We’re gonna be elected

Inside this special equalities issue: reports from ASLEF’s BAME, LGBT+, Women’s and Young Members’ committees plus James Sutherland on ASLEF’s political course and Gregor Gall on the failure of outsourcing
railway enginemen’s tax free saver plans

tax free savings plans for
Resource Managers, Roster Clerks, Driver Assessors, Driver Team Managers, Customer Service Assistants, Driver Instructors, Drivers, Customer Service Managers, Train Managers, Conductors, Retail Sales Managers, First Class Hosts, On Board Cleaners, Controllers, Guards, Revenue Protection Inspectors & Senior Conductors and anyone we’ve missed out who works on the railways or for train operating companies!

for further information call us on freephone 0800 328 9140
visit our website at www.enginemens.co.uk
or write to us at Railway Enginemen’s Assurance Society Limited, 727 Washwood Heath Road, Birmingham, B8 2LE
News

- ASLEF members standing in the local elections plus Tweets of the Month
- Smithfield Market on the move plus Off the Rails: Chris Deerin, John Gray, Team Sky, Claudia Winkelman and Michael Gove
- Drivers on strike at Croydon Tramlink
- Branch secretaries’ course at Wortley Hall
- Julian Vaughan comes up trumps with step-free access at Biggleswade station

Features

- Dodgy outsourcing deals remind Gregor Gall of The Great Rock ‘n’ Roll Swindle
- Deborah Reay, Liz Cocks and Bianca Rennie report for the Women’s Representatives’ Committee
- James Sutherland, Hollie Yates and Robert Kitley report for the Young Members’ Committee; and David Jones of the LGBT+ Committee asks are you PrePared?
- Asif Ali and Trevor Robinson report for the Black & Minority Ethnic Committee
- ASLEF’s week-long political training course aims to help members get elected – to local councils and then into Parliament

Regulars

- Branch News and 100 Years of Union
- Obituaries
- Letters and Classified Advertisements
- On Track: Nailing your political colours to the mast; Crossword; Legal Services; and Change of Address

GS Mick Whelan
A real voice

We have been preparing for our annual assembly of delegates in Leeds, our annual conference, where nearly half our branches will be represented. It’s a time for reflection, debate, critique, and creativity. We look back over our achievements and at the things we could do better; what we might change, and what we aspire to in the future, industrially, politically, and societally.

I raise AAD because some members do not seem to understand that this is where policy is created, changed, or updated. Branches are asked, every year, to submit items for discussion that can become the overarching policies of the union that every representative is obliged to seek to achieve. We are one of the few unions that remains committed to an annual conference run for and by the members, with a lay delegate as chair, and only delegates permitted to vote; becoming, effectively, the executive committee apart from some legal areas dictated by law.

This process is important for many reasons, not just because we are the most democratic craft trade union – where only train drivers represent train drivers – or because we have evolved our democracy over 139 years. It’s about having a real voice. These structures allow engagement and a voice. I have heard ‘It’s only those who go to the branch that make the decisions’ but anyone can attend and everyone can have a say and everyone has a vote. We give you the opportunity to contribute.

It does not matter how many social media groups are out there – open, closed, or those that have ASLEF in the title – they do not feed into or create policy. They can be useful, on occasion, for dissemination of information, and correcting misinformation, but do not effect change and I want to encourage our members to drive our vision.

Such input is invaluable as we get the annual ‘most expensive diary in the world’ comments as the annual subscription rise happens. Only members can shape the future and those of us who have what we have today because of those who came before us. We only have what we have today because of those who created policy, and fought for it, and we have a duty to do the same.

What we decide not only drives our industrial, safety, and political agenda, but also impacts on those who come after us. We only have what we have today because of those who created policy, and fought for it, and we have a duty to do the same. So I look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones in Leeds, to challenging debates, and to the opportunity of building a better future.

Yours fraternally

Mick Whelan, general secretary
I’m your choice, I want to be elected

ASLEF members are standing in the local elections in England on Thursday 2 May. Seats in 270 local authorities – most of them last contested in 2015 – are up for grabs.

They include three train drivers who attended our last political course, held at Esher Place in Surrey, in February: Dave Bowen (Piccadilly Line branch) standing in Kidmore End & Whitchurch for South Oxfordshire district council; Alan Coiley (Crewe) in Crewe South for Crewe town council; and Barry Hare (Peterborough) in Casewick for South Kesteven district council.

Other ASLEF members standing for election include: Collette Gibson (Shenfield) in Great Notley & Black Notley and DOS Nigel Gibson in Rayne, both for Braintree district council; Cliff Holloway (Euston) in Stanford West for Thurrock council; ECS Howard Kaye in Upper Hale for both Farnham town council and Waverley borough council; Adrian Lunn (Skipton) in Skipton North for Craven district council; Mark Prenter (Waterloo/Nine Elms) in Twydall for Medway council; Steve Pritchard (Selhurst) in Three Bridges for Crawley council; and Julian Vaughan (Northern Line North) in Biggleswade for Central Bedfordshire council.

Debbie Reay (Northern Line North), who also attended our political course, is standing for selection as Labour’s prospective Parliamentary candidate in Luton South where the sitting MP, Gavin Shuker, has joined The Independent Group/Change UK. ‘I wish all our members the very best of luck on 2 May,’ said GS Mick Whelan. ‘We want to see more ASLEF members elected to serve on local councils – and our ambition is to see an ASLEF member back in Parliament.’

James Sutherland reports on our political course on page 15

FULL MARX ON MAY DAY

The Marx Memorial Library on Clerkenwell Green, where labour movement activists gather for the traditional May Day march to Trafalgar Square, will throw open its doors from 11am to 3pm on Wednesday 1 May. ‘It’s a chance for everyone to see the room where Vladimir Lenin worked in exile in 1902, editing the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party’s newspaper Iskra, and to have a look at our collections of posters and radical history, including the International Brigades’ British battalion banner,’ says library manager Meirian Jump.

Come on lad and bring your tool bag

Our hip, hot and very much happening red baseball cap will keep the sun out of your eyes this summer. £5 (inc p&p); email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk

QUOTE...

‘Brexit fatigue and Brexit bullying are Theresa May’s instruments of torture to grind recalcitrant MPs into passing her destructive deal.’

– Polly Toynbee in The Guardian

ARCHIE MANUEL, Labour MP for Central Ayrshire, was the last ASLEF Member of Parliament. He was elected to Westminster in 1950 and re-elected in 1951; lost the seat in 1955 but won it back in 1959 and held it until he stepped down in 1970. John Cryer, Labour MP for Hornchurch from 1997 to 2005 and for Leyton & Wanstead since 2010, worked for ASLEF, and Alan Meale, Labour MP for Mansfield from 1987 to 2017, worked at head office in London as assistant to GS Ray Buckton from 1979 to 1983; but neither was a train driver.

YOU CAN KEEP A KNOCKIN’ BUT YOU CAN’T COME IN

One Tory MP quoted, albeit anonymously, in the Daily Telegraph, said after Theresa May’s latest trip to Brussels, ‘The whole thing is utterly, utterly ****ed. How on earth are we meant to sell this pile of sh*t on the doorstep? It’s like the 2017 election all over again.’

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

Life comes at you pretty fast. Especially if you’re as slow as Chris Grayling.

@ByDonkeys

Just putting this out there for future reference – DfT says: ‘We have total confidence in our process’ on disqualification of Stagecoach.

Dominic O’Connell @dominicoc

How was the Garden Bridge Trust able to spend £46 million on a non-existent bridge?

@ArchitectsJrnal

What Orwell failed to predict is that we’d buy the cameras ourselves, and that our biggest fear would be that nobody was watching.

@keithlowell

Credit to her, she keeps going. I reckon that having secured her place as the worst Prime Minister ever, she’s now going for the worst person ever. Because there are always more goals for a true champion.

@mrmarksteel

Every MP who is changing their mind on the deal should allow voters the same luxury.

#PeoplesVote

@ rorybremner

We’re basically switching our membership of the EU from contract to pay as you go.

Karl Sharro @KarlrMarks
Where’s the beef?

A SLEF’s head office has been in St John Street, near Farringdon station, since we moved here from ‘the big house’ in Arkwright Road, Hampstead, in 2011. The building is close to Clerkenwell Green, an area with strong radical roots – it’s where Wat Tyler camped during the Peasants’ Revolt in 1381 and where George Loveless, first of the Tolpuddle Martyrs to return to these shores after transportation, came back to a heroes’ welcome in 1838. It’s also just a couple of hundred yards from Smithfield Market. There has been a meat and livestock market here since at least 1174, when Thomas à Becket’s clerk William Fitzstephen wrote about ‘a smooth field where, every Friday, there is a celebrated rendezvous of fine horses to be traded and, in another quarter, are placed vendibles of the peasant, swine with their deep flanks, and cows and oxen of immense bulk’. Smithfield is the last of the historic food markets to trade from its original site in the capital. The fruit, flower and vegetable market at Covent Garden moved to Nine Elms in 1974; the fish market at Billingsgate to Poplar in 1982; and the fruit and veg market at Spitalfields to Leyton in 1991.

But now the City Corporation has published plans to move the meat market to either Barking, Silvertown, Fairlop in Redbridge, or Thurrock in Essex, or move the meat market to either Barking, Silvertown, Fairlop in Redbridge, or Thurrock in Essex, and another slice of history could disappear from the streets of London.

