Meet me by the entrance of the Tube – District 8 special report plus Daniel Davis on how to change your community in three minutes; Dave Tyson on the Norwich banner; and Gregor Gall on blacklisting.
tax free savings plans for
Resource Managers, Roster Clerks, Driver Assessors, Driver Team Managers, Customer Service Assistants, Driver Instructors, Drivers, Customer Service Managers, Train Managers, Conductors, Retail Sales Managers, First Class Hosts, On Board Cleaners, Controllers, Guards, Revenue Protection Inspectors & Senior Conductors and anyone we’ve missed out who works on the railways or for train operating companies!

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News

- GTR under fire for ‘false’ passenger poster
- Susan Calman on her specialist subject – trains – plus Simon Armitage, Roger Scruton, Tim Finch and Neil Jordan go Off the Rails
- New report: On Track With Diversity 2019
- Tube drivers’ pay offer is not good enough
- Soham rail explosion heroes remembered

Features

- Daniel Davis on how you can start to change your community in three minutes
- DO8 Finn Brennan reports on TfL, London Underground, and the Mayor of London
- Going Underground: Finn Brennan, Gary Comfort, Kris Davis, Trevor Robinson and Marc Tanner
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- Dave Tyson proudly unfurls (and explains) the history of the new Norwich banner

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- Branch News and 100 Years of Union
- Obituaries
- Letters and Classified Advertisements
- Last Word: Chris Proctor ponders the big question – was she the worst PM in history?
- On Track: Richard Holbrook and the US in Vietnam; Prize Crossword; Legal Services; and Change of Address

Cover: Alice Underground

In 2012 we published the first On Track with Diversity report which revealed the rail industry to have very low numbers of women, young, and black and minority ethnic drivers. We used that report to hit every HR director’s desk and say, ‘We have membership density in this industry in the very high nineties but can only recruit as members the drivers you employ.’

The situation was compounded by the McNulty Report and a Tory government which tried to blame the unions for the lack of diversity on the grounds of ‘flexibility’ – the same government which, when asked by us to introduce an equalities impact assessment before awarding a franchise, refused. Two decades of campaigning for job shares, flexible working, pre-retirement links, and reduced hours working, in the years before part-time working attracted pro-rata rights to leave and pension, have all been conveniently ignored.

We launched an updated version, On Track with Diversity 2019, at the Palace of Westminster on 17 June, calling on employers (not all are bad) to work with us to create more opportunities to build a workforce which better represents the communities we serve. To those companies who refuse to respond we will be asking what you have to hide.

Are you playing Conservative Bingo? Who’s going to be the next Tory leader, and unelected Prime Minister, with 13 initially out of the traps, including old union-hating, union-baiting Boris Johnson, the worst London Mayor and Foreign Secretary we’ve ever had, with spectacular integrity and moral issues. Only two candidates, of course, go to members of Conservative constituency associations.

Not one of them has pledged to reduce poverty, food bank usage, or the widening wealth gap; increase benefits and the minimum wage; scrap tuition fees or the public sector pay reformation; rehome the victims of Grenfell, or protect those in Britain’s core industries which are now under threat. Instead we hear about tax cuts for the rich. Whoever wins should be obliged to call an immediate general election to allow real life and death issues to be discussed for a better future for this once great nation.

Yours fraternally

Mick Whelan, general secretary
You spin me round like a wonky record

TR is under fire from passengers and industry analysts after an extraordinary attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of their ‘customers’ – as the company likes to call commuters – following the privatised train operator’s run-in with the Office of Rail and Road.

Posters have appeared at stations served by Southern, Thameslink, and Great Northern, announcing: ‘GTR Thameslink Railway is contributing £15 million towards tangible passenger benefits and we want to hear how you want to spend it: either at your local station or on a wider passenger benefit scheme.’

GTR was fined by the ORR after the timetable fiasco in spring last year and ordered to spend £15 million on improving its service. Not that you would know the truth from the company’s expensive PR spin. Thameslink tweeted @TLRailUK: ‘We have £15 million to spend on passenger benefits’ etc. One passenger, Simon Tilley, dryly tweeted @roguertrader1980: ‘You typed it in a hurry and messed up. Fear not. Mr T has fixed your grammatical error’ and wapsishly – but accurately – changed the opening to ‘We have to spend £15 million on passenger benefits…’

John Cannon @johnncannon wrote: ‘I think you should be explaining why you suddenly have money for passenger benefits. Customers need to know this is a fine for your woeful performance.’

