Inside this issue: Floyd Doyle on the TUC black workers’ conference plus Gregor Gall on how big pharma is ripping off the NHS, and the long shadow the Great War cast across JRR Tolkien’s Middle-Earth

Routledge on the royal train

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AST month Mr Grayling said he was not responsible for running the railway; now he has changed his mind and wants to get involved in areas that have nothing to do with him. You can see the deflection tactics coming; his colleagues start popping up in the press about voluntary overtime and lack of coverage of Sundays. No recognition that any shortfall in driver numbers, or training, is down to them. And no thanks for the staff bearing the brunt of their collective incompetence when we are working over and beyond our contracts. All this when polls show the railway has just a 23% trust rating – only secondhand car dealers have a worse score – thanks to Mr Grayling, the DFT and Network Rail! That’s after 20 years of privatisation, with government subsidy running at £6.9 billion a year – £3.5 billion net after returns – which does not have to be repaid by the privateers before they take their profit. The Government set the mechanism for fare rises and made an active decision to pass the pain from the taxpayer to the fare box that has come back to haunt them. ‘So what can we do? Let’s blame the rail unions!’ It was strange; we were getting questions from the right-wing press and then, late in the day, an email pops up from Mr Grayling to all the rail union general secretaries. Shall we be cynical about the timing? Of course! As such tactics are unworthy and petty. Mr Grayling is going to talk to the RDG about using CPI as a measure; but they have no consultative over the negotiating locus in the industry so that’s a waste of time. He would have such authority in a nationalised, but not a privatised, industry. And his department is aware of the numerous deals already in place in our fractionalised industry. Some are staged arrangements and some have fixed anniversaries based on RPI. We have correspondence from one of his predecessors confirming they will not interfere in free collective bargaining. So does their model of market economics only apply to companies, and bosses, not workers? Offline, certain employers are talking about the lunacy of the government, and the department, but we will wait and see what they do formally. Mr Grayling seems to have alienated every driver in the country, as well as our brothers and sisters across the industry. It’s irrational, when the industry is dependent on goodwill, but if you look at the other sectors where Mr Grayling has been in charge, and ruined, why should we be surprised?

Yours fraternally  
Mick Whelan, general secretary
What a way to run the railway

Mick Whelan has slammed Chris Grayling for ‘nodding through’ another big increase in rail fares for hard-pressed passengers. ‘It’s a bit rich, isn’t it?’ said Mick. ‘Mr Grayling wants passengers to pay more for a poorer service. That’s not a great offer, is it? For passengers – or for voters at the next election.

‘Commuters complain about persistent delays and cancellations, the consumer group Which? says the privatised train operators are one of this country’s least-trusted groups – and understaffed trains. The last thing they need is another inefficiency-busting fare increase. Our railways need urgent investment. But private rail companies are being allowed to payroll for their failure to deliver. But Chris Grayling, a man who clearly couldn’t run a model train set, let alone Britain’s complex railway industry, is nodding through another whopping increase in prices for passengers.

‘The trouble is that the privatised train companies aren’t interested in delivering a proper public service for passengers, only in delivering a private profit for their shareholders.

‘The Transport Secretary is turning a blind eye to the problems while the companies are laughing all the way to the bank.’

Failing Grayling reaches end of the line

You know you’re in trouble when the Daily Telegraph – famous for backing all things Tory, all things privatised, and all things free market – turns against you. Witness this cartoon, on the op-ed page in August, depicting Transport Secretary Chris Grayling, as the kiddies’ character Thomas the Tank Engine, heading for the buffers.

Frances – privatised trains are overcrowded and understaffed

Frances O’Grady, general secretary of the TUC, has called for Britain’s railways to be brought back into public ownership. She said: ‘UK commuters are paying through the nose for overcrowded and understaffed trains. The last thing they need is another inflation-busting fare increase. Our railways need urgent investment. But private rail companies are being allowed to prioritise shareholder profits over improving services. It’s time for Britain’s railways to be publicly-owned. This would free up money for much-needed upgrades and lower ticket prices.’

Inquiry into sexist info screen jibe

CrossCountry managers have launched an investigation after a digital screen scrolled the words ‘Only fit birds on this train’. Commuters were shocked to see the sexist observation flash repeatedly across the LED screens that provide service information above carriage doors on a rush hour train between Basingstoke and Reading on 2 August.

DfT condemned by consumer group

Alex Hayman of Which? has criticised Transport Secretary Chris Grayling for sitting on his hands while commuters suffer. ‘It’s time to see a rail industry which works for passengers, not just for the train companies. The government must take urgent action to ensure that passengers are compensated automatically.’

QUOTE...
‘Passenger franchising requires an urgent rethink – and the chaos of the Govia Thameslink Railway/Northern timetable meltdown really proves this.’ – Nigel Harris, editor, Rail

OOPS! RDG ADMITS ONE IN 10 TICKETS IS WRONG
More than 10 million train journeys are taken with incorrect tickets every year. The Rail Delivery Group, which lobbies on behalf of the privatised train operating companies, admits that ‘confusing terminology’ and ‘jargon’ means that one in 10 passengers buys the wrong ticket.

VULTURES CIRCLE TROUBLED FIRSTGROUP
Rivals of FirstGroup, the struggling rail and bus operator, are circling amid rumours that a break-up of the company is on the cards. The firm has held talks with Trenitalia about selling its UK rail arm and hired consultants to consider options for Greyhound, its US bus subsidiary.

In October, Labour called on the government to freeze fares on routes – run by Govia Thameslink, Arriva Rail North and TransPennine Express – affected by timetable changes as ‘a small gesture of goodwill for passengers.’ ‘Labour is right,’ said Mick. ‘The train companies should be punished – not rewarded – for their failure to deliver. But Chris Grayling, a man who clearly couldn’t run a model train set, let alone Britain’s complex railway industry, is nodding through another whopping increase in prices for passengers.

‘The trouble is that the privatised train companies aren’t interested in delivering a proper public service for passengers, only in delivering a private profit for their shareholders.

‘The Transport Secretary is turning a blind eye to the problems while the companies are laughing all the way to the bank.’

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TWEETS OF THE MONTH

The rottenness of Boris Johnson goes deeper even than his casual racism & his equally casual courting of fascism. He will advocate literally anything to play to the crowd of the moment. His career is a saga of moral emptiness & lies; pathetic, weak & needy; the opposite of strong.

Andrew Cooper

12,000 firefighters have lost their jobs since 2010. Austerity is massively compromising public safety. Look no further than Grenfell Tower.

Mark Seddon

We must renationalise the railways to work for us and not the shareholders!

Sam Harris

Daily Mail angry that a working-class job pays well. Well done train drivers and their union – we should all be on decent pay.

Mark Hebden

Chris Grayling couldn’t run a model train set, let alone Britain’s complex rail network.

Mick Whelan

I would not trust him with my train set.

David Booth

I wouldn’t trust him to run a bath!

Colin Anderson
**Walk this way**

**FLAT EFFECT**

ILM set artist Lionel Stanhope – who created the flaking paint effect for Helen Mirren’s flat in her forthcoming feature film *The Good Liar* – has brought a touch of vintage movie magic to an old brick railway bridge at Lee in south-east London.

**QUOTE...**

‘People need to realise the railway is not a playground.’ – Rob McIntosh, route managing director, Network Rail

**...UNQUOTE**

The work is part of a £5,000 project to cheer up ten of the capital’s Victorian rail bridges – there are already retro signs at Brockley, Catford, Forest Hill, Herne Hill, Hither Green and Nunhead.

**CONFERENCES & RALLIES**

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 black workers’ conference is at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow, from Saturday 6 to Sunday 7 October. The ITF congress is at the Suntec convention centre in Singapore from Sunday 14 to Saturday 20 October. The STUC women’s conference is at the Caird Hall, Dundee, from Monday 29 to Tuesday 30 October. The STUC disabled workers’ conference is at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow, from Saturday 17 to Sunday 18 November. The Scottish Trades Union Congress is at the Caird Hall, Dundee, from Monday 15 to Wednesday 17 April 2019. The STUC youth conference is at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow, from Saturday 29 to Sunday 30 June. The Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival, near Dorchester, is from Friday 19 to Sunday 21 July.

**LOSERS CHALLENGE TUBE TRAIN AWARD**

The award of a £1.5 billion Transport for London contract to Siemens to build 94 trains for the Piccadilly line has been challenged in the High Court by the two losing bidders, Bombardier and Hitachi.

**500 CLUB:** S Madden, with number 216, won the August draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £420.

**Off the Rails**

**LUCY TOBIN** caught the mood of many passengers when she laid into the privatised TOCs in her column in the *Evening Standard*. The trigger was HS2’s promise of, er, ‘moody lighting’ and ‘touchscreen windows’. ‘Get excited, commuters,’ muttered Lucy dryly. ‘Rail operators always focus on gimmicks. When one wins a new franchise the press release is splattered with “exciting new innovations” – the promise of live seating updates telling you where you can find a still-warm seat – but that’s not what passengers want. Our train lines provide only sauna-hot carriages, stuffed fuller than the average sausage casing, with their only reliable feature being a reliably wrong timetable. As troubled Thameslink recently tweeted, “We are currently running a different timetable each day with no guarantee”. The company might like to look up the definition of timetable. It’s really about safety, speed, and being on time – not about fancy lighting.’

**CARLSBERG EXPORT** – the premium line, with a gold and white label, rather than the better known green and white bottle – trades as brewed by ‘Carlsberg of Kobenhavn’ (Copenhagen) declaring it’s a ‘premium beer brewed to Danish standards for perfect balance down to the last drop’. The lager was relaunched recently with the company saying ‘It has been rebranded for the British market with the aim of placing more emphasis on the beer’s Danish roots’ and, to reinforce the ‘brand message’ boasts, on the neck, the signature of JC Jacobsen, the Danish industrialist who founded the company in 1847. The small print, though, reveals that the beer, ahem, is actually brewed and bottled in the EU – 28 nations, batch – by ‘Carlsberg UK’. So ‘the best lager in the world…probably’, is actually brewed in Northampton, England, and not Kobenhavn, Denmark. Probably the most misleading beer label, then, is in the world...