QUOTE...
‘The railways remain the most effective answer to the problems created by the growth of cities and population, while also providing the answer to environmental concerns.’
– Ian Brown, policy director, Railfuture

500 CLUB: Paul Collins, with number 23, won the April draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £416.

CONFERENCES & RALLIES
SLEF’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 Saturday 26 May. The Matchwomen’s festival is at the Bow Arts Trust, 183 Bow Road, London, E3 2SJ on Saturday 29 June. 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.

Off the Rails

CHRIS DEERIN, a former hack for the Daily Record, Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, and Scotland on Sunday, who is now director of the right-wing think tank Reform Scotland, as well as lead singer with Fat Cops, who churn out ‘glam-punk-garage-disco stompalongs’ – his words, not ours – with comedian Al Murray, the Pub Landlord, on drums and JK Rowling’s hubby Neil Murray on keyboards, had coffee recently with Angus Robertson, former leader of the SNP at Westminster. ‘The last time we met, Angus was still in his Commons pomp. He made his reputation at PMQs where his spiky contributions saw him described as the real Leader of the Opposition. I like meeting frontline politicians once they’ve left office. They’re always different; softer, a bit baggier, wryer. Angus has always had what we Scots call “a guid conceit o’ himself” but defenestration by the electorate – he lost his Moray seat in 2017 – to a man who was not just a Tory but also a football referee – is a stiff corrective to the ego and today he is self-deprecating, startlingly honest, and also considerably hairier.’

JOHN GRAY, the political philosopher who taught at Essex University, Jesus College, Oxford, and the London School of Economics, is cheerfully dismissive of Chuka Umunna and Winnie the Pooh and the rest of the TIGgers. ‘There is little reason to think voters will flock to a party that offers to take them back to the conditions that led to their present alienation – the strange nostalgic vision that possesses centrist liberals. A post-Cold War era that included the Iraq War, the financial crisis, and a decade of austerity, is not a time to which many people long to return.’

DAVE BRAILSFORD, whose Tour de France winning cycling team has been under a cloud of suspicion since the mystery delivery of dodgy packets – suspicions that prompted Sky to pull the plug on its sponsorship deal – was able to persuade Jim Ratcliffe, CEO of Ineos, and Britain’s richest man, to fill the funding gap. Prompting one rival, Jonathan Vaughters, manager of the Education First team, to mutter that Brailsford ‘has an impressive ability to reach into the toilet and pull out chocolate.’

CLAUDIA WINKLEMAN, who presents Strictly Come Dancing, adores the Tube. ‘I relish the London Underground. Embarrassingly, I’ve always been slightly emotional about it. It got me to school every day when I was small, it got me out of tricky situations (you never need to stay with a boy when the Northern line is on offer), and, now, 100 years later, it whizzes my kids about at record speed and it’s never, ever cold.’

MICHAEL GOVE argued stridently, when asked during the referendum campaign three years ago about Brexit negotiations with the European Union, that ‘We’ll hold all the cards.’ Unfortunately, as Michael Deacon dryly pointed out in the Daily Telegraph, they turned out to be ‘the two of spades, a Joker, Mr Bunn the baker, and a Tesco clubcard. And Theresa May has been holding them the wrong way round...’
**Tramlink standstill**

STRIKE by ASLEF members on Thursday 28 March brought Croydon to a standstill after talks at ACAS on our pay and conditions dispute with FirstTram Operations, which operates the Croydon tram system, ended without agreement. ‘Our members showed their reaction to the company’s pay offer by returning a Yes vote of 99.1% in favour of strike action, on a turnout of almost 90%’, said DO8 Finn Brennan. ‘Management has not changed that offer. Despite six months of talks, management is not prepared to make an offer that recognises that our members do a difficult and stressful job and deserve to be properly rewarded. Staff on Tramlink have seen their pension benefits slashed and are paid much less than those in similar roles in other TfL modes. They want to see real improvements to reflect the responsible job they do.’ Members will strike for a further three days in May – on Wednesday 1, Thursday 9 and Thursday 23 – unless FirstGroup makes an improved offer.

**Norwegian wood**

Following a recent meeting in Oslo with the general secretary and senior officials of Norsk Lokomotivmannsforbund, the Norwegian train drivers’ union, a further meeting took place at head office in London which I attended with members of the Southern/GX company council. We met to discuss co-operation between our unions in response to the Go-Ahead group being awarded a contract to run services on the Norwegian south line between Oslo and Stavanger.

Discussions took place on a number of subjects, including how the railways were privatised in the UK, the structure of both unions, the legal framework in both countries, pay and conditions of drivers, and driver training. Interestingly, driver training in Norway is part of their further education system, provided by the state and, as such, in most cases is unpaid.

We have agreed to continue dialogue at all levels and to share information as appropriate to assist our NLF comrades in future negotiations with the Go-Ahead group.

**Mum: silent night trains killed my kid**

A mother whose 16-year-old daughter died when she was hit at a level crossing in Hipperholme, near Halifax, is suing Network Rail for £22,124 in damages. Milena Gagic died in December 2014 when she sat between the train tracks, ‘laughing and giggling’, because she believed that no trains ran at night. Leanne Gagic said her daughter thought that if a train did approach, it would sound its horn. But a ‘night quiet period’ was introduced in 2007, barring the use of horns between 11pm and 7am. Leanne says Network Rail breached its duty of care; NR says Milena was herself to blame. ‘Whilst noise pollution is a concern, priority must always be given to saving lives,’ said GS Mick Whelan. ‘We have real concerns about the lack of protection – including the use of horns – for pedestrians at level crossings.’

**East Midlands goes Dutch**

Mick Whelan has responded to the announcement that Abellio has been awarded the East Midlands franchise by the DfT: ‘We welcome the fact that our members on the East Midlands routes now know who they will be working for because clarity and security is important in any industry. But we have never preferred one operator to another and have always maintained the position that the railways in Britain should be run as a public service, in the public sector, for the public interest.’

**Bravehearts**

GS Mick Whelan, DO2 Kevin Lindsay, Craig Beharrie of Edinburgh No 2 and Jim Lafferty of Motherwell attended the Scottish Trades Union Congress at the Caird Hall, Dundee, from Monday 15 to Wednesday 17 April. Speakers included Scottish Labour Party leader Richard Leonard on Monday; TUC president and PCS GS Mark Serwotka on Tuesday; and First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon on Wednesday.

**Leavers on the line**

Leave campaigners left malicious devices on railway lines in a bid to disrupt Britain’s rail network on the day – Friday 29 March – Britain was due to leave the European Union. The home-made devices – left with the message ‘Leave means leave’ – were meant to trigger signal failures but Lucio Buffone, of Paddington branch, pointed out on his Twitter feed that they didn’t work as the track had been upgraded in line with EU directives.

‘It’s utterly stupid to put the safety of passengers and staff at risk,’ said Mick Whelan.

**P-way Paul**

Paul Clark, of Shoeburyness branch, who is retiring after a career on the permanent way, picks up his 40 year badge from Mick Whelan at head office.

**Graham opts for the Norway model under Mick Jones’ triptych at head office**

EC1 Marz Colombini joins Tramlink members on the picket line
**Made in Sheffield**

GS Simon Weller and EC1 Marz Colombini led a week-long course for branch secretaries at Wortley Hall, between Barnsley and Sheffield, from Tuesday 2 to Friday 5 April. Those attending included: Dave Allen, Worcester; Chris Allinson, Birkenhead; Joe Beckett, Salisbury; Adrian Cook, York; Sean Gillard, LU Test Trains; Dave Harrison, Hull; Darren Hartley, Blackburn; Alan Horner, Wembley Park; Kevin Sangster, St Pancras International; Charlie Sherratt, Banbury; Graham Sibbons, Southend; Lawrence Stephenson, Horsham; John Thorpe, Stratford; Tracy Whitbread, Didcot; and Jon Zinzan, Watford.

Branch secretaries on the steps of Wortley Hall, the workers’ stately home, a few miles from Sheffield in south Yorkshire.

**Yob smashes cab window**

A violent passenger smashed the driver’s windsreen after he was thrown off a rush hour commuter train near Cardiff by a guard. He was ejected at Eastbrook at 8.15am on Wednesday 10 April. The BTP said a 22-year-old man has been arrested.

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

**Fly like an Eagle**

Stuck in the middle with you – Roy of the Rovers at another retirement party

District 1 Organiser Graham Morris and Kevin Eade, David Maclennan and Paul Donnelly of Southern/GX company council made a personal retirement presentation to Southern CC legend Roy Luxford – a signed Crystal Palace football shirt.

**‘I LEFT £1,000 ON THE TRAIN’**

Tim Waterstone had a mixed day when he opened the first branch of his book shop chain Waterstone’s on the Old Brompton Road in west London in 1982. ‘Good news is we took over £1,000,’ he told the Meet the Writers podcast. ‘Bad news is I left it on the train. I can’t bear it, even now. Can you imagine leaving a bag with £1,000 in it on the train?’

**CROSSRAIL WON’T OPEN UNTIL 2020**

The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee has warned that Crossrail, which should have been running in December 2018, and is already £2.8 billion over budget, faces further delays, until next year, and will probably need another bailout. Committee chair Meg Hillier blamed a ‘culture of over-optimism’ amongst contractors.

**Men of Harlech**

DO7 Brian Corbett and Ian Thompson of Treherbert were the ASLEF delegates to the Welsh Labour Party conference at Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Friday 12 to Sunday 14 April. DO3 Andy Hourigan and EC7 Andy Hudd attended as visitors.

**Men of Harlech**

DO7 Brian Corbett and Ian Thompson of Treherbert were the ASLEF delegates to the Welsh Labour Party conference at Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Friday 12 to Sunday 14 April. DO3 Andy Hourigan and EC7 Andy Hudd attended as visitors.