And Commuter Justice posted: ‘It’s a fine because you screwed up.’

The Association of British Commuters has now reported the company to the Advertising Standards Authority as the poster campaign ‘completely erases the true history of the company’s failure, without even a hint of an apology. It is clear to us that the advertising materials are an attempt to derive PR value and reputational capital from what is essentially a false political communication in a public space.’

The ORR is also understood to be unhappy because ‘it is highly doubtful’ that ‘any such improvements’ will ‘constitute reparations to those who were affected by the breach of passenger information rules’.

LUCIO ELECTED
Lucio Buffone, Paddington branch chair and GWR company council, has been elected to the national committee of LGBT+ Labour, the campaign for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans rights, on a job share with Maria Exall, of the CWU, as trade union liaison officer.

CROSSRAIL OF THE NORTH
More than 5,000 businesses have called on the government to invest in a £39 billion high speed rail link – dubbed the Crossrail of the North – across the north of England.

ARE FRIENDS ELECTRONIC?
Members can receive the ASLEF Journal – and reps can receive circulars – electronically if they choose to do so. Just contact admin at head office.

QUOTE...
‘The Intercity 125 was probably the most iconic train operating in the UK.’
– Andrew McLean, head curator, National Railway Museum

...UNQUOTE

Lights! Camera! Action!

Dan Smith, executive producer of an ITN documentary about Crossrail, to be broadcast on Channel 5 this summer, spent an hour interviewing GS Mick Whelan at head office in St John Street last month.

Duck! Donald offers Brexit Britain a ‘big trade deal’ – if he gets the NHS

Although the president’s men tried to row back after Donald Trump, on a state visit to Britain last month, said the NHS would be ‘on the table’ in any future trade deal between the UK and the US, and Matt Hancock, the Secretary of State for Health, insisted ‘the NHS is not for sale’, Jason Cowley pointed out in the New Statesman: ‘The US, by virtue of its size and power, will dictate the terms of any deal.’

The simple joys of 6 year olds: my son worked out that the toilet on the heritage train carriage emptied directly onto the track after he had flushed it (in a station) so he ran to the back of the carriage as we departed so he could see his poo on the track
That’s entertainment!

Susan Calman, the diminutive stand-up comic, TV presenter and panellist on radio shows such as The News Quiz and I’m Sorry I Haven’t a Clue, confesses in her Good Housekeeping column that ‘train stations of the UK’ was near the top of her list of potential specialist subjects when Celebrity Mastermind came calling.

‘Entirely based on my lifestyle. I travel all around the UK by train and I know many of the stations better than I know my own house. I can tell you where the coffee shops are, which end of the train to disembark from, and where the taxi ranks are located. Sadly, I have a feeling that this might not pass for entertainment and I would just look really dull. Rejected.’

Susan adds that she also considered Cagney and Lacey, Marks & Spencer’s petite range, cats, and, er, toilets in National Trust properties (‘Quite niche but very important!’). ‘After several sleepless nights, and endless lists, I decided to say no to being on Mastermind.’

Susan Calman: ‘The most terrifying part of Mastermind is the specialist subject’

Instead, I resolved to carry on shouting at people on the TV. Because that’s a specialist subject at which I really excel…

QUOTE…
‘Some people still want their unicorns.’ – Neil Coyle, Labour MP for Bermondsey & Old Southwark

...UNQUOTE

Aye, Eye, Grayling

Private Eye has spoofed Failing Grayling with this report: ‘A lone individual was blamed last week for single-handedly disrupting hundreds of trains all over the country and causing massive inconvenience to travellers. The man, known to police only as Chris Grayling, managed to reduce Britain’s railways to chaos simply by turning up for work at the Department for Transport.

Mr Grayling defended his actions. “I wanted to make a political point,” he said, “which is that I shouldn’t be allowed to run a bath, let alone a government department.’

CONFERENCES & RALLIES

The Durham Miners’ Gala is on Saturday 13 July. The Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival, near Dorchester, is from Friday 19 to Saturday 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: John Simpson, with number 7, won the June draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £422.

