Coming home
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Campaigning for a better future

We have once more just debated all those industrial, social, political and international issues at the front of our branches’ and members’ minds and, once more, conference dealt with emotional and passionate issues in a comradely way. I wish more branches would submit more items on the issues that affect them, our industry and their communities.

It is strange that the questions I am often asked, and people say they would like altered, are not always reflected in motions or rule changes sent to AAD.

I have had a number of conversations about entry into the union. We have had to change the membership form to meet the needs of the Trade Union Act and the data requirements of GDPR. These are delivering problems for the union, as was the intention of the Conservative government, which wants to stifle the voice of civil society (but where is the legislation to deal with bad employers?)

The first issue we have is the number of people filling old forms that do not have the opt-in box for the political fund, so we have to err on the side of caution and assume they do not want to support, and a proportion of the new forms coming back without the box being ticked. That’s fine if people do not want to contribute the few pennies it costs but it will hamper the campaigning we can do both within and outside the Labour Party on issues that affect each and every one of us. The other issue is the box on the back of the form to use your data; if we cannot store it or use it we cannot ballot you or, in some cases, assist you. Can all branch secretaries please check the box is ticked?

Some people think trade unions are only about terms and conditions and we should not be involved in anything else. Wrong. This trade union has a long history of representing its members’ views on fascism, racism, genocide, homophobia, women’s rights, the NHS, education, Royal Mail, gas, water, electricity, pensions, green issues, the minimum wage, and others too numerous to mention. And international issues, wars and dictatorships, in a world where transnationals operate everywhere and share bad practice and it’s up to trade unions to share best practice.

The important thing is that we move forward together, creating our own legacy of campaigning on issues old and new, for train drivers and their families and a better future for all, and those who come after us do the same.

Yours fraternally

Mick Whelan, general secretary
Strikes bring Tramlink back to table for talks

TRIKE action by ASLEF members on Thursday 28 March and Wednesday 1 May brought trams in Croydon to a standstill and forced FirstTram Operations, which runs the system in south London, back to the negotiating table for talks.

ASLEF members at Tramlink voted to strike after talks at ACAS on our pay and conditions dispute 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. ‘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.

Privatisation means more inefficiencies

Andy McDonald has hit out at his oppo after Chris Grayling admitted, in his answer to the Shadow Transport Secretary’s Parliamentary written question about what assessment he has made of the capacity to reallocate MTR Crossrail drivers who are not yet operational to other parts of the rail network where staff shortages exist, that ‘management of the MTR Crossrail contract’ is not his responsibility.

‘It’s frankly ridiculous that hundreds of staff on Crossrail who are employed yet not operational cannot provide cover for other parts of the rail network where shortages exist,’ said Andy. ‘The absence of cross cover and mixed traction knowledge among drivers, in particular, adds significantly to rail’s costs and inefficiencies. Labour’s plan to re-allocate track and trains in one publicly-owned company will allow a more holistic approach to the deployment of rail staff which will reduce costs and improve efficiency for passengers and taxpayers.’

GS Mick Whelan said: ‘One of the benefits of bringing our railways back into public ownership will be that we won’t just be putting the wheels and the steel back together – the trains and the track on which they run – but we will be in a position to address problems like this.

DO8 Finn Brennan with members on the Croydon Tramlink picket line

They want to see real improvements to reflect the responsible job they do.’

Following talks at ACAS with FirstGroup management on 7 May, ASLEF agreed to suspend the strike action planned at Tramlink on 9 May,’ said Finn. ‘Talks will continue in a bid to resolve the problems at Tramlink.’

I’m your choice

Alan Coiley of Crewe branch was elected to Crewe town council in Crewe south and Mark Prenter, Waterloo Nine Elms, was elected to Medway council representing Twydall, in the local elections held in England on Thursday 2 May.

Craig’s list

Craig Finnie, who has been working as a workplace learning co-ordinator for the Workers’ Education Association for the last 15 years, has joined ASLEF as our new education support worker in Scotland. Craig is based in Glasgow but will be supporting ULRs working for TOCs and FOCs right across Scotland.

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

‘Just going to be held here for a few minutes.’ Ok Tube driver, enjoy your hug, it’s been a rough morning, so feel your pain.
@owenjbennett

Labour’s campaign against the City is intensifying.
@CityAM

As opposed to the City’s war on the rest of us for the last 40 years.
@FinnBrennan

Compromise idea. Let Trump have his state visit but make sure every bit of his itinerary is organised by Chris Grayling.
@davidschneider

It would have taken courage and judgement for Tony Blair to heed the million who marched against the Iraq war. He didn’t have them – and his project and reputation collapsed.
@williamhutton

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What passing-bells? Anthem for doomed railway lines...

OST countries have their own version of Dick Dastardly – as Dr Richard Beeching, the man who butchered Britain’s railways in the 1960s – is still known at the DfT. Many other, much less pleasant, descriptions are also available.

That’s why – despite it being clear that trains are the transport of choice for the future – there are lots of lost railway lines around the world. Lines that Anthony Lambert celebrates in his new book Lost Railway Journeys from Around the World (White Lion Publishing, £25).

While the book is, in part, a requiem for adventures no longer possible on the permanent way, it is also a chronicle of the transformation of tracks into walkers’ trails and cycle ways. And the occasional partial – or possible – reopening of the iron road.

A significant part of the 14,000 miles of the National Cycle Network in Britain has been built on old railway tracks, including the 12-arch viaduct in Glen Ogle – acclaimed by one railway executive, Lambert notes, as Scotland’s ‘Khyber Pass’ – on the Dunblane-Crianlarich section of the Callander & Oban line.

Lambert looks at 33 railway lines on six continents, including the Kettle Valley Railway in Canada where, between Midway and Hope in British Columbia, walkers, cyclists and riders can take the old path of trains through the five Othello tunnels – named, alongside such stations as Juliet and Lear, by the railway’s Shakespeare-loving builder Alexander McCulloch.

Lambert’s hymn to lost railways and (right) Butcher Beeching

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CONFERENCES & RALLIES
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 Burston strike school rally at Burston, near Diss, in Norfolk is on Sunday 1 September. The Trades Union Congress is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 8 to Wednesday 11 September. The Labour Party conference is at the Brighton Centre from Saturday 21 to Wednesday 25 September.

500 CLUB: Daniel Bound, with number 18, won the May draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £444.

Our new ASLEF LGBT+ purple polo shirt – ‘driving for equality’ – is available in S, M, L, and XL. £15 inc p&p; email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk

Off the Rails

JIMMY GREAVES, the greatest goalscorer in English football – 44 goals in 57 games for England, and 366 goals in top flight football for Chelsea, AC Milan, Spurs and West Ham – is now 79 and, after suffering a stroke four years ago, needs a full-time carer as he lives out his days at Little Baddow in Essex. Natural by David Tossell (Pitch Publishing, £19.99) reminds us of his legacy. Including his impish sense of humour. On the day he completed the gruelling 1970 World Cup Rally in Mexico as a celebrity co-driver, promoting the British car industry, Greavsie went on a search of Bobby Moore who, in the wake of the ‘ogot’ stolen jewellery’ incident, was at the British embassy. Helped over the embassy wall, and eluding security guards, Greavsie discovered the England captain quietly sipping a beer and reading a magazine. ‘Right, Moors,’ he said to his startled host. ‘What have you done with that bloody bracelet?’

LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI, the radical poet, painter and activist who celebrated his 100th birthday on 24 March in San Francisco, where he has lived since 1950, and where the mayor planted an olive tree on a street named after him – Via Ferlinghetti which, he dryly observed, is a former haunt of undertakers and bootleggers – was asked, as he blew out the candles, about the state of the union. ‘There’s less and less room for political dissent because the great god Mammon rules everything.’ Ferlinghetti, whose City Lights book store and Pocket Poets paperbacks were a spiritual home for Beats like Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and Gregory Corso, added: ‘I spent the weekend dreaming of the overthrow of the capitalist system and the installation of a people’s republic not dominated by the military-industrial complex of America.’

FIONA HILL, half of the Maybot’s dynamic duo with Nick Timothy, and known at the Home Office and in Downing Street as ‘Theresa May’s brain’ before she was forced to walk the plank after the disastrous decision to call a snap election in 2017, has set up a new political consultancy to lobby her old chums in government on behalf of big corporations. It’s called FMH Strategy because, er, ‘strategy means strategy’. What? Like ‘Brexit means Brexit’?

FRANK FIELD, MP for Birkenhead since 1979, who sits as an independent after resigning the Labour whip, is often described as a ‘maverick’ – a polite way of saying his ideas won’t work in the real world. Tony Blair appointed him Minister for Welfare Reform in May 1997, asking him to ‘think the unthinkable’ but sacked him 15 months later, grumbling: ‘The problem was not so much that his thoughts were unthinkable as unfathomable.’

KATHERINE PARKINSON, star of Doc Martin, The IT Crowd and Home, I’m Darling, asked by ES ‘Bus, taxi or Tube?’ confessed: ‘I love the Tube and I am loyal to black cabs over Uber, but I feel like I spent my whole childhood on buses, so would rather walk if I can.’ She also cheerfully admitted: ‘I used to collect thimbles, but then I got a life.’

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Oh, you don’t get me
I’m part of the union

SLEF activists from around the UK joined GS Mick Whelan, AGS Simon Weller, EC president Dave Calfe, EC members Jim Baxter, Marz Colombini, Howard Kaye and Mark Wakenshaw, and district organisers Dicky Fisher and Nigel Gibson on the traditional May Day march in central London.