**Initial offer ‘just not good enough’**

London Underground finally made a pay offer on Wednesday 3 April – after six meetings where we went through our pay and conditions claims in detail. Even though LU generates a huge surplus of £1 billion a year, management says all this money is required for investment and to subsidise other parts of TfL. ‘The offer of a 2.5% pay rise would mean no improvement in members’ living standards,’ says DO8 Finn Brennan, ‘as it simply matches the RPI inflation rate and falls way below the ASLEF claim. We want to see a real improvement in wages and conditions, not to simply stand still.’

**QUOTE**

‘To call Chris Grayling accident prone would be to defy the laws of probability.’  
– John Pienaar, deputy political editor, BBC

**...UNQUOTE**
Grayling on probation for privatisation disaster

The part-privatisation of the Probation Service in England and Wales has been a disaster, according to Dame Glenys Stacey, the Chief Inspector of Probation, who says the system which permits private firms to make a handsome profit from the public purse while monitoring criminals is ‘irredeemably flawed’. In her final annual report, she says it would be ‘safer’ if permits private firms to make a handsome profit from the public purse while monitoring criminals is ‘irredeemably flawed’. In her final annual report, she says it would be ‘safer’ if

Coroner calls for crossing measures

The coroner at the inquest into the death of a teenager at the Meldreth level crossing between the villages of Meldreth and Melbourn in Cambridgeshire has called for improved safety measures. Rosamund Rhodes-Kemp, sitting at Huntingdon, criticised the lack of warning signs and lack of proper security and said using the crossing was a matter of ‘taking your chances’.

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

District 8 members fly the flag – the RAF roundel adopted by The Who and The Jam and other mod bands as they are not allowed to use the iconic London Underground bar and circle logo – on the streets of Krakow.

LABOUR COUNCILLORS TELL TEAM INEOS CYCLISTS TO FRACK OFF

Doncaster councillors – including former EC president Tosh McDonald and his wife Nikki – are boycotting the Tour de Yorkshire to protest about the takeover of Team Sky by Ineos. Councillor Dave Shaw said ‘Fracking is harmful to the environment and it smacks of rank hypocrisy that a cycling team, after riding with messages about ocean pollution, is now being bankrolled by one of the planet’s biggest polluters.’

WATER – TIME TO TAKE BACK THE TAP

‘Insulting to customers’ and said that, 30 years on from water privatisation in England, ‘it’s clearly not working’. ‘Billions of litres of water are wasted every day and fat cat bosses get paid millions while water bills have soared 40% above inflation since the industry was privatised by Margaret Thatcher.’

JEREMY CORBYN CALLS FOR NEW LINE TO THE WEST COUNTRY

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has called for a new electrified rail line – avoiding Dawlish – to the south-west of England. ‘Essentially it is vulnerable – and always will be vulnerable – because of its location, and I do think we need to look at an inland by-pass route.’

QUOTE...

‘For a festival presence somewhere between a court jester and a mob orator, Keith Flint of the Prodigy was rave on legs. A capering monster of the id – part Johnny Rotten, part Smike, part Vyvyan from The Young Ones, and part Mr Toad – he incarnated the most absurd and electrifying aspects of the dance music experience.’

– Andrew Harrison, former editor of Mixmag, Q, and Select

...UNQUOTE
Comprehensive legal cover to keep you and your family on track

ASLEF members get free, specialist legal advice and representation for:
- Personal injury at or away from work, on holiday or on the roads
- Serious injury including brain and spinal cord injuries
- Industrial disease or illness
- Employment law (accessed via your ASLEF district organiser)

Additional member benefits include:
- Special terms for clinical negligence
- Free wills service, which allows you to generate a will online without submitting a paper application
- Reduced rates for conveyancing
- Work-related criminal law advice (0800 587 7530)
- Cover for family members (personal injury claims away from work)

Use the ASLEF legal service, provided by Thompsons Solicitors, and **keep 100% of your compensation** within the union scheme.

Call the ASLEF legal service today on **0808 100 8009**

www.thompsonstradeunion.law/aslef
The only notes that really count are the ones that come in wads

GREGOR GALL, an affiliate research associate at the University of Glasgow, and editor of the Scottish Left Review, reveals the problems caused by ‘compulsory competitive tendering’, ‘best value’, and ‘outsourcing’ – the various names under which the dodgy sub-contracting deals have sold the public short.

CASH FROM THE CHAOS
Thatcher wasn’t rock’n’roll, and there was no rock’n’roll in her sentiments or actions. But those lyrics – written by Steve Jones, Paul Cook and Julian Temple, and sung by Jones, Cook and Edward Tudor-Pole because Johnny Rotten had left the band – are prescient about the plague of outsourcing that has afflicted the provision of our public services since Thatcher, and after her the Thatcherites, set about dismantling local government and privatising our public utilities.

Under the Great Public Services Swindle a few capitalists, in the words of the Pistols, made ‘wads’ of ‘loot’ and ‘filthy lucre’ while the rest of us got well and truly shafted. Taxes were still collected but services got worse.

For the Tories and their capitalist chums, the time was right to push ahead as supporters of the welfare state were on the back foot after the economic crises of the 1970s.

The Tories used a practice known as ‘compulsory competitive tendering’. But since her ejection from Downing Street in 1990, the swindle has continued under a different rubric. Under New Labour, and Tony Blair, it was called ‘best value’ and now it is described as ‘outsourcing’. But it might as well be called ‘sub-contracting’. Because that is what it is. Whatever the terminology, the practice has afflicted local and central government, the NHS, Probation Service, and even the RAF.

Compared to the traditional mode of public sector delivery, proponents of outsourcing say that introducing ‘the competition and rigour of the market’ leads to better value for money in the delivery of public services and brings in the expertise of private sector management. In other words, it’s a case of ‘business knows best’ and a ‘win-win’ situation all round.

But with the collapse of Carillion, contracts being taken off G4S and Serco, and continuing problems at Capita, Atos and Interserve, the nightmare of outsourcing is well and truly upon us. All because when the profit motive is introduced into public services, crazy things happen. To go back to the Pistols, it’s a case of Anarchy in the UK.

When capitalists and shareholders take a slice of the pie for providing a service, there is less money for that service – so the service, inevitably, gets worse, not better. That’s not rocket science.

AN EVER BIGGER SLICE OF THE PIE
And, of course, venture capitalists and hedge funds want an even bigger slice of our money so they cut jobs and spend less money on necessary things like cleaning products for cleaners working in hospitals. That leads to an even worse service with people catching bugs in hospital and sometimes dying from them.

But that’s not all. The greed of the capitalists knows no bounds so they go bat shit crazy. In order to get the contracts – the source of their profits – they outbid their rivals by paying more than is sensible. This has two effects. First, it puts even more downward pressure on jobs, wages, working hours, pensions and other terms and conditions, as well as the cost of materials.

Second, to get the necessary to bid for these contracts, they borrow huge sums of money. This puts further downward pressure on costs as the money men want their slice of the available cake, too. Paying interest and then not being able to service the debt, let alone pay it back, is what sank Carillion and might well do the same to Interserve.

But the problems don’t end there. Governments since 1979 have rushed into outsourcing as, in the short term, it gets government debt off the books and government expenditure down. But, like its dodgy cousins PFI and PPP, it only stores up massive problems in the long term.

YOUR FUTURE DREAM HAS SURE BEEN SEEN THROUGH
For any government, accountability and control of services seeps away as government becomes reliant on private services companies that have a monopoly for the length of the contract. Funnily enough, you can see all these problems in the private sector itself where aspects of services are outsourced to external providers. Think of all the calamities in information technology when outsourcing rears its ugly head.

So outsourcing has been good for capitalists, bad for customers and bad for citizens. But what can be done about it?

Unions have worked out they need to target the client that awards the outsourcing contract as much as the outsourcer if they are to protect jobs, wages and conditions. But this is just sticking plaster on an infected wound. Ultimately, we need a change of government to stop the outsourcing madness. There is only one party prepared to go down that road – the Labour Party, led by Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell. Returning to the Sex Pistols, and St Francis of Assisi, they will end the anarchy of the market in our public services and bring back faith, hope and harmony.
All I’m asking is for a little respect

DEBORAH REAY, Northern Line North branch secretary, and chair of ASLEF’s Women’s Representatives’ Committee, opens our special four page equalities drivers and the menopause report with an article on one in three female drivers are approaching, or already having a laugh!

They want a seat which is adaptable for shorter arms and wider hips? Perish the thought!

‘They want a uniform that fits a female body? What an outrage!’

Whilst some women sail through the menopause, others suffer badly and experience symptoms ranging from hot flushes and night sweats to poor psychological health and depression. TOCs and FOCs need to ensure that all line managers have been trained to be aware of how the menopause can affect work and what adjustments may be necessary to support women going through it.

Sickness policies should be flexible enough to ensure that they meet the needs of menopausal woman. Women should not be penalised because they need to take time off during their menopause.

ASLEF has been proactive on this – more than most TOCs and FOCs – and created a policy five years ago. Whilst the ASLEF policy has to be generic, ideally, it would be the starting point for company councils to raise it through the machinery and get a TOC or FOC specific policy in the workplace. The gauntlet has been thrown!

My baby takes the morning train

LIZ COCKS, of St Pancras branch, and the Women’s Representatives’ Committee member for District 6, cuts through the myths and misconceptions about flexible working

COMMON misconception about flexible working is that it’s only open to those with caring responsibilities. This is wrong! It’s open to everyone to apply. And has been since 2014.