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

SIMON ARMITAGE, born into a working-class family in a terrace house in Huddersfield in 1963, is the new Poet Laureate, for which he will be paid the princely sum of £6,750 and a barrel (720 bottles) of sherry a year. It is, notionally, a royal appointment, and Simon cheerfully told the Press Association, ‘I’m hardly a rampant republican.’ This will come as something of a surprise to readers who remember his sonnet Those Bastards in Their Mansions from his 1993 collection Book of Matches: ‘Those bastards in their mansions: / to hear them shriek, you’d think / I’d poisoned the dogs and vaulted the ditches, / crossed the lawns in stocking feet and threadbare britches, / forced the door of one of the porches, and lifted / the gift of fire from the burning torches, / then given heat and light to streets and houses, / told the people how to ditch their cuffs and shackles, / armed them with the iron from their wrists and ankles. // Those lords and ladies in their palaces and castles, / they’d have me snuffed out by their beagles, / picked at by their eagles, pinned down, grilled / beneath the sun, // Me, I stick to the shadows, carry a gun.’

ROGER SCRUTON, the free-wheeling, free-thinking, right-wing philosopher, lost his gig as head of the government’s Building Better, Building Beautiful commission after George Eaton tweeted a couple of carefully selected quotes from an interview he had conducted for the New Statesman. In the published piece, though, Eaton wrote: ‘Scruton, who is repulsed by some of the consequences of globalisation – “It is outrageous that Amazon doesn’t pay any tax in this country” – retains a scepticism of the free market [and] confessed that he was “tempted by the idea of renationalising the railways – they seem to run quite well in places that they’re nationalised.” Way to go, Rog…

TIM FINCH steps down as head of industrial relations in August to spend more time on the terraces of Belper Town in the Evo-Stik League, East Division, the eighth tier of English football. Tim was warmly thanked for his work by the GS at AAD in Leeds in May. As he exited stage left, blushing, and clutching a gift, with the applause of delegates ringing in his ears, Tim, a former shop steward at Rolls-Royce in Derby, muttered, in his usual dry and self-deprecating way: ‘I do get paid to do this, you know…’

NEIL JORDAN, who wrote and directed award-winning films such as The Company of Wolves, Mona Lisa, and The Crying Game, was born at Rosses Point in County Sligo. Asked what would make his life better, he muttered miserably: ‘More bookshops. Better weather in Ireland. I love the country, but it’s so bloody dank and miserable for most of the year.’

ALLISON PEARSON in the Daily Telegraph said her ‘instinctive sympathy for someone so ill-equipped’ to do her job – Theresa May – was supplanted by anger and disbelief. ‘Why had the Conservative Party not acted sooner to put her – and us – out of our misery?’
Mick: ‘I want to see fewer people who look like me’

ASLEF launched its new On Track with Diversity report – which reveals a glaring gap between those in the cab at the front of the train and the communities we serve – at the Houses of Parliament on Monday 17 June.

GS Mick Whelan told MPs, peers, rail industry staff and journalists: ‘When I stood up at our annual assembly of delegates in Leeds this year I was pleased to see how diverse the room looked. Because I have spent 35 years on the railway, and 35 years as an active trade unionist, and I know how many train drivers look just like me. Middle-aged, male, and white.

And that’s why I was delighted to see so many young members, women drivers, and black reps at conference.

‘Because while the trade union movement has not always been at the progressive cutting edge on some of these issues, this trade union is absolutely committed to equality and diversity in the rail industry.

‘But, as a trade union, we can only recruit, as members, those who have been employed as drivers by the privatised train and freight operating companies. We work with these companies, every day of every week, to ensure they encourage women, as well as men, and black and minority ethnic, as well as well as white, people to become drivers.’

But the harsh facts are that, in 2019, only 6.5% of train drivers in England, Scotland and Wales are women; just 8% are from an ethnic minority; and only 15% are under 35. These figures do not represent the communities we serve because 51% of the people in this country are female; 20% in the last census identified as ethnic minority; and 23% are aged 18 to 35.

‘We believe that a train driver is a train driver – regardless of gender, sexuality, religion, or race – and we’ve been pushing companies to allow more part-time and flexible working because the lack of such agreements has been a barrier, in the past, to women coming into our industry as many still take on the primary responsibility for child care.’

Mick thanked Carolyn Jones, director of the Institute of Employment Rights, and Nadia Motraghi and Ijeoma Omambala, of Old Square Chambers, authors of the report, for their detailed research, analysis, and recommendations.

