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GS Mick Whelan
Better world for everyone

WE ARE, and always should be, a campaigning union carrying out the wishes of the membership on workplace issues, standards, health and safety, pay, equality fairness, legal protections and rights. This is on top of hundreds of existing policies on issues, at home and abroad, generated and rightly supported by this trade union over the 139 years of its existence. Sometimes we should remind ourselves that we were formed not just as the collective industrial voice of our members, but to be a force and voice for social justice and a pressure group to achieve those aims and correct those injustices that impact on our members and their families.

To those who have not been in a trade union before, and think we are just an insurance policy, or about pay and conditions, it is our job to demonstrate that, together, we are more than that, and we operate as a movement for the greater good. There are, of course, those we will never convince, but as one of the few groups that have not seen austerity directly impact upon us we have a greater need to demonstrate our belief of a better world for everyone. None of us can believe it is right for children to go hungry outside of school terms or that one in five workers suffer in-work poverty. Work must pay and have the dignity that comes with it.

Trade unions were formed to give voice, strength, and liberty through education to drive social mobility and a more just society. It seems to me we still have a long way to go. Since politically-imposed austerity we have slipped back; childhood illnesses that had been eradicated have returned, life expectancy is decreasing, homelessness is increasing, and food banks are becoming the norm. With the norm comes acceptance and we will fight to see that does not happen. I am ashamed that we are the only generation to leave our children and grandchildren worse off. That should not be our legacy.

So with your support and help, and the help of your reps, ASLEF will always research, champion, campaign and demonstrate. To add our voice and our logo to all those causes that advance society and help to build a better world. When we come under attack we are called ‘greedy train drivers’ and comparisons are made with other workers – to try to create the politics of envy – but those who say these things are not like us because we want decent wages and standards for everyone, and I have never seen any of our critics convince, but as one of the few groups that have not seen austerity directly impact upon us we have a greater need to demonstrate our belief of a better world for everyone. None of us can believe it is right for children to go hungry outside of school terms or that one in five workers suffer in-work poverty. Work must pay and have the dignity that comes with it.

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May I add my congratulations to Graham Morris on his re-election as office for District 1 and to Mark Daniels on his re-election as trustee. I look forward to continuing to work with them both.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
NEWS

Failing Grayling does it again!

ICK Whelan spoke out after it emerged that Northern Rail’s six-carriage long services in and out of Leeds station have been delayed by a further two years. The longer trains should have been brought in at the end of this year but won’t, now, come into service until late 2021.

Mick said: ‘During the timetable crisis no one – not Chris Grayling, the Secretary of State for Transport who famously washed his hands of the problems passengers were suffering by claiming “I don’t run the railway”, and not Northern – ever mentioned that the new, longer, trains wouldn’t be coming in until 2021.

‘That means that the problems of overcrowded trains, which the DfT, and the company, promised would be sorted this year, won’t be dealt with for another two years. Now I know that nothing is ever Mr Grayling’s fault, but it is now clear that he knew, and chose to say, and do, nothing.

‘Mr Grayling is the man who hired a ferry company with no ferries and is now responsible for a train company with no trains – or, at least, not the right trains.’

The lighted flame

ASLEF’s 18 senior elected officers – the general secretary, assistant general secretary, executive committee members and district organisers – line up at head office in front of the Mick Jones triptych portraying the history of our union since it was formed in Leeds in 1880. From left: DO2 Kevin Lindsay; EC3 John Metcalfe; DO5 Nigel Gibson; EC7 Andy Hudd; AGS Simon Weller; EC5 Howard Kaye; DO7 Brian Corbett; DO3 Andy Hourigan; GS Mick Whelan; EC1 Marz Colombini; DO6 Dicky Fisher; DO1 Graham Morris; EC6 Dave Calfe; EC4 Mark Wakenshaw; EC2 Jim Baxter; DO4 Nick Whitehead; DO8 Finn Brennan; and EC8 Terry Wilkinson.

Photo: Andrew Wyard

QUOTE...

‘Brexit was like the UK got drunk and accidentally unfriended Europe on Facebook.’ – Leo Kearse

…UNQUOTE

DBC FINED £2.7 MILLION

DB Cargo has been fined £2.7 million, with £188,873 costs, after being convicted of an offence under the Health & Safety at Work Act. The ORR prosecuted the company after a 13-year-old boy suffered life-changing injuries when he received an electric shock from a 25,000 volt overhead line at Tyne Yard in Gateshead.

STUPID GIRLS POSE FOR SELIFIES ON LIVE LINE

Two ‘stupid’ schoolgirls, aged 13 or 14 according to police, were caught on camera risking their lives by posing for selfies, striking several different poses, on live railway lines at Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, on Friday 1 March.

TUBE SUICIDE ATTEMPTS FALL

The number of suicide attempts on London Underground has fallen for the first time in five years. TfL has praised staff for making more interventions with vulnerable passengers.

Blowing bubbles

Graham Morris has been re-elected, unopposed, to serve another five-year term as District 1 Organiser. Graham, London Bridge branch, and a big West Ham fan, was first elected to the position in November 1999. He is ASLEF’s lead officer for negotiations with Southern;

Graham Morris: COYI
Southeastern; South Western; Thameslink; Great Northern; and the Island Line on the Isle of Wight.

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

Top speech from Kevin Lindsay of @ASLEFunion calling out the shambles of Abellio ScotRail, the need for public ownership of buses and trains, and rejecting the parking levy.

@NeilFindlay_MSP

We have minor delays between Woodford and Hainault due to absence of train staff.

@centralline

Use of language is important. It’s a lack of train staff either due to the company trying to run the service on too few staff or poor coverage administration. Saying absence puts the blame on staff and implies that they have made a choice to just not come in.

@WestLondonElectric

Not enough train drivers on the roster with the added bonus of four ‘one unders’ in six weeks means four less drivers from the ones we do have.

@ShruggedAslef

Police colluded with construction blacklist by giving information about workers to building companies.

@AlanJonesPA

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My aim is true

ALISON Miller, a driver with ScotRail, and secretary of our Women’s Representatives’ Committee, starred in the six-part television series Inside Central Station on BBC Scotland last month.

The documentary series, which began on 3 March, and was produced and directed by Paul Glynn, looks at the lives of the men and women who work all hours to keep Glasgow Central, Scotland’s busiest railway station, on track.

Pete ‘Punky’ Smith

A retirement do for Pete ‘Punky’ Smith – a Watford driver for more than 40 years – is being held from 16.00 on Friday 12 April at the White Lion, 79 St Albans Road, Watford, WD17 1SJ. ‘All who know Pete are welcome,’ says Ian Morris, Watford LLC.

CONFERENCE & RALLIES

The Welsh Labour Party conference is at the Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Friday 12 to Sunday 14 April. The Scottish Trades Union Congress is at the Caird Hall, Dundee, from Monday 15 to Wednesday 17 April. Workers’ Memorial Day is Sunday 28 April. ASLEF’s annual assembly of delegates is at the Marriott Hotel, Leeds, from Monday 13 to Thursday 16 May. The STUC LGBT+ workers’ conference is at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow, from Saturday 25 to Sunday 26 May. The STUC youth conference is at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow, from Saturday 29 to Sunday 30 June. The Durham Miners’ Gala is on Saturday 13 July. The Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival, near Dorchester, is from Friday 19 to Sunday 21 July. The Trades Union Congress is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 8 to Wednesday 11 September. The Labour Party conference is at the Brighton Centre from Saturday 21 to Wednesday 25 September.

500 CLUB: John White, with number 77, won the March draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £392.

Off the Rails

JONATHAN POWELL, who made a few friends, and lots of enemies, as Tony Blair’s chief of staff from 1995 to 2007, has condemned the Tory government’s “abominable handling of Brexit” as ‘the worst-managed negotiation in living memory’. Theresa May, he says, ‘tried to play hardball, employing the mantra that “No deal is better than a bad deal”. Adding, caustically, ‘In a negotiation it is a good idea to know what your best alternative to a negotiated agreement is, but that is not the same as threatening to shoot yourself in the head unless the other side do what you want [because] they are likely to invite you to do it.’

RICHARD E GRANT, asked by E5 magazine whether he takes ‘bus, taxi or Tube?’ replied: ‘Bus and Tube every day using my coveted Oyster freedom pass, due to my vast vintage.’ The star of Withnail and I, The Age of Innocence, Gosford Park and Can You Ever Forgive Me? was born in Mmbane, Swaziland, 61 summers ago. Asked what he would do if he were Mayor of London for a day, he said: ‘Offer free bus and Tube travel. Make wifi free above and below ground and designate a landing spot for Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane.’

SUE PERKINS, best known for The Great British Bake Off, Light Lunch and Insert Name Here, when asked about the political figure she most admires, didn’t hesitate. ‘Nye Bevan. Universal health care is the most sacred part, the most important pillar, of British citizenship.’ Mind you, when asked what her Mastermind subject would be, she muttered: ‘The Gothic novel, or Jacobean tragedy. No trifling for me: it’s all about grimness, death, destruction and monsters.’

ROY HODGSON, manager of Crystal Palace, and fondly remembered by ASLEF members in Kent as a tenacious right-back for Tonbridge Angels, Gravesend & Northfleet, Maidstone United and Ashford Town, was droll in defeat when a Match of the Day interviewer gushed, ‘Looking at the positives, you did score two away from home today?’ Roy, after a Pinterestesque pause, replied: ‘Yeah, but it’s no good scoring two away from home if the opponents score three...’