‘Flexible working’ is a broadchurch term used to describe alternative working to main rosters, and normally – but not always – means a change in contract or terms and conditions. Under flexible working you can only apply once every 12 months. If it is initially refused you might be able to appeal and avoid an individual grievance. There are only certain reasons it can be rejected and these can be found in ASLEF’s Women at Work guide.

Flexible working can benefit entire depots. If you are considering a change then speak with your local rep prior to your application and see what has been granted previously so you know whether your company is likely to look favourably on your application. Make sure you check your company’s policy on flexible working; this is normally found with ‘family friendly policies’.

If you are considering applying or changing your flexible working terms then please contact your WRC member who will be able to assist you in making your case and drafting a letter to the company. All committee members’ details are in the ASLEF diary and we are all very happy – and willing – to help.

Characterised by silence

BIANCA RENNIE, of Peterborough branch, and the WRC member for District 5, writes about domestic violence

DOMESTIC violence includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse in couple relationships or between family members. Domestic violence can happen against women and against men. Anybody can be an abuser and it still remains, in our society, a hidden problem.

It is characterised by silence. Silence from those who suffer, silence from those around them, and silence from those who perpetrate abuse. This silence is corrosive. It leaves women, children and men carrying a burden of shame; it prevents them from speaking out about their abuse; and it prevents them from getting help. At its worst it can be fatal. Violence of any form, to male or females, should not be accepted in our modern society, nor should it be locked away as an allowable, social norm.

Data shows there was a 63% increase in domestic abuse offences between 2011 and 2018. In the year ending March 2011, there were 48,422 domestic abuse offences recorded by the Metropolitan Police, compared with 78,814 to the same point in 2018.

Domestic violence is an issue that the WRC has highlighted many times over the years. The committee has produced a domestic abuse policy with guidelines which can be accessed via the ASLEF website. Last year we submitted a motion to AAD calling for paid domestic violence leave; this was adopted and placed into the machinery of negotiation.

If you – or anyone you know – needs professional help and advice please contact the 24 hour domestic violence helpline on 0808 200 247. There is also an LGBT+ domestic abuse helpline on 0800 999 5428.
HE branch meeting: it’s a central cog in the machinery of our trade union, yet many of our members have yet to attend their branch, with one of the most frequently cited reasons being a lack of understanding of how it all works.

ASLEF’s Young Members’ Representatives’ Committee found, during our 2017 survey, that 49% of young members (that’s ASLEF members aged between 18 and 35, for the curious hopefuls) have yet to attend a meeting of their branch.

The admission of not understanding the format and protocol of branch meetings as the reason why many have not attended is one with which we, as a committee, can sympathise, as many new and young members have never worked in an industry with such an active and powerful trade union presence.

It was quickly decided by the committee that improving attendance amongst young and new ASLEF members should form a key part of our work.

Our branch meetings are open to all members of our trade union; our rule book has no stipulations to control the function, but the fact remains that all members may attend and should attend if they can. Many larger trade unions do not allow all members to attend their branch meetings; this is something of which we should, perhaps, be mindful.

To combat this problem, our YMRC has come up with a ‘Buddy Up for Branch’ scheme which can be implemented by all ASLEF branches; our committee delegates explained this scheme during their district council meetings in March in the hope that delegates will bring this scheme to their branch.

So, how does it work? Well, branches are being asked to use active members, those who attend branch meetings regularly, to go into our places of work and identify members who have not attended a branch meeting before.

These active members can offer their fellow branch member to go along to the next meeting with them: meet them beforehand for a drink at the venue, explain the formalities, who the branch committee are, and any other useful information that may help the new attendee.

At the venue, the active member can introduce the new attendee to the

Don’t be afraid to talk about mental health

HOLLIE YATES, of Cambridge branch, and YMRC secretary, introduces ASLEF’s new Mental Health at Work Guide

In recent years there has been a transformation in the way we talk about and recognise mental health. With one in four people experiencing a mental health problem each year, a continued change is vital to end the stigma surrounding the issue.

During 2017 there were 5,821 suicides in the UK. This highlights that more needs to be done to spread awareness and educate as many people as possible so we can all become part of the solution.

At the end of 2018 we were invited to attend a mental health awareness training course at head office. The course covered the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions and the ways in which we can assist those who are struggling. It was a fantastic day, which was well received by all who attended.

It can be incredibly hard to start a mental health conversation or ask a colleague “How are you doing?” You may be concerned at their reaction or wonder if it will be awkward, but by thinking about what you want to say, finding the right time and the right place, using positive body language and listening skills, these conversations can be made a lot easier. You shouldn’t be afraid to talk about mental health.

It is important to recognise that the life of a train driver leaves us susceptible to mental ill health. More than 60% of employees with a mental health issue say work is a contributing factor. Our shift work, workplace stresses, and lifestyles are all proven to contribute towards our mental health.

ASLEF is continuing to improve training and awareness in order to support those in the workplace. If you would like more information ASLEF has published a Mental Health at Work Guide which can be accessed through your local reps or via the members’ section of the ASLEF website. The NHS, and Mind, suggest there are five steps to improve our mental health. If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive, and more able to get the most from life.

Five steps to good mental health

- Give the right time and the right place, using positive body language and listening skills, these conversations can be made a lot easier. You shouldn’t be afraid to talk about mental health.
- Be active in the workplace. If you would like more information ASLEF has published a Mental Health at Work Guide which can be accessed through your local reps or via the members’ section of the ASLEF website. The NHS, and Mind, suggest there are five steps to improve our mental health. If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive, and more able to get the most from life.
- Keep learning about mental health. If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive, and more able to get the most from life.
- Connect with others. If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive, and more able to get the most from life.
- Take action. If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive, and more able to get the most from life.
Are we PrEPared?

S REPS we are often asked to give advice on a topic we know nothing about. I have had a number of calls recently from reps in this situation with regard to the drug treatment known as PrEP.

So what is PrEP? Well, it’s short for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. That is the use of drugs to prevent HIV and AIDS in people who have not yet been exposed to the virus. The recommended drug is the Gilead Science-manufactured treatment Truvada.

The NHS in England, Wales and Scotland has been trialling the treatment with a view to a full national programme. This initially created a postcode lottery as to availability but, as the trials continue, it is becoming more widely available. The guidelines as to who would benefit from – and therefore be prescribed – PrEP are centred around certain groups:

- Men who have unprotected sex with men (gay and bisexual men).
- Women who have unprotected sex with men in the above group.
- People who share needles for the use of drug injection.
- Sexually active couples where one partner is infected and one isn’t (serodiscordant).

Studies in the United States (where PrEP has been available longer) show that, if taken every day, PrEP can be up to 99% effective in preventing an individual contracting the HIV virus. So this should become a fantastically important tool in helping to control the spread of HIV and AIDS.

What are the issues for our members? The issues are around the need to inform employers of all medicines being taken. Informing our immediate line manager of the intention to start taking Truvada (PrEP) immediately places us in one of the above groups. Confidentiality, then, really is an issue.

It is also really important that any medication a driver is taking doesn’t affect our ability to do the job safely, but the concerns are around reporting. I very much doubt any of us have a driver manager who is medically qualified to a level to be able to advise on a particular treatment. Each TOC and FOC has a dedicated occupational health provider for this, and this is where we must be directing our members.

It is every individual’s right to have their personal medical records remain confidential. Our employers can ask certain questions, mainly around whether we are fit for duty or not, but details about our personal life are entitled to be withheld from our immediate managers.

There are also issues in some companies where an individual’s line manager may often be their spouse or partner. They are still entitled to confidentiality.

Advice to reps:

- Driver informs his or her union rep that he or she intends to start taking a PrEP treatment.
- Rep makes a generic non-personal approach to the company’s occupational health provider.
- If the occupational health provider gives the OK for the medication the driver can be informed (unlikely).
- If not, company councils need to be urgently requiring occupational health and human resources departments to have proper guidelines in place.

Any rep who requires further advice please feel free to contact your district LGBT+ rep. And any driver who would prefer to talk in total confidence about this or any other matter can always contact their LGBT+ Representatives’ Committee member whose contact details are in the ASLEF diary.

Sorcerer’s apprentices

ROB KITLEY, of Exeter branch, and District 7 rep on the YMRC, explains how the First Great Western operations apprenticeship scheme helped him get onto the footplate.

HE Young Members’ Representatives’ Committee is passionate about encouraging TOCs and FOCs to run apprenticeship schemes with progression into the driver grade, especially those which are aimed at young people such as the scheme being run by Virgin Trains.

Apprenticeship schemes allow candidates to learn the job in a practical setting, whilst continuing their education and gaining industry-approved qualifications.

Several of our YMRC members have joined the industry through apprenticeship schemes which have given them a good grounding of practical railway experience and knowledge. I joined what was then the First Great Western operations apprenticeship scheme in 2013. This 18-month scheme gave candidates the opportunity to work in various roles across the company including booking offices, buffets, revenue protection, gate lines and platform assistance. Alongside practical experience we were also able to complete an NVQ in customer service and an Institute of Railway Operators certificate with Glasgow Caledonian University. Opportunities were also available to attend IRO-organised training days with industry experts as well as external qualifications.

This scheme was available to anyone from school leaving age
When fascism comes calling it doesn’t care what shade you are

AKSIR ALI, of Leeds branch, and the Black and Minority Ethnic Representatives’ Committee member for District 4, reports on the March Against Racism in London

The unity demo March Against Racism was planned well in advance of the day, Saturday 16 March, and fell a day after 50 people, children, women and men, young and old, were killed praying in a mosque at Christchurch in New Zealand, gunned down by a white supremacist. The global rise of far-right politics could not be any clearer.