Members met at midday on Wednesday 1 May at Clerkenwell Green, close to ASLEF’s head office in St John Street, and an area with strong radical roots. Wat Tyler camped here during the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 and George Loveless, the first of the Tolpuddle Martyrs to return to these shores after transportation to Australia for having the temerity to form a trade union, came back to a heroes’ welcome on Clerkenwell Green in 1838.

ASLEF members, together with activists from other British trade unions, workers from other countries, students, pensioners, and anti-austerity campaigners, moved off at 1pm, making their way via Clerkenwell Road, Kingsway, Aldwych and the Strand to a rally in Trafalgar Square where speakers included Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, GMB national secretary Rehana Azam, and RMT GS Mick Cash.

Sharing a beer and a story or two

The ninth annual Brighton reunion took place on Tuesday 7 May at the Brighton Railway Club, offering a space for ASLEF members old and new to share a beer and a story or two. This event is not just about retired men and women but is very much about trying to gather together ASLEF members to show support and solidarity for a unique and important trade union. This year our GS presented badges to Andrew Butcher (20 years), Dave Lace (35), Dave Penny and Tony Farmer (40). A wonderful afternoon and, if you didn’t make it, there is always next year.

Jem Hannam, branch secretary

SCOTRAIL ON THE WRONG TRACK WITH DUSTY BIN

Keir Mudie, writing in the Sunday People on 12 May, asked readers: ‘Remember Ted Rogers from 3-2-1? Dusty Bin and all that? He was famed for his cryptic clues in the final round. But he has nothing on ScotRail. In response to a question about peak fares, one customer got this reply: “Hi, we don’t charge extra to travel at peak times but we offer a discount to travel at quieter times.” Answers on a postcard, please…”

SPREADSHEET PHIL’S LESSON FOR LIZ ON ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Philip Hammond has pulled rank on Liz Truss, his number two at the Treasury, who proposed scrapping HS2 to save £60 billion. ‘Sometimes you have to make big strategic judgments,’ said the Chancellor of the Exchequer. ‘And HS2 is such a strategic judgment. It will change the economic geography of the UK.’

I COULD MURDER SOME BUBBLY ON THE ORIENT EXCESS

Nigel Nelson, in his Sunday Mirror column on 12 May, revealed: ‘The Orient Express was parked next to my Southeastern commuter train at London Victoria station. My journey cost £13.30. But passengers paying £2,450 one-way to Venice somehow mistook my train for theirs. To end this comic confusion, the driver tannoyed: “This train has four toilets – but no champagne service”.

QUOTE...

‘Somebody told you the railroad was a bad thing. That was a lie. It may do a bit of harm here and there, to this and that; and so does the sun in heaven. But the railroad’s a good thing!’ – Caleb Garth in Midmarch by George Eliot

...UNQUOTE

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Line of duty

TALIANS do it with style – as GS Mick Whelan and EC1 Marz Colombini discovered when, waiting for a train to take them from Livorno to Pisa in Tuscany – or, as it says on the side of the locos, Regione Toscana – they found themselves inadvertently involved in driver Filippo Cufari’s retirement celebrations.

‘It was the last turn of duty in Livorno for Filippo’ said Marz. ‘He stepped down from his cab for the last time, with a clenched fist salute, to a chorus of Bella Ciao from his friends, family and comrades who had gathered to greet him on the platform. What a way to have your mates mark your retirement!’

‘Naturally, we introduced ourselves and offered our warmest congratulations. Filippo insisted on a photograph…’

Remember the dead, fight for the living

ALAN MOSS, Virgin Trains company council, and Stalybridge & Hyde CLP trade union liaison officer, reports on Workers’ Memorial Day in Manchester

ASLEF has a proud history of supporting Workers’ Memorial Day on 28 April each year, remembering those who have needlessly lost their lives in workplaces around the globe. District 3 has always supported the outstanding work of the Manchester Hazards Centre and supports them at the Manchester event each year. A small delegation, along with our great banner, attended the memorial in Albert Square. Hearing stories from families who have lost loved ones never gets any easier and enthuses us to ensure health & safety is always at the top of the agenda and any attempts to eradicate the rights of safety reps are met in the strongest and most vehement manner. We will campaign and organise for a Labour government that will support workers’ rights and ensure our friends

CROSSRAIL FINISH TWO YEARS LATE

Crossrail should be completed sometime between October 2020 and March 2021, according to Mark Wild, the project’s chief executive. That’s two years after the new railway across London was due to open, in December 2018. Bond Street – one of ten new stations along the Elizabeth line, will not be ready. London Mayor Sadiq Khan described the new timetable as ‘realistic and deliverable’. The cost of Crossrail has risen from a projected £14.8 billion to £17.6 billion.

Silent night train mum loses her compo case

A mother whose 16-year-old daughter died when she was hit at a level crossing in Hipperholme, near Halifax, has lost her claim for compensation. As reported (Journal, May) Leanne Gagic sued Network Rail for £22,124 in damages after her daughter Milena died in December 2014 when she sat between the train tracks, ‘laughing and giggling’, because she believed that no trains ran at night. Leanne said her daughter thought that if a train did approach, it would sound its horn. But a ‘night time quiet period’ was introduced in 2007, barring the use of horns between 11pm and 7am. Leanne said Network Rail breached its duty of care; but NR said Milena was herself to blame. Judge Heather Baucher, sitting at Central London County Court, said a sign telling pedestrians to ‘Stop, Look, Listen’ next to the crossing gate was a ‘perfectly adequate’ way of warning users.

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QUOTE...

‘Tommy Robinson doesn’t have far-right views.’ – UKIP leader Gerard Batten...

...UNQUOTE

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McCall’s Virgin on the ridiculous

ASLEF has urged the Williams Rail Review to ignore a call from Virgin Trains to move to a reservation-only system designed to force passengers off trains. GS Mick Whelan spoke out after Patrick McCall, senior managing director of the Virgin Group, which includes Virgin Active, Virgin Money, and Virgin Trains, claimed his plans would ‘improve the customer experience and end complex ticketing.’

Mick said: ‘When Virgin won the West Coast franchise they promised services in the 19th century. ‘The truth is that Virgin is more interested in foisting an airline system – with sky high prices – on the railway network. The answer to the problem of overcrowding is to run more trains to accommodate all those passengers who want to travel – not to force people off the network.’

Mick added: ‘As a trade union we believe in an integrated transport system, with trains at its heart, to create a greener economy. But the news that we have lost 90 million bus journeys means we have a less integrated public transport network as people can’t get to railway stations. ‘It’s madness to force people off buses and trains and into cars when we are trying to tackle climate change by cutting carbon emissions.’

Frying tonight

DOS NIGEL GIBSON
reports from a fundraiser at Harwich, one of the Haven ports, and a CLP with whom ASLEF has longstanding links

On a cool Thursday evening in January, a number of local ASLEF activists and officials joined Harwich town councillor Pam Morrison and her colleagues at the Tower Hotel in Harwich for the local constituency Labour Party fundraiser. Following a traditional fish and chips supper, our after dinner speakers, GS Mick Whelan and Shadow Transport Secretary Andy McDonald, gave members an overview of the transport industry, predominantly speaking about the rail sector and how the franchising model is broken.

Both Mick and Andy explained the importance to constituents and our activists of returning a Labour government in order that we can build a transport network that is operated in the interests of the travelling public rather than the private operators. Bringing the railways back into public ownership, and having a real and properly integrated transport system, are key planks of Labour Party policy. Their contributions were both well received and followed by a number of questions and answers in the traditional way.

Our longstanding links with Harwich CLP are well known and we will continue to support candidates standing for councils or Parliamentary seats across the region in the best way we can.

On the money

The competition watchdog has called for a complete overhaul of the accountancy market – suggesting the big four companies should be broken up – something Gregor Gall, affiliate research associate at the University of Glasgow, and editor of the Scottish Left Review, discussed in a feature for the ASLEF Journal in March.

Labour to transform buses in Britain

Labour has unveiled a new plan to set up a £1.3 billion ‘bus transformation fund’ that will reverse the Tory cuts to 3,000 bus routes and reinstate services across the country.

The policy is designed to help people from communities which have been worst affected by austerity under Conservative-led governments since 2010.

The party has already announced plans to bring local services into public ownership and to offer free bus travel to under 25s, while Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard has said he would build a free bus network to serve the whole of Scotland.

‘Bus services have been devastated by nine years of austerity,’ said Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn. ‘Thousands of routes have been axed, fares have soared and passenger numbers are in freefall.’

Shadow Transport Secretary Andy McDonald added: ‘Local services are a lifeline for many, particularly the elderly and those in rural areas. Cuts have had disastrous consequences for our towns and city centres and for air pollution and the environment. Bus networks are essential which is why Labour is committed to creating thriving bus networks under public ownership.’

QUOTE...

‘I have never seen so many white people in one place’
– Jon Snow, C4 news anchor, on the pro-Brexit rally at Westminster on the day the UK was due to leave the EU

…UNQUOTE

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
This is the future calling

EC vice-president ANDY HUDD reports on our ERTMS working group course for ASLEF reps

HE European Rail Traffic Management System, which is already in use on some parts of the network, will start to be rolled out on a much larger scale in the coming decade or so. This was recognised at AAD some years ago when a resolution was passed that led us to set up the European Rail Traffic Management System working group to deal with the (rules) changes that were inevitable with this system. As part of this ever-changing field of technology the working group has extended its remit to cover training, first in class fitment (of ERTMS hardware) as well as continuing to monitor rules changes.