NAOMI CAMPBELL, asked by E5 magazine ‘Bus, taxi or Tube?’ replied: ‘If I were a tourist I’d say get on the Tube, as that’s where you see and hear the real London.’ Naomi’s not a tourist, so that’s taxi, not Tube, then...
Strike vote forces FOC to back off

After drivers at two of the big five rail freight companies voted overwhelmingly to strike to protect their pensions, Freightliner withdrew its plans to change its scheme. Members were balloted after Freightliner Heavy Haul and Freightliner Intermodal sought to introduce a five-year qualifying period before new drivers can join the companies’ scheme. This would have a detrimental effect on current members as a five year pause on new members – as people leave or coming in, as others leave, to maintain the level of contributions in the fund.

Ballot result: Are you prepared to take part in a strike? Freightliner IM: Yes 94.1%. No 5.9%. Turnout 70%.
Freightliner HH: Yes 84.8%. No 15.2%. Turnout was 60.3%. The EC called two 24-hour strikes for Friday 15 March and Friday 29 March. ‘We regret the need to go on strike but are determined to protect the interests of our members,' said GS Mick Whelan. ‘It is still not too late for the company to see sense. We are willing to sit down and talk to Freightliner and try to keep the wheels of business turning in Britain.’

Nick Barclay of Freightliner, a Genesee & Wyoming company, wrote to Mick after a meeting with lead officer Nigel Gibson and business council reps Paul Barber and Pete Mason ‘to confirm that Freightliner will not be proceeding with the implementation of these proposals at this time.’ ‘We stuck to our position that we would not support changes to benefits for commercial gain,’ said Nigel Gibson.

‘And that strike action would go ahead if they did not withdraw the proposal!’

Kevin calls on councils to rule out car park tax

ASLEF has urged councils to rule out introducing a car parking tax which would penalise hard-pressed working men and women. Kevin Lindsay, our organiser in Scotland, said: ‘It is absolutely outrageous that councils are considering taxing people for turning up to work’

‘The SNP government, in cahoots with the Greens, is going to give councils the right to charge a workplace parking levy and there are signs that many councils will do just that. They say it will reduce congestion on the roads and cut air pollution.

‘That’s, frankly, unlikely. But what it

Rail firms say they have learned lessons

Rail companies claim they have ‘learned the lessons’ of last year’s timetable fiasco – the problems of which would have been far worse had ASLEF members not helped TOCs out of problems of their own making – ahead of the introduction of 1,000 extra services on Sunday 19 May to tackle overcrowding.

Govia Thameslink Railway, Northern, Network Rail and Transport Secretary Chris Grayling were all blamed by passengers for the chaos last year which crippled the rail network. This time companies say new services will only be introduced where there is ‘high confidence’ in the infrastructure, where the route learning has been done, and when the trains are ready.

The road to hell

Chris Proctor, once of this parish, sends a postcard from Sicily: ‘The first railway in Italy was inaugurated 180 years ago, in October 1839, in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. It was less than five miles long and ran between Naples and Portici but met with opposition from an unexpected quarter. The Pope at the time – Gregory XVI – changed the French term for a railway chemin de fer – path of iron – to declare it a chemin d’enfer – a way to hell! – and

Graffiti artists died hiding from train

Three graffiti artists – Jack Gilbert, 23, Alberto Carrasco, 19, and Harrison Scott-Hood, 23 – who were found dead at Loughborough Junction station on 18 June were hiding from an oncoming train, a coroner has found. A detective told the court they would have seen the train coming but not known which line it was on as it was pitch black. A statement from the families said the three friends ‘lost their lives because of the dangers this art form brings’ and added: ‘Rest in Paint’.

QUOTE...

‘Anniversary tours tend to be weakly nostalgic. But Massive Attack’s Mezzanine (1998) has acquired greater relevance. In an era of hostile environments, drone warfare, and surveillance capitalism, its air of encroaching paranoia feels eerily prescient. Is there a better description of the anxious tedium of Brexit than Inertia Creeps?’ – George Eaton in the New Statesman ...UNQUOTE
TIGgers’ Blair Witch project

S Mick Whelan spoke out after Chuka Umunna and seven other Labour MPs resigned the whip to sit as The Independent Group. ‘I regret that they have decided they no longer wish to represent their constituencies in Parliament as Labour MPs, especially as that was how they were elected. On a Labour ticket at a general election that inspired millions to vote Labour and saw the party increase its vote by the largest share since 1945. ‘Their decision to walk out into the political wilderness – remember the fate of the SDP? – is sad, but not unexpected. Frankly, it’s less about a desire to “forge a new consensus” and more that they don’t like Jeremy Corbyn, and the socialist policies on which Labour fought the last election, and long to bring back the ghost of Tony Blair. ‘The truth is that were asked to dance! We were given a chance to be heard and also gained an insight into the mechanics of the union. It was an opportunity to hear first hand the vision of our general secretary in ensuring ASLEF is for all. A great day and events like this show what an inclusive and progressive union we are. Thanks to D8 BAME rep Trevor Robinson for hosting the event.

ASLEF for all

SHERELLE CADOGAN, assistant branch secretary, Morden, reports on the District 8 BAME forum

I attended the ASLEF BAME forum for District 8 at head office for the first time last month. With Mick Whelan, Finn Brennan and Terry Wilkinson we discussed how we can move forward with engaging more of our BAME colleagues across the transport network. Diversity is being invited to the party, inclusion is being asked to dance. This day we were asked to dance! We were given a chance to be heard and also gained an insight into the mechanics of the union. It was an opportunity to hear first hand the vision of our general secretary in ensuring ASLEF is for all. A great day and events like this show what an inclusive and progressive union we are. Thanks to D8 BAME rep Trevor Robinson for hosting the event.

Shortage of drivers

DB Cargo and the National College for High Speed Rail have launched a new 18-month Level 3 train driver apprenticeship programme in Doncaster. ‘This shows what can be achieved when train operating companies, freight operating companies, on-track machine companies, trade unions and regulators come together and collaborate,’ said Kerrie Talbot of DBC.

She added, with no discernible sense of irony, given the company’s mass clear-out of drivers via voluntary redundancy and early retirement, ‘We have an acute shortage of train drivers and this is an excellent way of developing a new pipeline of talent and creating the next generation of drivers.’

Passengers fed up with private TOCs

A new survey by Transport Focus shows that passengers do not feel the railways are run for their benefit and there is a lack of accountability when things go wrong, TF chief executive Anthony Smith said: ‘Passengers know they are not getting the train service they are paying for. This research underscores that passengers want a more reliable service and – whichever model is selected to run the system – that they want to know who is in charge of their railway.’

TRAIN WINDSCREEN SMASHED

Police are trying to trace teenagers who threw a stone that cracked the windscreen of a train approaching Galashiels on the Borders Railway line between Edinburgh and Tweedbank. The driver was unhurt but the windscreen will cost £3,200 to replace.

The water of life tastes better in an ASLEF crystal whisky tumbler! Price £8 (inc p&p); email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk
Put the wheels and steel back together

S MICK

Whelan has urged the Williams Rail Review to recommend putting the ‘wheels and steel’ of Britain’s railways back together – under public ownership.

He was speaking after Sir Peter Hendy, chair of Network Rail, which owns and manages the UK’s railway infrastructure, said he would not mind if the Williams report recommends Network Rail’s abolition.

‘We have long argued that the right thing to do – for passengers, staff and taxpayers – is to bring the wheels and steel back together – to forge a modern, vertically integrated railway, fit for the 21st century – in which the operator is also responsible for the track on which the trains run,’ said Mick.

‘But it has to be done under public ownership. Keith Williams has said that the franchise system has failed and everyone who works on the railway – a natural monopoly – knows that privatisation hasn’t worked.

‘That’s why it would be utterly wrong if the privatised train operating companies – which let passengers down every day, and take money out of the industry – got their hands on the infrastructure, which is currently in public hands.

‘Opinion polls show that even Conservative-voting commuters, fed up with the high fares the TOCs charge, want to bring every part of our railway back into public ownership. To run it for the benefit of everyone. That’s the way forward.’

Mick: ‘We need to forge a modern vertically-integrated railway fit for the 21st century

The air that I breathe

Mick Holder of ASLEF’s health and safety department attended the launch of the Trade Union Clean Air Network at the ITF in Borough, south London, on Wednesday 6 February. UNICEF, the same week, launched Healthy Air for Every Child, a report which criticised the UK government for being ‘insufficiently ambitious’. Graham Petersen, secretary of the Greener Jobs Alliance, said: ‘There has, rightly, been a public outcry about this but very little has been said about workers as a vulnerable group. There are huge numbers of people exposed to dangerous levels of pollutants as a result of work yet this is rarely reflected in national and local strategies.’

£80m wall to protect track

The DfT has made up to £80 million of funding available for a new wall to protect the railway line at Dawlish in Devon where the sea wall, built to protect one of the most picturesque stretches of track in the country, was destroyed by high tides and stormy seas in 2014. The new wall will be two-and-a-half metres higher than the existing five metre high structure.