‘There is, we believe, light at the end of the tunnel. Especially if the recommendations in our report are implemented. We know the rail industry needs to do more to improve its recruitment policies and will work closely with the companies to ensure this happens.

‘ASLEF has been at the forefront of promoting diversity in our industry, and we want to ensure that train drivers are more representative of the communities we serve. So that next year, at AAD, I will see even fewer people who look just like me.’

Getting on your goat

Goats who delayed Thameslink trains last month by grazing on the line between West Hampstead and Kentish Town in north London told passengers that they weren’t really sorry.

A hastily-painted sign – possibly not by hooves – at the scene of the crime said: ‘Wer yoo delayd on fryday coz ov us? #sorrynotsorry’. A spokesperson for the Kentish Town city farm coyly told commuters: ‘It seems those cheeky goats have been making you a sign; we asked them for an apology, but it seems naughty goats will always be naughty goats’.

Three goats – Ronnie, Rosie and Hope – have since been named and shamed.

The farm later tweeted: ‘Hooof! We have told our goats multiple times it’s not cool to play on the tracks! Thank you to the super helpful train drivers and engineers who pulled together to get them all in.’

Goats: #sorrynotsorry

Putting the brakes on HS2

Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, is standing firm, pressure to scrap HS2 is growing from other Tories. David Davis, Conservative MP for Haltemprice & Howden, says: ‘The case to scrap HS2 is getting stronger and stronger each day. It is becoming increasingly clear it will not be value for money, it will not bridge the north-south divide, and it will not help ease congestion across the rail network.’
Tube offer not good enough

SLEF formally rejected London Underground’s offer of a 2.6% pay rise for Tube drivers this year, and RPI plus 0.2% for 2020, at pay talks on Wednesday 5 June. We think that, while LU plans to double its operating surplus, staff deserve to be properly rewarded for their work and to see progress on increasing quality time off and the other parts of our claim.

‘This offer is just not good enough,’ said Finn Brennan, ASLEF’s organiser on the Underground. ‘More talks will now be arranged, involving the conciliation service ACAS, but it is time for LU management to come up with a serious offer if they want to avoid a dispute.’

DfT wants to know if HS2 will deliver

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling says the £56 billion HS2 high-speed rail line connecting London with Birmingham and, eventually, the north is under review to ensure it can be delivered within its existing budget. He said decisions have to be made ‘in the context of what is deliverable and not [focus on] decisions that are not deliverable.’

He was speaking as images were unveiled showing the futuristic design of HS2 trains. They will be 400m long and capable of carrying up to 1,100 people, with twice the number of seats on a Virgin Pendolino. They will reach speeds of 225mph but be quieter than any other train in the UK.

Three designs – by Siemens, Alstom and a joint bid by Hitachi and Bombardier – have been revealed. Bids have also been made by Talgo and CAF. The contract for the trains is worth £2.75 billion.

LU’s first female driver honoured

Hannah Dadds, London Underground’s first female Tube train driver, has been honoured with a plaque at Upton Park station. Hannah, who was born in Forest Gate, worked as a ‘railwoman’ at nearby Upton Park from 1969, becoming a driver in 1978. She drove trains on the District, Bakerloo and Jubilee lines – working, sometimes, with her sister Edna, who was an Underground guard – before retiring in 1993.

Hannah’s niece Vivian Parsons, speaking as the plaque was unveiled on Friday 31 May, said: ‘Hannah made sure she was accepted as a driver – not a token female driver – and there was no special treatment.’

Driverless trains fail down under

Angry commuters expressed their frustration after new driverless trains on the Sydney Metro broke down between Cherrybrook and Epping, causing long delays. Other trains have been taken out of service after the doors would not open.

QUOTE...

‘I knew Andrew Marr when he was a Trotskyite selling Trotskyite newspapers to bewildered railwaymen.’ – George Galloway

...UNQUOTE

Keep cool in the long, hot summer with this red ASLEF water bottle. Price £5 (inc p&p); email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk

Hannah Dadds (1941-2011) climbs into the driver’s cab (right); the plaque at Upton Park (top); and her family and friends at the unveiling (above)
For whom the bells toll

HURCH bells rang out last month to remember the heroic railwaymen who died and were seriously injured in an enormous explosion while saving a town in East Anglia from destruction on the eve of D-Day.