The EC understands the importance of having reps at all levels trained to a standard that enables them to know what they’re talking about when dealing with issues that arise around the introduction of ERTMS so, following on a successful pilot course two years ago, we worked with industry experts – including Paul Boyle, head of ERTMS at LNER; Ian Simmonds, ERTMS train crew training manager at the Rail Delivery Group; and Paul Titterton, head of new technology implementation at the Digital Railway, Network Rail – to facilitate another ERTMS awareness day in London on Thursday 25 April.

The course was successful and we hope our reps came away with enhanced knowledge of the system. The course was over-subscribed by 57 so we plan to have another two (possibly three) courses in other parts of the country later this year.

SIMON SAYS

Presentations were made at the April meeting of Morden branch including a 35 year badge to Everald Nesbeth and a 25 year badge to Victor Aimable. Also present was train operator Audrey Meehan whose autistic son Simon spoke about his experiences in the workplace, and how he overcame them, and also took time to explain a number of general behaviour issues; everyone appreciated Simon’s presentation.

Thanks to EC1 Marz Colombini for joining us at Horsham in May.

Lawrence Stephenson, branch secretary

OBITUARIES

BRIAN PERRY WORKED HIS WAY UP

Brian Perry was born in Palmers Green, Enfield, north London, and on leaving school at 16 joined British Railways as a cleaner in the top shed.

He worked his way up through the ranks to become a fireman and then a driver. When the top shed closed he moved to King's Cross, working from steam to diesels and then electric on the main line. Brian, like many colleagues, became a commuter while working at King’s Cross; he and his wife and family took up residence in Bounds Green when it opened and remained there until he retired. Sadly, he developed a very aggressive form of cancer from which he never recovered.

On 12 April it was full to standing as we gathered at his funeral to support his family and friends and celebrate the life of a much-loved and well-respected comrade.

PJ Smith, King’s Cross

TONY NEAL MR SPEAKER

It is with deep regret that I report the passing of Tony Neal (1942-2019) affectionately known as Mr Speaker through all his years as chair of Didcot branch, chair (and co-founder) of the annual ASLEF reunion, chair of Didcot GWRSA and EC member for the London area of the GWRSA. Tony was promoted fireman from Newport and then made driver at Old Oak Common.

On his return to Didcot he was always an active trade unionist. His popularity was shown by the attendance of colleagues from all over the region at Didcot RC church on 7 March. Our condolences to wife Sheila and daughters Heidi and Leigh. RIP old mate. Gone but not forgotten.

Alwyn Evans, Didcot Retired Members’ Section

DAVE BROWETT RAILWAY FAMILY

Dave Browett started at New England loco, Peterborough; on its closure he became a commuter when he transferred to Clarence Yard diesel depot, Finsbury Park. He moved to Bounds Green when it opened and remained there until he retired. Dave rose to supervisor and, like many colleagues, due to our working environment, became part of the railway family. He was a committee member of the old railway club at Peterborough (now the Parkway club) which laid on a tribute on 16 April to celebrate Dave’s life. May he RIP.

Peter Smith, RMS reporter

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AAD is ASLEF's policy-making parliament, and the foundation stone of our union's democratic structure.

‘It’s great to be back in Leeds, our spiritual home,’ said general secretary Mick Whelan. ‘This is the week when we turn our trade union over to members to evaluate what we have done, where we are, and what we want to do in the future.

‘AAD is ASLEF’s most important body. It makes the policy that we carry out. Every branch has the right to propose a motion and the chance to send a delegate to the conference where we establish our priorities and make plans for the year ahead.’

Coming home

ICHARD BURGON,
Shadow Secretary of State for Justice, and Labour MP for Leeds East, opened AAD, welcoming activists to his home town with a sparkling speech that set out a bright vision of a new Britain under a Labour government.

‘ASLEF was founded here in Leeds in 1880;’ he said. ‘It’s nice to see you’re coming home! I bring fraternal greetings from the home town of a socialist realist writer, said “Man’s mean and petty past. Live that, knowing the burning shame of a dying, you have the right to say, all my life, all my strength, were given to the finest cause in all the world: the fight for the liberation of mankind.”

Richard remembered Bill Ronksley, former president of ASLEF, lifelong communist, ‘and a dear friend of mine.’

‘Nikolai Ostrovsky, the Soviet socialist realist writer, said ‘Man’s dearest possession is life. It is given to him but once, and must be lived so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never to mean and petty past. Live that, knowing the burning shame of a dying, you have the right to say, all my life, all my strength, were given to the finest cause in all the world: the fight for the liberation of mankind.”

‘That’s a fitting tribute to Bill, and to all our sisters and brothers in our struggle for a better world. It would be a fitting tribute to Bill to carry on fighting as fiercely as he did for a better deal for those who work on the railways – and a better deal for everyone.’

The ASLE&F at the Commercial Inn

A manifesto for the Associated Society of Locomotive Steam Enginemen & Firemen, dated February 1880, says: ‘We propose that a society be formed, consisting of enginemen and firemen only.

Enginemen to pay 5 shillings, firemen 2 shillings.’

The first eight branches were established at Bradford, Carnforth, Leeds, Liverpool, Neath, Pontypool, Sheffield, and Tondu.

‘It was decided for reasons of economy that the affairs of our Society should be conducted by a committee elected from the Leeds branch, Leeds being chosen as the most convenient position for the movement, and the men at Leeds were vested with directing authority in January 1881.’

The first rule book of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen was issued to members in 1881 as ‘registered under the Trade Union Acts, with registered office at the Commercial Inn, Sweet Street, Holbeck, Leeds.’

committed to the railways as Andy – and Jeremy Corbyn.

‘Andy and Jeremy are deeply committed to bringing Britain’s railways back into public ownership. That’s one of the most popular policies in Labour’s manifesto, and popular with people of all parties. That promise, with the workforce at the centre of the process, not a top down process, is at the heart of our vision of a popular, modern, publicly-owned public service, and is something only a Labour government can and will deliver.

‘ASLEF members, and others working on the railway, are well aware of the catastrophic bad decisions that have been made under Chris Grayling as Secretary of State for Transport. And before he made a mess of the railways, Failing Grayling made a mess of probation, resulting in a rise in reoffending.’

Richard, an employment lawyer with Thompsons, the trade union solicitors, before he became an MP, said Labour will ensure that access to justice becomes a key pillar of the welfare state, alongside health and education. ‘Labour’s vision is for a transformative government, with a new Ministry for Labour, and a commitment to govern for the many, not the few.’

Richard remembered Bill Ronksley, former president of ASLEF, lifelong communist, ‘and a dear friend of mine.’

‘Nikolai Ostrovsky, the Soviet socialist realist writer, said ‘Man’s dearest possession is life. It is given to him but once, and must be lived so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never to mean and petty past. Live that, knowing the burning shame of a dying, you have the right to say, all my life, all my strength, were given to the finest cause in all the world: the fight for the liberation of mankind.”

‘That’s a fitting tribute to Bill, and to all our sisters and brothers in our struggle for a better world. It would be a fitting tribute to Bill to carry on fighting as fiercely as he did for a better deal for those who work on the railways – and a better deal for everyone.’

RUNNING ORDER

The arrangements committee, which met at head office on 29 and 30 April, and in Leeds on Sunday 12 May, comprised Khalid Rana, Gidea Park, chair; David Jones, Swansea, secretary; James Glew, Buxton & Peak Forest; and EC4 Mark Wakenshaw, Gateshead & Newcastle.
You want history

DAVE CALFE, in his president’s address on Monday morning, welcomed delegates to the 2019 AAD, our parliament, here in Leeds, city of our first head office, at the Commercial Inn and praised our early activists who organised a trade union structure ‘built on regional, not company, lines; a branch-based, lay member-led, trade union.’

Dave said a general election – not another referendum – is the only way out of the current impasse about Brexit in Parliament. ‘We have a government and a parliament in paralysis. Whichever side of the Brexit debate you are on this is no way to run the country. The only thing that will resolve the situation is a general election and a Labour government – not a people’s vote, or a second referendum, but a general election.’

Turning to Failing Grayling, he said: ‘We have a Transport Secretary who would have been managed out of our industry years ago – and, by managed, I do mean sacked – because of the damage he is doing to our industry. ‘When fares are increased by RPI he says workers should take a lower pay rise, implying that fare increases would be lower, but makes no mention of the companies taking millions of pounds out of our industry on regional, not company, lines; a branch-based, lay member-led, trade union.’

Banking on LUFC

AAD voted to donate £500 to the Leeds United Supporters’ Trust food bank project.

Off the AAD Rails

AT ROLL CALL every morning and afternoon delegates typically answer ‘Yes’ or ‘Here’ or ‘Present’ when the general secretary calls out the name of their branch. Cue peels of laughter when the GS called Rugby on Monday morning and Tony Venson, after a late night at the joint District 5 and District 6 social at Northern Guitars on Call Lane on Sunday night, muttered ‘Alive.’ And when, on Thursday morning, after Leeds United had lost in the play-offs to Derby County, the GS called Eastleigh, Peacocks fan Phil Sparkes responded miserably: ‘Depressed.’