Fly like an Eagle


‘Chris Smith was absolutely gobsmacked, but delighted: “Ditto Peter Mandelson. But when she told John Prescott, her boss at the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, he harrumphed: “Tell me something I don’t know, love.” All the gay men were gobsmacked,’ she tells the Progress podcast, ‘and all the heterosexual men go “Yeah, yeah, we know” because, obviously, they don’t get the signals they normally get from heterosexual women.’

WHEELIE BIN LEFT ON LINE

Teenagers climbed a fence across a private level crossing at Carnoustie, near Dundee, on Thursday 21 February and left a wheelie bin on the railway line. One boy stood by the tracks to film the impending crash but the driver of the Edinburgh to Aberdeen service, warned by a train driver going the other way, slowed before impact. The BTP are looking for the culprits.

NEW RESEARCH REVEALS HGVS CAUSE ACCIDENTS AND DEATHS

A Freedom of Information request to Highways England by Freight on Rail has revealed that HGVs were involved in 43% of critical incidents on the strategic road network lasting more than five hours, and 56% lasting more than ten. ‘More rail freight means fewer fatal collisions and fewer road closures,’ said Freight on Rail manager Philippa Edmunds.

CITY OF LONDON

Our City of London branch has closed. Members from this branch have been moved into St Pancras branch.

Our new topical tee-shirt, designed by those Hoxton hipsters at Philosophy Football, features Rik Mayall as the obnoxious anarchist Rick in The Young Ones, and this classic exchange: ‘He threw us off the train because you said ASLEF was an anagram for “total and complete bastard!” And apart from everything else… it isn’t, even. £10 (inc p&p); email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk
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Deal with the devil

The Locomotive Journal in April 1919 heralded a historic agreement hammered out after long negotiations – and the threat of a national strike – between ASLEF and the Railway Executive over our national programme. MICK HOLDER turns back time, and the pages of the bound copies of the Journal, to see what GS John Bromley and the EC won for members.

THE GOVERNMENT'S PLEDGE

Monday 24 March saw the final conference in the renewed negotiations between our representatives, Sir Albert Stanley, and the Railway Executive. The interpretation of the government's offer has been decided, and to that extent an agreement was reached. The government give a pledge that negotiations on the outstanding items of the programme shall be continued immediately after the agreement is ratified.

Representatives of the National Union of Railwaymen and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen met Sir Albert Stanley, President of the Board of Trade, and the Railway Executive. Sir Auckland Geddes and Sir Robert Horne, Minister of Transport, were also present.

At the conclusion of the conference, after seven o'clock, Mr Bromley said: 'A general agreement has been reached. It is not a final settlement; it is only an understanding so far as we have gone. I am more satisfied tonight than we have gone. I am more satisfied tonight than we have gone. I am more satisfied tonight than we have gone.

THE TERMS OF THE OFFER

Sir Albert Stanley issued the following statement: 'At the meeting between representatives of the government, the Railway Executive Committee, and the railway unions, the whole of the concessions offered by the government were reviewed and agreed interpretations arrived at.'

Guaranteed Week The standard week's work to consist of 48 hours. The standard week's wages, exclusive of any payment for overtime or Sunday duty, to be guaranteed to all employees who are available for duty throughout the week. But turns commencing and finishing on Sunday shall form part of the guaranteed week. In the event of a strike affecting the work of any grade, either generally or in any district, the question of suspending the operation of this article shall be referred to the general committee to be set up under article 7 of this memorandum.

Overtime All time worked on weekdays in excess of the standard hours to be paid for at the rate of time and a quarter, each day to stand by itself for overtime purposes.

Sunday Duty Twelve o'clock midnight Saturday to twelve midnight Sunday. Time and a half, without addition, to rate for overtime or night duty, the same to apply to Christmas Day and Good Friday. Hours worked on these days in excess of the standard number of hours shall not be computed as part of the hours of work of any other day.

Night Duty (Weekdays) All ordinary time worked between 10pm and 4am to be paid for at the rate of time and a quarter; all overtime worked between 10pm and 4am to be paid at an inclusive rate of time and a half.

Rest In all regular duties a period of 12 hours rest to be shown on the rosters at the home station, but in other cases a minimum of nine hours.

Holidays One week's holiday with pay after 12 months' service, to include all casual employees who are regularly employed, without prejudice to those men who already have a longer holiday under their existing conditions of service.

Management The negotiating committees of the two unions will be recognised as the medium for dealing with all questions affecting rates of pay and conditions of service while the present negotiations are proceeding. Other items to be discussed at further meetings.

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF RAIL

Private management and ownership of railways not only stands condemned in itself, but its stranglehold affects every other department of national life.

The ASLEF Journal – which was known, from its first issue in 1888 until 2006, as the Locomotive Journal, is the longest-established, continuously-published, trade union periodical in Britain and, we believe, the world. The Journal, which is mailed to every member's home each month, is the main method of communication between head office and members. When the Locomotive Engineers & Firemen's Monthly Journal was launched as a 32 page A5 periodical in February 1888, the editor explained: 'A desire has been expressed that there should be a medium of communication between the members of the Society and locomotive engineers and firemen in general, whereby they might exchange opinions on the different questions in which they, as a body of responsible workmen, are directly interested, with a view to their consolidation as a body for the purpose of improving their position.' While the look of the Journal has changed, the reasons for publishing it have not. The ASLEF Journal is still, in this 21st century digital age, a key tool for this trade union.

John Bromley left school at the age of 12, in 1888, and joined the Great Western Railway as an engine cleaner two years later. He became a fireman, then a driver, and was always active in the union, known as 'a witty and erudite orator with pronounced left-wing views, at least on domestic affairs'. He was general secretary of ASLEF from 1914 to 1936 and Labour MP for Barrow-in-Furness from 1924 to 1931.
OLITICS is the main topic of conversation just now with the UK Parliament engaged in a game of Brexit Hokey Cokey. Our politicians at a UK level will be held accountable for the outcome at the next general election by us all. But whilst most of the media focus has been on Westminster and Brexit, here in Scotland the Scottish government has passed its budget with the support of the Scottish Greens. Contained within this budget were significant tax changes which will affect ASLEF members and their families.

As a socialist and trade unionist, I’ve always supported a progressive tax system. I’ve always believed that those who earn the most should pay the most. In the Scottish budget train drivers in Scotland, on average pay of £52,000, will pay around £1,500 more in tax than a company director on £150,000. Surely a progressive tax system must include other tax bands? And, with a fairer tax system, Scotland could do more.

Also included in the Scottish budget is a proposal from the SNP to the Greens to give local councils the powers to introduce a workplace car parking levy. Whilst councils are seeing their budgets cut this levy can’t be the panacea to this problem. As a union we want to encourage as many people out of cars and onto public transport as possible – but putting a levy in place is not going to achieve it.

Recent press reports say that people are making 5 million fewer bus journeys a year due to cuts in services and the failed policy of deregulation of the bus industry. On rail, Abellio ScotRail is practically running the railway into the ground, with some employers saying they won’t employ anyone who relies on Abellio to get them to work as the railway is so unreliable.

The Scottish rail franchise performance is the worst it’s ever been. Yet, remarkably, Abellio will post a profit of around £1.2 million this year. So, with public transport in disarray, this is not the time to allow local councils to introduce this levy. I’d also argue that, in the event it is introduced, shift-working train drivers should be exempt as there is no public transport for early morning starts or late night finishes.

ASLEF is a campaigning union and, without our political fund, we would not be able to campaign for a progressive tax system, a publicly-owned railway, for or against a workplace car parking levy, or safeguarding our pensions as well as many other issues that affect our lives. For those who think it’s all about donating to the Labour Party, you’re wrong! Our political fund is really our most powerful tool. It’s our voice – and it allows us to shout loud and proud for our policies. I’d urge all members to join the political fund and help make the voice of our union stronger.

KEVIN LINDSAY, ASLEF’s organiser in Scotland, opens our four page special report by looking at Brexit, the Scottish government budget, tax bands, the workplace car parking levy, ScotRail’s poor performance (but nice fat profit), and how our union’s political fund gives members a powerful voice both in Scotland and the UK.

P

We live in interesting times

JIM BAXTER, ASLEF’s new EC member for Scotland, examines the problems at ScotRail, Freightliner and DB Cargo, pension deficits and greedy shareholders.

‘D LIKE to start by thanking everyone, branches and individuals, who supported me during the executive committee election. It’s a great privilege to be elected by my peers to represent District 2 in the EC room and I look forward to the challenges ahead and hope I can do our district proud.

We are living through some very interesting times politically. Brexit is a complete mess and, for our members in Scotland, there is the added ingredient of whether the eventual departure of Britain from Europe will lead to a second independence referendum. Only time will tell. Our members in ScotRail have their crosses to bear. Abellio is in complete turmoil and our members are the ones suffering: jobs constantly being cancelled or altered and drivers being moved to suit. There appears to be an exodus of drivers, which is hardly surprising, what with bad timetabling, bad diagramming, heavy workloads, lack of training, and being at the low end of the pay scale. All issues Abellio was warned about but chose to do nothing about.

There are clearly a number of problems the company has to deal with, amongst them a new training and recruitment plan. While they’re at it a discussion about an Employer Justified Retirement Scheme wouldn’t go amiss. Knowing when drivers are going to retire will allow the company to plan better with the bonus of seeing the industry help to bring down the high unemployment figures for young people.