A train with 44 wagons carrying high explosive bombs, and a further seven containing components such as tail fins, caught fire on its way through Soham, in Cambridgeshire, shortly before 2am on 2 June 1944. Driver Benjamin Gimbert, 42, and fireman James Nightall, 22, were trying to drive the train out of town when it exploded, killing Nightall and signalman Frank Bridges. Gimbert was ‘fearfully maimed’ but survived.

‘As the loco was approaching Soham station the driver looked back to see flames coming from the leading wagon, which contained 44 general purpose 500lb bombs,’ said local historian Mike Petty. ‘He brought the train to a stop and, rather than running for safety, instructed Nightall to uncouple the first wagon from the rest of the train.

‘Nightall quickly managed this and, although the fire was now quite serious, Gimbert started to draw the wagon away. He had moved it about 140 yards but was still alongside the platforms at Soham when the bombs exploded. If it had exploded closer to the town there would be no Soham.’

End of the line for Northern?

The Sunday Times has reported that the viability of the rail operator Northern is being investigated by the DfT amid growing expectation that it will be the next train franchise to be renationalised.

John Collingridge, deputy business editor at the paper, and a former reporter with PA, the Yorkshire Post, and the Hull Daily Mail, wrote: ‘The Operator of Last Resort, a government arm that takes over ailing rail operators, is understood to be conducting due diligence on Northern, which has been hit by strikes, delays and last year’s timetable chaos.

City leaders from the north of England [have] called for the vast franchise – which stretches from Liverpool to Hull and from Middlesbrough to Nottingham – to be taken back into state hands.

‘The OLR already runs the East Coast line, renationalised last year when Stagecoach and Virgin gave back the keys after overbidding for the right to run the route.

‘Northern’s finances are widely thought to be unsustainable. The German giant Arriva won the franchise in 2016 with a pledge to reduce its reliance on state subsidy. However, it has been beset by problems and bosses have tried to renegotiate the contract with the DfT:’

Swedes on track after suffering flygskam

The number of Swedes taking the train for domestic journeys has soared as domestic plane travel has plummeted, reflecting growing concern in the country about climate change.

Swedavia, which runs Sweden’s busiest ten airports, says passenger numbers have been hit by a further 8% in the first three months of the year, by a further 8% in the first three months of this year, while business trips soared 12%.

In contrast, Swedavia, which runs Sweden’s busiest ten airports, says passenger numbers fell by 8% from January to April this year, after a 3% fall in 2018.
TUC Congress 2019

The 151st annual Trades Union Congress is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 8 to Wednesday 11 September
(Q) What can you do in three minutes?

(A) Help change your local community

DANIEL DAVIS, ex-Gloucester, now Reading, and pictured here at AAD in Liverpool last year, asks why ASLEF needs a political fund? What are the latest changes to Britain’s trade union laws (and how do they affect you?) And suggests ways that you can help us to help you.

IT WAS after attending the ASLEF branch secretaries’ course, and the political course, and working closely with Fran Boait, Labour’s prospective Parliamentary candidate in the target seat of Gloucester, that I better understood the important changes to the trade union laws in Britain and the implications of these changes for all of us.

By law, a trade union needs to set up a political fund to defend its members’ interests in Parliament. Without such a fund, unions are prevented from lobbying MPs to try and change policies or legislation that affects their members’ working lives.

Lobbying and campaigning costs a lot of money from printing leaflets to organising event days, trade union campaigning seeks to influence the decisions made in Parliament.

FOUNDED BY TRADE UNIONS

Many ASLEF members share and promote the views of the Labour Party – many don’t just vote Labour, they are members of the party, too – which was founded by the trade unions to represent the interests of working people in Parliament. Labour, in turn, supports the trade unions and, in the case of ASLEF, backs many of the issues for which we are fighting.

The political fund also supports, through local branches, other good campaigns, including:

- We celebrated the 70th birthday of the National Health Service by giving tea and cake to NHS staff, listening to their concerns, and promoting Labour’s plan to protect and improve our NHS.
- Legislation on employment rights.
- Health & safety at work.
- Equal opportunities.
- Minimum wage.
- Pensions.
- Benefits.
- It’s allowed us to campaign against the closure of local Post Offices, a big issue in rural areas.

And it’s helped us to campaign in partnership with other unions – such as Unison, on the Health Service – and engage with different communities, and different parts of the electorate.