**LONGSIGHT** legend Mel Thorley draws our attention to this poster for Dr Haze’s Freak Show, ‘featuring acts from the infam ous Circus of Horrors, the show that stormed into the finals of Britain’s Got Talent’. ‘You never know where the Brothers will end up,’ mutters Mel. ‘Mr Methane, the man who put the art into fart, and is not, er, bottom of the cast list, is none other than 52-year-old former Bury and Buxton train driver – and staunch ASLEF member – Paul Oldfield, Macclesfield’s most famous bum. I mean, son.’

**BORIS JOHNSON** – denounced by Jason Cowley in the *New Statesman* as ‘a huckster and a showman, seemingly without conscience or sense of loyalty’ – is a notoriously poor Parliamentary performer. After his resignation statement, Jess Phillips, Labour MP for Birmingham Yardley, shrewdly observed, ‘He’s a crap public speaker and somehow Parliament as a setting always crushes him.’ Cowley adds: ‘His bluster and declamatory style simply don’t work in the chamber.’

**STEPHEN BUSH** reckons that ‘Who betrayed Brexit?’ is the big question that both Labour and the Tories will put to the country at the next election, adding ‘the big fight in politics is to establish which party has betrayed the 52% who voted to leave.’

Our new ASLEF mug has images from the Mick Jones triptych in reception at head office. There are four versions – three have an image on one side and the ASLEF logo on the other; the fourth has all three images. £6 each (inc p&p) or £15 for a set of three; email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk
ASLEF rebuts Northern claims

MICK Whelan was quick to rebut claims by Northern Rail that the company was forced to cancel 80 services on Sunday 5 August because staff ‘made themselves unavailable to work.’

Liverpool was worst hit, with all 30 direct services between Liverpool and Manchester airport cancelled; 29 from Liverpool to Wigan cancelled, reducing it to an hourly service; all trains between Blackpool and Carlisle cancelled, and services between Blackpool and Colne only every two hours. In a provocative statement the company blamed workers: ‘Some of our staff have made themselves unavailable for work on Sunday.’

Mick said: ‘We have sought numerous times to put Sundays in the working week – which would have obviated this issue. The company, though, prefers to run on voluntary overtime rather than employ enough staff to operate the services it promised in its franchise application to deliver for passengers. Then, of course, it seeks to blame those who opt not to work their days off? That’s rich! The company, by this attitude, runs the risk of alienating drivers even more and losing the little goodwill it has left with an increasingly demoralised workforce.’

A more sensible – and more honest – statement issued ahead of cancellations the following Sunday, 12 August, made no mention of staff availability. It simply apologised to passengers for disruption caused by planned cancellations and engineering work.

Onen hag oll!

‘Onen hag oll’, pronounced ‘owan hag oll’, means ‘one and all’ in Kernowek (Cornish)

To celebrate the 125th anniversary of ASLEF organising in Kernow, St Blazey branch has created a commemorative badge. The first ASLEF branch in the county (or kingdom) of Cornwall was founded by the enginemens of Truro, with the first recorded meeting featured in the September 1893 edition of the Locomotive Journal. It is believed other Cornish enginemens on the Great Western Railway, from loco sheds at St Blazey and Penzance, became members of Truro until they could establish their own branch – quite a common practice in the early years of our union. St Blazey was formed in 1905, Penzance in 1920, and Wadebridge (the London & South Western Railway) in 1908.

Paul Edwards, St Blazey branch

Tej honoured for inspiring millions

Tejinder Sharma, a former Silverlink/London Overground driver, who has written several critically-acclaimed collections of short stories, and was made an MBE in the Queen’s birthday honours list for his contribution to Hindi literature and community cohesion, has picked up a prestigious Times Now ICICI Non-Resident Indian of the Year Award for arts and culture in Europe at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Mumbai. The awards, organised by the Times of India media group, with the ICICI Bank and the Global Indian International School, honours prominent ex-pat Indians ‘who make India proud and inspire millions back home’. During my interview with the Times Now TV channel, I did make mention of London Overground trains,’ says Tej, who worked as a flight purser for Air India for 20 years before settling in the UK in 1998. He also worked for All India Radio, DoorDarshan, and the BBC World Service – and acted in Annu Kapoor’s film Abhay with Nana Patekar – before becoming a train driver in London.

Do8 Finn Brennan

Northern line driver was attacked in her cab just before midnight on Saturday 28 July on a service out of King’s Cross when passengers, who were fighting, forced their way into her cab. She managed to bring the train safely into Angel station but TfL has knocked back District Organiser Finn Brennan’s demands that it ensures drivers’ cabs are secure. In a separate dispute, we are balloting members at Leytonstone, Loughton, Hainault, West Ruislip and White City for strike action, and industrial action short of a strike, over LU’s failure to resolve outstanding issues on the Central line. Ballot papers must be returned by Wednesday 19 September.

Travel staff appreciation

The RailStaff awards – organised by the magazine and to be presented at the NEC in Birmingham on Thursday 29 November – are looking for nominations in the train driver of the year category. You can nominate online at www.railstaffawards.com

Derailed train – carriages due for service

An RAI investigation into a freight train derailment at Queen Adelaide, near Ely, on 14 August last year, which caused chaos, found that the damping system on the flat wagons, which were due in for service, was to blame and recommended better maintenance by management.

Do you know the train driver of the year?

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Quote...

‘You can’t outrun a train travelling up to 125mph even if you see it coming, and you can’t take on 750 volts in the electrified rail, or 225,000 volts in the overhead cables.’

Johnny Schute, chief operating officer, RSSB

...unquote

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Strike ballot over cab security

ASLEF is balloting members on London Underground for strike action over LU’s failure to ensure the safety of drivers on Tube trains. A female

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I ought to report you to the Gnome Office

WILLIAM LYNN-ADAMS, a ScotRail driver, and member of Glasgow Central branch, reports on the success – and commercialisation – of Glasgow Pride

ATTENDED my third Glasgow Pride, my first with ASLEF, on Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 July. As a driver at Glasgow Central I wanted to ensure we were represented at my city Pride and show that we support equality for all and this year, locally, we wanted to support the trans movement in particular. More than 10,000 people attended and Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland’s First Minister, led the parade (the first leader of the UK or a devolved government to do so) which started on Clyde Street and ended 5km later at Kelvingrove Park.

District 2 equality committee reps Hugh Cummings of the LGBT+ committee and Alison Miller of the WRC attended and the BBC interviewed us as part of a documentary being made about Glasgow Central station. I enjoyed the weekend with friends and family showing support in person and on social media. This was the most successful, but also the most commercial, Pride. It was moved from the city centre to the west end where queuing to enter the event area was strictly controlled. Pride has been criticised for over-selling tickets and many were left outside for hours in the heat. Pride began as a grassroots movement but has developed into a big commercial event. In Scotland in 2015 I was legally allowed to marry my husband Mark and I feel these demonstrations helped pave the way for this equality in law.

The Scottish government recently apologised for convictions of gay men under old historical laws. Both help to make the country a fairer place in which to live, but there is more to be done – only a few weeks ago a 21 year old was violently attacked as he walked home in a town on the outskirts of Glasgow.

My husband works for a bank that supports Pride events nationwide, and they have looked at how, as a company, they treat everyone in the workforce. Policies have been changed to give gay/lesbian couples the same rights as straight couples, for example, in terms of having children.

Union demos and Pride marches are not that different from each other; both want a fairer and more just society. I also recommend you watch the film Pride, I learned lots as both an LGBT+ and union member.

The Laughing Gnome takes Pride in Glasgow

QUOTE…
‘Donald Trump is a unicorn, riding a unicorn over a rainbow.’ – Sean Spicer, former White House press secretary
...UNQUOTE

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Vinnie Humphries, Paul Basham, Mark Wakenshaw and John Scott of Gateshead & Newcastle branch join DO4 Nick Whitehead and Shadow Attorney General Shami Chakrabarti at a Jarrow Labour Party fundraiser.

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TRACK SHORT CUT COSTS £1,400

Steven Payne, 49, was fined £1,000 at Highbury Corner magistrates’ court for walking across the railway line at Purfleet station. He was found guilty of railway trespass and ordered to pay costs of £300 and a victim surcharge of £100.

WE’RE IN THE MONEY

One in four employees at Britain’s high-speed rail project is on a six figure pay deal, according to an investigation by The Times. HS2 Ltd has 1,346 staff – and 318 of them pocketed more than £100,000 in salary and perks last year, double the figure for the previous year.

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ORR calls on NR to up its game

The Office of Rail and Road has made its annual assessment of Network Rail’s performance in England and Wales and says more needs to be done before its £34 billion five year plan for Britain’s railway begins on 1 April 2019.

Planning for Control Period 6 is in its early stages and Network Rail’s routes have more to do, including booking network access for planned work, reports the ORR. ‘Safety on Britain’s railway remains good, with no worker fatalities or industry-caused passenger deaths on NR infrastructure or stations in 2017-18. However, there is a need for risk management best practice to be adopted across all routes to ensure consistency. Only 87.6% of trains arrived on time in 2017-18, 4.8 percentage points off target.

‘Network Rail deferred £441 million of work to renew the railway in 2017-18 in order to keep within budget. This increases the backlog of renewal work it must catch up on over the next control period. This is essential to future reliability. NR’s budget remains tight, with only £100 million of headroom allowed for any unanticipated costs in 2018-19. This makes it more likely that the company would have to defer more renewal work to keep within budget.’

Joanna Whittington, ORR’s chief executive, said: ‘Passengers and freight customers rely on Network Rail to deliver a high quality service every day. Our assessment shows it is delivering well on safety, but a significant improvement is required to make it more efficient and to address the very poor levels of performance which many passengers are currently experiencing.’