The rail freight industry continues to be a merry-go-round of contracts won and lost. This creates uncertainty for our members. I believe the only way to stop this unsustainable model is for the whole rail industry to be brought back under public ownership. A case in point is DB Cargo which, after the mass clear-out of drivers via voluntary redundancy and early retirement, is now seeing the error of its ways and looking to recruit heavily. But I don’t think DBC will find it easy to recruit experienced drivers from other companies with the gaping hole in its pension scheme.

We, as a union, will do all we can, in what is a very difficult situation, to protect our members as the company looks at all options to alleviate this problem. Freightliner seems to want to attack our members’ pensions for no other reason than to fill the pockets of its greedy shareholders.

It’s not all bad news, though, as we are looking at a recruitment drive across many companies that should see the number of train drivers swell significantly. We have the new TransPennine Express depot in Glasgow, and Freightliner, DBC, ScotRail, Virgin and CrossCountry all looking to recruit. Going forward we will be working to the true professionalisation of our grade through the Train Drivers Apprenticeship Level 3. Already being trialled in England, we will be working with employers and lobbying the Scottish government and political parties to make sure Scottish train drivers aren’t left behind.
Comedy sketch

ANDREW FERGUSSON, company council secretary, reports on Abellio ScotRail

While the best railway Scotland has ever had is Abellio’s new slogan. Well, sadly, since they took over from First Group in April 2015, they have done some real old fashioned shunting and propelling movements. Our new InterCity service, which was to be operated by our refurbished iconic HSTs, with a full deployment from the December timetable change, sadly has not materialised. Indeed, we have only 10 sets in ScotRail at present of which only two have been refurbished. The Mark 4 coaches leased from Angel Trains, and refurbished by Wabtec, have been on a permanent slow and behind schedule.

Our 385s are well in service now and operating on the Edinburgh to Glasgow services, with few problems, and have been extended onto the southside of Glasgow services, although this was only possible after a full renewal of the driver’s front window, which was giving a distorted view whilst driving at night. Our interim fleet of 365s are being withdrawn, as they were a short-term lease, and the ageing 314s have also come to their lives’ end.

We have to mention the fiasco that was the training of drivers on HSTs and 385s, where our train planning made a comedy sketch of producing too many diagrams on the network side of ScotRail with nowhere near enough drivers trained to cover services. Our drivers have excelled at trying to shore up this ongoing problem by going above and beyond to keep the services running. But this hasn’t stopped ScotRail being issued with its second performance notice, as the company has failed to meet contractual targets of 85%, scoring just 79%, and has been given 12 weeks to submit remedial plans.

Over the last year ScotRail has lost more than 80 drivers for various reasons, and this year will lose another 50, mostly because of heavy recruiting by Virgin and FTP, and we can see a real problem materializing as these drivers have not been replaced in time.

Queen Street refurbishment is ongoing but, we believe, running behind schedule. The next stage is due to start in May, and will mean more cancelled and altered workings for our members. We are in year two of our two year pay deal; this will deliver a further increase in salary of 2.5%. Lastly, we have a new EC member in Brother Jim Baxter, who has taken over after Hughie’s stewardship of District 2 for the last 15 years. We wish you well, Hughie, and look forward to working alongside Jim.

First batch of apprentices

ARCHIE BARR, Polmadie, and company council rep, reports on Virgin West Coast

It has been a busy year at Virgin West Coast. The company has continued to recruit drivers internally, and recruited trainee drivers from outside the industry. Our lead officer, Kevin Lindsay, was the initiator in taking on the first batch of apprentice drivers, this being a first for Virgin. Of the apprentices, one was placed at Polmadie. Going forward, the company has intimated it intends to continue to recruit in our grade in Scotland. The company council obviously welcomes an increase in our grade, which we see as an indication that the franchise is in good hands.

We drive trains from A to B

RAB WICKSTED, company council secretary, reports on London North Eastern

The LNER drivers’ company council last year negotiated and delivered a pay deal from April 2018 to 2020, which included a traction/technology payment given to drivers from 28 December. The third part of this deal was paid from 27 March, this payment based on the February RPI figure published in March. Different companies use different monthly RPI figures throughout the year, hence the reason for the differing percentage rises your colleagues working for other companies might get.

The new traction we are learning, Class 800/801, is the largest undertaking of new traction learning on the East Coast main line since we learned the Class 90/91/DVTs. Unfortunately, their introduction has been delayed, but this bears no significance to us as drivers. We drive trains from A to B whenever they make delivery and become available; and for whoever the franchisee, or body appointed by the government is, so long as we are given the correct time to be trained and to learn them. The final part of that pay deal comes in on 29 March 2020 (based on February 2020 RPI).

We have a change on the DCC as Mark Wakenshaw, of Gateshead & Newcastle, was elected to the executive committee, from January 2019. We wish him well, and especially thank him for his time and all of his excellent work for drivers on the East Coast main line. We welcome Paul Basham, from Gateshead & Newcastle, who takes over from Mark on the company council.
**Big step forward**

**KEV BELL, company council, reports on DRS in Scotland**

HAVE the honour of giving the first ever report on behalf of the Direct Rail Services company council (Scotland). DO3 Andy Hourigan negotiated a third position, which was a good opportunity for me to move from local level rep to company council. The post was created in February after consideration of the size and geographical area previously covered by one member. The constituency covers York, Selfield, Carlisle, Motherwell, Grangemouth and Inverness, a very large area for one person to cover, thus the new position.

This is a big step forward for both ASLEF and DRS considering this time last month there was no ASLEF company council. The three new company council reps are Peter Robinson (Crewe depot) for the south of England; Warren Brannon (Selfield) for the north of England; and Kevin Bell (Grangemouth) for Scotland. All three of us have hit the ground running since taking up our posts in the middle of February.

We met with Andy Hourigan, lead officer, a couple of days after being elected. The first of what are going to be regular coaching sessions to give us an insight into how ASLEF works within the machinery. The role of company council rep is a different dynamic from my previous role as a local level rep, and I look forward to embracing this.

Our first meeting with management covered a number of topics. Over the past year the company recruited a number of trainee drivers into the grade, mostly from other roles in the company. The trainees all successfully passed their first driver’s rules and regulations. They have now passed out on their basic traction, the Class 37 engine. Further training on Class 66, 68 and, where required, Class 88 diesel/AC traction has started. Our drivers in training should be up and running by about September.

There is still an active recruitment programme in the company; we have seen two new drivers for Motherwell and a train person at Inverness.

DRS has recently been awarded one new contract in Scotland, the IM train, which brings with it a fair bit of training from route learning DBSO and Class 37 locos. In some cases it’s just refreshers but it’s encouraging to see work coming into Scotland and we are aware of other contracts being looked at. Throughout the UK, DRS has won some new flows of traffic and lost others; overall it balances out. We have had meaningful discussions on rules days, clarified that drivers can and will be given light duties as the occasion arises. We are currently negotiating a new rest day working agreement and I look forward to bringing ASLEF policies into the company.

**Rock’n’roll high school**

**SHIRLEY HANDSLEY, ASLEF Education’s project co-ordinator, reports on the project’s work in Scotland**

ASLEF Education is coming to the end of a two-year project, funded by the Scottish government via Scottish Union Learning, and a network of eight union learning reps working across ScotRail, LNER and Virgin West Coast. The ULRs have been instrumental in helping us deliver a range of courses to our Scottish members.

Examples include: Spanish language courses to SQF level 4; mental health awareness – understanding trauma; sign language courses; and understanding pensions.

The project has continued to work with our partner to develop courses for members that can be delivered in a classroom environment or online, with tutor support, for members in outlying areas through the collect learning partnership initiative run by the City of Glasgow Trade Union Education Department.

ASLEF has successfully applied for a further three years’ funding from the SUL. Starting on Monday 1 April the new project will focus on the following key objectives:

- **Apprenticeships**: A train drivers Level 3 apprenticeship went live in England in June 2018. Using this as a model the Scottish project will work within funding and qualification frameworks to create and deliver the equivalent across all companies operating in Scotland. We will also replicate the SVQ Level 2 modern apprentice that we deliver in ScotRail to other TOCs and continue to work with Unite to expand opportunities in engineering apprenticeships.

- **Mental Health**: Raising awareness of how the nature of driver employment can negatively impact on mental health. We will engage with employers to develop a comprehensive mental health policy and procedures to address these issues and look at creating mechanisms to assist drivers who have traumatic incidents by providing trauma support courses.

- **New Employer Engagement**: Rather than being a ScotRail focused project we will expand employer engagement with a particular focus on the vulnerable rail freight sector.

To enable us to deliver these objectives a new project worker will be appointed as Jim Baxter is now on the EC. Thanks, Jim, for leaving ASLEF Education in Scotland in a healthy position.
Element of hope

HUGH BRADLEY, a driver with Freightliner Intermodal, and the former EC member for District 2, reports on the state of freight in Scotland

A BRIEF update on the state of Scottish rail freight is still one of precariousness tinged with an element of hope.

For this article I’ve spoken to the various reps and find it frightening when looking at the number of freight drivers currently working in Scotland: DRS 36; DBC 32; GBRf 30; Freightliner IM 12; Freightliner HH 12 (once the drivers working the TPE services are TUPE’d over in May); Colas IM 4. With these driver numbers there has to be a question of how the rail maintenance contracts with Network Rail will be facilitated.

Against this backdrop we also have the major problems with the DB Cargo final salary pension fund being addressed while Freightliner members voted to strike over management’s changes to their final salary pension fund.