CHANGES TO THE ACT

The Tories made a number of changes to the Trade Union Act in 2016 and the Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, including issues in relation to political funds. These changes to our already repressive trade union laws – some of the most draconian and restrictive in Europe – were implemented to tie the hands of trade union members in a Gordian knot.

To make it more difficult to put improvements to our working and personal lives in place, using the established negotiating machinery. These new provisions only apply to new members and to new funds set up after the expiry of a transitions period.

Existing members of a trade union and existing political funds continue to be subject to the current provisions in the 1992 Act. The important thing, however, is that only trade unions are legally constrained by the need to have a political fund. Employers and other Parliamentary lobby groups have no equivalent restrictions on their political spending. Our political fund, therefore, is necessary to allow us to counter potentially damaging employer arguments with respect to workers’ rights to government and Parliament.

So what can spending three minutes of the time of new and existing ASLEF members do as far as trade union benefits is concerned?

IT REALLY IS THAT SIMPLE

Every trade union member has the option to ‘opt-in’ by contributing to the political fund. Previously, members would automatically be opted-in, in a number of cases. At present your trade union needs to inform you about the existence of – and ask your permission for you to contribute to – its political fund. If you choose to opt-in, please write to your local branch secretary, using email or a letter to state your wish to opt-in to the political fund. It really is that simple; there’s no need to do anything more! If you’re unsure who your branch secretary is, you can either ask around at your depot or contact ASLEF head office at info@aslef.org.uk

It’s not just our futures we need to protect, but also the generations going forth! So please, please, share this information around the mess room and on social media. I am happy to discuss the matter further, either at your local branch or via email at davisdaniel463@gmail.com
Well let the boys all sing and the boys all shout for tomorrow

District 8 Organiser FINN BRENNAN lifts the lid on pay talks with London Underground and our determination to ensure that Tube drivers have t&cs as good as, or better than, at any other company

S Transport for London’s cash continues to pour down a large black hole named Crossrail – or the Elizabeth line if there is ever any good news to report – talks about pay and conditions are continuing on London Underground.

Our EC member Terry Wilkinson, who has probably more experience of pay negotiations than any other TU rep in the country, pointed out to me some years ago that there has never been a time we turned up to talks to be greeted by a friendly director saying, ‘Good news, lads, we have loads of money this year! How much do you want?’

So it was no surprise to be given lengthy presentations on just how cash-strapped TfL is as a result of the government’s removal of the general grant and Crossrail delays! But it was interesting to see that LU is generating a healthy operational surplus of around £700 million a year, money that is being used to fund upgrades, but also to keep afloat the loss-making parts of the TFL group. In fact, the ‘successful delivery’ of the TFL business plan depends on LU doubling its annual operational surplus.

This means that LU is now the cash cow that subsidises other TFL modes and services like Dial-a-Ride. Seeking to double the LU surplus will mean even more massive pressure on costs and on staff who bear the burden.

And, while cross-subsidy of transport modes may make sense, our members on LU are, rightly, adamant that they should not have to accept reductions in their living standards or working conditions or in our ambition for further improvements.

Meetings with the Mayor of London

In stark contrast to the days when Boris Johnson was at City Hall and trade unions were ignored and insulted, regular meetings take place between the transport unions and Sadiq Khan and his team. ASLEF uses these meetings to highlight issues that go beyond the remit of the machinery meetings with employers and to encourage a more reasonable attitude on matters we have raised with the company. Support from the Mayor’s office was key to progress on cab security. We are also discussing the real world operation of TfL’s commitment to diversity and inclusion, including facilities for our reps and issues such as the provision of electric car charging points. London’s Tories have been very explicit that if they ever hold power again, they intend to attack the TfL pension fund and our members’ travel facilities. Whatever disagreements we may have with the current Mayor, having a Labour administration isn’t just a matter of political preference; it makes a real material difference to ASLEF members on London Underground.

While there are many differences in working agreements and, of course, pension arrangements, between LU and Overground and Crossrail operations, drivers note that the 34 hour four day week is now becoming the standard.

I don’t believe that if we were simply to replicate the drivers’ agreements on London Overground or Crossrail on LU our members would necessarily be very grateful! In fact, Underground management constantly tell our reps that they would love to have the ‘flexibility’ they claim exists at other TOCs. But we do want to see real progress on our aim of a shorter working week and more opportunities for flexible working as well as the other elements of our pay claim.