As the Trump presidency has inspired a wave of racism in the United States, here in Britain a new far-right street movement, driven by the media and united through social media platforms, is taking advantage of the current political landscape, attacking migrants, refugees and the Muslim community. Islamophobic hate crime and anti-Semitism has grown tenfold under a Conservative government that struggles with racism within its own membership and policies – like the Windrush scandal – which destroy people’s lives with detention and deportation.

There was never a better time for ASLEF’s BAME committee to join 25,000 people in London at the event organised by Stand Up to Racism and Love Music Hate Racism. We were joined by other ASLEF members including EC secretary Dave Calfe and DO6 Dicky Fisher. The demo started outside the Dorchester Hotel on Park Lane. Crowding around a fire engine, which formed a stage, numbers grew on a cold and cloudy but, thankfully, dry day. As a speaker called out ‘Christchurch!’ the crowd chanted ‘Never again!’ ‘Auschwitz!’ ‘Never again!’ ‘Grenfell!’ ‘Never again!’ The crowd was warming up and the cold was fading away.

As the march passed New Zealand House banners were lowered and wreaths were laid by Islamic and Jewish organisations, other faith groups, and trade unionists. The rally gathered at Whitehall where speakers including Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott, TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady, poet Michael Rosen, and representatives of the Muslim Council of Britain, the Muslim Association of Britain, the Jewish Socialists’ Group and the Jewish Council for Racial Equality took to the stage. Speakers called for unity against racism, Islamophobia, white supremacy, anti-Semitism and fascism.

The march demonstrated confidence in our values of respect and equality for all, multiculturalism and peace. It demonstrated solidarity against racial discrimination of all kinds, and the politics of hate and fascism.

Supported by the TUC, the ASLEF BAME committee was proud to take part and stand united with our brothers and sisters. I would like to finish with a quote from Dr Edie Friedman, chief executive of the JCORE: ‘When fascism comes to call it doesn’t care what shade of difference you are.’

ASLEF promotes diversity on the railway; while Ed D’Bell, Trevor Robinson, Floyd Doyle, Peter Acheampong, Aksir Ali, Paul Patmore and Aaron Clapp thank Tosh McDonald for all his hard work with the BAME Committee

The government’s approach will only temporarily paper over the cracks instead of dealing with the root cause of why these kids feel they are not part of our society and their lives, and the lives of their peers, are not worth anything.

The BAME committee has affiliated to Mothers Against Violence UK and Growing Against Violence, organisations which work with young people to prevent violence. We urge other ASLEF branches to consider doing the same.

Britain’s knife crime epidemic

TREVOR ROBINSON, of Bakerloo Line branch, and secretary of the BAME committee, on the knife crime motion the committee is taking to AAD this month

ASLEF’s Black and Minority Ethnic Representatives’ Committee continues its fight against inequality in our workplaces up and down the country, trying to educate people wherever possible. We believe we also have a social responsibility to highlight issues beyond train driving.

One of the issues affecting England and Wales, particularly London, is knife crime among our young people. It is reported that two out of five children of secondary school age in London carry a knife or bladed weapon and the poorer the borough the higher the rate of knife crime. Knife crime has become so normalised that, in many cases, even when it results in death, it is not reported in newspapers, on television, or online. However, the statistics speak for themselves. In 2017-18 the number of knife-related homicides in England and Wales was 285, the highest since 1946. One in four victims were men aged 18-24 and 25% of them were black, the highest proportion since data collection began in 1997.

The government’s solution to this epidemic has been to loosen the rules around stop and search. Stop and search has been used in the past to racially profile, harass and intimidate people from the BAME community which leads to a breakdown in community relations with the police. This is particularly counterproductive at a time when communities should be working with the police to stop knives getting onto our streets. Add to this the Tory austerity programme which has seen sweeping cuts to youth provision in our communities, and a rise in precarious employment, and it is no wonder there is a whole generation which feels disenfranchised.

The government’s approach will only temporarily paper over the cracks instead of dealing with the root cause of why these kids feel they are not part of our society and their lives, and the lives of their peers, are not worth anything.

The BAME committee has affiliated to Mothers Against Violence UK and Growing Against Violence, organisations which work with young people to prevent violence. We urge other ASLEF branches to consider doing the same.
A round 30 minutes from London, Waterloo stands Esher: an archetypal commuter town, like many that we drivers call at through our working day. Esher Place is a country house, whose history dates back to the late 19th century, fittingly around the same time as what would become the Labour Party was formed. The house was donated to the Ragged School Union, latterly passing to Unite as a training and education site. This was the venue for ASLEF’s annual political education school.

Eighteen delegates attended this course, from across most of our eight districts, with members of both passenger and freight sectors in attendance.

**OH NO, NOT MORE POLITICS**

At the helm for the week was Marz Colombini, who stressed the importance of members being involved in politics. Far too often we hear ‘Oh no, not more politics’; what we need to remember is that we work in an industry that, ultimately, is controlled by the government. So it is imperative that we, as train drivers, as trade unionists, and as members of the Labour Party, get involved with the political process and with the party that has our interests, as workers, at heart.

The course was led by two long-standing Labour Party activists and political educators: Mark Walker and Ed Murphy. Mark was a member of the RMT for many years before becoming a member of their staff, delivering political training courses at their in-house school, then leaving to set up his own political education school.

The first day was spent learning about the structure of the Labour Party and local councils; the who’s who and what’s what of local authority powers.

On the second day the political journalist Kevin Maguire joined us to talk about dealing with the media. Kevin, associate editor of the Daily Mirror, and columnist on the New Statesman, shared with our group his in-depth, honest, and humorous experiences of being on the other end of the media, such as how to be prepared for interviews, what lengths to keep journalists at, and some of the faux pas that so many fail to avoid. It was extremely interesting to listen to his experiences over his long career in the media.

**MICK MAKES NO BONES ABOUT IT**

Then we put what we’d been taught into practice. Delegates were asked, before starting the course, to submit issues affecting their local areas; these were now chosen to form part of our first interactive activity: the radio interview.

Mark and Ed gave each delegate an issue, and we ASL to prepare for a mock radio interview, conducted by Mark. This activity was filmed by Marz, so the group could watch each other’s interviews and give feedback on how each delegate tackled the task.

Everyone performed very well; testimony, I think, to the branch structure of ASLEF that enables our members to take part in public speaking so often.

Towards the middle of the week we were joined by GS Mick Whelan, who gave a rousing speech concerning the importance of these courses, the necessity for our members to become politically engaged, and the effect politics plays on our industry. Mick makes no bones about it, politics affects everything we do as train drivers. It’s been nearly 50 years since we had an ASLEF member in Parliament – Archie Manuel, Labour MP for Central Ayrshire until he stepped down in 1970, was the last ASLEF Member of Parliament – so let’s change that!

Mick detailed a catalogue of errors made around the planning and delivery of our industry, errors made by people who know no better, which highlights why we need to put our people forward, for local and national government.

Throughout the course, Mark and Ed ensured we were talked through the important steps of delivering a successful local election campaign; part of this process is the selection address which must be made at our local Labour Party meetings.

After some preparation, delegates delivered their selection addresses, after which the rest of the delegation acted as local branch members and asked the prospective candidate questions. Some delegates were hit with some real curveball questions, which were handled very well, while others, such as myself, got away quite easily!

The final day saw Toni Ryan, leader of the Labour group on Houghton Regis town council in Bedfordshire, join us to talk about how she became a local councillor and to give us an insight into the day to day role of a councillor. It was extremely inspiring to see how a worker, like you and me, can become involved in local politics and really make a difference. The challenges Toni faces are evident, but so is her grit and determination; and that’s why she is where she is today.

**EXTREMELY REWARDING**

The course was delivered by Ed, Mark and Marz with ease and supportive professionalism. It was extremely rewarding to see each delegate develop their ability, understanding and confidence with the matters that were covered. Our sincere gratitude to all involved in the organising and delivery of the school.

And the staff at Esher Place did a tremendous job of hosting us; the food was fantastic and the service was second to none.

ASLEF has shown great commitment to develop its members, Now it is up to those of us who attended to make use of the fantastic opportunities that our union makes available to its members.
AAD – a tool for change

A S a newly elected CC member, I was invited to attend a reps’ training day in Cardiff with my colleagues from other TfW depots; also there were reps from GWR Swansea, DB Newport and Port Talbot. We were greeted by Emma Penman of ASLEF Education who gave us a brief on courses and funding available in our region; also contact details of union learning reps in our district. I strongly advise you to seek out your own ULR to see what courses are available in your area.

Our first speaker was DO7 Brian Corbett, who told representatives about the importance of data protection and advised us to check out the ASLEF website for a guide to data protection best practice. Brian was then joined by DO3 Andy Hourigan and they went through ASLEF’s union structure.

They stressed how important branch meetings are; when, for instance, members want to initiate a rule book change this is where the process starts. AAD is another tool to force change. I wasn’t aware how powerful the delegates who attend could be, where, if need be, they can command the general secretary to do their bidding.

Marilyn Thomas, our next speaker, spoke about mental health awareness. The main objectives are to identify appropriate use of language, and to question the effect of negativity on someone with a mental health issue. The Equality Act 2010 mentions family stress, religion, and maternity, but the list goes on. If you feel depressed, or anxious, or have any other problems seek help as soon as you can from your rep, line manager, or GP. There are other agencies who can help, ie Mind Cymru in Wales, so don’t suffer alone.