We still have the madness of the privatised freight industry where, in Scotland, Heavy Haul’s major work is presently TPE services to Manchester airport from Glasgow and Edinburgh; GBRf’s major work is the Caledonian Sleeper service; and DRS still covers the loco-hauled Fife circle ScotRail services.

Add to this we have Colas IM drivers working track maintenance services for DRS – after DRS won the contract from Colas IM – because DRS do not have enough drivers to fulfil this newly-won contract!

Hopefully, at last, we have reached the bottom of the demise of the freight industry in Scotland and can now see an increase in traffic and driver numbers. We are seeing active recruitment within DBC and, hopefully, new contracts on the horizon with increased intermodal and supermarket traffic.

And, on a positive note, the Moseggend international rail freight park is on schedule for operation in 2020. This is the project to expand the existing Moseggend railhead including 775m sidings with onsite storage, distribution services, and logistical facilities, with new road access and community green space. This will be a significant investment in the local community with up to 4,900 construction and operational jobs and will provide a direct road to rail link to logistic users all over the UK and continental Europe via the Channel Tunnel.

This will be an opportunity to run longer and heavier trains although, at this time, we do not know how many trains will be involved or who the preferred operator will be. Nevertheless, it’s a positive story in a time of uncertainty.
Let’s dance

Sherelle Cadogan believes that black or white, male or female, young or old, we have much more in common than we think. She tells KEITH RICHMOND about her life on the Underground.

DIVERSITY IS being invited to the party – inclusion is being asked to dance,’ says Sherelle Cadogan, 42, an instructor operator on London Underground – she joined the railway in 2002 – single mother of two, livewire union activist, and the guiding force behind TFfLA, which runs socials, raises money for charity, and aims to change the image of Tfl staff.

’It starts from the ground up, it can’t be top down. And to have a more diverse workforce you need to have more diverse panels:’ She pauses. ’I’m quite a little stirrer. And I’d love to leave a legacy of more diversity in transport.’

Sherelle was born in Westminster in 1976 and brought up in West Norwood. Her mum Von was an HR manager for BT, her dad, Ulric, an engineer on London Buses who was also a union rep, magistrate, and member of the Labour Party, who stood for the council and campaigned for progressive causes, including campaigning with Ken Livingstone to reduce the 23-hour lock-up at Brixton prison.

’I grew up with two brothers and two sisters, in a close-knit family, with a strong sense of social responsibility, an understanding of the value of the labour movement, and a belief in the Labour Party. I went out with dad as he delivered flyers door to door.’

At 16 Sherelle left school – an all-girls’ school, the Virgo Fidelis Convent School, where female science teachers encouraged the notion that girls, as well as boys, could do everything – to go to South Thames College, but her studies were interrupted when, at 18, she had a son. ’My mum and dad were really supportive but it wasn’t easy to study and look after a baby.’

Kadell Daniel, now 24, is a semi-pro footballer, a left-winger with Dover Athletic in the Vanarama National League, the fifth tier of English football, who has won four international caps for Guyana, the Golden Jaguars, for whom he qualifies through his maternal grandparents. As a youngster, he was on the books of Crystal Palace and Charlton; went on loan to Hayes & Yeading, and Torquay United, and had spells at Woking, Welling and Dulwich Hamlet, before joining Dover.

Sherelle did a two year part-time HND in electrical and electronic engineering at Lambeth College and then a three year engineering degree at South Bank University, funding herself with a string of part-time jobs at WH Smith, Thomas Cook, and a bowling alley, before getting a job as a customer services assistant with United Airlines at Heathrow.

When airlines contracted after 9/11 in 2001, Sherelle, who had a brother on London Underground, seized the chance to become a CSA on the Northern line. After working in the ticket office she applied to become a driver – as a single mum, renting, in Brixton, it was the only way I could see myself getting on’ – and six months later got her key.

There were eight women at Golders Green depot, four at Morden and three at East Finchley. Sherelle was one of only two black women on the Northern line. ’It was a bit of a culture shock, coming from an inclusive, mixed, environment to a job that was predominantly white and male. The environment could be intimidating. Some men were on guard, apprehensive, because they didn’t know how to take a woman or black woman. And we didn’t have our own separate facilities.

’But there were also people who walked in, said “Hi, Sherelle, come and sit here,” and you don’t forget their friendship. With my hair, and nails, as an Afro-Caribbean woman, I was colourful, but a colleague made me a great gadget to help me open the doors without pressing the button and breaking my nails! And the women on the line were amazing, really welcoming.’

She transferred to Morden, as it was nearer home, ’and when I walked in dead early to book on, the guy looked over shoulder and took a set of keys and threw it on the booking on point. I picked up the keys and held them in my cleaner’s keys because the only black women he knew were cleaners. Another manager was horrified. As an instructor operator today I sometimes still get a bit of that. Some people are surprised to find a black woman leading on this.’

Sherelle has been on the railway for 17 years and became an instructor operator eight years ago – ’I love train driving and I love training people’ – and for the first 10 years I tried to assimilate. I heard a lot of inappropriate conversations, in earshot, but only started to feel responsibility to impact change when I saw more women coming on, and when I saw more black women coming on, and didn’t want them to experience what I had experienced.

’Sometimes it’s unintentional. I went into a mess room, and had a conversation with a lovely guy, who talked about “coloured people” and I said it’s not “coloured”, it’s “black”. It’s the elephant in the room …’

’Kadell taught me a lot – I took him to games, and I remember, when Woking played Tranmere, and he scored, and I jumped up, and we were the only black people in the stadium! I experienced being the only black woman in a room and I don’t want others to have to go through that.’

Her second son, Dayne Thompson, 12, plays piano, guitar, cello and timpani. ’Dayne is a very different child, totally opposite, loves classical music, contemporary dance, and loves performing, and I go to the South Bank with him a lot.’

Sherelle is assistant branch secretary, getting involved ‘because of my upbringing, because of dad, and because I believe in the union and what it fights for. District 8 is blessed to have Finn Brennan and Terry Wilkinson, who come to meetings, so we understand what’s happening, and I believe that black or white, male or female, young or old, we have more in common than we have differences – and if we focus on what we have in common it will work better.’

‘What is the first thing you think of when you hear about TfL staff, Tube driver, bus driver, LU customer service assistant, ticket office staff or train driver? Most of the press about transport workers is negative. We strike, we are lazy, we get paid too much. Well, we know this is not true…’

In 2012 Sherelle and a couple of colleagues set up the Transport & Friends for Life Association to create a social club and organise different events to get people together, away from the pub culture that culturally excludes some people. The TFfLA organises events including a retirees lunch, Ascot ladies’ day, family seaside trip, summer party, Christmas party, and art auctions. ’We’ve showcased the talents of people who work at TfL and raised a lot of money for Prostate Cancer UK, the Rainbow Trust, and Great Ormond Street. A Macmillan bake sale at Morden included samosas and Jamaican patties, all sorts of ethnic food, and you spoke to people you’d never spoken to before. We’ve done the sale three times now and raised £3,000.’

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Class act

Paul Martin was branch secretary at Stourbridge 207 for ten years. During his tenure he was instrumental in gaining ASLEF union recognition at Pre-Metro Operations Ltd alongside District 7 Organiser Brian Corbett. At the branch meeting held on Thursday 7 February Paul’s presentations were well received with an excellent turnout from both Chiltern and PMOL employees. After being presented with his retirement certificate by Brian and EC vice-president Andy Hudd, Paul was presented with a model Class 68 locomotive from Stourbridge branch as thanks for his excellent work rendered over the years he has been at Chiltern.

Chris Teuwen, branch secretary

95 on the board for ASLEF train Crewe

An extremely healthy turnout of almost 50 members meant it was standing room only at Crewe’s February branch meeting. Members were kept up to date with various developments by WMT company councillor Bob Earlam and Freightliner business councillor Pete Mason.

Local reps Ian Dickinson and Andy Clarke (Freightliner Intermodal); Alan Coley (Freightliner Heavy Haul); Mick Jacques (WMT); Dave Tomlinson and Dave Brehaut (TIW); Keith Murnin (DB Cargo); and Chris Wallwork (DRS) also reported to members.

GS Mick Whelan then gave a witty and inspiring address to the packed venue, covering a wide variety of topics, before making retirement presentations to Bros Bob Fletcher and Paul Turner, two comrades who managed to rack up almost 95 years of railway service between them. The meeting concluded with a buffet and drinks.

Jim Cockburn-Powell, branch secretary

Lasting impression

It’s not often that you have the opportunity to meet people who leave a lasting impression on you. Vern Matthew is one of those special characters we have all had the pleasure of knowing. After serving 40 years on the Underground it was finally time for us to say farewell to Vern. At our February branch it was fantastic that our EC member, Terry Wilkinson, who has known Vern for many years, had the pleasure of presenting Vern with his ASLEF retirement certificate and a plaque from his colleagues on the H&C. Enjoy your retirement Vern, you deserve it.

Gary Jarman, branch secretary, Hammersmith & City 267

Upcoming events

- **RAMSGATE – THURSDAY 4 APRIL**
  From 11.00 at the Red Arrow Club, Ramsgate, Kent, CT11 0QX.

- **STONEBRIDGE PARK – SATURDAY 6 APRIL**
  Reunion from 14.00 at the Skinners Arms, Judd Street, King’s Cross, WC1H 9NT. ‘Hope to see you there,’ says Carlos Chase.