Of course, every negotiation involves choices and our excellent team of trains council reps are determined to make sure that Underground drivers have conditions that are as good as, or better than, on any other company.

PRO-RATA FOUR DAY WEEK

Thanks to the agreement made during the last pay round, and the hard work of EC8 Terry Wilkinson and our trains council reps to make sure it was implemented, around 60 drivers across the Underground have now moved to a pro-rata four day week. While we keep pushing to reduce working hours for all, it’s good to see some real improvement in the work/life balance for members who have opted for this choice.

TRANSPLANT

As part of TfL’s Transformation programme, LU told us last October that they planned to make redundancies in Transplant who operate engineering trains across the combine. These plans have now been withdrawn, along with proposals for variable rostering. Any changes to rosters will have to be negotiated and agreed at local level.

CAB SECURITY

Hard work and constant pressure from your ASLEF h&s council reps means that progress is continuing on making our driving cabs secure. A prototype lock is being tested on a Central line train and plans to roll out the new cab locks across the combine from November are on track.
This is the modern world

An e-payslip presentation was given and it looks good. You can use a personal email address to get notified the payslip is available and it will be issued almost a week before payday. The list of pay months comes up and, if you open a particular month, a pdf is displayed, like our current payslips on headed paper, with logos, etc, which can be used for loans and mortgages. It has the P60 for this year and previous years. The ASLEF position is that we welcome e-payslips for those who can use it.

Over previous months ASLEF has pushed the issue on equality and, particularly, people with older demographics who may not wish or have the ability to get payslips on a PC, so we requested legal advice under section 8 of the Employment Rights Act. We cited Anakaa v Firstsource Solutions (2014) around written pay statements. Most of the questions have been dealt with; for example, if someone needs assistance to help get payslips online we could use our union’s ULRs, etc. The only issue outstanding is if somebody doesn’t want to learn and doesn’t have a computer how does the company give them a written pay statement. They have taken this one away and we will have more discussions going forward. They are going to use paper for June and July alongside online via the TfL link.

Some unions have issued advice to continue with paper payslips via a memo with 80% requesting paper payslips even though the pro forma was distributed via WhatsApp! I said it’s not our union’s position to be difficult or obstructive but we need assurances that help and support in all areas are given to members who need it.

Conclusion: if you can use a smart phone and or have access to a PC this will clearly be better for most members but if, for any genuine reason, our members can’t access this then we need to fully support them to make sure that whatever is needed is, within reason, provided.
Talking shop or real engagement?

**TREVOR ROBINSON**, secretary of the Black and Minority Ethnic Committee, reports on the first TFL diversity forum

SLEF was invited to TFL’s diversity and inclusion forum, chaired by Staynton Brown, director of diversity, inclusion and talent, on Tuesday 28 May. The delegation included Trevor Robinson (BAME committee member for District 8), Deborah Reay (WRC member for District 8) and Matt Whyte.

After we were given a breakdown of what the forum was about, the ASLEF delegation made it clear that we would not be taking part in a forum designed as a PR tool or tick box exercise. Staynton guaranteed that this is not the purpose of the forum. While, on the face of things, TFL looks to have one of the most diverse railway workforces, that diversity does not quite filter through the company all the way to the top.

There is also a problem within TFL with the gender pay gap. It’s not an issue for drivers but is for the combine as a whole.

While TFL has a lot of policy it doesn’t particularly deal with specific issues for the individuals in those diversity groups. For example, Debbie raised a point about the lack of a menopause policy that deals with the effect it has on females with TFL as a business. TFL has a long way to go in terms of being a true champion for diversity and inclusion.

Although the forum is not part of any negotiating machinery we were assured that suggestions raised at the forum to make the company more inclusive and diverse will be taken forward. We will be meeting every quarter so watch this space...

**FINN BRENNAN**, ASLEF’s organiser on Tramlink, explains how strike action forced the company to improve its offer

**Tramlink strike forces FirstTram to up the ante**

FTER two days of solid strikes, the first ever by ASLEF on Croydon Tramlink, a breakthrough in talks at ACAS meant the EC agreed to suspend the action and recommend a revised offer to our members. This gives drivers an above inflation pay rise and an additional 13 rest days each year. This significant improvement on the previous proposal has been brought about by the strength and solidarity of our members on Tramlink. They have had two rock solid days of strike action with more than 50 members taking part in picketing. The new proposal is the biggest improvement in working conditions since the tram system opened. The additional rest days, giving the equivalent of a 35 hour week that is now standard on the railway, means members will have quality time off with much improved rosters. The driver’s salary will increase by a minimum of 9.9% over the three year period, with a guaranteed link to the RPI rate of inflation. An additional 10 drivers will be recruited to facilitate this and new rosters will be introduced before the end of the proposed pay settlement in November 2021.