After lunch it was Andy’s turn again, this time talking about CDP. How the old points system has been replaced, thankfully, I hasten to add. CDP should be tailored to the driver’s requirements, not managers being lazy and putting drivers on the longest CDP possible. It should be relevant and deal with factors of the incident and monitoring should be reasonable.

Last, but by no means least, Katie Asspattis, who was instrumental in getting union recognition down the Welsh Assembly, took to the floor. Katie did that good a job, she now works for the Assembly/TfW to liaise between the various unions involved. She told us about TfW’s plans for management to engage more with the workforce unlike the old regime at ATW so, hopefully, this will happen, moving forward. She also spoke about the new electrified tram/trains and the new depot planned for the Valleys network.

Andy Chinnock, Cardiff Valleys company council

Cambridge blues

At our April branch meeting we had the pleasure of welcoming CrossCountry company council for their annual visit. Mark Sarson gave XC drivers an insight into the ongoing industrial problems between ASLEF and the company and the ballot for strike action being conducted. It was XC local level rep Chris Carey’s last branch report before his retirement after 42 years on the railway and he was presented with a tankard by Mark for his services over the last 10 years. A special mention was made by chair Kevin Facer for GA driver Lee McAllister who has been on the railway for 45 years to the day of the branch meeting.

We would like to thank everyone who attended and our next meeting will be our Badges & Buffet event on Monday 17 June. Martin Haylett, Cambridge branch secretary

920 YEARS’ SERVICE On behalf of the trade union, and Ipswich branch 109, thank you for your loyal and continued service to ASLEF: Dave Bray, Dave Harlott, Trevor Southgate, Alan Tricker, Richard Wood (45 years); Mark Davies, John Orris, Mark Ross (40); Darren Clarke, Allan Dewhurst, Andy Harlott, Tim Knight, Tim Mallion (35); Kevin Dady, Matthew Leone (25); Tim Howlett, Martin Johnson, Simon Pearson, Steven Rogers, Mark Smith, Nick Stirton (20); Brian Aitkenhead, Michael Avern, Brian Damant, Josephine Middleton, Kelvin Moody, Ian Watling (15); Daniel Amner, Dean Barnes, Mark Ford, Craig Mann, Shane Ollis, John Smith, Matthew Waddington (10); Jamie Abbott, Andy Fowkes, Alex Green, Glenn Merchant, Paul Moore, Owen Nicholas, Joe Seaman, Simon Sherman, Connor Wood (5).

Lee Barber, Ipswich branch secretary
Arbeit macht frei

MAEVE HANLEY, Northern Line, North branch, and London Underground trains functional council, reports on a visit to Auschwitz, the concentration camp in Poland where more than one million men, women and children were killed by the Nazis

IXTEEN ASLEF
District 8 members and friends went to Poland in February. The weather was kind so, on Sunday afternoon, we walked around Krakow and tried to see Oskar Schindler’s factory but, unfortunately, you need to book tickets in advance. We did visit the Jewish Quarter, passing along the narrow cobbled streets to the old town, stopping at some of the churches (there are 300 in total, almost one in every square).

On Monday we went to Auschwitz, originally a Polish army base; Birkenau, a purpose-built extermination camp; and the salt mines. As you enter Auschwitz you see the ‘Arbeit macht frei’ sign above the gate and cannot help but shiver.

It’s hard to know which part of the guided tour was the most harrowing and we all found different aspects difficult. However, the fate of the children was probably the worst. It’s only when you walk along the corridors listening to the details through your headphones that you can step back in time and imagine the feelings of the prisoners there.

We all learned something new. For me, it was the realisation that the prisoners didn’t know what their fate would be. And when Jewish families arrived they were made to send postcards home to family and friends to encourage them to come to Auschwitz! So more people came without knowing that the sender of that card had been sent to the gas chamber before their postcard had been posted. We also saw suitcases with the names and dates of people who were killed, baby clothes, and human hair collected to make socks for soldiers.

After Auschwitz we headed to Birkenau. By now the weather was not so kind which, in a way, was fitting for what we saw and heard. One of the first things that struck me was the vastness of the site; Birkenau is huge. We saw the railway line where the prisoners arrived by train and the barbed wire fence surrounding the site where many prisoners leapt to their deaths, deciding it was better than remaining in the camp. Possibly the most poignant part was hearing that prisoners volunteered to clean the makeshift toilets – where they had to use their hands to scoop out the faeces – knowing that the guards wouldn’t enter for fear of catching dysentery.

Hearing these horrific stories made it easier to understand why the trees don’t seem to have any life and why I didn’t see a single bird fly over the whole time we were there.

Finally, we headed to the vast salt mines at Wieliczka. You walk down 380 steps to see elaborate attractions including a lake, sculptures, and displays of historic mining. We spent time in a beautiful chapel where they hold weekly masses and concerts and then took an extremely quiet and thoughtful coach ride back to Krakow.

Am I glad I went? Definitely, yes. The most despicable crimes happened here but it would be even more despicable to forget what happened. Many thanks to Debbie Reay for organising such an interesting and educational trip.

Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss displayed the words Arbeit macht frei – work will set you free – at the entrance to the camp. The phrase was coined by the German nationalist Lorenz Diefenbach in 1873 and taken up by Nazis in the 1920s as a purpose-built extermination camp; and the salt mines. As you enter Auschwitz you see the ‘Arbeit macht frei’ sign above the gate and cannot help but shiver.

It’s hard to know which part of the guided tour was the most harrowing and we all found different aspects difficult. However, the fate of the children was probably the worst. It’s only when you walk along the corridors listening to the details through your headphones that you can step back in time and imagine the feelings of the prisoners there.

We all learned something new. For me, it was the realisation that the prisoners didn’t know what their fate would be. And when Jewish families arrived they were made to send postcards home to family and friends to encourage them to come to Auschwitz! So more people came without knowing that the sender of that card had been sent to the gas chamber before their postcard had been posted. We also saw suitcases with the names and dates of people who were killed, baby clothes, and human hair collected to make socks for soldiers.

After Auschwitz we headed to Birkenau. By now the weather was not so kind which, in a way, was fitting for what we saw and heard. One of the first things that struck me was the vastness of the site; Birkenau is huge. We saw the railway line where the prisoners arrived by train and the barbed wire fence surrounding the site where many prisoners leapt to their deaths, deciding it was better than remaining in the camp. Possibly the most poignant part was hearing that prisoners volunteered to clean the makeshift toilets – where they had to use their hands to scoop out the faeces – knowing that the guards wouldn’t enter for fear of catching dysentery.

Hearing these horrific stories made it easier to understand why the trees don’t seem to have any life and why I didn’t see a single bird fly over the whole time we were there.

Finally, we headed to the vast salt mines at Wieliczka. You walk down 380 steps to see elaborate attractions including a lake, sculptures, and displays of historic mining. We spent time in a beautiful chapel where they hold weekly masses and concerts and then took an extremely quiet and thoughtful coach ride back to Krakow.

Am I glad I went? Definitely, yes. The most despicable crimes happened here but it would be even more despicable to forget what happened. Many thanks to Debbie Reay for organising such an interesting and educational trip.

Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss displayed the words Arbeit macht frei – work will set you free – at the entrance to the camp. The phrase was coined by the German nationalist Lorenz Diefenbach in 1873 and taken up by Nazis in the 1920s
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).

Educational Study Visit to Derby’s Historic Roundhouse

28th May

Join ASLEF Education on a journey to explore the oldest surviving 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 chnutty@hotmail.co.uk

---

ASLEF LGBTQ+ Social

The ASLEF LGBTQ+ Representative Committee would like to invite members to a social, the event is open to all but they would particularly like to welcome the union’s LGBTQ+ members.

Wednesday 3rd July
Comptons, 51 Old Compton Street, Soho
Meeting between 16:00 - 19:30hrs

If you require further information, please contact Lee James at ljames@aslef.org.uk
JASON BANCROFT  
**A PASSION FOR HEAVY METAL, GOLF, LIVERPOOL, RANGERS AND RACING**

Jason Bancroft, ex-Southport driver, tragically died in an accident on 30 January at the age of 51. Jason joined the railway as a guard in 1993 and quickly progressed to train driver, a role he carried out for 22 years until he took early retirement in 2018.

An avid supporter of both Liverpool and Glasgow Rangers he was overjoyed when Steven Gerrard became manager of Rangers last year and made trips up to Ibrox to watch their matches. Jason’s favourite sport, though, was horse racing and we will always remember him early morning at the depot getting the train dressed like a country squire in his long coat and hat going to his latest race meeting with the Racing Post under his arm.

Jason also loved heavy metal music, a passion he shared with his wife Susan, and they would regularly go to concerts together to watch the likes of Guns’N’Roses, Kiss, and Def Leppard.

A member of Steve – a freeman of the borough of Colchester – something of which he was immensely proud – following his passage of colleague and close friend Steve Ball.

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of colleague and close friend Steve Ball. Bally was a larger than life character known by many who loved his sense of humour and mischievous jokes. He was not afraid to speak his mind and, if he saw an injustice, would be the first to take up the cause. He helped many over the years and was fiercely loyal to Colchester depot, being involved with the branch, the welfare club, and even found time to run the depot shop! Steve was also a freeman of the borough of Colchester – something of which he was immensely proud – following his father and family who have lived there for more than 100 years.

Bally started on the railway as a second man in 1970, having previously worked on the ferries out of Harwich. He was really proud to be a train driver, and it was devastating when, through a health issue, he was forced to retire early. He had given 32 years of service, and continued to take an interest in what was happening on the railway, and with his colleagues.