- **STRATFORD – SATURDAY 13 APRIL**
  Annual reunion from 17.00 at the Railway Tavern Hotel, Angel Lane, Stratford. Buffet provided, plus a prize raffle. Further details from Chris Daughters (07809 430257).

- **NORWICH – SUNDAY 14 APRIL**
  The Norwich loco welfare fund has kindly sponsored the annual reunion of Norwich footplate staff past and present. Colleagues from other grades and depots are also welcome to join old friends from 19.00 at the Sprowston Sports & Social Club, Blue Boar Lane, Sprowston, NR7 8RY. Free buffet; a bar is available. Contact Chris Pearson on 01362 691045 or 07776 123206.

- **DIDCOT – SATURDAY 27 APRIL**
  Annual reunion from 12.00 at the GWRSA Club. Buffet provided.

- **BRIGHTON – TUESDAY 7 MAY**
  Informal open afternoon for all retired and working members of Brighton or any of our Sussex branches from 14.00 at the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont, off Dyke Road. Details from Paul Edwards (07402 478278) or Paul Horan (07868 757492).

- **HITHER GREEN – WEDNESDAY 8 MAY**
  Old farts’ reunion from 11.00 at the Richmal Crompton (a Wetherspoons pub) near Bromley South station. ‘All welcome – well, nearly everyone’ smiles Ray Cooper, RMS.

- **ENFIELD – FRIDAY 17 MAY**
  Reunion starts 19.30 at the Jolly Butchers, 168 Baker Street, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 3JS.

- **ASHFORD – THURSDAY 4 JULY**
  From 11.00 at Ashford Railway Club, Beaver Lane, Ashford.

- **RAINHAM – THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER**
  From 11.00 at Rainham Social Club, 86 Station Road, Rainham.

- **LONGSIGHT – THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER**
  All grades welcome at our annual reunion from 13.00 at the Navigation Road BRSA Club next to the BR & Metrolink station. Always a great event with beer and buffet. For further info contact Colin Allsobrook (07771 374559).
**Save the over 75’s TV licence**

The BBC has come in for criticism but it is the government that should fund the over 75’s TV licence, and other benefits, and not pass the buck. Because when it was introduced, it was part of a package of measures to offset the UK’s low state pension which is ranked 37th out of 37 OECD countries. Surveys suggest that half of the men and women aged 75 and over are disabled and one in four say TV is their only companion. Half of all pensioners have an income of less than £12,000 a year, with many living their final years in poverty.

Losing all or part of this concession will force a further 50,000 into poverty and then what comes next from this government? The winter fuel allowance? Eye tests? Bus passes? Means testing is unacceptable and all the evidence shows that the cost far outweighs any savings.

That’s why we went, as ASLEF RMS reps, and London region National Pensioners’ Convention EC members, to the TV licence lobby in Whitehall followed by a meeting with Labour MPs in Portcullis House.

Because this issue is not just about today’s pensioners. Young or old, the effects of this proposal – and other government policies – will be damaging to all of us.

We are the custodians of hard-won benefits for pensioners and have a duty to preserve them for today’s generation and future generations.

**PJ Smith and Tony West, RMS committee**

**Last link to steam**

**Chester 049 branch: Andy, Dave, Ron and John**

DO3 Andy Hourigan and EC3 John Metcalfe attended Chester branch on Sunday 3 March to make presentations to Dave Brown, retiring after 36 years on the railway, and Ron Jones, the branch’s last link to the steam era, who’s retiring after 53.

**Your district needs you**

District 3, covering north-west England and North Wales, needs a representative to fill a vacancy on ASLEF’s Black & Minority Ethnic representatives’ committee.

‘ASLEF is far more than just an industrial trade union,’ said EC3 John Metcalfe. ‘We have long recognised the important role and contribution made to the life of ASLEF by our black, Asian and minority ethnic background members. Now we’re looking for a volunteer to serve District 3 on the equalities committee. It’s a real opportunity to get involved and be part of our district team.’

DO3 Andy Hourigan added: ‘Our BAME committee does fantastic work campaigning, tackling workplace issues, and attending the TUC black workers’ conference as well as our own AAD. If you’re interested, we’d love to hear from you. District 3 is a great part of ASLEF, with many committed and dedicated reps. A new BAME rep will add to that team and full support will be given to help you carry out the role.’

Interested drivers in District 3 can contact John Metcalfe at metcalfej@aslef.org.uk; Andy at hourigan@aslef.org.uk; or Lee James, ASLEF equalities adviser, at ljaames@aslef.org.uk

**MICK HOLDER turns back the pages to April 1919 and the national swindle of coal, the disparity in house size between rich and poor, and Bolshevist tendencies in Britain**

**DRAMATIC REVELATIONS OF THE FORTUNES MADE BY EXPLOITERS**

‘The sensational disclosures before the Coal Commission continued from the first day to the last, and the commission was left without any honourable escape. The evidence began with an official statement of profits on coal known to the coal controller, and the enormous imposition of charging 2s 6d extra per ton because the miners got 1s 6d a day extra was clearly exposed as a national swindle. The evidence ended with the dramatic revelations by Mr Emil Davies of undisclosed profits, smothered and wrapped up in every subtle way known to capitalism, to prevent the miners and the general public getting to know what enormous fortunes were being made by exploiters.’

**COAL STORED UNDER THE BED**

‘Mr John Robertson, chairman of the Scottish Union of Mine Owners, gave to the Coal Commission statistics regarding overcrowding at Wishaw, Lanarkshire, where 28.5% of the population live in houses of one room. There were numerous houses with one apartment, where husband, wife, and seven children lived. In such houses coal was stored under the bed. The population of Hamilton is 38,000. The ground occupied was between 300 and 400 acres, and the population averaged six per room. Yet the palace pleasure grounds of the Duke of Hamilton occupied 2,500 acres.’

**INVESTIGATE THE RAILWAYS**

‘We want a Royal Commission to investigate railways, their watered stocks, their land monopoly, their colossal waste, their inefficiency, their ill-paid workers, and their failure to meet the needs of the community. We want a Royal Commission into Transport, to disclose shipping profits, and state submission to privilege against the public interest.’

**THE HORRORS OF BOLSHEVISM**

‘For months now it has been the custom for a number of daily newspapers to devote regular columns to the horrors of Bolshevism, and by that inference to attach Bolshevist tendencies to sections of organised labour in England. But those stories and their intention are as atrocious as the crimes they purport to describe, and they have been entirely one-sided.’
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.....................................................................................................................................................

Address...............................................................................................................................................

Name....................................................................................................................................................

The 135th Durham Miners’ Gala

will be held on Saturday 13 July 2019

Please support the Big Meeting by joining the Friends of Durham Miners’ Gala

www.friendsofdurhamminersgala.org

Educational Study Visit to Derby’s Historic Roundhouse

28th May

Join ASLEF Education on a journey to explore the oldest turning shed in the World where the golden age of steam once ruled!

The crumbling remains of The Roundhouse has been restored into a truly unique learning centre for Derby College and this special tour reveals how the impressive new buildings complement the character of this historical site.

Derby Roundhouse is a Grade II listed building, built in 1839 and given Guinness World Record status in 2012 as the oldest surviving railway Roundhouse in the world.

The friendly and knowledgeable tour guides will take you around The Roundhouse, the Engine Shed and Carriage Shop and reveal the true-life stories of the men, women and children who pioneered Derby’s railway industry. The tour lasts approximately 45 minutes to one hour. You can walk in the footsteps of George Stephenson, constructor of The Roundhouse and discover how the town of Derby prospered at the forefront of Britain’s Industrial Revolution.

For more information, or to book your place contact Chris Nutty at cnutty@hotmail.co.uk
JIM PETERS  THIS TRAIN TERMINATES HERE – ALL CHANGE PLEASE

We have lost a dear friend, colleague, brother, counsellor, tutor and activist. Jim Peters was taken from us far too soon but fought until the very end against an unbearably unbeatable (without early diagnosis) disease – prostate cancer. A disease largely ignored in the workplace before Jim took the issue by the horns and campaigned to raise awareness, give advice, and offer an arm around the shoulder to anyone who needed it.

Jim made me the dreaded visit to the doctor to get my prostate checked – which was a bit of an eye opener! I had to phone Jim once it was checked to let him know all was okay. ‘Did you get the count?’ he asked. I said I hadn’t, and he told made me to go back and get the number. I now realise the importance of this as it means you can monitor and take control should the count change. If you have any problems with urination such as blood, burning, pain, loss of control, frequent urges (especially at night) or any difficulty, please get your prostate checked with your GP as soon as possible.

I was lucky enough to spend a lot of time with Jim as joint ASLEF union learning reps at King’s Cross for a number of years, and his knowledge and passion for education and helping others was amazing. Jim could drop into speaking French or Dutch when needed and made an immense contribution to ASLEF Education. In fact, anything Jim turned his hand to proved just how highly intelligent and gifted he was. He is sadly missed by all at King’s Cross, held so dearly by so many who knew Jim throughout his railway career.

Jim’s partner Colin has been an absolute rock and I know Jim was so proud and grateful to have such a wonderful partner who stood shoulder to shoulder with him during every step of their time together on this emotional final journey and we all want to express our condolences to him for the very sad loss of Jim.