QUOTE...

‘We should never underestimate the ability of a ruling class, however educated and sophisticated, to act stupidly.’ – Allister Heath, editor of the Sunday Telegraph

…UNQUOTE

RDG ‘LIVING ON ANOTHER PLANET’ – TORY MP

The Rail Delivery Group has been accused by Bim Afolami, Conservative MP for Hitchin & Harpenden, of ‘living on another planet’ after Robert Nisbet, regional director of the RDG, bizarrely claimed that Britain’s privatised railways are ‘an example to the rest of Western Europe’.

‘BORING BUS COMPANY HAPPY AFTER RAIL EXIT’

Dean Finch, chief executive of National Express, has emphatically ruled out a return to Britain’s railways. ‘We’re happy to be a boring company. If I said to my board I want to go back into rail, they would take me outside and shoot me.’

WOMAN JAILED FOR BEING DRUNK ON STATION

Natalie Petrie, 31, from Middlesbrough, was jailed for four months at York magistrates’ court after pleading guilty to being drunk and disorderly on York railway station and biting and spitting at police officers who arrested her.

Rail ombudsman to handle rising tide of complaints against train companies

A new rail ombudsman will be appointed – to start in November – after complaints about the privatised train operating companies soared to more than half a million a year. The ombudsman will deal with complaints not satisfactorily resolved by the TOCs. ‘This is an important step by the industry,’ said Rail Minister Jo Johnson. ‘An independent and effective ombudsman, working closely with consumer groups, will ensure passengers get a fair deal and give them a stronger voice and help the rail companies to improve their service to passengers.’

Night of the Condor

Terence Cuneo’s oil painting Night Freight (Condor) fetched £27,500 at auction in a sale of modern British and Irish art at Christie’s. Cuneo, a prolific artist, famous for his railway and military pictures, gave the canvas, showing the London to Glasgow Condor (container door-to-door) service, to Sir Robert Lawrence in 1960.

‘The humble, and notoriously unreliable, Metropolitan-Vickers Co-Bo diesel loco was so under powered that they ran in pairs from the start of their career on the Starry starry night during British Rail’s modernisation programme

Midland, ‘recalls Longsight legend Mel Thorley. ‘They kicked off the new Condor express fitted freight service from Hendon to Gushetfaulds in Glasgow with a wave of publicity; even had Terence sitting in a yard with his brushes to produce the famous Night Freight poster. One wag, ex-Trafford Park, who worked on them, said “More like Night Fright when you found you’d been rostered a pair on the 16.25 off Pancras in December”.

ASLEF activists Mark Prenter, Waterloo Nine Elms, and a Labour candidate in Twyddard ward for Medway council at the local elections next year; EC1 Marz Colombini; ECS Howard Kaye; and Southeastern company councillor Ray Garland join Angela Rayner, Shadow Education Secretary and Labour MP for Ashton-under-Lyne, at a Gillingham & Rainham CLP fundraising dinner celebrating 150 years of the TUC.
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HE theme of this year’s conference – held at Congress House in central London from 20 to 22 April, with 213 delegates, plus observers, attending from 27 trade unions – was marking 150 years of standing up for black workers in Britain.

ASLEF’s BAME delegation was made up of Ed D’Bell (D1), Roger Galloway-Smith (D3), Floyd Doyle (D5), Peter Acheampong (D7) and Trevor Robinson (D8) accompanied by head office minders Simon Weller, AGS, and Lee James, ASLEF’s equalities adviser.

There were 20 motions, with the ASLEF one being number 17 on the agenda, on subjects such as racism in the workplace; Brexit and the rise in hate crime; universal credit and its impact on BAME workers; fighting anti-Muslim racism in educational establishments; and our motion on support for Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers.

SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARIES
We had guest speakers including Frances O’Grady, TUC general secretary; Neville Lawrence, father of murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence; Lord Herman Ouseley, who has held various equalities posts, including chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, was chief executive of the London borough of Lambeth, and also part of the Kick It Out racism in football campaign; Moyra Samuels of Justice4Grenfell; and Chidi King of the International Trade Union Confederation.

A number of significant anniversaries fall this year. It’s 150 years since the first Trades Union Congress; 100 years since some women got the vote in this country; 70 years since the MV Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury; 50 years since the 1968 Race Relations Act; and 25 years since the murder of Stephen Lawrence at a bus stop in Eltham, south-east London.

Frances spoke about the struggle of workers for better pay, decent terms and conditions, proper health & safety protection, and secure employment over the last 150 years.

Neville spoke about the pain of losing Stephen in a racially-motivated attack and the long struggle to try and get justice for his son. He also, amazingly, talked about how he’s forgiven the murderers after being baptised! What a great and humble person he is. An inspiration to us all.

Lord Ouseley spoke about the Windrush scandal and illegal deportations. He said that of the Commonwealth countries, only Barbados was prepared to put its head above the parapet and challenge the British government. They gave Lord Ouseley a call and things started moving forward from there. You know the rest.

Moyra spoke about the disgusting way the victims of Grenfell are being treated; 50 of the 72 who died were of Muslim background, and the shameful nickname for the block of flats was ‘the Moroccan tower’. The infamous ‘go home’ vans – Theresa May was the architect of that nasty little campaign – were driven around the tower when the Tory government thought that was a good idea.

RIVERS OF BLOOD
The TUC race relations committee read out three statements on Windrush, the Race Relations Act, and Stephen Lawrence, which ASLEF originally put in as an emergency statement. The committee also covered the 50th anniversary of Enoch Powell’s infamous ‘rivers of blood’ speech to a Conservative Party meeting in Birmingham in 1968.

On Friday evening the ASLEF delegation attended the roots, culture and identity art exhibition launch, which featured the fabulous choir the Nawi Collective, and another speech from Neville Lawrence. A great evening before we headed to Chinatown for a meal.

On Saturday there were several workshops for delegates to attend including black workers, automation and artificial intelligence; black women and sexual harassment; building capacity and organising black workers using social media; and what next for race relations legislation?

I attended the automation workshop and was surprised to hear that machines already read books to children and administer injections after taking your temperature! Safeguards are in place, as per driverless trains, but it’s still scary, in my opinion. The workshop was presented by Unite and urged us all to be careful as it’s better for employers to have one person operating 10 or even 50 machines, with no holiday pay, maternity leave, sickness or pensions! It’s coming your way soon.

We had a panel debate discussing the impact of the Race Relations Act chaired by Omar Khan, director of the Runnymede Trust, with panellists including Suresh Grover of The Monitoring Group; Gloria Mills of the TUC race relations committee; Ilyas Nagdee, NUS black students officer; and Ayeisha Thomas-Smith, co-founder of KIN.

Saturday night saw the social, as usual, and a chance to network over a drink or two.

STANDING OVATION FOR ROGER
On Sunday it was time for the ASLEF motion on support for Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers. Delegates and visitors heard a very hard-hitting and emotional speech by our District 3 rep Roger Galloway-Smith. It was Roger’s first time at conference, and his first time up front and central. It was clearly hard for Roger to read his speech, but he kept going and got his message out. Conference could see his passion and encouraged him with applause during his speech and, when he finished, he got a well-deserved standing ovation! There were three other standing ovations – one for Moyra on Grenfell, another for a lady whose family member died in police custody, and one for Neville – so our Roger was in great company and ASLEF can be proud of him, as we all were in our delegation.

Overall, a great conference and, on a personal note, I was re-elected to the TUC race relations committee for another year.
Doctor! Doctor! Can’t you see I’m burning, burning

GREGOR GALL, an affiliate research associate at the University of Glasgow, and editor of the Scottish Left Review, reveals how Britain’s National Health Service is being ripped off by big pharma – the multinational pharmaceutical companies

The NHS turned 70 on 5 July this year. It was founded on the principle of care being free at the point of need, paid for out of general taxation. Set up by the great reforming post-war Labour government, led by Clement Attlee, from 1945-50, the NHS was a fundamental part of the welfare state providing care for every citizen, regardless of wealth or status, from the cradle to the grave.

It faced some difficult initial problems. The first was that many doctors refused to work for the NHS, preferring to maintain themselves as private entrepreneurs rather than become public servants. The second was that the economy was very weak after the war and loans from the US were being repaid so the funds necessary to properly resource the new service were scarce. And, third, there had just been the worst winter for decades, vastly increasing the demand for health care.

But the NHS overcame these problems and grew. It has faced many other challenges, such as developing new medical technologies and responding to new health diagnoses as well as new practices in health care. And it has become a victim of its own success – people living considerably longer has created new challenges for social and health care.

Now, in 2018, after 70 years, the NHS faces another year of significant underfunding as services close, waiting times lengthen and waiting lists rise. But throughout all these challenges since 1948, one has remained constant. This is that the medicine the NHS needs to dispense is all produced and marketed by private pharmaceutical companies in Britain and abroad.

MAJORS Gobbled up Minnows

Over the years, these companies have grown in size and power as the majors have gobbled up the minnows. The reason they have names such as GlaxoSmithKline is because Glaxo Laboratories merged with Burroughs Wellcome to form Glaxo Wellcome and then with SmithKline Beecham (itself the result of a merger between Beecham’s and SmithKline Beckman) to form GSK.

Big pharma – the big pharmaceutical companies – are some of the most profitable – and rapacious – capitalist corporations in the global economy.

Developing new medicines is an expensive business, with years of intensive research work in laboratories. Sometimes, the cures and breakthroughs are never made despite the work. This makes it a risky activity so companies often work with universities to lessen their exposure to these costs. Essentially, they piggy back off the state.

POT AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

But that still leaves them needing to have a capacity for drug research and development. When these companies are chasing the next cure – for cancer or the common cold – they are all chasing the magical ‘pot of gold’ at the end of the rainbow. If they get there first, they establish exclusive rights over a new drug by patenting it. This means only they can produce and sell it. And they are, they cheerfully admit, determined ‘to exploit’ their new drug to the last dollar and cent.