Steve was devoted to his family, his wife Mel to whom he was married for 46 years, and his daughters Kelly and Carla. He was also, to his great joy, blessed with two grandchildren he adored.

Bally was diagnosed with a terminal illness nearly three years ago, but as was the man, he battled until the end doing charity challenges and raising more than £15,000 for local hospitals, showing strength and endurance that touched us all. To all who knew him, he will be hugely missed, and to those of us who regarded him as a friend, he has left an eternal mark. RIP my friend.

Dave Chable, Colchester

DAI JONES

Dai Jones passed away on 20 February at the age of 84. Dai started his career on the footplate at Moat Lane back in 1951. After national service in the Tank Corps he ventured to the West Midlands, taking up firing duties at Oxley and Stafford Road and finally made driver in 1966. With the demise of steam there were a lot of redundancies and Dai was one of them in 1967. He came back as a second man at Wolverhampton before being made redundant again in 1969. This time Dai ventured back onto the p-way as a renowned and sought-after crane operator on Trip 27, which was known as Walker’s Circus, and could go anywhere in the Midlands network. Dai took early retirement in 1996. On behalf of the branch I would like to pass on my condolences to Dai’s family at this sad time.

Nigel Harkness, Wolverhampton

RAY SOUTHALL

It is with sadness that I report the passing of retired engineman Ray Southall on 19 February 2019 aged 88. Ray retired back in 1993 after 48 years’ service and was a regular attendee of the Railway Club and Good Friday reunions. Our condolences to Ray’s family at this sad time.

Nigel Harkness, Wolverhampton

Arnold Cheetham has passed away at the age of 89. He entered the footplate grade on 27 May 1946 at the age of 16. He was always associated with Trafford Park depot in Manchester, the city in which he later served as chief traction inspector.

Mel Thorley, RMS

## ARNOLD CHEETHAM

Arnold Cheetham (left), Trafford Park stalwart, pictured in 1988

Come on you ‘Gers – Bluenose Jason

Kirkdale golf society for many years, Jason loved his golf and wanted to join Hurlston Hall golf club in retirement.

Jason was well-liked, both at work and by his wide circle of friends from racing, golf, heavy metal, not forgetting the On the Buses fan club.

Jason took early retirement to spend more time with Susan and his daughters.

In memory of Jason I am organising a golf event at Hurlston Hall in the format of Texas scramble. This is proposed for late September 2019. Anyone is welcome, please register your interest by emailing jbtexasscramble@gmail.com

Alex and Samantha and our sympathy goes out to them. Jason, you were one of the good guys. You were always a good laugh and you left many people with great memories.

You will be sadly missed.

Mike Cooper, LLR, Southport

STEVE BALL

**MISCHIEVOUS JOKES**

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of colleague and close friend Steve Ball. Bally was a larger than life character known by many who loved his sense of humour and mischievous jokes. He was not afraid to speak his mind and, if he saw an injustice, would be the first to take up the cause. He helped many over the years and was fiercely loyal to Colchester depot, being involved with the branch, the welfare club, and even found time to run the depot shop! Steve was also a freeman of the borough of Colchester – something of which he was immensely proud – following his father and family who have lived there for more than 100 years.

Bally started on the railway as a second man in 1970, having previously worked on the ferries out of Harwich. He was really proud to be a train driver, and it was devastating when, through a health issue, he was forced to retire early. He had given 32 years of service, and continued to take an interest in what was happening on the railway, and with his colleagues.

Steve was devoted to his family, his wife Mel to whom he was married for 46 years, and his daughters Kelly and Carla. He was also, to his great joy, blessed with two grandchildren he adored.

Bally was diagnosed with a terminal illness nearly three years ago, but as was the man, he battled until the end doing charity challenges and raising more than £15,000 for local hospitals, showing strength and endurance that touched us all. To all who knew him, he will be hugely missed, and to those of us who regarded him as a friend, he has left an eternal mark. RIP my friend.

Dave Chable, Colchester
Letters

Surely what’s good for the English goose is good for the Scottish gander?

I was interested to see in the most recent Journal (April, page 6), Kevin Lindsay, the district organiser for Scotland, being critical of the parking levy legislation recently passed in Scotland after budget negotiations between the minority SNP government and the Scottish Green Party.

Perhaps if Scottish Labour had engaged with the process, rather than refusing to take part in it, there could have been other, maybe better, outcomes in the budget. Who knows? The opportunity was there. Fighting for the Scottish people, for me, is a better plan than just fighting against another Scottish party. This new legislation brings Scotland into line with English law, ie the Transport Act 2000, a piece of legislation introduced in England and Wales by the government of Tony Blair, a Labour government, enabling councils to raise a levy. So far Nottingham city council, in 2012, with, at that point, 50 Labour councillors out of 55, being the only place to do so. Surely what’s good for the English Labour goose, is good for the Scottish Green gander?

There could well be an effect on train drivers by this legislation, presuming firstly that any councils actually introduce it and then if the companies decide to try and pass this charge on to drivers, but I am sure there will be a robust defence by ASLEF, for those drivers who have been lucky enough to be given a piece of legislation introduced in England and Wales by the government of Tony Blair, a Labour government, enabling councils to raise a levy. So far Nottingham city council, in 2012, with, at that point, 50 Labour councillors out of 55, being the only place to do so. Surely what’s good for the English Labour goose, is good for the Scottish Green gander?

In my own depot all bar three drivers out of over 70 currently have access to company-provided parking (worth £2,600 pa), which has been brought up by LLC and CC numerous times, but to no avail.

Perhaps company councils could look in their upcoming pay negotiations to push forward a contractual obligation to provide free parking for drivers expected to book on or off out with day time public transport operations. In that way we will protect our parking requirements, ensure any new costs are borne by the TOCs and FOCs, while also extending that benefit to all drivers, not just a privilege of length of service. A privilege that we have seen recently can be withdrawn as a ‘punishment’ during disputes.

Hugh S Cumming, Edinburgh

Founding fathers wanted a United States of Europe

In the December 2018 Journal, you published a letter of mine on the highly topical subject of Brexit. In outlining my reasons for voting Leave I said, ‘The European project can only end in one place – a United States of Europe – where I do not want to go.’

Whilst it would be fair to say my letter provoked a somewhat vitriolic response, it is also fair to say that the substance of my concerns went unanswered. So in order to make clear that I do not inhabit a world of ‘unicorns’ and ‘double glazing salesmen on commission’ I will quote Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the European project:

‘Europe’s nations should be guided towards a super state without their peoples understanding what is happening. This can be accomplished by successive steps, each disguised as having an economic purpose, but which will eventually and irresolubly lead to federation. We can never sufficiently emphasise that the six community countries are the forerunners of a broader, united Europe.’

I take Monsieur Monnet at his word. I cannot help but wonder why a supposed trade association of free and independent nation states needs all of the organs of a nation state.

Does free trade require an executive, a legislature, a judiciary, a flag, an anthem, a foreign and diplomatic service, a seat at the UN, a central bank and a currency? The much maligned suggestions of the creation of a European army and a common tax system controlled by an exchequer with tax raising authority are now being discussed openly by the French and Germans. Successive steps...

Other trading blocs, such as NAFTA and ASEAN, have no comparable structures. Sure, they need a secretariat but that is on an entirely different scale to the machinery of the European Union.

It seems more plausible to view the institutions of the EU as the successive steps in the realisation of Monsieur Monnet’s vision – the establishment of a United States of Europe.

The constitution of the United States of America and the preamble to the Treaty of Rome (the founding document of what was to become the European Union) bear
Hello darkness, my old friend, I’ve come to talk with you again

I assume there was more than a soupçon of tongue-in-cheek in Chris Proctor’s piece The Sound of Silence (Journal, April). However, it certainly resonated – sotto voce, of course – with me. Buses, trains, stations, shops and – dare I say it – sometimes churches, too, are infested with a surfeit of noise.

There seem to be two reasons for this cacophony of sound:

(1) A paranoia of litigation by someone who tripped, left their shopping behind, got off at the wrong stop, failed to see the door closing, got on the wrong train – you name it. Common sense has gone out of the window – or would do if you could open it!

(2) A fear of silence brings music – or what passes for it! – everywhere. If it’s quiet, people might just start thinking: quelle horreur!

But, yes, the noise is such that one can ‘switch off’ mentally and fail to hear something really important, like ‘evacuate this building immediately.’

And, anyway, so many people are plugged into their ‘device’ that they probably don’t hear announcements. I travelled the other day with a chap who was overcarried all the way to London because he failed to hear any announcements because he had earphones on.

Thanks for the article: I support the concept behind it. And keep up the good work.

I was also intrigued to see the subject of religion raised again on the letters pages. From the number of parts of the Bible that Bro Dence quotes, it would seem that he has read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. If so, he should have read why the world situation is as it is, and what God has done, is doing, and will do to sort the mess out.

Of course, he could just have done what a lot of people do, pick up suitable quotes to make a point from someone else, without getting the whole picture. I hope this is not so. If Bro Dence is really interested in getting answers, perhaps he could contact me and I will try to put him in touch with someone near his home with whom he could discuss the issues.

Eric Stuart. Retired Members’ Section.

TOCs back pedalling fast

As new trains come into use, it’s a disappointment that our current mania for cycling has not been factored in. Spaces for bikes on commuter trains are being dramatically reduced, and the red tape of pre-booking has now been introduced. Even leaving a bike at the station is almost impossible. The capital may be putting its best pedal forward but train operators are back pedalling fast.

