helen Gurley Brown and, er, Eva Braun – through what they cooked and ate, for themselves and for others, in six entertaining essays which reveal as much about how women’s roles have changed, at least in North America and Western Europe, as about the food on our plates.

Godwin, her mother the pioneering feminist Mary Wollstonecraft – she eloped at 16 with the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was already married, travelling across Europe with him, and famously writing Frankenstein after a house party with Shelley, Byron, and John Polidori on the shores of Lake Geneva. ‘Scotland came into the modern world on railway tracks’, claims David Ross. Well, up to a point, Lord Copper. Up to a point. If you ignore the Scottish Enlightenment, which dragged not just Scotland, but Britain, into the modern world, and pre-dated the passenger railway by 100 years. ‘Each time you step on a train you extend the continuty of a colourful strand in the national story.’ That, at least, is true and in Getting the Train: The History of Scotland’s Railways (Stenlake Publishing, £10) he tells the story of the Scottish nation – and the Scottish railways – from the first rail promoters in the 1840s to ScotRail today.

Richard Westwood, a retired teacher, former Mayor of Leominster, and Labour Party candidate at the 1997 general election, re-examines The Hixon Railway Disaster (Pen & Sword Books, £19.99) when, at a newly-installed half-barrier robot level crossing in Staffordshire, 11 people died and 45 were injured in 1968. Richard’s father Jack was one of the railway workers whose quick thinking helped prevent a similar tragedy when a low loader from the same haulage firm, Wynn’s, ground on a level crossing at Leominster in Herefordshire in 1966. He concludes that lessons that should have been learned from that near-miss would have prevented the fatalities at Hixon.

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ET TU, BRUTE?

HEN David Calder, wearing a leather USAF flying jacket, and red baseball cap, which he cheerfully tosses into the crowd, pump-primed by Mark Antony and an aggressively loud four-piece rock band, strides on stage (in processional pomp on the way to the Forum, according to Shakespeare and Plutarch) it is clear that Nicholas Hytner's stunning new modern dress production of Julius Caesar – with not a toga in sight – is going to mine the rich topical seam of 21st century politics.

This Caesar – more charismatic crowd-pleaser than despotic dictator – is not Donald Trump, as such, or even George W Bush – in fact Hytner says it’s about ‘an out-of-touch elite’ – but the signifiers are clear, as they are in the second half, after Caesar has been killed by the conspirators, and Rome disintegrates into a bloody civil war here dressed up to look like the Balkans.

Crowd control in turbulent times: Fairley, Morrissey, Whishaw and Calder

Hytner’s production at The Bridge Theatre in London is fast, fluid and fabulous. It stars Ben Whishaw as Brutus, David Morrissey as Antony, Michelle Fairley as Cassius, and Calder as Caesar, and is played in the round, with a couple of hundred spectators, groundlings at The Globe, standing, not seated, cast off the cuff in a collective role as the fickle, and manipulated, Roman mob.

Tip the hat to production designer Bunny Christie, too. As the mob we move around players who enter, argue, plead, cajole, bully, bribe, and harangue – sometimes each other, sometimes us – on a series of ramps and platforms that rise and fall. It makes for a visceral evening at the theatre – dropping to the floor when Caesar is assassinated, by guns not knives, sidling first against, and then for, Antony as we lend him our ears; and ducking again, caught in the crossfire as Antony and Octavius, in what is after all an Elizabethan revenge tragedy, emerge victorious over Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Philippi.

Julius Caesar is a play about passion and populism; democracy, demagoguery, reason and rational debate. Hytner’s new production – that holds, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature – is a version for our times which shows that the play has rarely been more relevant.

Keith Richmond

Solution to Crossword 144

Across: 1 Butterfly whose larvae eat greens (7, 5) 7 Zigzag fold of hair 8 Sluggish 10 Old local authority charge 11 Commotion 13 Scamp 15 Eighth month 17 Corn or maize 18 Mournful song 19 Nozzle 21 Complain and grumble 22 Fruit and veg enterprise (6, 6)

Thanks for all your responses to the 144th prize crossword in the April 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 May.

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.
JOIN US FOR THE
MARCH & RALLY
SATURDAY
12 MAY 2018

Assemble 11am at
Victoria Embankment, London
(between Hungerford Bridge
and Blackfriars Bridge)

WE DEMAND
A NEW
DEAL FOR
WORKING
PEOPLE