Mick O’Shea, King’s Cross

Jim wrote a popular online blog, rantfromthesuburbs, about being a gay man with prostate cancer. It was, like Jim, witty and elegant, and full of helpful advice. This was his last post on Saturday 9 March under the head ‘This train terminates here – all change please’:

‘Barring miracles, this is probably going to be my last post. I can’t type any more so Colin, my partner, is doing it for me. I’ve been in the hospice for the last ten days. I can’t begin to explain the symptoms and everything I’m feeling. I need help for everything and never thought I’d ever be in this situation. The staff here are marvellous. The support I’ve got from every direction from you, has been enormous, but not unexpected and I just want to say thank you to all of you’.

Finally, there was this footnote by Colin. ‘Jim sadly passed away Saturday 2 March 2019, five days before his 64th birthday. RIP Jim. The suburbs will be quiet without you.’

TERRY CAMP

Terry Camp passed away on 16 December 2018. He started his career in 1957 as a fireman at Enfield before moving to Hornsey in 1960. He got his driver’s ticket in 1965 and moved back to Enfield in 1967. In 1989 Terry moved to Stratford, finishing his career at Chingford after Stratford was closed.

John Sable, Chingford LLR

JOHN CRONE ONE FOR THE CRAIC

Carlisle’s Northern Rail depot had a sad start to 2019 with the sudden death of driver John Crone at just 59. John had moved through the grades on the railway and was easing himself towards retirement on a job share arrangement. One of the depot’s true characters, John was a good servant to ASLEF as a local rep. Always one for the craic and a robust debate about rostering and agreements, he will be sadly missed. John was a lovable rogue and a countryman at heart. A part time bookie, accomplished hound trialler, and lover of all things horse racing, his funeral had a big turnout, with many of Carlisle’s railway family attending to say farewell. He’ll be a huge miss at the depot, leaves many memories, and our thoughts are with his wife Claire, son Jonathon, daughter Joanne and all his family.

John Metcalfe, EC3

LAWRIE GRIFFIN

Lawrie Griffin started his career in 1941 at Stratford depot before moving to Wood Street. He moved on to Enfield before ending his career at Bishop’s Stortford in 1990. Lawrie passed away on 30 November 2018 and is greatly missed.

John Sable, Chingford LLR

BOB BARRON

Sadly, on Saturday 12 January, our friend and railway brother Bob Barron, retired section member, passed away after a short illness. Bob was a well-respected driver at Thornaby depot which was shown by the messages of condolence posted on Facebook and the great turn out at his funeral. RIP Bob. You will be sadly missed by all who had the pleasure to know you.

Geoffrey Burton, Thornaby branch 211 secretary

BRIAN DOHERTY

Brian Doherty passed away just short of his 76th birthday, leaving behind his loving wife Linda, extensive family, and grandchildren. He began his footplate career at Lees shed near Oldham, moving to Newton Heath, then Guide Bridge, before finally moving to Manchester Piccadilly and retirement. A great character, and loyal ASLEF member.

PP Jackson and Myrtle O’Brien, Manchester Piccadilly

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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

It's more – much more – than a pretty face

It is a question we all sometimes hear, or ask. Why do I belong to a trade union? Well, let me put my spin on that very question. We all think we know what our union does, but now I know just how far they will, when required, go over and above to support us.

It was just over a year ago (December 2017) that I got into a bit of a situation at work that escalated out of hand and totally beyond my control. I ended up in crown court having to defend my innocence. In what has been my darkest year ASLEF gave me all the help and support I could have ever asked for.

I was found not guilty of the accusation levied against me and, thankfully, I am now back at work doing my role. I would like to extend my deepest and sincerest thanks to my company council representative Richie MacKinnon, District 7 Organiser Brian Corbett, and Thompson’s solicitors, who helped and assisted throughout the case and in my time of need.

So the next time you hear someone say ‘It’s a lot of money for a diary’ remember that within said diary are all the numbers, contacts and help you will require should you ever need them. Let’s hope it just remains a diary though, eh? Thank you!

Richard Thomas, Marylebone

History of wickedness

In a further response to Marek Lasek’s letter on the subject of religion (Journal, December), Marek uses the analogy that Harry Kane is not responsible for football violence, but if we look at God’s laws in the Old Testament of the Bible it is apparent that they condone being violent (Hosea 13:16); homocidal (1 Samuel 15:3); and slavery (Exodus 21:20-21).

These are just a few examples of many. It is no wonder that the 18th century philosopher Thomas Paine wrote that the Old Testament is ‘a history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalise mankind’. That is the Old Testament, but Jesus says in Matthew 5:17-18 that Old Testament laws still apply until heaven and earth disappear. He also said he would have thought that God would want to help his people, but he didn’t stop the Holocaust. Also we could have done with some help with the Black Death and other tragedies. God’s answer to leprosy was to have the poor victim expelled from the camp, and they must shout ‘unclean, unclean’ (Leviticus 13:46). Does that really seem the advice of a supreme being that made the universe and DNA?

Religious beliefs are generally passed down from parents through the generations. I feel it is wrong to indoctrinate children with any religion, but it is the way that this mythology has managed to survive. Let kids learn about religion when they are old enough to understand; they deserve to have the right to freedom of thought. I’m certain that if there is a supreme being, it would be horrified by how man’s religions have depicted it.

Barry Dence, Ashford

ASLEF – the past we inherit, the future we build

In response to JE Rimington (Journal, March) I believe that the very well-known and well-

Are you a winner? A gentle reminder to all supporters of the RMS 500 Club prize jackpot draw every month

To ensure the continued smooth operation of the club, can we ask that you make sure that, when submitting your completed application form to join, you return it to head office with your cheque.

If you decide to pay by standing order, having submitted the standing order form to your bank, you must return your completed application form to head office. This is needed to put your details on the database and to advise you of your allocated number or numbers.

Should you at any time wish to have another share, to increase your membership of the 500 Club, apart from informing the bank to alter your standing order, you must submit a completed application form to head office for another number or numbers.

Regarding branches and district councils that are members of the 500 Club, when there is a change of secretary you must inform head office, to ensure that in the event of your number or numbers being drawn, the prize will go to the person in office.

Only members of ASLEF can make an application to join the RMS 500 Club. This does not stop family members joining, but the application form and standing order can only be completed and submitted by a member. This is to ensure that no unnecessary problems arise.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation which is needed for the smooth operation of the club.

Good luck!

Ray Jackson, chair,
Retired Members’ Section and Bill Dale,
committee member and acting treasurer

ASLEF – 100% SERVICE TO YOUR INTERESTS

Reading my latest Journal (March edition) this morning and seeing the article about Vic Raskin, I went though some of my old paperwork and thought I would share this. A time long gone by, but I am glad I kept this stuff...

Colin Harries by email

Vic Raskin's ASLEF election flyer for the Southern Region sectional council in 1966; an ASLEF progress booklet; and an old ASLEF membership card
respected name of our union should remain the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen as this defines who we are and pays respect to those who got us here. To paraphrase the NLTUC badge, ‘The past we inherit, the future build.’ We should never forget our past or the people who went before us and helped shape who we are and where we are. And, despite being a small craft union, we are still very active in the trade union movement and on the wider political scene – something we should never forget. ASLEF is who we are. I’d hate to think we’d even consider becoming the union formerly known as ASLEF. Wear your ASLEF badge and tie with pride, fly our ASLEF banners high, let everyone know we are proud of who we are and where we came from, acknowledge the past, it’s where we got our sense of pride, our moral compass, and shapes where and who we are.

Jim Lafferty, Motherwell

Trains on film (and radio)

My elderly father and I live in a block of flats in Southend and a train driver lives in the same block. We’re not sure who he is but, occasionally, he leaves the ASLEF Journal on a table in the communal foyer. We enjoy reading it and very much appreciate the hard work you all do. I hope you don’t mind me doing this, but I’m writing with regards to the excellent article Trains on Film in the February issue. You asked for any train films we have particularly enjoyed. Although we have no direct contact with train employment, we wanted to tell you of our favourite train films. They are:

- *Train of Events* (1949) with Jack Warner and Susan Shaw. A train disaster is told as four short stories to give character studies of the people involved, how it affects them, and how they deal with it. My father’s favourite!
- I would also like to tell you about another railway show. It’s not a film, but a radio broadcast which is a very amusing comedy half hour from the series *All Gas and Gaiters: Only Three Can Play* (originally broadcast on 7 March 1967). I know you asked for films, but I had to include this as it is really enjoyable and easily available on YouTube. I hope you listen to it and enjoy it, too.

Brian Wingrad, Southend, Essex

Taking the last train home

Tom Courtenay as Strelnikov and his armoured battle train in *Doctor Zhivago*

My favourites, apart from *Brief Encounter*, which you mentioned, are *Dr Zhivago*, the old 1960s version with Julie Christie and Omar Shariff as the good (handsome) doctor and a fantastic Czech film called *Closely Observed Trains*. Another amazing film is *Last Train Home* about Chinese workers going back to their villages for Chinese New Year to see their children who are looked after by their grandparents. The workers live in dormitories in the big cities.

Philippa Edmunds, Freight on Rail manager, Campaign for Better Transport

Le front de l’art on film

One film which has not been mentioned in the last two editions of the *Journal* was *The Train* (1965) with Burt Lancaster, an unusual film starring a Hollywood A-lister. Mr Lancaster threw himself into his role. Very many railway themed sequences and long lost practices in this superb film. Sent from my baked bean tin with a length of string from the end.