DAVE TYSON, who has recently retired from train driving, and who was introduced by Dan Masrani as ‘the only interesting speaker on pensions I’ve ever heard,’ warned delegates on Tuesday morning about the dangers of getting old. ‘I’ve been helping more around the house. The other day I was cleaning and thought, after doing half the house, hmm, this doesn’t clean like Mr Sheen. So I put on my glasses, looked at the bottle, and realised I’d been using the fly spray…’

RAB WICKSTED, Edinburgh No 2, brought the house down on Wednesday afternoon when, following a Pinteresque pause, he looked around the room and growled, ‘I should have brought that translator [from the Croatian delegation] up here, so you could all understand me…’

DANIEL MASRANI, after the GS, during a debate on the legal section of the annual report on Wednesday morning, told delegates that Victoria Phillips, head of employment rights at Thompsons solicitors, and sitting in the visitors’ section, was celebrating her birthday, rose to the occasion and smoothly announced: ‘Happy 40th birthday, Vicky!’

RACHAEL MASKELL, Shadow Minister for Transport, looked around the Thomas Ambler room on Thursday morning after talking about diversity in the rail industry, and smiled: ‘I hate to say it, brothers, but we need a few more sisters, too…’

DELEGATES were amused to find, next to the Holy Bible placed in their bedside cabinet by the Gideons of Lutterworth, Leicestershire, a copy of The Book of Mormon – ‘another testament of Jesus Christ’ – thanks to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints of Salt Lake City, Utah. Testament, grumbled delegates, to the power and the money, if not the glory, of a popular Broadway – and West End – musical.

HANGING in every bathroom was a card reading: ‘Like we care for you, we care for our planet.’ The word ‘care’ was capitalised and boxed. ‘Please help us help the environment by hanging your towels for future use.’ Naughty! Under the guise of saving the planet, hotels cut their costs, drive their business, grow their margins, bloat their profits, and increase dividends to their shareholders.

Cliffy H – a good guy who gives everything and asks for nothing

The EC president concluded his address by reflecting: ‘I never thought, when I started on the railway, nearly 35 years ago, that I would be stood here today, let alone still on the job. I remember in my first few months seeing a young driver with a 10 year badge and thinking “10 years? That’s a lifetime!”

‘Nobody gets anywhere on their own, you get there with good people around you, and I am very fortunate that I have had lots of good people around me. People like Cliffy Holloway, who will be retiring in six weeks’ time, a true mate and a good guy, who gives everything and asks for nothing. Thanks, Cliffy!

‘And thank you to those members who give back to our union, who attend our branch meetings, the heartbeat of our union, and get involved.’

QUOTE…

‘If you’re driving a train, you’re driving a train. We’re all equal.’

– Emily Malcher, St Pancras

…UNQUOTE
Public services in the public interest

JEREMY CORBYN was introduced by Dan Masrani on Thursday morning with these words: ‘For the first time, in a long time, the leader of the Labour Party is here to speak to our annual assembly of delegates.’

The Labour leader said: ‘I want to thank you for the work you do for our transport team and as an affiliate to the Labour Party and I want to thank Mick for all his hard work at TULO. It’s a pleasure to be here, at one of the oldest craft unions in the country, and I am proud to be the first Labour leader to come to an ASLEF conference with a pledge to bring our railways back into public ownership. Because the Tory privatisation has failed.

‘This country can afford many things, but we cannot afford the luxury of Chris Grayling. He has the reverse of the Midas touch. Any industry he touches turns to chaos and it costs us millions, nay billions, of pounds. Due diligence is not high on his priorities and news that the National Probation Service is being brought back into public ownership shows just how incompetent he is.

‘Public services should operate in the public interest, not the interests of private shareholders. On the wall of my office is an ASLEF poster from 1916 that shows the important role unions play in industry and society. You’ve been through a lot. Nationalisation in 1948, the end of steam in the 1960s, the shift to diesel and electric, then privatisation. I want unions to play a role in planning the return of the railways to public ownership. And I want to thank Mick, and ASLEF’s head office staff, and members who have helped our transport team because I want a co-operative approach. I do not envisage a recreation of the national boards of the initial nationalisation; I see a form of public ownership that involves workers and passengers.

‘We want an affordable, sustainable, transport system and we need an imaginative response. That’s why we will be investing in every region to make sure every area gets its fair share and why we will have a balanced rail-road strategy for freight in this country.’

Jeremy paused, his throat dry, and, when Mick handed him a glass of water, he smiled: ‘Thank you. A true comrade. And one day our water, too, will be publicly owned!’

He continued: ‘On Brexit, the real divide is not between those who voted Leave and those who voted Remain. The real difference is the difference between rich and poor. You might be on a zero hours contract, universal credit, in Tottenham, and voted Remain. You might be on a zero hours contract, universal credit, in Mansfield, and voted Leave. But your interests are the same. And it comes down to how we get rid of this Tory government. Because Nigel Farage is promoting an exit for hedge fund managers. He represents something very, very dangerous. That’s why we reject a no deal Brexit.

AMBITION FOR BRITAIN

ACHAEL MASKELL, Labour MP for York Central, and Shadow Minister for Transport, told delegates on Thursday morning: ‘Failing Grayling has exceeded all expectations in failing in everything he has done. But we don’t just look at him, we look at the future and we have been beavering away, with your support, to map out the future for transport in Britain.

‘Profits get in the way and we know the franchise system is broken. That’s why we will bring Britain’s railways back into public ownership. All those franchises that are timed out will come straight back into ownership and infrastructure projects will be properly planned. As we rejoin track with train, and rebuild Britain’s railways, even Conservatives now recognise that public ownership is the way forward.

‘Climate change is the biggest issue facing the world and transport is responsible for 29% of emissions. If we are to reach our climate change targets we are going to have to reduce emissions by 10% for each of the next ten years. We have to speed up clean transport systems. The days of private ownership belong to another era and public transport is at the heart of our transport strategy.

‘We need good connectivity to drive people onto the rail system. And we want to invest in new enhancements. Not like Chris Grayling, switching the investment on and off as if it’s his own personal train set. So we have a 30 year plan. We built this into a white paper which we will launch soon. Our plan is for a real public service, in which we will be ambitious on behalf of our passengers, ambitious for staff, and ambitious for the country.’

AUL NOWAK, deputy general secretary of the TUC, praised the work of ASLEF officers – especially Mick, Simon, Tosh and Dave – when he addressed delegates on Wednesday morning.

‘It is a privilege to reaffirm our links with your union – one of our oldest, strongest, and proudest craft unions. ASLEF is not just a potent industrial force, not just a strong advocate for train drivers, but, for the past 139 years, you have also been a great champion of social and economic justice. Playing a huge role within the wider trade union and
in rail industry

‘We want to restore pride and prosperity to communities destroyed by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. We are determined to deliver for Britain and the plans of John McDonnell and his team will give this country hope for the future. ‘But our radical programme will be challenged by very powerful vested interests. We won’t be afraid to intervene in industries, or sit back to let the magic of the markets ruin people’s lives. ‘The legacy of a Labour government will be a change of atmosphere and a change of attitude. And I can’t wait for the opportunity to go round the country at a general election and campaign for a Labour government that will deliver for the many, not the few.’

When Mick presented him with a trowel and fork for coming to speak, Jeremy smiled, thanked the GS, and said: ‘As you know I enjoy gardening and, whenever I plant a cabbage, I say there isn’t a lot more to do.’

Ian said his focus, going forward, is on competency, in the broadest sense; managing stress; finding tools to make the job safer and more efficient; removing people from harm; and improving performance reliability and predictability.

Ian Prosser: ‘It’s not about scores on the doors job safer and more efficient; removing people from harm; and improving performance reliability and predictability. ‘In answer to a question from Darron Cattaneo, Three Bridges, he said: ‘We’re tackling level crossings on a number of fronts. Close them, if you can. Remove them where they are down a lot. Enforcement: the BTP has put in a lot more effort, and we have cameras at more crossings, to change behaviour. And new technology: a reduction in the number of half-barrier crossings and active warnings at passenger crossings.’

More controversially, Ian claimed that the ‘successful implementation of alertness devices on Croydon trams will have an effect on main line operations,’ adding: ‘Doing nothing is not an option.’

People like Mick Whelan – who has done a brilliant job as general secretary, and taken on a broader role within the trade union movement, leading the Labour Trade Union Liaison Organisation and being a driving force in our work on international solidarity.

People like Simon Weller, your representative on the TUC general council and executive committee – someone who always represents your union with intelligence and integrity as well as, occasionally, with sarcasm and wit, and there aren’t usually many smiles around the table! People like Tosh McDonald, your former president, and Dave Calfe, your president – people who have worked on the railway for decades, who know your industry inside out, and who ensure the union is 100% focused on doing what’s best for members day in, day out.

Thanks to every activist, train drivers have an effective collective voice, rooted in the fact that 49 out of every 50 train drivers are members of ASLEF. A collective voice that has delivered better terms and conditions against the challenging backdrop of privatisation, fragmentation and refranchising. ‘This union has a lot to be proud of. But every person knows that some huge challenges remain in our rail industry. We need a proper strategy to get freight off our roads and onto our railways. And we need to invest in our railways across the piece.

‘But we also know a better rail system isn’t just about money – it’s about changing ideology, too. Think about my journey this morning. On a train owned by Eversholt, on track run by Network Rail, maintained by any number of private contractors, and regulated by the Office for Rail and Road Regulation and the DfT. On a train operated by LNER, which bailed out Virgin, which scandalously replaced East Coast, which itself bailed out National Express.