After spending time and money to get it, they argue that they should be able to charge exorbitant prices to the NHS – to patients, taxpayers, and government – for patent medicines to exploit their monopoly position on each pill they bring to market and make as much profit as possible.

In the process, the huge duplication and waste of resources is self-evident. None of the big pharma companies will co-operate with each other on drug development. Even though the NHS is the biggest single buyer of drugs, almost being a monopsony, it still can’t beat big pharma because as the term suggests – being a singular collective noun – the companies co-operate on one thing and one thing only – they act as a cartel or oligopoly to keep the prices they charge the NHS ridiculously high.

Canadian Concordia International was found by the Competition and Markets Authority to have ‘abused its dominant position to overcharge the NHS’ by hiking the price of lithium, used to treat patients with an underactive thyroid, by an astonishing 6,000% between 2007 and 2017. The amount the NHS paid per pack rose from £4.46 in 2007 to £258.19 in 2017. The price of a single pill went up from 16p to £9.22, even though production costs remained broadly stable.

Pfizer & Flynn raised the price charged for 100mg packs of an epilepsy drug by 2,600% from £2.83 to £67.50 in 2012, before reducing it to £54 in 2014. Pfizer was also found to be massively overcharging for Viagra, one of the growth medicines used not just for erectile dysfunction.

And Boots has been charged with overcharging the NHS for unlicensed medicines – it is said to have charged the NHS £3,220 for a specialist mouthwash that can be bought for £93 elsewhere.

SECURE SUPPLIES OF BLACK GOLD

It is a longstanding demand of the left for nationalisation of the leading pharmaceutical companies or for the state to set up its own pharmaceutical company to supply medicines to the NHS at cost. Both would be better than trying to more fully regulate pricing or create a windfall tax on big pharma profits because the former requires a time consuming bureaucratic exercise, with the possibility of evasion and avoidance, while with the latter profits can be registered abroad so HMRC never gets near them.

There is a precedent for both demands. Strategic industries such as coal, steel, gas, electricity, water, railways, and buses were nationalised in the post-war period but new companies were established by the state, too.

The British National Oil Corporation was set up in 1975 as North Sea oil and gas began to flow; a strategic decision taken by Tony Benn, Secretary of State for Energy in Harold Wilson’s Labour government, to secure supplies of black gold and exert some control over the nation’s energy reserves before they were milked by private companies.

The social justice organisation Global Justice Now spells out what it thinks of big pharma; a grassroots activist campaign against the multinationals; and Mike Keefe’s comic take on the greed of big pharma in The Colorado Independent.
Not quite so fast, next time, Mr Conductor, if you please

The royals have enjoyed a romance with Britain’s railways since Queen Victoria built the first royal train in 1869. Well, not personally. But she commissioned it. PAUL ROUTLEDGE looks at the claret carriages – and freight-hauling locomotives – that comprise the royal train today

ET ME tell you about a royal romance. Prince Charles loves trains. The future monarch is never happier than when he’s chugging round the country in the best set of carriages in the kingdom.

Except, of course, when he gets onto the footplate, like all true railway enthusiasts. In February 2009, he named Pacific 60163, the first express steam engine to be built in Britain for 40 years, Tornado, and then rode in the cab from York to Leeds. Royal media handlers didn’t say if he regarded it as a firing turn, and got his hands on the shovel, but it’s an improbable scenario. Firing is a skilled job.

The Prince of Wales is more fortunate than most railway buffs, having a dedicated royal train. And he’s determined to keep going a travel tradition that goes back almost 200 years to Queen Victoria.

Has he a special reason for this transport of delight? In 1980, the Sunday Mirror reported that he and wife-to-be Lady Diana Spencer spent several hours in the royal train as it stood in a siding. The story was strongly denied, but rumour later suggested that ‘the blonde on the train’ was actually his lover Camilla, and not his fiancée Diana.

The prince’s passion for trains hit the headlines again recently, when his travel spending details were published. They show that it costs £20,000 every time this Buckingham Palace on wheels takes to the track. The heir to the throne used it seven times in the last year of royal accounts, but often it’s more.

And the Queen, who used it only three times, is just as passionate about her train as Prince Charles. It’s her favourite way to visit distant parts of the country, sleeping overnight in her rather Spartan bedroom while her carriage is discreetly parked in a siding away from stations.

Today’s royal train is a far cry from the sumptuous luxury enjoyed by monarchs of yesteryear, with quilted ceilings and velvet embroidery. The furniture is more practical – there are no double beds. It’s a more functional instrument of government, suited to a constitutional monarchy. But that almost didn’t save it from the cutter’s torch. As recently as 2013, it was revealed that the train would soon have to be axed, sharing the fate of the royal yacht, scrapped by Gordon Brown when Britannia reached the end of her seagoing life.

Sir Alan Reid, Keeper of the Privy Purse, told a committee of MPs that the rolling stock, mostly dating from the 1970s, had only five to ten years of service left. The prospect of replacing it would be ‘a major decision’, he said, adding ‘the figures are quite staggering’. But further tests on the Mk3 coaches – some built for the APT – showed that the train’s life could be extended by many years and, with further efficiency savings, running costs could be reduced.

QUEEN BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF
‘Tests revealed it has more life in it than previously thought,’ says a Palace spokesperson. ‘There’s no end in sight to its use and no fixed, agreed horizon in terms of when it would become inoperable or be decommissioned.’

Her Majesty, who had been tearfully upset at the loss of the royal yacht, breathed a sigh of relief. The palace insists that the train is now value for money, offering safety and a working environment for the Queen. It saves on hotels, minimises security costs, and brings the royals on time to their engagements.

Besides, the cost pales into insignificance compared with some of the royal flight extravagance. A visit by Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall to South Asia on a £10 million refitted RAF Voyager set the taxpayer back £362,149.

Of course, he couldn’t go there by train, though it’s a fair bet he’d like nothing more than to take his Flying Walesman through the Channel tunnel to the continent. It would be cheaper, and more fun, than flying.

His palace on wheels is currently operated by a German-owned FOC – DB Cargo. When not in use, it’s based at Wolverton, at an Alstom facility, though it may have to move from there as the site is being redeveloped.

Since 2004 a small stable of Class 67 locomotives has had royal status. 67005 Queen’s Messenger and 67006 Royal Sovereign, liveried in royal claret, were joined in 2012 during the Queen’s jubilee year by 67026 Diamond Jubilee, appropriately in diamond silver. When the royal train isn’t in use, the locos are on revenue-earning DB diagrams.

In the era of preserved steam on the main line, heritage locomotives are sometimes used. In July 2012, the Queen was hauled by Stanier Pacific 6201, Princess Elizabeth, named after her by the LMS in the 1930s. Other steamers rostered include 70000 Britannia, and 6024 GWR King Edward 1.

On his trip to the Lake District in March this year, Prince Charles travelled behind LMS Pacific 6233 Duchess of Hamilton. Stopping to talk to royal fans at Langwathby station on the historic Settle-Carlisle route, England’s highest, and frequently threatened with closure, he was heard saying to admirers, ‘I’m so glad they kept open the line.’

He must also be glad there are still drivers who know how to handle a regulator. The royal train doesn’t have dedicated, individual drivers. Instead, they are drawn from a roster of about 100 of the most experienced footplatemen. They have to be able to pull up the train within six inches of a designated station stop.

The train travels at lower speeds than today’s expresses, and drivers are warned not to take her over ‘humpy points’ at 7.30 in the morning, because that’s when the Queen takes her bath, and we can’t have the royal bathwater sloshing over the sides, can we?

It has always been regarded as an honour to drive royalty, and while some drivers may be republicans, there is never any shortage of volunteers. Everywhere the train goes, it is greeted by admiring crowds. Its polished carriages, painted claret, inlaid with red, and carrying a prominent royal crest, make it a work of art on the move.

The current set of nine, sometimes reduced to seven, dates back to 1977, when it was extensively refurbished for the Queen’s silver jubilee tour of the nation. Individual members of the royal family have their own carriage, and there are saloons for catering, conferences and
EIGHT THINGS YOU DIDN’T KNOW ABOUT THE ROYAL TRAIN

- Everything about this train is unique, including the lamp headcode: a row of three at buffer-beam level, and one below the chimney, or where it ought to be.
- If the Queen dies in Scotland, her body will be brought back from Edinburgh to London on the royal train as part of Operation London Bridge.
- The real cost of the royal train is one-tenth of what is was during the silver jubilee in 1977.
- Many of the original Victorian, Edwardian and later carriages can be seen in the National Railway Museum, York, and other museums around the country.
- On 21 June, 1898, driver George Fenwick, taking the train from Aberdeen to Perth, died when he was struck by a bridge after climbing onto the tender to mend a broken communication cord.
- The first royal to travel by train wasn’t Queen Victoria, but sickly Queen Dowager Adelaide, spouse of William IV and a devout Tory, who went from Nottingham to Leeds on 22 July 1840.
- Phlegethon, the name of Queen Victoria’s first locomotive, is a mythical river of blood in Hell that burns human souls.
- Its driver, Daniel Gooch, was a Tory MP, and successful locomotive superintendent of the Great Western Railway recruited by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. A London pub named after him shut two years ago.

The Royal Sovereign, one of the royal trains, which takes the Queen (and Prince Philip and Megan Markle and Prince Charles) around the country in style: chef at work; the dining car; the Prince of Wales’s study; one of the bedrooms; and the Queen at her writing desk.

It was also the first to be equipped with an on-board lavatory, a heavy, wooden-lidded thunderbox, in 1850. Only royalty was allowed to use it, and only Albert did. Courtiers and riff-raff servants had to make do with public loos on the stations. History does not record whether this was the first royal flush.