N Caldicott, Freightliner Heavy Haul

OLD OAK COMMON final closure. Only 100 made. £10 each inc p&p from Greg Burton Paddington 155. Paypal to: intercityexpress125@hotmail.co.uk

THE KING’S CROSS STORY by Peter Darley (The History Press, £20) as featured on the cover page of the January *Journal*. Buy it direct from the Camden Railway Heritage Trust at a discounted price of £15 inc p&p; email Darleyp@aol.com or phone 020 7586 6632 for details. ‘All income from sales goes to the trust,’ says Peter.

AIRDRIE has produced a badge to commemorate its reopening as a separate branch. £6.50 inc p&p. Please contact branch chair Ivan Wilson (07949 862393) for details.

HANDMADE miniature driver’s keys to wear as a charm or round the neck. Solid silver and solid 9ct gold weighing approximately 7 grams. Just over 2cm in length and just under 2cm width. Gold £300, silver £100 + £7 p&p recorded delivery. Contact Brad McCarthy on 07929 350146.

CLASS 308 NSERS badge to raise funds for the preservation of the last complete Phase One 4 CIG train 1753. £6 inc p&p from NSERS, 41 Highfield Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 6DD. Cheques payable to Network South East Railway Society.

INTER-CITY DRIVER LANYARD

Black with safety clip. £5 inc p&p from Greg Burton (Paddington). Paypal payment to: intercityexpress125@hotmail.co.uk

PERTH branch badge to commemorate 110 years (1908-2018). £6 plus £1 p&p. Cheques payable to Perth branch ASLEF No 134 General. Please contact branch secretary Grant Murchie for details on 07412 453454 or grantmu32@btinternet.com

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at sensible prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on the pint tankard. Contact Paul Potts by email at pputts1969@hotmail.co.uk

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To place an advertisement please phone 020 7324 2400 or send an email to journal@aslef.org.uk

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The sound of silence

When Meatloaf sang of liking ‘Everything louder than everything else’ he might have been thinking of the clash of announcements at Britain’s railway stations where information overload often makes Lemmy of Motorhead look quiet. CHRIS PROCTOR reckons railway stations should follow the lead of some airports and turn the platform into a quiet carriage.

F YOU go to London City airport, you might think you’ve gone deaf. Try as you may, you won’t be able to hear an endless ear-harming explosion of amplified bellowed ‘information’. The reason is that they have cut out departure announcements. The place is quiet. Like, you know, civilised.

They’ve replaced a distorted public announcement system with (silent) notices saying, ‘Look at the boards for flight information or ask at the information desk.’ And, in the background, you can hear… nothing. Serenity. It’s almost peaceful.

Silent airports are a growing trend: you’ll find them from Helsinki to Bangalore, Barcelona to Chennai, Dubai to Cape Town. It’s a response to passengers saying they don’t appreciate constant background caterwauling – especially when it’s not only mentally and physically draining – it’s also pointless.

Because do you know what? Even in quiet airports, without any background noise, people still catch their planes. Spooky but true. Could someone tell the people who run the UK’s railway stations about this?

QUITE LITERALLY DEAFENING
Some of the noise levels at UK stations are, quite literally, deafening. Announcements often sound as if they are competing with each other. It’s like a playground where all the kids have a contorted PA system. Volume levels make Motorhead sound acoustic. And it’s all unnecessary. For one thing, half the passengers are attached to ear-plugs so they are utterly unaware of the din. But, even if you’re listening, have you heard the guff that is blasted out?

‘As a result of today’s inclement weather, floors in this station may be slippery.’ Well, diddy-eye doo. There’s a thing. Get on, Sherlock. Do you really think so? All these years and I’ve never associated wet floors with a tendency towards slipperiness. Top advice well worth making public, I’d say.

And what about ‘Mind the gap between train and platform’? I can’t believe I lasted all these years without this sage council. Until my enlightenment I used to just toss my feet somewhere forward, and take a chance they might land somewhere safe and fling my body in the same direction. I’d never considered looking where I was going.

And then there’s, ‘The doors at the rear of the back coach will not open at the next stop.’

Most of us, I hazard, can, at a pinch, recognise a closed door even without aural advice.

My favourite is the one about ‘taking your personal belongings with you.’ Is this an exhortation not to take things that belong to other people? Or an invitation to leave any ‘personal’ belongings? What are they? Or is it advice the train companies genuinely think you need?

STATION SOUND POLLUTION
I’m sure I’m not unique in that, normally, unless especially well lubricated, I remember, all on my own, to pick up my bag and coat when I leave all manner of places – home, pub, bookies, church; and, miraculously, in the latter case at least, I don’t have to be reminded every five minutes. I just do it. Why should I suddenly become gripped by amnesia because I’m near a train? Does the rolling motion affect my memory? Why don’t they remind me to breath in and out, alternately, while on the concourse? It would be so easy to forget.

OK. Partially sighted people or those with reading difficulties might like help to find their train. But they don’t need to have this blasted over the entire station, deafening everyone else. Has no one heard of information points? And I believe things like texts and apps have now been invented; technologies that make the old bellowing system completely redundant.

And then there’s the quality of the noise. Where do they get that equipment? The British Museum’s ‘extremely antique’ section? It sounds like the first transatlantic phone call cranked up to Lemmy’s favoured levels. In fact, a lot of station sound pollution is people shouting to ask the person next to them what the announcement said.

TELL ME YOU’RE QUIET
The mass of competing messages bellowed at the same time makes the whole exercise pointless, according to psychologist Dr Bernadine King. She was pinchered for driving her car in a bus lane in Chelmsford but successfully appealed on the basis that too many notices ‘confuse drivers’ brains’. She proved that the human brain cannot process too many optic signs at the same time. The same applies to sound announcements. They distract, but they don’t inform.

All this crashing amplified nonsense inflicted on us at railway stations does little good. It raises anxiety; tires; confuses; reduces concentration levels; and harms ear-drums.

My local music venue used to have four letters displayed on the columns at the side of the stage to request that patrons were quiet during performances. ‘STFU’ it read. I think it’s a formula we could well apply to railways stations. Couldn’t we trial it at a few, at least?
Y

CARRY ON REGARDLESS

OU know you’re in serious trouble when the reptiles on your own side of the party political divide start mocking you. Michael Deacon, Parliamentary sketch writer for the Daily Telegraph, set about Chris Grayling with a vengeance:
‘In these benighted times, there are few British politicians who could be cited as role models for the young. But if I were asked to name one, I would, without hesitation, say Chris Grayling. For a very simple reason. He shows that anything is possible.
‘He does. He is living, breathing proof that all you need, if you want to get somewhere in life, is self-belief. Not intelligence, or talent, or skill, or knowledge, or basic competence, or anything like that. Just self-belief.’
And that, from a man who was, until recently, also the Torygraph’s restaurant critic, was just for starters. This was the main course:
‘This, after all, is a man who, as Transport Secretary, refused to accept responsibility for a calamitous reworking of railway timetables, shelved plans to regulate the use of drones shortly before they brought Gatwick to a standstill, and, most impressively of all, prepared for a no-deal Brexit by agreeing a £14 million contract with a ferry firm that didn’t own any ferries – only for the deal to fall through mere weeks before those non-existent ferries may be needed.
And then a spot of afters:
‘But did Mr Grayling let any of these setbacks get him down? Did he falter, and sigh, and think, “Everyone’s right. I’m no good at this job. I should quit, so that someone at least halfway adequate can do it”?
‘No. He did not. Because Mr Grayling isn’t the kind of wimp who gives up on a task merely because he’s cataclysmically bad at it. He keeps calm, and carries on. No matter how much criticism he receives, no matter how great the pressure to resign, he refuses to let anything come between him and the monthly collection of his pay cheque. And that, I think, takes a very special kind of courage.’

Keith Richmond

ASLEF’s legal services

Have you been sacked, or are in trouble at work, and cannot get hold of your branch secretary, local representative or District Organiser in an emergency? Call our industrial relations department on 020 7324 2400 (9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday or 9am to 4pm on Friday) or leave a message on the answer service, or email info@aslef.org.uk with a subject heading of ‘For the attention of the industrial relations dept’.

Solution to Crossword 155

Across: 1 Electrician 7 Seep 8 Betting 9 Owl 10 Raise 11 Status 13 Sculpt 16 Incur 18 Pot 19 Dwindle 20 Roll 21 Gingerbread
Down: 1 Exempt 2 Export 3 Tables 4 Inter 5 Initial 6 Neglect 11 Shindig 12 Auction 13 Superb 14 Untrue 15 Pallid 17 Ridge

Congratulations to Brian Monk, of Banbury, Oxfordshire, 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

Solution to crossword 155

Across: 1 Three-legged camera stand 7 Smack or political influence 8 Easily taken in 9 Not ever 10 A chance of loss 12 Type of gull 13 Animal hunted for food 14 Violent rage 15 Choppers 17 Browns in the sun 19 The entire amount 20 Sanctioned by authority 21 Bird’s resting place 22 Living room

Down: 1 Fierce striped cat 2 Explanatory picture 3 Leather-softening grease 4 Perfume 5 Chatty communication 6 Strongly built 11 Locking instrument 13 Family cat or dog 14 Tomorrow and next year 15 Sly and sneaky 16 Fabric 18 Find an answer to
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