‘I became a great runner,’ said Sebastian Coe, ‘because, if you’re a kid in Leeds, and your name is Sebastian, you’ve got to become a great runner.’

Paul: ‘ASLEF reps are 100% focused on what’s best for members’

‘Overseeing all this chaos and incoherence is the controlling mind of Chris Grayling, who demonstrates daily that incompetence is no barrier to advancement when it comes to the modern Conservative Party’.

He added: ‘Let me set out three key things we need to campaign and work for over the coming year – three things that could make a difference to your members, to union members and the people we aspire to represent up and down the country: securing a Brexit that actually works for working people, winning a new deal for working people, their families and communities; and building unity amongst our members, amongst working class people, and to defeat the far right.’

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It’s a Brexit not a Lexit

A

MOVE to change ASLEF’s policy on Brexit – moved by Christian Carroll, Waterloo Nine Elms, and seconded by Ian Scrace, Ashford – was decisively rejected at AAD on Monday afternoon by 77 votes to 3.

‘The position to support the Leave campaign was not an anti-immigration, pro-competition, stance,’ argued Christian, ‘but sought to deliver a Lexit that would divorce us from an EU which seeks to deliver a damaging Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership and Fourth Railway Package. We thought leaving would facilitate the nationalisation of our railways, and other essential public services, and allow the regulation of markets where necessary. We believe AAD should reverse ASLEF’s pro-Brexit position in opposition to Brexit until the election of a Labour government capable of delivering the type of exit package ASLEF can legitimately support.’

Ian added: ‘Brexit is one of the biggest issues of our time; a scandal, like PPI, of mis-sold information and propaganda. The EC supported Brexit on a left-wing exit package. But this government won’t deliver that.’

EC vice-president Andy Hudd, speaking against the move, responded: ‘I’m sure we’re all fed up with the discussion, but we need to rewind the clock. The EU referendum – which was about infighting in the Tory Party, not about the best interests of the UK – is the most democratic – and most destructive – exercise in our history. We adopted a Lexit – or left exit – position that was debated, at length, by the EC. And nothing we said at the time has changed. We have a Brexit, not a Lexit. The Tories are not going to deliver a Brexit for workers. But the EU is a capitalistic trading bloc, with the free movement of capital and labour, and we feel it is beyond reform in its present state.’

GS Mick Whelan added: ‘We didn’t lie to people. Our Lexit was not about stopping people moving, but about stopping social dumping. I’m the son of Irish immigrants and have nothing against people moving if they get paid the same as everyone else. John Major lied when he said the EU meant we had to privatisate our railways. And we lobbied against the Fourth Railway Package because we didn’t want our colleagues and comrades on the continent to go through the pain we have.’

Fringe Benefits

Leeds branch hosted a social evening in the Redondo Beach Bar and Kennedy Meadows Roof Terrace at Headrow House on Tuesday. Delegates donned shorts, and Do7 Brian Corbett sported a colourful Hawaiian shirt of the sort worn by ‘Hawkeye’ in MASH.

A gala evening, sponsored by Thompsons solicitors, in aid of Simon on the Streets, a charity which offers practical support for rough sleepers in West Yorkshire, particularly in Bradford, Huddersfield and Leeds, was held in the Fairground Room at the Cuckoo Bar in Call Lane on Wednesday.

In the Chair

Two candidates – Daniel Masrani, Cardiff, and Pauline Cawood, Leeds – stood for chair of AAD. Dan was elected by 44 votes to 36. There were also two candidates – Pauline Cawood and Phil Sparkes, Eastleigh – for vice-chair. Pauline was elected by 50-28.

Justice for Colombia DVD

GS Mick Whelan introduced a poignant DVD made by Justice for Colombia, an organisation set up by ASLEF, the FBU and the TUC in 2002 to support workers in their struggle for basic human rights.

The star that shines

AAD donated £1,000 to the Morning Star on Tuesday afternoon. Tony Venson, Rugby, said: ‘The Morning Star is a friend to this trade union and puts our message across. It’s become a tradition that we send them a donation and it’s right that we send this message that they’re with us and we’re with them.’

Andrew Bullock, Saltley, added: ‘The Morning Star is not just a friend to ASLEF, it’s a friend to all trade unions. Read it this week. Take it home and let the kids have a look. There’s no fake news in the Morning Star.’

Chacko responded: ‘This shows the strength of our relationship with a trade union at the heart of the battle for a Labour government that will bring our railways back into public ownership. Our paper stands in solidarity with ASLEF members and GS Mick Whelan as we fight for a fairer and more sustainable Britain.’

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Quote...

‘This is the most diverse AAD I’ve attended’ – Trevor Robinson, Bakerloo...

…UNQUOTE

Quote...

‘When West Brompton [Tony Cashman] gets up to speak I know I will be entertained.’ – Darren Howe, Bournemouth...

…UNQUOTE
Poison of privatisation

IM ROACHE, general secretary of the GMB, praised ASLEF on Wednesday for ‘leading the way by exposing how poisonous privatisation is.’

‘Carillion took public sector work into the private sector, t&cs were slashed, we kept saying the company is on the brink of collapse, but the government kept awarding further contracts until Carillion went bust with £29 million in the bank, and owing £7 billion.

‘As for water – we are running a Take Back the Tap campaign – because while Wales and Scotland have woken up and taken it back, nine organisations in England have made £6.5 billion of profits while my members’ pay has gone down 40% and t&cs have been slashed, with no job security, and no investment in people and skills. We just want the money, say the firms, so 2.4 billion litres of water are wasted every day.

‘What they call the gig economy and flexible working – flexible for whom? the employer! – and bogus self-employment are just bad old fashioned abuse. You’re on the bus to do a shift when you get a text from your manager to say “We don’t need you today.” A world in which Jeff Bezos of Amazon says “Your workers should wake up frightened every morning.” What a way to treat your workers!’

Marisa Rodriguez-Carmona, lecturer in the School of Health Sciences, Optometry and Visual Sciences, at City University, London, who has worked with the Civil Aviation Authority and Transport for London, spoke about colour vision assessment in occupational environments on Tuesday afternoon. She used a picture by Pablo Picasso to demonstrate how colour enables efficient coding of visual signals and enhances visual performance. ‘Colour coding conveys information very quickly and simply while colour blindness can contribute to accidents.’ Marisa is researching new systems, noting that the CAA introduced new standards in 2009 ‘after deciding its previous colour vision standards were too stringent.’

Strike a light

BOB HAYDEN, who has been re-elected for his seventh four-year term, is New South Wales locomotive divisional secretary of the Rail, Tram & Bus Union in Australia. The RTBU loco division has 7,000 members, 3,700 of them in New South Wales. Bob and his colleagues Farren Campbell and Peter Mundey spoke on Monday afternoon. ‘Train drivers’ issues are train drivers’ issues right around the world,’ said Farren. ‘We have some fairly archaic industrial relations laws that make it prohibitively difficult to do anything. We balloted members to take industrial action and the minister goes to Fair Work Australia because our action posed a potential risk of affecting the economy. Don’t know about you, but that’s the point of a strike! Even when you do everything right, the bosses will find a way to do you over. But now our members are angry and engaged in a way they never have been before.’

Picture this Picasso

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POUNDS OF ORDER

NENAD MRGAN, president of the Sindikat Strojovođa Hrvatske rail union in Croatia, spoke on Wednesday afternoon.

DEBORAH REAY, WRC and Northern Line North, reported on Monday afternoon on an all-women delegation to Palestine.

BEN TALBOT talked about the benefits of being in the Railway Benevolent fund on Thursday morning.

AAD voted to donate £2,000 to the Jenin refugee camp nursery in Palestine.

QUOTE...

‘My speeches usually end up noted or rejected.’ – Tony Cashman, West Brompton

UNQUOTE
Money, get away, get a good job with good pay and you’re okay

AVE TYSON, a trustee director of the Railways Pension Scheme for 18 years, since 2001, was hailed by GS Mick Whelan as ‘one of the greatest presidents of this trade union’ and a man with ‘a backbone of steel’ as he handed him honorary life membership of ASLEF. That was after Dave delivered, with his usual aplomb, his annual report on the state of the scheme:

‘After the mess that was left in the BHS pension scheme by Philip Green, the Pensions Regulator was heavily criticised for failing to deliver, with his usual aplomb, his annual report on Monday, saying the situation is in good shape. He thanked the union is in good place. We have a GS we can all be proud of and you can see the union is moving forward.’

The regulator is giving closer scrutiny to all defined benefit schemes, particularly the large, complex schemes, and they don’t come much larger and more complex than the Railways Pension Scheme, hence its interest in the RPS, in particular the train operating company sections.

‘Talks are continuing with the regulator, DfT, RDG, the government actuary’s department, trade unions, and the trustees, to try and come up with a TOC industry-wide solution to the regulator’s demands. The refusal of Stagecoach to take on the perceived deficit of the pension scheme was drawn to the attention of the Work and Pensions Select Committee and prompted Frank Field to write to the regulator.

‘The trustees have worked hard, over the past 25 years, to make sure the scheme is well-funded, and pays out pensions safely and securely, and this mantra has not changed. Our aim is to achieve returns over and above the rate of inflation so as to deliver on our promise.