Victoria’s plush rake wasn’t good enough for her successor. Edward VI ordered a completely new train in 1902, with instructions to make it look as much like the inside of the royal yacht as possible. It had bedrooms, a dressing room, and a smoking room – the king’s favourite, where he was attended by two liveried footmen: one to light his cigars, and the other to adjust the curtains and open the windows.

Continuing the setting of precedents, his successor George V installed the first on-train bath anywhere in the world. A red line was later installed on the inside to make sure the flunkies didn’t fill it too deep for the carriage motion.

Successive monarchs have always left their mark on the train, updating the décor, putting in electricity, and moving into new rolling stock. In World War Two, it was armour-plated, and used for morale-boosting visits by the king.

A NEW GENERATION OF ROYALS

So what does the future hold for this quintessentially British institution? While the Queen rules, nothing much will change. Prince Charles has made a characteristically environmental mark, introducing bio-diesel for the Class 67s wherever possible.

In an experiment, the train completed a round trip from London to Scarborough on a combination of waste rape seed and sunflower oil. He can be expected to make further changes when it is his train set.

And a new generation of royals is getting to know the train. Prince Harry’s bride Meghan Markle, now the Duchess of Sussex, became the first ‘non senior’ royal to travel on the train – ahead even of the Duchess of Cambridge. In June she travelled overnight (some sleepover!) to Runcorn, Cheshire, with the Queen to open the Mersey Gateway Bridge, and a theatre, before dining at Chester town hall. Despite all the fuss that was made of her before the Windsor wedding, the American actress must have been properly impressed at the honour. Wearing a cream-coloured outfit beyond my powers of description, she posed for pictures getting on the classic coach.

The Prince of Wales’s love affair with the railway has yet to reach its climax. He has agreed that a £5 million steam locomotive new build, LNER P2 2-8-2 can be named after him. Number 2007 under construction in Darlington is due to enter service in the 2020s. What are the chances he will want to see it at the head of his train when he is king – maybe with him on the footplate? Better than average, I should think, and no bad thing for the railway.

THE TRAIN IS VERY DEAR TO THEM

Traditional chefs toil in the kitchen car, turning out food for the Queen and her royal guests when she entertains in the dining car, around a table with settings for 12 people, a State banquet on wheels. Champagne, buck’s fizz, or a soft drink, sir?

Penny Junor, who wrote a biography of Prince Charles, says: ‘The train is very dear to them. It’s somewhere completely private, with everything they need on board. Everybody knows what it means to them. Yes, there’s a cost attached to it, but there’s a cost attached to having a monarchy, and it’s what we want as a country.’

The royal love affair with trains is almost as old as the railway itself. Queen Victoria was the first reigning monarch to travel by train, on 13 June 1842, from Slough – the nearest station to Windsor Castle – to Paddington, hauled by Phlegethon, driven by Daniel Gooch assisted by the incomparable Brunel.

The next day, she noted in her Buckingham Palace diary: ‘We arrived here yesterday morning, having come by the rail-road from Windsor, in half an hour, free from dust and crowd and heat and I am quite charmed with it.’

Her husband was rather less charmed. The Morning Post reported the same year that: ‘Prince Albert generally accompanies the Queen, and patronises the Great Western Railway generally when compelled to come up from Windsor alone. The Prince, however, has been known to say “not quite so fast, next time, Mr Conductor, if you please”’. Later operating instructions stipulated: ‘The Queen travels at 40mph.’

Victoria was so taken with this newfangled mode of travel that she ordered the first two coach royal train, constructed in 1869 at a cost of £1,800. And she paid for it with her own money, the only monarch ever to do so.

Dining.

One 75ft long carriage is for the Queen’s sole use. It has a 3ft wide bed with a tartan coverlet. The room has a bedside cabinet, with a radio permanently set to BBC Radio 4, a wooden chair, and tartan curtains. Framed landscapes by Scottish artist Roy Penny adorn the walls. There is a adjoining bathroom, and a sitting room where she works and takes breakfast with Prince Philip.

The Duke of Edinburgh’s coach is more modest, with a shower rather than a bath and a fitted kitchen for when he travels without the Queen and doesn’t need the kitchen car. He has an enlarged copy of his senior rail card, presented in 1987, framed on the wall, and a section of original Isambard Kingdom Brunel rail is also on show.

THE ROYAL TRAIN

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Freight doesn’t have a vote but car drivers do

And they want freight switched from road to rail.

PHILIPPA EDMUNDS, manager of Freight on Rail, reports on another way to win votes at the next general election

A RECENT survey by Brake, the national road safety charity, revealed that 79% of drivers are concerned for their safety and have (well-founded) fears about the amount of freight being transported on our motorways. They are right to be worried. Lorry traffic on our motorways reached a new peak of 7.9 billion vehicle miles in 2017.

So you can understand why car drivers are calling for further investment in Britain’s railways to alleviate pressure on the road network. Freight may not have a vote at a general election but this report shows that drivers – who do – want to see more freight transferred to rail.

Car drivers’ fear of freight on motorways is well-founded, with the latest government figures showing that HGVs are almost three times more likely than cars to be involved in fatal crashes on minor roads. The last fatality caused by a freight train was at Stafford in 1996.

The relative safety costs of the different modes of transport also need to be taken into account. Government figures show that the HGV involvement rate on urban roads is almost six times the rate of cars with the Department for Transport valuing the prevention of each road fatality at £2 million.

The government would be unwise to pin its long-term hopes on lorry platooning which is untested and in its infancy; motoring organisations are opposed while the haulage industry remains sceptical and drivers hate on safety grounds.

The Brake survey found that 77% of car drivers believe that truck platooning sounds frightening and that, if it went wrong, the causalities could be very high.

Because our road network is so congested, with frequent exits close together, these safety fears are well-founded. Carbon gains may only be around 5% whereas rail freight reduces carbon by 76% per tonne carried.

The report also highlighted drivers’ deep-seated and genuine concerns over their safety on motorways and are very wary about the increase in freight traffic.

Brake is urging the government to take note of its report, prioritise safety over capacity, and be aware of opposition to truck platooning.

The biggest issue facing rail freight is a shortage of infrastructure and space on the network which has resulted in suppressed demand. Government investment to unblock pinch-points and improve the capability of the strategic freight network is crucial to satisfy customer demand for rail freight.

Transferring more freight to our railways is a key part of making our roads safer, cleaner and less congested. Trucks also need to use minor roads to access depots which are more dangerous; in 2016 HGVs were almost seven times more likely than cars to be involved in fatal crashes on minor roads. The last fatality caused by a freight train was at Stafford in 1996.

The 18 month commission was set up in response to the government’s industrial strategy, published last autumn, which overlooked the value of staff engagement.

It comes as no surprise to trade unions that the most successful workplaces are the ones where staff, leaders and boards talk to each other about the aims of the organisation, or company, discuss and implement shared ideas for improvement, and continue to talk about what does and doesn’t work.

Our commission will work with unions and academics in the UK, and across the world, to find evidence of where collective voice has made a positive difference to productivity. We’ll also talk to unions, employers, politicians and workers about what they think collective voice can achieve in the 21st century. With just 13% of private workers in a union, we’ll be sharing good practice with unions, to support recruitment, and with employers, to build strong, responsible organisations in the face of Brexit and ever-evolving technology.

For more details and to get involved visit www.unions21.org.uk and @unions21
Under the wild sycamore tree

KEITH RICHMOND reflects on the banners, bands and barbecues, discussion and debate, at the Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival in Dorsetshire during the long hot summer of 2018 – the hottest since 1976

S THE sun rose on 24 February 1834, George Loveless, a farm labourer and Methodist lay preacher, kissed his wife Betsy and their three children goodbye and set off to work. He didn’t see them again for three years. Because, as George left his cottage in the village of Tolpuddle, in Dorset, he was served with a warrant for his arrest.

George was one of six agricultural labourers – the others were his brother James Loveless; James Hammett; James Brine; Thomas Standfield and his son John Standfield – who were charged by the authorities with making an illegal oath. Their real crime was forming a trade union to protest about their pay being cut from nine to six shillings a week.

The Tolpuddle Martyrs were sentenced at Dorchester Assizes to seven years’ transportation for having the temerity to stand up for themselves – for standing together and forming a Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers – to fight for better terms and conditions of employment.

That is what trade unions have been doing for the best part of 200 years. And that is why the story of Tolpuddle and its martyrs still resonates at the heart of the history of the trade union movement. Because the people who have the power in this country – who own the land; the factories, warehouses and offices; and big corporations – don’t want us to stand together. They never have. Because in unity is strength.

That’s as true today as it was in 1834. A trade union, such as ASLEF, and the others that affiliate to the TUC, exists to negotiate better terms and conditions for its members, to promote health and safety at work, to promote a pride in the job, to champion equality, and to provide education services.

Employers, generally, don’t like that. They want to hire and fire at will, drive down wages and pay employees as little as possible, and cut budgets like they cut corners.

That’s why trade unions are under attack by the Conservative government and by what Joseph Conrad – in his novel Nostromo – calls the ‘material interests’ they represent. And that’s why strong unions are as relevant – and necessary – now, in the early years of the 21st century, as they were in the 19th and 20th centuries.
Dancing in the dark

ANYONE watching the news over this long hot summer will be aware of the monumental challenge faced by firefighters with the moorland fires in the north-west of England; such was the scale of these fires the Army was called in to assist. What is shocking, though, is the fact that, due to Fire Service cuts by the Conservative government, firefighters had to appeal to the public for essentials such as water, socks, sun cream and energy drinks. Those Tories who cut that funding are oxygen thieves.

Some of my networking comrades are FBU members and, for my CLP, fellow activists. This was happening on our branch.

ASLEF’s Alan Moss hands over much-needed supplies to FBU comrades fighting the fires on the moors outside Manchester

Patch. It was time for a rallying call.

With little notice, members at Longsight, who never cease to amaze, filled a large bag full of socks, sun cream and insect repellent. A call to our pro-active E.C. vice-president and a bag of ASLEF baseball caps was in the post.