Mark Adamson. west London

Railway stations: Cum on feel the noize

comparison. The US constitution opens with the phrase, ‘We the people of the United States, in order to create a more perfect union…’ Whereas the Treaty of Rome states that the six leaders are, ‘Determined to lay the foundation of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe.’

Leave voters are frequently challenged to demonstrate what Leave looks like. But, in light of the evidence I have put forward, I challenge the Remain cheerleaders to tell us what remaining in the EU will look like in five years’ time, let alone another 40.

The Europe of Jean Monnet was forged from the ashes of two world wars and the understandable fear of a third. So, in a letter of quotations, I shall finish with President Franklin D Roosevelt who said, ‘The only thing you have to fear is fear itself.’

Tom Burns. Perth

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

THE KING’S CROSS STORY

by Peter Darley (The History Press, £20) as featured on the centre pages 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.

GROVE PARK branch 50th anniversary badge. £6.50 inc p&p. Contact branch secretary Ray Garland 07931 612615 or rgarland1@sky.com

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 wide. Gold £300, silver £100 + £7 p&p recorded delivery. Contact Brad McCarthy on 07929 350146.

YORK 243 branch 130th anniversary badge. Last few remaining £6 inc p&p. Contact branch sec Adrian Cook at york243branch@gmail.com

INTER-CITY DRIVER LANYARD

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

A little bit Brompton and W1A

To 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

May 2019 | The ASLEF Journal | 21
Locos bring the goods

CHRISTIAN Wolmar had every right to feel the stars were not aligned when, on the eve of the publication of The Story of Crossrail (Head of Zeus, £20), the opening of the new Elizabeth line, running 73 miles from Abbey Wood and Shenfield in the east through the heart of London to Heathrow and Reading in the west, was put back.

But Christian, a journalist for the New Statesman, The Independent and The Observer, before turning his hand to books – including Broken Rails: How Privatisation Wrecked Britain’s Railways; Fire & Steam: A New History of the Railways; and Engines of War: How Wars Were Won & Lost on the Railways – is a phlegmatic feller, hoping for a reprint when the wheels finally begin to turn.

He looks at the money, the men, and the machines – eight large TBMs, all, as per mining matériel, ‘as well as everything that was grown, made or mined’ – had to be carried.

And the job of the railway.

‘Books do furnish a room,’ observes Lindsay Bagshaw in Anthony Powell’s magisterial twelve volume cycle of novels A Dance to the Music of Time.

KEITH RICHMOND looks at some of the new books that have turned up at head office in St John Street

Their book is the result of courses Davis has taught, with the help of Rentoul, a biographer – many commentators say hagiographer – of Blair, first at Queen Mary, University of London, and then at KCL, analysing the achievements of the New Labour governments from 1997 to 2010. Contributors to their classes – and this book – include Andrew Adonis, Ed Balls and Alastair Campbell so you will not be surprised that although Davis and Rentoul concede ‘that the view in this book is slanted in Blair’s favour’ they conclude that Mandy’s merry men are right to be ‘proud of their collective record’.

Glyn Ford, an academic at Manchester University from 1976 to 1984, Labour MEP for South West England from 1999 to 2010. Contributors to their classes – and this book – include Andrew Adonis, Ed Balls and Alastair Campbell so you will not be surprised that although Davis and Rentoul concede ‘that the view in this book is slanted in Blair’s favour’ they conclude that Mandy’s merry men are right to be ‘proud of their collective record’.

Glyn Ford, an academic at Manchester University from 1976 to 1984, Labour MEP for South West England from 1999 to 2009, is an expert on, but not an apologist for, North Korea. He’s visited the country 50 times, knows the leadership of the DPRK, and, in Talking to North Korea (Pluto Press, £14.99) argues that while there are many roads to war, there is only one path to peace – dialogue with a government keen to end its isolation, rather than régime change. Donald Trump won’t read this engaging history of Korea in the 20th century – ‘Hell, he doesn’t read books, he colours them in’/mutter White House minions – but he should.

Despite its title, Brexit Britannia by David Kavanagh (Dram Books, £5.70) has nothing to do with the travails of Theresa since the vote on 23 June 2016 but is, really, a primer covering 2,000 years of the history of our island nations in a slim volume of 130 pages, making it perfect for your back pocket (or loo).

‘You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me’ – CS Lewis

Michael O’Neill, Professor of English at Durham University, was a gifted poet and influential critic of Romantic poetry who died just before Christmas from the cancer of the oesophagus which is the subject of his final volume of verse, Crash & Burn (Arc Publications, £10.99). It opens with the words ‘Good news’ from ‘this sensibly / downbeat nurse, / who’s schooled me in the school of knocks that are hard’ from the wryly prophetic poem False Positive, and ends with the words ‘Goodnight, sweet prince’ from Hamlet. There’s humour, love, and warmth here, as well as pain, as he honestly describes his feelings from diagnosis through surgery and post-op chemo to that moment when ‘the tenses have not // quite ended not / ended not / quite not quite’.
TRUE COLOURS

ASHIONISTAS, pointing to the colour palette boards put up in DIY stores by Crown and Dulux, like to claim that there are dozens of different colours. But there aren’t. Not really. Think football shirts. With the exception of Leeds and Spurs (white); Newcastle and Notts County (black and white); Norwich (yellow); Wolves (gold); Blackpool and Luton (orange); Plymouth, Yeovil, Celtic and Hibernian (green) most clubs in England, Scotland and Wales play in a version of red or blue. The shades may vary (Cardiff blue versus Coventry blue); be worn as red stripes (Sheffield United) solid colour (Manchester United) or white sleeves (Arsenal) but, basically, the vest is either red or blue. The claret of West Ham, Aston Villa and Burnley is just a deeper, darker, version of red.

Ocean Colour Scene: the TIGgers play Richard of York galloped back in vain

As for football, so it is in politics. Red is the colour of the left – of socialism, communism, and the labour movement, not just in Britain, but in Europe, and has been since the French Revolution of 1789 – while blue is the colour of the Conservative right. (Although, in the United States, the Republicans are red while the Democrats are blue). Here, the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru sport yellow while the Green Party, naturally, goes green.

Which gave The Independent Group a problem when they faced the media after resigning the Labour whip. The TIGgers didn’t dare wear either red or blue. So Chuka Umunna wore a self-satisfied smile and purple tie, despite that being UKIP’s colour; Gavin Shuker and Angela Smith thought the future was orange, colour of choice for Liberal Democrats; Luciana Berger went black to the future; Ann Coffey black and white; Mike Gapes turquoise; and Chris Leslie something murky and indeterminate. A motley collection of colours for a motley crew, murmured assembled hacks. Chuka later claimed the colour purple was not en hommage à Nigel Farage but a tip of the tilter to the high days of New Labour when Tony Blair preferred the ‘passion’ of purple to the socialist association of traditional red. Watch this space (and those ties)…

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’.

Changed your address? Please let us know! Just fill in this form

Name..................................................................................................................................................
Address..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................................................
Postcode.................................................................................................................................................
Telephone..............................................................................................................................................
Branch...................................................................................................................................................
Member No............................................................................................................................................

Please return coupon to: ASLEF, 77 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 May

Prize Crossword

Crossword 157 by Tom Williams

Across
1 French miss
7 Domesticated
8 Comedians’ jokes
10 Curious
11 Old keepsake
13 Levels of social hierarchy
15 Offensive remark
17 Biblical song
18 Becomes submerged
19 To dislocate a disc
21 Meaty fish
22 Military tribunal
(5,7)

Down
1 Harley-Davidsons
2 Raze to the ground
3 A health check
4 Relatives by marriage (2,4)
5 Cutting side of a blade
6 Record of a ship’s voyage
9 Discarded iron and steel (5,5)
12 Pasta tubes with a cheese sauce?
14 Bet suggester
16 Two-rider bike
18 Electrical circuit extension
20 The lion

Solution to Crossword 156

Across: 1 Tripod 7 Clout 8 Gullible 9 Never
10 Risk 12 Tern 13 Prey 14 Fury 15 Axes 17 Tans
19 Total 20 Official 21 Roost 22 Lounge

Down: 1 Tiger 2 Illustration 3 Dubbin 4 Scent
5 Conversation 6 Sturdy 11 Key 13 Pet
14 Future 15 Artful 16 Cloth 18 Solve

Congratulations to Daniel Taylor of York, 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 156th prize crossword in the April edition of the ASLEF Journal. If you successfully complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 May
Qualified Train Drivers

£49,819-£50,977 rising to circa £62,000 by 2020
Reading, Oxford, Bristol, Gloucester, Westbury, Fratton, Plymouth, Exeter & Penzance

At GWR, we’re looking for Qualified Train Drivers who want to deliver a different kind of rail service. Where rewards are first class, and where salaries will rise to around £62k by 2020. Where the fleet is being modernised. And where you’ll get the chance to drive through some of the UK’s most beautiful countryside, across the South West of England and Wales.

We’re setting a new standard for rail in the 21st Century – for our passengers and for our people. And we’re focused on creating a relaxing, fast, efficient, friendly, fun and special experience.

Join us and you’ll use your drive, commitment, passion for customer service, and exemplary safety record to help over 100 million passengers travel between more than 275 stations, safely and on time, every year.

It means you’ll need to work a variety of shifts and live within an hour’s travel of the depot you apply to. But in return, we offer a Defined Benefit Railway Pension Scheme, free rail travel across the GWR network for you and your family, a Health cash plan and much more.

GWR celebrates diversity and is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all our employees.

Join our team of Great Westerners and help us make history.

We’re unable to accept paper applications or applications via email. Please complete the online application.

To apply please visit GWRcareers.co.uk