‘The past year has seen mixed fortunes for the scheme. While we recorded an overall loss of 4.6% (£750 million) following a challenging year for global equities and property, we achieved an annual gain of 32% on our private equity pooled fund. Our infrastructure and illiquid growth pooled funds also delivered returns substantially ahead of targets. And the scheme has increased membership, marginally, from 337,000 in 2014 to 344,000 in 2018. ‘There are many challenges we face and organisations such as this great trade union that has, in the past, and will, in the future, play a vital role in protecting pensions for its members and their dependants for years to come.’

IAN SMITH, Glasgow, presented the trustees’ report on Monday morning, saying the union is in good shape. He thanked Phil Clark – who, as a partner of Moore Stephens, was a familiar face at AAD for many years – for all his work. Phil chose to leave the firm when it was taken over by BDO in February. He was a popular figure at AAD, partly because he made a complex subject easier to grasp, partly because he didn’t look like a typical accountant. With his bleached blond hair, he was referred to by the finance dept as ‘Barry Manilow’ and by delegates as ‘the fourth member of The Police.’ Catherine Halsey, associate director of BDO, who gave the auditor’s report on Monday, dryly began: ‘There are quite a few differences between Phil and me, as I’m sure you can see, and one is that he enjoyed doing this, and I am terrified…’ Ian concluded his address: ‘This union is in a good place. We have a GS we can all be proud of and you can see the union is moving forward.’

A driver is a driver

A motion moved by Matthew France, Young Members, and seconded by Paul Keeler, Newton Heath, ‘that qualified drivers should enjoy the same rate of pay, regardless of length of service, or whether they are recently qualified’ was passed on Tuesday afternoon.

‘It’s not just young members, because we have 40 and 50 year olds coming into the grade,’ said Matthew, ‘but we are disproportionately effected.’ Paul said: ‘Newly-qualified train drivers work the same diagrams, and same rosters, and take trains to the same places. Why should they be paid less? A train driver is a train driver is a train driver.’

GS Mick Whelan pledged: ‘This industry, until recently, had more pay differentials than you could throw a hat at. In many companies we have eradicated it and, where we haven’t, it’s wrong, and we will try to eradicate it.’

QUOTE...

‘We’re all the same race. The human race.’ – David Jones, Swansea

…UNQUOTE

Money money money

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The view from the chair

ANIEL MASRANI, Cardiff, has been a driver for 16 years, drives Pacers, Sprinters, 175s and Class 67 locos at Transport for Wales, and became familiar with trains – and their drivers – at a very early age. ‘My grandfather had friends who were drivers at Landore, near Swansea, and when I was little, he lived in Port Talbot, and after we’d been down to see him I used to jump in the driver’s cab and have a cab ride back to Cardiff.’

When Dan became a driver he joined ASLEF. ‘My mum was a teacher, my grandfather worked in the steel works, and my great-grandfather worked in the docks. Always union. I got involved, and got active, straight away. I was LDC for 10 years, company council for the last four, and have been to the ETF – in Madrid and Brussels – a couple of times.’

Dan was on the arrangements committee in Brighton in 2014 – setting the agenda that has become the template for every AAD since – and vice-chair at the last two, in Bristol and Liverpool. ‘I’ve been to a few conferences, been active on the floor, and seen the pride of those who sat in the chair. I’d had a little taster, as vice-chair, and thought it would be an amazing experience, something I really would love to do. It’s an honour, isn’t it? Although my heart was pounding, and my legs shaking, when I was walking up there for the first time.’

Delegates said Dan did a great job, keeping AAD on track, with a light touch on the tiller, allowing discussion and debate while making sure we got through the agenda. ‘If we’re calm, the floor is calm, and business gets done. It’s emotional, some of this stuff, but we should try and keep our emotions under control.’

He made sure that Pauline Cawood, a union stalwart at Leeds branch, who will be retiring soon after a long career on the permanent way, and who stood against Dan for chair, had her moment in the sun.

‘I went to Pauline, and said I know you wanted it – we both wanted it, and I’ve seen some vice-chairs not get a chance to sit in the chair – and asked her if there was anything she wanted to do, perhaps a section a day.’

Pauline, who served on the WRC for a long time, wanted to speak on equalities, and then chaired AAD all Wednesday afternoon. ‘It was the right thing to do.’

ATTACK ON DEFINED BENEFITS PENSIONS

AGS SIMON WELLER told delegates on Thursday: ‘The DB Cargo pension scheme has significant problems. DBC’s biggest problem is the collapse of the business. But the company is now working with us rather than working against us. I have a view on the Pensions Regulator. They’re incompetent. They had their fingers burned with Carillion and now they’re looking for problems. But with the TOCs, it’s an artificial deficit. We’re doing a lot of work – these are people’s pensions, people’s deferred wages. And we will not be selling these people out for a little bit of showmanship.’

C’MON BRIAN, CHEER UP

As Phil and the tech crew struggled with the electronic voting system on Thursday afternoon, and conference reverted to an old-fashioned show of hands, Monty Python’s Always Look on the Bright Side of Life came through on the PA.

THE PEOPLE’S FLAG IS DEEPEST RED

AAD ended, in the traditional way, on Thursday afternoon with everyone singing the Red Flag.
Spa treatment

L EAMINGTON Spa branch was pleased to be joined at our latest meeting by Bob Earlam, VM Trains company council, who gave an interesting report on issues including the latest pay deal including add-ons such as tablet computers, the May timetable changes, the introduction to Leamington of the Coventry to Nuneaton work, the new Class 230 and future 196 DMUs, and other stock moves of Class 150s, 153s and 170s.

Bob presented long service badges to Paul Hately and Colin Williams (5 years) and Ian Farey and Richard Hopkins (40). Ian spent time at many West Midlands depots, starting as a second man at Saltley in 1979, moving to Rugby in 1984, and getting his driver’s job in 1986 with a move to Birmingham New Street. He went to Stratford upon Avon in 1987, then Leamington Spa, his final destination, in 1993.

Congratulations to all our long service people, may you continue to have ‘uneventful days’. And thanks, Bob, for continuing to support our little depot.

Nick Walker, branch chair

Stratford legends

Our thanks to Chris Daughters for his expertise in organising another successful Stratford reunion at the Railway Tavern on 13 April. We were privileged to have the company of DOS Nigel Gibson, ECS Howard Kaye, and ASLEF stalwart and Stratford legend Tony West, who made presentations to two long-serving and loyal members (Dave Hebb and Chris Nelson, 40 years each, with Chris receiving a retirement certificate). Tony and Nigel made excellent speeches and their presence was very much appreciated. Chris organised a raffle, with some of the proceeds going towards our branch appeal for one of our members, and the generosity shown is testament to our members and how we

Richmond, Bob Earlam, Ian Farey and Paul Hately; and Bob with Colin Williams

All the best, Harry

Newly retired driver Harry Blane, who had been driving at Corkerhill for 25 years, was invited along with his wife Vanessa to our recent branch. Harry started driving down in London in the late 1980s but came back up to Scotland in the early ‘90s. He was presented with a tankard and a cheque and his wife received vouchers. We all wish Harry all the very best in his retirement.

Phil Gallagher, branch secretary

QUESTION TIME

London Mayor Sadiq Khan, along with members from District 1, attended a dinner organised by Orpington CLP on 12 April. Questions put to the mayor by ASLEF members included what’s his preferred option – TfL’s ambition to be responsible for London’s suburban services through devolution, or Labour’s pledge of complete renationalisation?

What can be done about London’s knife crime epidemic and the increase in violent attacks on rail staff?

And what can TfL do to ensure that all disabled passengers are able to travel with dignity and respect?

After addressing our concerns, the mayor thanked ASLEF for our continued support and he recognised the important role we play.

Steve Richardson, D1 council sec

FRIENDS FOR YEARS: It was our privilege and our pleasure that our extremely hard working EC member Terry Wilkinson took time out of his very busy day to present Edgware Road’s very own Dave Shannon with his 25 years in ASLEF membership badge. A very enjoyable branch was had by all.

Gary Jarman, branch secretary, Hammersmith & City 267

Terry and Dave (right) and the rest of the crew (left)
Lighting the flame at Wortley Hall

JOHN MCAVOY, branch secretary, Abbey Wood, reports on our branch secretaries’ course at the historic Wortley Hall in south Yorkshire.

The annual ASLEF branch secretaries’ course is designed to prepare and train new secretaries for the role on which they are about to embark. In April, 25 branch secretaries from across the country descended on Sheffield. The setting – Wortley Hall, affectionately known as the workers’ stately home, with all the history that goes with it – was perfect.

Our tutors for the week were the assistant general secretary, Brother Simon Weller, and the EC member for District 1, Brother Marz Colombini. On arrival at Tuesday lunchtime, after a bite to eat, it was straight down to business for what was to be a very enjoyable, albeit intense, four-day course.

Subjects covered during the first afternoon included the structure and objectives of ASLEF; the importance of branches; the role of the secretary; what makes a good branch secretary, the importance of membership density; and how well we are doing, as a craft trade union, having 97% membership within the grade.

On Wednesday we had a guest speaker, Keith Richmond, who handles media and communications for the union. Keith gave a very insightful speech, explaining his role at ASLEF, describing how the Journal is published every month, and what goes on behind the scenes. We were also fortunate enough to see a slide depicting the front page of the first ever Locomotive Journal published in 1888. We then had a session discussing ASLEF’s annual assembly of delegates covering how AAD works, how to write and submit motions, and what to expect if you are elected as a delegate.

On Thursday our guest was Katrina Cuss, secretary in the future. We then had a session on discrimination and the grounds under which it is unlawful.