A phone call to one of my company directors asking if we could fill a car full of water and chocolate was met in a positive manner. So off we went to see our FBU comrades with the donated items to thank them for the outstanding work they do to protect us all.

Thanks to branch secretary Jim and future Eggheads contestant Jamie, our ULR rep, for their invaluable help and, of course, thank you to my fellow members. Alan Moss, Longsight

Welcome to Leamington

At our latest branch meeting we were very pleased to hand out long service awards to two former freight drivers – Paul Baker (5 years) and Angela Tinkler (15). We should like to welcome Paul and Angela to Leamington Spa branch, along with another former freight driver, Paul Hately, who is our new health & safety rep. A warm welcome to all three and we wish you a long and enjoyable time with us!

Nick Walker, branch chair

GARY FOX

Following the sad news regarding the passing of ex-Charing Cross driver Gary Fox (see page 19) Grove Park welcomed Gary’s wife Debbie and eldest daughter Emma to our July branch to present them with Gary’s retirement certificate and a gift to the family from the branch. District 1 Organiser Graham Morris and EC member Marz Colombini made the presentation and said a few words in memory of Gary.

Ray Garland, Grove Park

Debbie, Graham, Emma and Marz

Safety reps Les Meek (Doncaster) and John Mullen (Mossend) present Ian Swindell of Donny with his 40 year badge.

Bro Neil Butcher received his 30 year badge at the meeting of Portsmouth & Isle of Wight branch 164 on 13 July.

Deb Butt, branch secretary

Derby win

Photos of the Derby reunion in June by Reginald Sargeant.
Thanks, Steve, for everything

Ipswich branch welcomed ECS Nigel Gibson, DOS Howard Kaye, Steve Wilson, Freightliner Intermodal business council, and Steve Wright, Greater Anglia company council, to a well-attended branch meeting on a very hot July day. Nigel gave a detailed report on all the passenger and freight companies, including pensions and the prospect of new t&cs for Anglia members, and new trains which will be arriving soon. Anglia members had many questions for Nigel and Steve Wright, which at times got a bit heated, but all in good faith. A long discussion continued for two hours and Nigel and Steve said there will be a possible referendum for the terms & conditions, etc. Howard gave a full report on how the EC works, and the issues it deals with, AAD, and freight on rail. Steve Wilson gave his report, which will be his last, because after 44 years’ service he will be retiring shortly. Branch chair Mark Mulley gave a vote of thanks for everything Steve has done as Freightliner Intermodal business rep. All the best, Steve, and have a nice quiet and relaxing retirement. Look forward to your Retirement do!

Lee Barber, branch secretary

Just keep that hair in place, Steve

In a short space of time, Freightliner Intermodal has seen three good union men retire: Chris Clarke, Birmingham depot and Salfley branch secretary; Dave George, also of Birmingham depot, who was LLC rep; and Steve Wilson of Tilbury. Steve has worked on the business council for numerous years at different times, working through difficult periods at Freightliner. His great knowledge will be much missed. Andy Bullock and I have worked with Steve for a number of years on the business council and would like to place on record our thanks for all the work he has done in his time as BC chair. Steve has become a friend as well as a colleague (just keep that hair in place, Steve). We wish all three a long and happy retirement.

Peter Mason, BC secretary, Freightliner Intermodal

Badge bonanza at Bishop’s

It’s the bishop – DOS Nigel Gibson joins the front row

Bishop’s Stortford branch welcomed District 5 Organiser Nigel Gibson in June to present long service and loyalty badges to Bros N Taylor, S Gregory and C Martin (5 years); R Malone and D Hill (10); A Bell (35); A Hislop, local level rep, and branch chair A Carter (40). The meeting was well attended; those present included a delegation from the Retired Members’ Section and a stowaway from Cambridge branch. A lavish buffet was provided by the Bishop’s Stortford Social Club. Special thanks to former branch secretary Bro R Roscoe for assistance in the smooth running of proceedings.

Guntis Furmanis, branch secretary

Tygers, tygers, burning bright

TOP DAY AT THE MILLGATE

A superb turn out – and superb weather – brought out retired and active drivers and guards 33 years after the shed closure and move to Manchester Victoria. The usual excellent buffet was followed by John Pat’s famous booze free raffle, which gets bigger every year, and reflections on colleagues who passed away during the last year. Thanks to Andy Gee, the branch, and the 105 committee, for making it happen. Footie fans went off to watch the World Cup – a perfect end to a perfect afternoon.

Sam Black, Newton Heath RMS

The Armistice was just weeks away but there is nothing in the Journal to show that anyone expected the Great War to end. MICK HOLDER turns back time to September 1918

VICTIMS OF THE GERMANS

The Shirebrook branch secretary reports: ‘Members on the books 170, on His Majesty’s Service 27, returned 1, victims to the German hordes 2, prisoner of war 1, abstentions from political and war levies 5, new members this year 8.’

BOYS OF 15 FIRING FOR THEM

Retford branch reports a visit by J Bromley, ASLEF’s general secretary, who talked about war work: ‘No other class of the community were more inconvenienced than railwaymen by commencing and finishing their duties at all hours of the day and night, and being away from home for long hours.’ The branch secretary adds: ‘He referred to the sacrifices made by us through having to work engines in bad repair, and making the best of them, and in some parts of the country men working 40 and 50 hours continuously, and never leaving their engines, and drivers having to take boys of 15 years of age firing for them on the engines of today, which require great physical strain to maintain steam.’

THE THICKEST OF THE FIGHTING

The Ipswich branch secretary reports: ‘It is with deep regret that I have to report the death of Bro AB Cracknell, late acting fireman on the Felixstowe branch of the GER, who died at No 47 casualty clearing station from wounds he received in action in France. He joined the RFA in May 1915, and had been in France the last two years, where he had seen some of the thickest of the fighting. He was a young man who took a great interest in the Society, and one who would have made a good worker had he been spared to come back. To his sorrowing father and mother the branch extend their deepest sympathy.’

SOMEBODY IN FRANCE, 1918

Mr and Mrs Lister write to the Locomotive Journal: ‘We wish to thank the Associated Society’s officials for forwarding the £5 death grant on behalf of our late son, GH Lister, who fell in action, ‘Somewhere in France, on 28 May, 1918.’
EDWARD CANT ONE OF THE LAST GREAT STEAM MEN

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of our oldest surviving member, Edward George Cant. Ted joined the LN ER as an engine cleaner in 1937 having previously worked as an errand boy in a cycle shop and as a warehouse lad, earning 15 shillings a week. On joining the railway, Ted’s earnings rocketed to 6 shillings a day! Imagine that; he said. A lad earning 30 shillings a week whilst farmhands were earning 28 shillings & tuppence! Ted’s first week was spent with the firelighter being taught how to light up an engine and raise steam, the following week with the boilermaker and tube sweeper. How things have changed! After passing out as acting fireman he was sent to Clacton. In 1939, when many were made redundant, Ted transferred to Stratford, staying in lodgings at Leyton. When war was declared Ted joined the Royal Engineers and was posted to run the goods trains on the Elham Valley line to Canterbury where, amongst other freight, they hauled (in Ted’s words) ‘The 18 inch howitzer HMG Boche Buster!’ In 1941 Ted was granted leave to marry his childhood sweetheart Doris, to whom he was married for 72 years, bringing up three children, Veronica, Edward and Margaret. If Margaret had been a boy, she would have been called Stanley Gordon.

Ted Cant and (above) the BL 18 inch railway howitzer deployed on the Elham-Canterbury line for coastal defence during World War Two

JIM ANDERSON FROM BAKER’S BOY TO THE TOP LINK

James Campbell Anderson was born in Aberdeen. When he left school he went to work for a baker; their delivery carts were horse-drawn and he looked after the nags. He was called up at 18 to serve in the Army Veterinary Corps. When he was demobilised he joined the railway, and in 1950 was sent on loan to King’s Cross. He decided he wanted to stay at KX but, unfortunately, to do this he had to resign from his home depot and restart at KX so lost some seniority. He progressed through the ranks to become a top link driver. It was at a dance at King’s Cross that he met Clare. They got married and were blessed with two daughters, Elizabeth and Helen. His family were really chuffed to see so many colleagues at the funeral; they were so proud to know we held Jim in such high regard.

Peter Smith, Retired Members’ Section

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 this half of the form to: Andrea Weston in the Admin Dept, ASLEF, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN and hand the other half, the standing order mandate, to your bank (or via your internet bank)
ALAN HAYES TOFFEEMAN
It is with deep regret that I report a loss to our Merseyrail family: Alan Hayes has passed away suddenly at the young age of 65. Alan, a well-respected driver at Kirkdale, took the last journey to the great depot in the sky on 29 May. I had the pleasure of sending a story to the Journal, four years ago, about Alan’s 40 year membership of ASLEF, when he was presented with a badge and engraved tankard by GS Mick Whelan.

He started his railway career as a carriage cleaner at Allerton depot on 19 August 1972, progressing to shunter. He became a second man at Garston, becoming a minder driver, advancing to instructor. He was awarded a certificate of achievement for his vital role in the prevention of a potentially fatal accident.

Alan, a keen sportsman in his youth, was a fervent supporter of Everton football club; he recently was a fanatical Millwall supporter. His great heroes, Alan Ball. He was a true Southern gentleman in every way, always ready to pass on his railway knowledge and experience to younger drivers. Arthur was a loyal ASLEF member and continued his interest in our union by joining the Retired Members’ Section and attending the AGM. The service was well attended at Beckenham crematorium and afterwards at Oak Farm Lodge for refreshments to reminisce about the great depot in the sky on 29 May, 2018.

It is with deep regret that I report the passing of retired Selhurst driver Arthur Hughes. Arthur began his career as an engine cleaner at Norwood depot in 1946, progressing to fireman then driver. He went into the dual link and worked on steam and electric traction before transferring to West Croydon and then Selhurst where he remained until his retirement in 1996. He was a true Southern gentleman in every way, always ready to pass on his railway knowledge and experience to younger drivers. Arthur was a loyal ASLEF member and continued his interest in our union by joining the Retired Members’ Section and attending the AGM. The service was well attended at Beckenham crematorium and afterwards at Oak Farm Lodge for refreshments to reminisce about the great depot in the sky on 29 May, 2018.

ALBERT SEYMOUR LAST JOURNEY
Albert Seymour has died at the age of 80. Starting at the local depot in October 1953, and joining ASLEF, he later became branch secretary at a busy time for the branch. He formed the 105 Club – still successful today – and after depot closure moved to Manchester Victoria which saw Albert change his footplate career to driver instructor and traction inspector until retirement.

MICK HOLMES LIVELY CHARACTER
Former Rugby branch retired member Mick ‘Oblob’ Holmes passed away on 17 May aged 81. Mick had always been a driver at Rugby in a long footplate career. Retiring in the late ’90s, he still turned up to the annual retired members’ do to catch up with old colleagues. At work, Mick was a very lively character, well-liked by all, willing to help, and I remember his brilliant wisecracks to help break the ice. His funeral was held at the Christadelphian Hall, with a wake at the railway club afterwards. Our thoughts and prayers go to his family.

GARY FOX DOCKERS’ FAN
Charing Cross driver and local level rep Gary Fox has died. Gary started as a railman at Lewisham station in June 1983, moving onto guard two years later at Slade Green before getting his driver’s job, also at Slade Green, in 1989. Gary transferred to Charing Cross in 1995 where he became a longstanding local level and health & safety rep, but by many will be fondly remembered as the king of the five-way fiddle. A fanatical Millwall supporter, Gary would often be seen wearing his Lions shirt to meetings with local management. Gary had only recently made the decision to retire early from the railway, before his life was untimely cut short, and it is a great shame Gary didn’t get to see more time in the retired link. Gary was a proud family man and our condolences to his wife Debbie, daughters Emma and Fran, family and friends.

ROY ARNOLD MUNGGOJERRIE AND RUMPELTEAIZER
On a hot sunny Friday morning at Charing crematorium, 25 old drivers turned up, along with his family, to pay their last respects to fellow Ashford driver Roy Arnold, who passed away on 24 June aged 96. Roy started on the railway at Maidstone before moving to Ashford in the 1950s where he got his driving post. One of his most memorable moments was to drive the royal train from Appledore to Victoria which went as smooth as clockwork. When he retired in the 1980s he took off his railway watch and said he was now finished being a slave to time. He loved cycling and stopping overnight at hostels so it was appropriate that his exit song at the crematorium was The Pushbike Song by Mungo Jerry.

Gary Fox as a young man (right) and not so young man (left) drinking in the Lions’ Den get to see more time in the retired link. Gary was a proud family man and our condolences to his wife Debbie, daughters Emma and Fran, family and friends.

Ray Garland. Grove Park

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Letters

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.

Staff travel facilities and the Rail Delivery Group

As the number of protected staff who have RDG national free travel passes diminishes (a point made by Paul Cutmore, Chingford, at AAD; reported in the Journal, July) I would welcome any push for improving travel facilities for all rail staff. With RSTL changing its name to RDG has anything changed? I would like to see an end of their god-like control of removed passes. With fellow council reps, I fought a five year battle on behalf of a member; a battle that had many eye-opening moments. At the start we were told RSTL has no appeal process; latterly we were informed there is a process. But it turns out to be so woolly and non-transparent it is hardly worth the paper it is written on.

I attended my branch and listened to a report from RMS members Les Muir, Tony West and Alan Taylor, three members with a total of well over 100 years’ service, and highly regarded in our trade union. They explained how RMS members are having passes removed or amended by over-zealous ticket inspectors, due to the legibility of the writing. And there is no appeal process. As we get older writing standards can diminish. I had the pleasure of informing them that there is an appeal service, and emailed them a copy.

As part of the five year battle, during which our GS made representations to RSTL, which were also unsuccessful, it has been evident that the appeal process is not fit for purpose. A letter of appeal cannot answer any questions that may arise, and cannot show the shaky handwriting of our more elderly members. It is a bureaucratic response that is usually negative. Surely, as RDG is made up of the TOCs we work for, it is time they pushed for a more open appeal process, allowing personal representation. There cannot only be one sanction available. After all, criminals have an appeal process, and receive varying sentences, not all of which are life.

Dave MacLennan, company council rep, and Selhurst branch

Mental health and safety critical roles on the rails

As someone who has been in safety critical posts for the past 14 years, and who also suffers from a mental health condition, I would like to highlight this important issue. Mental health in the workplace is a hot topic right now, and many employers are starting to realise it is an issue that needs attention. Good insight into mental health amongst employers is beneficial for both employee and employer. The correct understanding, support and assistance can lead to a much better recovery in the long-term.

The problem I have found is that not enough is understood about mental health conditions amongst employees who work in safety critical posts. The RSSB does not issue clear enough guidance for medical professionals, and employers have a distinct lack of understanding to enable them to support employees effectively.

More needs to be done to equip line managers to assist employees when needed, and the RSSB needs to research how to offer the correct guidance to occupational health professionals and employers alike. Employees suffer in silence for fear of being removed from their safety critical roles, either temporarily or, in some cases, permanently.

Mental health can be a short-term issue or a life-long issue, and statistics say that 1 in 4 of us will have some kind of mental health issue at some point in our lives. Let’s not let people suffer in silence, but be able to come forward and seek the help and support they need to allow them to recover effectively and be able to retain their safety critical status.

Jason Waddington, Leeds

Hard work and harmony

We would like to thank District 7’s DDC reps, EC member Andy Hudd, and full-time officer Brian Corbett for securing the harmonisation deal for GWR drivers on the West. The finalised harmonisation deal addressed the need to attain fairness and equality amongst ASLEF members and was duly supported through a democratic majority vote in July. The hard work that our DDC members, EC member, and full-time officer put into these negotiations is evident and reflected in the new t&cs. We thank all those involved and are proud to be part of a union that looks after its members’ interests. We encourage the union to maintain the principles achieved in the harmonisation deal by ensuring this contributes to a sense of unity and solidarity across the regions which will place the union in a strong negotiating position for the future challenges we, as drivers, will face.

Dan Davis, Gloucester branch secretary

Solidarity with guards

I would like to recognise the solidarity shown by South Western Railway guards in the ongoing dispute over guaranteeing a second safety-critical staff member on every passenger train, and especially to Bournemouth and Weymouth guards who are involved in an additional dispute regarding the dismissal of two colleagues. While spin doctors may use the terms ‘plan’, ‘normally’ and ‘guarantee to roster’ in their press releases, front line train crew know that only by guaranteeing that every train in passenger service has a second safety-critical member of staff will all passengers know there is someone to help them in an emergency. It is only then that passengers will know there is someone to

‘PNB when convenient’ on your diagram but the truth is there are frequently no facilities apart from the cess

The article in the Journal (August) regarding recruitment of female freight drivers seems to imply that because these drivers would be based at depots, with access to proper facilities, excuses such as a lack of toilets, will not be valid in future. This is fine for work that goes yard to yard, or terminal, where there should be facilities, but there is a glaring problem. A large proportion of freight work involves infrastructure work where the dreaded phrase ‘PNB when convenient’ appears on the driver’s diagram. The inconvenient truth, as highlighted by Barry Hare, of GBRf company council, is that there are frequently no facilities apart from the cess. The engineering supervisor’s only concern is job and finish, especially on auto ballaster and rail delivery trains. They have no concern regarding driving around for miles trying to find a PNB facility. On some freight companies there is no restriction on the length of night work, so 12 hour diagrams are common, with up to five hours continuous driving. Freight companies may want diversity but until they address the key issues, with t&cs and access to PNB facilities, recruitment is going to be an ongoing challenge.

Paul Barber, Eastleigh
turn to with enquiries during disruption, that vulnerable passengers will know there is someone to turn to for help when they are being harassed, and that less mobile passengers will know they will be able to travel when they want to rather than booking days in advance or worrying if there will be help to get on and off at their stop. For decades, railwaymen and women have stood together and fought to defend jobs, attain favourable pay settlements, rosters, and terms and conditions. Guards and drivers today benefit from the solidarity of those in whose shoes we now walk, and it is not only right to stand up for passengers, but also right to defend good jobs rather than allow a spiralling descent into a culture of split shifts, reduced sick pay, zero hour contracts and spiralling debt. Guards and drivers help to get on and off at their stop. Days in advance or worrying if there will be someone to turn to for help when they are being harassed, and that less mobile passengers will know they will be able to travel when they want to rather than booking days in advance or worrying if there will be help to get on and off at their stop.

**From a position of strength**

Can I take the opportunity to thank all the drivers in District 3 for the huge honour and responsibility in becoming your voice on the EC following my recent election? With over 2,200 drivers in the north-west of England and North Wales the task of representing your best interests cannot be underestimated. But having visited many branches already, and knowing the strength of unity across all drivers in ASLEF, I know that, collectively, we face any challenges from a position of strength. Many thanks and I look forward to working on your behalf during my time on the EC.

**A pleasure and a privilege**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members in District 2 who took the time to vote for me and to thank all the branches who nominated me in the recent EC election. I was overwhelmed by the support and hope I can do the job in a manner that is fitting to my district and to this great union. I would also like to thank Perth branch and Edinburgh No 2 for organising hustings and allowing all three candidates the opportunity to speak to the membership. It was an absolute pleasure and a privilege to stand alongside John McCue (Glasgow) and Tam McKendrick (Grangemouth) to debate the future of our trade union. It would be remiss of me not to mention my own branch, Motherwell. The support and encouragement was, and still is, greatly appreciated. The help, support and education I have received over the years has been fantastic and I thank each and every one of you.