Throughout the week we enjoyed good camaraderie and healthy debate, even after the business of the day was concluded – it always carried on late into the evening – and set a very good practice time will tell – and set a very good practice time was had by all present, and I would strongly recommend this course for anyone thinking of taking on the role of branch secretary in the future.

One Thursday our guest was Katrina Cuss, from ASLEF’s finance department. This was of high interest, as branch finances and annual statements provide the biggest headache in our substantive roles. Kat gave a wonderful overview and made it all sound so easy – only time will tell – and set a very good practice task for us to undertake. I can only guess that Kat will be getting quite a few phone calls for help come December!

Friday morning was spent discussing GDPR and social media, and the rules and implications that go with it. We then held a session on discrimination and the grounds under which it is unlawful.

‘Questions of lodging allowances, special duties, meal times, clothing, and the position of drivers and firemen who fail to pass the eyesight test, have been fully discussed and the position advanced. Wage rates are still under discussion, and we hope that before this is in the hands of our members to have arrived at a settlement.’

WAGE RATES UNDER DISCUSSION

‘By the peace terms published on Thursday 9 May, Germany is asked to cede Morroset, Eupen, and Malmedy to Belgium; Alsace Lorraine to France, and the Saar mining area to France. Luxemburg is to be free, and Poland is to take the greater part of Upper Silesia, Posen, and West Prussia. It may not be realised in this country that the people of Germany will gasp at this change of frontier lines. It takes away from them at a stroke the main sources of their economic strength. France gets the extensive field of iron ore, and the coal, too, and Poland is a great land of coal.’

KNOCKED DOWN AND KILLED

Organising Secretary Parfitt: ‘I went to Portland, to an inquiry respecting the death, by accident, of two platelayers. On 3 May I was at Cardiff, making inquiries respecting a fatal accident to a pipefitter on the GWR. It appeared he got in front of a slowly moving shunting engine, and was knocked down and killed before a warning shout from the yard foreman could reach him. The coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death and stated that the men on the engine were not in any way to blame. The deceased leaves a widow and several children.’

AIM TO PROVIDE A SUBSTANTIAL TEA AT REASONABLE COST

The Colwick branch secretary: ‘On Good Friday we held our first annual tea and social evening. Our idea was to unite the members and families, provide a substantial tea at a reasonable cost, have an enjoyable evening, and rouse interest in our orphan fund and the Society in general; and I am pleased to report success crowned our efforts in every way.’

Gateshead & Newcastle branch held a reunion at Gateshead Bowling Club – a good chance to catch up with old friends. EC4 Mark Wakenshaw presented Paul Basham, Mark Newton, Bob Henry and Mala Henderson with their 40 year badges as well as wishing Bob a very happy retirement. Many thanks to all who attended, and I hope to see you next year. Gary Arrowsmith, branch secretary

Gateshead & Newcastle celebrate their 125 year anniversary on Saturday 22 June with a party from 19.00 at the Labour Club in Newcastle city centre. Tickets cost £5 from garya68@hotmail.co.uk
There’s no heaven on earth

I’d like to respond to Tom Burns’ letter (Journal, May) which beautifully showed why many Brits never felt that, as a nation, they belonged to Europe, too. When I grew up among what was left of Arnhem and Oosterbeek in the Netherlands after the Battle of Arnhem in 1944, and two USAF bombardments from inexcusable navigation mistakes, and the final liberation fights in 1945, the feeling was ‘absolutely never again’.

It was clear that the only way to reach a state of peace and co-operation was to provide each country with a stake in the well-being of all other nations. To provide easy travel and trade in a large internal market which would suppress the urge for the land-grabbing adventures that had been such a blot on European history for so long. Europe started to prosper and the UK, economically, by 1973, the sick man of Europe, finally came into the fold. So far, so good.

But Dutch kids, unlike British kids, were taught that Europeans had to learn to live together, appreciate one another, and learn each other’s languages. We learned French, German and English next to our mother tongue and I still am very grateful for that. And, yes, we were taught that one day Europe would be unified! Europe still has borders, but on the continent you hardly notice them. And you don’t need four or five different currencies. No different, in fact, than going from Scotland to England or travelling within big countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia or Brazil.

Could Tom explain why that is no good in Europe? Since 1945 the USA has been notably more economically successful than Europe, because of a huge internal US common market which the EU has also successfully implemented. The USA is not just one country, but a deeply-integrated federation of 50, in many ways quite independent, states. California, New York and Hawaii cannot be compared, politically or culturally, with Arizona, Wyoming or Alaska. The US is the adult political amalgam that the EU strives to be.

Heaven does not exist on earth. A united Europe of culturally very diverse nations has its faults and failures; as does the USA, Canada and Australia. Any attempt to make 27 countries with 150 languages act in unison is bound to be difficult. But that does not mean it should not be attempted, or that the energy invested is wasted; that is the spineless attitude of infantile quitters.

Winston Churchill saw emerging European unification as the only benefit of World War II. And the only way to protect the lifestyle, health and prosperity of millions of Europeans against the increasing political and economic pressure of US and Russian interests. Trade unions prove that co-operation generates more power to secure your best interest.

After the Brexit farce, wait until this country has given up its seat at the EU table, and political and commercial pressures force us to implement EU rules without having had our say; that’s going to be fun! Winston Churchill is turning in his grave.

Peter van der Mark, Retired Members’ Section, Bristol Temple Meads

Greta – cherry on the cake

So we vote for Brexit and it’s dismissed, undermined and stalled by Parliament as the referendum result does not fall in line with a majority of MPs’ view of the world (or Europe, at least). Next we have thousands of environmentalists bringing the capital to a standstill as, unless we all revert to living and sleeping in fields, washing our clothes in puddles, living off the land and relying on camp fires for heat and light, in 12 years’ time we are all doomed! The cherry on the cake is a 16-year-old kid, Greta Thunberg, finding fame by telling us what the future holds if we don’t heed her warnings and start living as if we were back in the stone age. I feel like the only opinions that matter are from the new age hippy brigade. As long as your politics are extreme left or liberal and your hair is purple or green, with a few piercings thrown in for good measure.

People turn right-wing when they are not listened to; so to dismiss 17.4 million people as bigots because the liberal elite knows better is a very dangerous path to follow! Labour MPs willing to ignore their own constituents, who voted to leave, for a second referendum, or people’s vote, makes a mockery of democracy and the idea of an MP being a representative of their constituents’ beliefs.

I have had enough and, having been a lifelong Labour supporter, and active trade unionist, find myself unable to support Labour any longer as it is now a Marxist movement that no longer reflects the millions of working-class people for which it was created to represent. Our MPs should hang their heads in shame!

Steven Hill, Manchester Piccadilly No1

Ray’s on top of the forum

Through the letters column of the June Journal I thank the committee of the RMS for organising another superb forum which was very much enjoyed by delegates. Dave Calfe, our new president, gave his first speech to us and ranged widely over issues including
When I see a photograph in the media showing people parading around on railway lines I complain because I cannot but believe that trivialising the dangers of trespass must have an effect. So I was saddened to see a picture, complete with ‘jokey’ strapline (which makes it alright) in the March edition of the Journal.

John Wells, Virgin Trains, Wolverhampton

The picture, as it says in the caption, is a still from the new series of the period TV drama Peaky Blinders being shot in Stockport. The headline makes clear that anyone walking, or working, on the permanent way should wear a hi-vis jacket.

Where’s his hi-vis jacket?

Longsight legend Mel Thorley sent us this pic of the fifth season of Peaky Blinders being filmed on the mean streets (and iron road) of Stockport. ‘Where’s his h.v. vest?’ inquired Mel.

A drone could blind or kill

Trainspotters have been warned to keep drones away from the railway or risk prosecution following a near-miss with the Flying Scotsman. Online footage showed a drone flying dangerously close to the world’s most famous steam engine between Farnborough and Woking in Surrey. Had it hit it, it could have damaged vital equipment, causing delays. In the worst case, it could have caused serious injury or death. It is a criminal offence to fly a drone on, over, or within 50 metres of the railway and offenders can be taken to court and fined up to £2,500. These guidelines were put in place by the Civil Aviation Authority to ensure the safety of staff and passengers and everyone who uses the railway. These idiots want stopping. A drone hitting someone in the face on the footplate could blind or kill them.

Mel Thorley, Longsight

May ordered police cuts

The surge in knife crime has led to government ministers and police chiefs clashing over whether the rise is linked to tumbling police numbers. Theresa May was the Home Secretary who oversaw police cuts, in the name of austerity, saying people shouldn’t worry as backroom staff would be moved to frontline duties.

P Begley, Bedford

Otter recalls the ASLEF

I came across this gem in an old copy of Steam Days. Charles Otter MBE, a former LMS press officer, in an interview about pre-war days, recalls: ‘You were not always prepared for the reactions to some of the photographers. I went with one to Camden loco sheds so he could photograph engines being cleaned. The cleaners were stripped to the waist. Soon we heard from the ASLEF that on no account must their members be depicted bare-chested!’ He adds that LMS top link drivers were paid 90 shillings a week, or £230 a year, ‘good wages at the time’ when porters earned 38 shillings a week. I particularly like his reference to ‘the ASLEF’.

Paul Routledge, Cross Hills, Yorkshire

A trove of loco delights

May I say how much I enjoy perusing your magazine – a veritable treasure trove of locomotive delight.