I would also like to thank Hugh Bradley, EC2, for all the hard work and dedication he has shown over the last 15 years. Because of this I will step into this role with the union in a far better place than it was on Hugh’s first election.

**Every vote counts**

I would like to thank the members and branches of District 4 who voted for me in the recent election for EC member. Also thanks to my fellow candidate Pete James for his well-run campaign. The election had a narrow winning margin, which goes to show that every member’s vote counts. I now will have the honour and privilege of representing District 4 as its EC member from 1 January 2019 and I wish the EC president Tosh McDonald all the best in whatever he does in the future. I must give special thanks for the support I received from my branch, the guidance I was given as a young rep by the late Alan Dodds, and I cannot finish without mentioning my fantastic wife Karen and my sons Adam, Ethan and Caden, whose support I could not do without.

**Mark Wakenshaw,** **Gateshead & Newcastle
The Road goes ever on and on

More than 100 million copies of The Hobbit, and 150 million copies of The Lord of the Rings, have been sold around the world. KEITH RICHMOND takes the train to Oxford, where JRR Tolkien studied, taught, and wrote, for a revealing new exhibition at the Bodleian

HEN JRR Tolkien started reading a new chapter of what would become The Lord of the Rings at a meeting of The Inklings, an informal group of friends, including CS Lewis, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, Nevill Coghill and Roger Lancelyn Green, who met at the 'bird and baby', the Eagle and Child, in Oxford to drink beer, discuss books, and read aloud their own work, Hugo Dyson, an English don at Merton College, spoke up. 'Oh, no,' he cried. 'Not another F***ing Elf!'

‘In a hole in the ground lived a hobbit.’

There are millions of people around the world – not all of them fans of fantasy, swords and sorcery, warlocks and witches, Harry Potter and Game of Thrones – who have been entranced by Tolkien’s tales of Middle-Earth – from The Hobbit (1937) and The Lord of the Rings (1954-55) and The Adventures of Tom Bombadil (1962) to the panoply of posthumous publications, such as The Silmarillion (1977), The Lays of Beleriand (1985) and, most recently, Beren and Lúthien (2017). And there are many more who, taking a leaf from Hugo Dyson’s book, fail to warm to fairyland with its warriors and werewolves, dwarves and elves, rivermaids, ringwraiths, dungeons, dragons and orcs.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born in 1892 in Bloemfontein, a small town on the high veldt of the Orange Free State, to English parents, Arthur and Mabel, and brought up in ‘genteel poverty’ in Sarehole, a village in Warwickshire, and, after he won a place at the King Edward VI grammar school, Birmingham. He went up to Exeter College, Oxford, to read Greats (Classics) before switching to English, and then, after graduating with a first in 1915, enlisted as a second lieutenant in the 13th Lancashire Fusiliers.

The Great War cast a long shadow over his generation. There is a poignant photo in a new exhibition, culled from the stacks of the Bodleian library, and curated by Tolkien archivist Catherine McIIwaine, which shows Tolkien and the other first year undergraduates of Exeter College in the fellows’ garden. There are 53 young men in the photo (four were missing); 46 fought in the war and 24 (almost half the cohort) were killed in action. ‘By 1918 all but one of my close friends were dead;’ he wrote in the foreword to the second edition of The Lord of the Rings.

After the war he did a stint on the Oxford English Dictionary before becoming Reader in English Language at Leeds University in 1920; Rawlinson & Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford in 1925; and then Merton Professor of English Language & Literature from 1945 until he retired in 1959. He worked mostly on Old and Middle English manuscripts – translating Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl and Sir Orfeo – and established his reputation with an essay (originally a lecture delivered in 1936) called Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics which transformed our understanding of this Old English epic poem composed 1,300 years ago.

‘The utter stupid waste of war.’

But what made his name – and his fortune – was The Lord of the Rings – particularly a single volume mass market paperback that took off in America in the late 1960s along with Jefferison Airplane, The Silver Surfer, and Siddhartha by Herman Hesse as a college kid staple on campuses throughout the States.

This exhibition, of 200 items, half of which have never been shown before, is the most extensive collection of Tolkien material put on public display. It includes his writing desk, chair, and briar pipes; the first page of the manuscript of Roverandom; lots of maps of Middle-Earth and drawings for The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings; and the correspondence to his children later collected as The Father Christmas Letters. As well as the original artwork for the cover of The Hobbit, with his handwritten notes in the margins, including a request for the sun to be coloured red. Stanley Unwin, the publisher, refused to cough up for an extra colour – he wouldn’t stretch beyond a two colour (blue and green) cover – which, given the millions Allen & Unwin has made from the book, is ironic.

‘Not all those who wander are lost.’

There’s fan mail, too. From Arthur Ransome, ‘a humble hobbit-fancier’, in 1937; Iris Murdoch, ‘absorbed by The Lord of the Rings’, in 1965; Joni Mitchell, asking for permission to use the names Lorien and Strider for two recording and publishing companies she wanted to set up, and sending him the lyrics for ‘from Father Christmas’; and the writer in a city of briar pipes, old trees, and dreaming spires
On Track

EYES DOWN FOR CONFERENCE SEASON BINGO

ARTY conference season is almost upon us: the 150th Trades Union Congress from 9 to 12 September in Manchester; the Liberal Democrats from 15 to 18 September in Brighton; UKIP from 21 to 22 September in Birmingham; Labour from 23 to 26 September in Liverpool; the Tories from 30 September to 3 October in Birmingham; the Greens from 5 to 7 October in Bristol; and the SNP from 7 to 9 October in Glasgow.

With the advent of a new conference season there’s a chance for delegates to play the popular parlour game of political party conference bingo. The idea is to tick off, one by one, the clichés trotted out by speakers at fringe meetings as well as from the podium in the conference hall. It’s a game you can play at home, too, by catching the coverage of conferences on the rolling news networks as well as the juiciest interviews and choicest soundbites on news bulletins on television, on radio, and online. And, of course, in the newspapers next day.

On the card this year are hard-working families; thought leadership; cutting edge; start the conversation; fully funded; connectivity; direction of travel; digital future; boom and bust; evidence-led; robust strategy; under the radar; magic money tree; and addressing the real issues.

As well as perennial favourites moving (or going) forward; making a (real) difference; pushing the envelope; 24/7; hit the ground running; elephant in the room; blue sky thinking; green field sites; red lines; bottom line; and drawing a line in the sand.

And common 21st century clichés such as fast track; touch base; no brainer; ball park figure; no magic bullet; in the loop; up and down the country; step up to the plate; think outside the box; on the same page; singing from the same hymn (or song) sheet; at the end of the day; the jury’s still out; and the ordinary man (or woman) in the street.

Let us know how you get on playing party conference bingo...

Keith Richmond

Prize Crossword

Crossword 149 by Tom Williams

Across
1 Lounge or parlour (7, 4)
2 Pal at school
3 Began
4 Honey insect
5 Native American tent
6 Dark red Bordeaux wine
7 Blows up with explosives
8 Select by voting
9 Tie-on label
10 Brilliant crimson
11 Egg-shaped
12 Chimney or church tower restorer

Solution to Crossword 148
Across: 1 Gosling 5 Bowl 7 Lad 8 Identify 9 Fatal 10 Coop 13 Mean 14 Save 18 Exit 19 Olive 21 Money box 22 Roe 23 Cent 24 Earnest
Down: 1 Goldfish 2 Sedative 3 Icicle 4 Greece 5 Bottom 6 Wife 11 Pedigree 12 Indecent 15 Expert 16 Stable 17 Hoaxer 20 Hole

Congratulations to Colin Pendrill, of Barnstaple, Devon, 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 148th prize crossword in the August 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 September.

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.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS: TRADE UNION AND LABOUR RELATIONS (CONSOLIDATION) ACT 1992 (AS AMENDED)

A resolution approving the furtherance of political objects within the meaning of the above Act as an object of the union has been adopted by ballot under the Act. Any payments in furtherance of those objects will be made out of a separate fund, the political fund of the union.

Any member, who joined the Union on or after 1 March 2018, who has given notice of their willingness to contribute to the union’s political fund (an ‘opt-in’ notice), has a right to withdraw that notice by giving notice to the union (a ‘withdrawal notice’).
Qualiﬁed Train Drivers

Vacancies at our depots nationwide including London, Rugby, Crewe and other locations
£53,172 Basic + London weighting allowance, where applicable + Comprehensive Benefits

Direct Rail Services is not just another rail operator. Serving Britain’s network of civil nuclear facilities as well as major logistics businesses and passenger operators, we deliver rail transport that is safe, secure and reliable. In fact, we’ve transported nuclear material over ﬁve million miles of track without a single signiﬁcant incident.

Operating nationwide, we employ more than 400 highly trained, dedicated people who enjoy stable long-term careers and some of the best beneﬁts in the business. You can join them.

As one of our professional drivers, you will carry out a varied range of train movements, as well as conducting brake tests and completing detailed documentation.

Naturally, you should be a qualiﬁed and experienced driver with an exemplary safety record and meticulous attention to detail, and you will be happy to work varying shifts, including some nights.

DRS is a strong promoter of gender, orientation and racial diversity in rail and particularly welcomes applications from members of minority groups. The Company is also happy to consider applications from candidates who would like to work ﬂexibly.

In return, we offer outstanding conditions of employment, including links that average to a 35 hour working week.

Under current arrangements there is the potential to work overtime, plus an unrivalled package including 34 days leave, a generous pension scheme, healthcare scheme, employee assistance programme, salary sacriﬁce schemes and even relocation assistance if appropriate.

What’s more, we offer a number of professional training courses to our team members – so we’ll work with you to take your career anywhere you want to go.

It’s time to drive trains with a difference. It’s time to download an application form from www.directrailservices.com/careers and return it by email to recruitment@drl.co.uk

Respected. Included. Performing at Our Best.

Changing the world of work for good