Tom King, Morning Star

franchising, training, HS2 and, of course, Brexit. Allison Gardiner, Labour councillor for Crackley in Newcastle under Lyme, who spoke passionately about transport issues, hospitals, schools and the malaise affecting our politics, was warmly received by the delegates. Ashley Morley of Unison spoke about social care; it was sobering to learn that 6 million people in the UK are now carers, most of them unpaid. Bob Deacon spoke of the difficulties facing the elderly and how the Midlands Pensioners’ Network is trying to improve matters. He was robustly supported from the floor by our own expert, Tony West. Mick Barker talked about his involvement in the Samaritans and Leroy Richards reflected on the Windrush scandal. P Begley, Bedford

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

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

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

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

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

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 grantmuc32@btinternet.com

Where’s his hi-vis jacket?
The write stuff

A new exhibition at the British Library celebrates the act and the art of writing – ‘one of humankind’s greatest achievements’ – with examples from seven continents and more than 5,000 years of human history. KEITH RICHMOND picks up his notebook, pen, and tablet and makes his mark on the Euston Road.

Language comes before literature. Just as children learn to speak before they learn to read and write so men and women, thousands of years ago, could talk before they designed characters to represent sounds and devised alphabets to make words in order to write down what they had heard and said. But writing – recording what we think and say and do by scribbling on leaves, scratching on wax, incising on metal, putting pen to paper, or setting fingers on a keyboard – has had a profound effect on human history and the human race.

We began to write – in places as far apart as Mesopotamia, Mesoamerica, Egypt, and China – more than 5,000 years ago; evidence exists in the form of Mesopotamian cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphs, and Indus valley script. There’s a Mesopotamian clay tablet – characters cut on moist clay with a reed stylus in what is now Iraq – from 2100BC and an impressive stone stela, erected in 647AD at Pusilha, in what is now Belize, to celebrate the Mayan King K’ak U T’ichan, at the start of Writing: Making Your Mark, a fascinating new exhibition at the British Library.

‘Writing revolutionised the way we live.’ – Ewan Clatyon

Languages are complex and so, too, are writing systems. But turning speech into symbols meant we could keep accounts, mark possessions, make agreements, treaties and laws. Our alphabet emerged on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean rim, with different symbols to represent distinctly different sounds, adapted and adopted first by the Phoenicians, then the Greeks, Etruscans and, finally, the Romans, who started writing from left to right rather than from right to left.

This exhibition – which is carefully curated and imaginatively presented – is arranged thematically rather than chronologically with spaces devoted to the origins of writing; systems and styles; materials and technology; spaces; and the future of writing. Systems and styles; materials and technology; spaces devoted to the origins of writing; thematically rather than chronologically with and imaginatively presented – is arranged left to right rather than from right to left.

The exhibition starts with a Mesopotamian clay tablet cut with characters in cuneiform script. The tablet, dated 3000BC, is a legal document of a purchase between two people, a man called Manush and a woman named Kupin.

Next are examples from 7 continents and more than 5,000 years of human achievement – with examples of different writing systems and styles, materials and technology. There’s a Mesopotamian clay tablet – characters cut on moist clay with a reed stylus in what is now Iraq – from 2100BC, and a beautiful pocket size edition of Virgil produced by the master printer Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1501.

People began printing on wood blocks in Japan and Korea in the 8th century – paper was invented in China nearly 2,000 years ago, proving popular as it was lighter and more practical than bamboo or wood – but when Johannes Gutenberg devised a printing press with moveable type in Mainz it transformed the power of the written word in Western Europe. Much to the annoyance of church and state which insisted that books, newspapers, pamphlets and broadsides should include the name and address of the printer in case any offence should be taken by the rich and the powerful and they wanted to slap the offending printer in gaol.

Here we can see a Papal indulgence from Nicholas V to raise funds to defend Cyprus, printed by Gutenberg at Mainz in 1454; William Caxton’s first edition of The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer, printed at Westminster in 1476; and John Baskerville’s edition of Paradise Lost by John Milton, printed at Birmingham in 1758 – Baskerville was so disappointed with the quality of English books that he set up his own type foundry and printing shop and designed his own fonts, many of which are still in use today.

We can also see the East India Company court book 1657-66; sheets of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s music handwritten in Vienna; Florence Nightingale’s diary; some of James Joyce’s stream of consciousness notes for Ulysses; and the poignant final page of Robert Falcon Scott’s Antarctic journal, written on Thursday 29 March 1912: ‘It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more. For God’s sake look after our people.’

‘Writing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words.’ – Mark Twain

Tools of the trade? There’s an Imperial typewriter, made in their thousands at a factory in Leicester for many a journalist, secretary and author in the 20th century; the Macintosh Apple II computer designed by Steve Wozniak in 1977; and a Vere Foster secretary and author in the 20th century; the Macintosh Apple II computer designed by Steve Wozniak in 1977; and a Vere Foster

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Writing: Making Your Mark is at the British Library in London until 27 August. Admission £14; Senior 60+ £12; Student, disabled, registered unemployed and children 12-17 £7; children 11 and under free.
The Rock Island Line is a mighty good road

The song Rock Island Line, about a train driver who smuggles pig iron through a toll gate outside New Orleans by claiming he’s carrying pigs, horses, cows and sheep, is a song about the American railroad – specifically, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad – and the tune, with its relentless drive, energy and rhythm, moves like a train. It is also, according to Billy Bragg in a programme broadcast on BBC Four, ‘the song that made Britain rock’.

Rock Island was where the first bridge was built across the Mississippi, connecting Iowa with Illinois, and Bragg traced the roots of the song to a jingle written for the railroad company by Clarence Wilson, an engine cleaner at the Biddle Shops freight yard near Little Rock, Arkansas, who performed the song with his group, the Rock Island Colored Booster Quartet, in 1929.

Lonnie Donegan: Now this here’s the story about the Rock Island Line

John Lomax, the pioneering musicologist who preserved so much American folk music, recording, often with his son Alan, the chain gang chants and Negro spirituals of black men serving time in state penitentiaries, recorded an early version of the song with Huddie Ledbetter – better known as the blues singer-songwriter Leadbelly – at the Tucker prison farm in Arkansas in 1934.

Leadbelly liked the song, rearranged it, and released his own version in the 1940s. A version which was ‘studied and imitated, phrase by phrase’, according to Alan Lomax in the Penguin Book of American Folk Songs, ‘by a young English singer of American folk songs.’

That was Lonnie Donegan whose recording, released as a single in 1955, of ‘this Arkansas Negro convict song, as adapted by Leadbelly,’ wrote Lomax dryly, ‘was published as a personal copyright, words and music, by someone whose name has not been traced for the railroad company by way of the Arkansas convict song, as adapted by Leadbelly,’ written for the railroad company by Huddie Ledbetter – better known as the blues singer-songwriter Leadbelly – at the Tucker prison farm in Arkansas in 1934. That was Lonnie Donegan whose recording, released as a single in 1955, of ‘this Arkansas Negro convict song, as adapted by Leadbelly,’ wrote Lomax dryly, ‘was published as a personal copyright, words and music, by someone whose name has not been traced for the railroad company by way of the American folk song library. That was Lonnie Donegan whose recording, released as a single in 1955, of ‘this Arkansas Negro convict song, as adapted by Leadbelly,’ wrote Lomax dryly, ‘was published as a personal copyright, words and music, by someone whose name has not been traced for the railroad company by way of the American folk song library.

Keith Richmond

Solution to Crossword 157

Across: 1 Mademoiselle 7 Tamed 8 Gags 10 Irate 11 Relic 13 Strata 15 Insult 17 Psalm 18 Sinks 19 Slip 21 Trout 22 Court-martial

Down: 1 Motorbikes 2 Demolish 3 Medical 4 In-laws 5 Edge 6 Log 9 Scrap metal 12 Macaroni 14 Tipster 16 Tandem 18 Spur 20 Leo

Congratulations to Paul Scott, of Manningtree, Essex, 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 157th prize crossword in the May 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 June.

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’.

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

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## ASLEF RMS 500 Club application form

Name: ..........................................................................................................

Address: ....................................................................................................

.......................................................... Telephone No..................................

email: ...........................................................................................................

Each number costs £4. You can purchase as many numbers as you like.

I confirm that I wish to purchase ____ numbers as part of the 500 Club.

A) I have set up my standing order (£48 per annum or £4 per month)

B) I enclose a cheque for advance payment (£48 per annum)

Signed: .......................................................... Date: ..................................

Please return 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)

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<tr>
<td>Unity Trust Bank</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>60-83-01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BENEFICIARY’S NAME</th>
<th>ACCOUNT NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASLEF RMS 500 CLUB ACCOUNT</td>
<td>2 0 2 0 1 1 9 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMOUNT IN FIGURES</th>
<th>AMOUNT IN WORDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commencing £

And thereafter every 1st OF EVERY MONTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE AND AMOUNT OF FIRST PAYMENT</th>
<th>DATE AND AMOUNT OF LAST PAYMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature(s) __________________ Date __________________

*Note: The bank will not undertake to:

(i) make any reference to Value Added Tax or other indeterminate element
(ii) advise payer’s address to beneficiary
(iii) advise beneficiary of inability to pay
(iv) request beneficiary’s banker to advise beneficiary of receipt

*Delete if not applicable

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

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The 135th Durham Miners’ Gala

will be held on Saturday 13 July 2019

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

www.friendsofdurhamminersgala.org

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The ASLEF LGBT+ 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 LGBT+ 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