**Trams and trains are operated by human beings, not robots**

**FINN BRENNAN** spoke to the London Assembly transport committee about safety on our transport network

IT WAS good to have the opportunity to speak to the London Assembly transport committee as part of a panel on tram safety. Many of the issues apply to the Underground and the wider transport industry, too.

The argument I tried to make is that safety at work doesn’t come just from having the right policies and ticking the right boxes. The essential element in any safety-critical environment is that people are able to speak openly and honestly about mistakes. There has to be a just culture where people are encouraged to report problems and errors, without fear of discipline or ridicule.

I know it sounds obvious, but serious incidents and accidents happen when people feel they have to cover up, rather than own up. Belatedly, LU has started to recognise this but much remains to be done.

The same is true of fatigue and tiredness at work. Trains and trams are operated by human beings, not robots. Of course, we all have a personal responsibility, but the reality of life means it is impossible to always get the quality rest you want if you work shifts. You can’t always get seven or eight hours sleep before a dead early turn, especially if you have family or caring responsibilities. And the noisy world outside doesn’t stop just because you have come off a night shift and have to be back in the next night!

Good managers recognise that and support staff instead of responding, ‘Well, are you going sick, then?’ when staff report that they are feeling less than 100%. Although progress has been made, there is still a long way to go before there is a culture in our industry that puts people – not processes – at the forefront of safety.

I’m grateful to the committee chair, Florence Eshalomi, for the invitation to take part. You can watch the webcast of the meeting here at www.london.gov.uk/transport-committee-2019-05-15n (if you have run out of Netflix box sets).
It’s a mighty long way down rock’n’roll from *Top of the Pops* to drawing the dole

**GREGOR GALL,** an affiliate research associate at the University of Glasgow, and editor of the Scottish Left Review, reflects on the Bard of Barking’s lyrics on *Waiting for the Great Leap Forwards* and the spectacular fallout from the campaign against blacklisting on construction sites – including Crossrail

OR his fourth album, *Workers’ Playtime,* released in 1988, Billy Bragg wrote a song called *Waiting for the Great Leap Forwards.* On it, the Bard of Barking sang: ‘If you’ve got a blacklist, I want to be on it’. The album was recorded in the despondency and gloom following the Tories’ victory under Margaret Thatcher at the general election of 1987. The socialist troubadour was a leading light in the Red Wedge collective of musicians who opened a cultural, and popular, second front by publicly backing the Labour Party at concerts and rallies.

**DEPRIVED OF THE RIGHT TO WORK**

But the dark humour of wanting to be on a blacklist to prove one’s left-wing political credentials in a period when many citizens had spurned Neil Kinnock as possible Labour Prime Minister could not disguise the awful fact that blacklisting has ruined lives, families and communities. Workers were deprived of the right to work, lost their homes and, sometimes, their marriages, as well as suffering unbearable stress and anxiety. Depression and suicide were not uncommon.

Blacklisting of workers for trade union and left-wing activities was not a post-1979 phenomenon. In the period when Britain came closest to a revolution, in the aftermath of the Great War, the Economic League victimised workers from 1919 until its demise in 1990. Its activities were taken up with gusto by the Consulting Association from 1993 with a specific focus upon the construction industry.

‘Troublemakers’ were not just socialists and communists but anyone who stood up for their fellow workers, like health & safety reps. Applying for work, some were never offered work despite being well-qualified and experienced. Others had their employment terminated shortly after it began for reasons that had nothing to do with their performance.

Blacklisting was relatively easy for employers in construction, compared to other sectors, because of two factors. First, there is very little direct employment; subcontracting is rife. Clients contracting out work appoint a main contractor who, in turn, appoint sub-contractors to do different bits of the work. Often there is sub-sub-contracting, too. Second, contracts are fixed for specific projects so when the school, hospital or power station has been built, the work ends and workers are forced to look for other work on new projects.

It was an accident of history that proved what many of us had long suspected. When the Information Commissioner raided a drab office in Droitwich in 2009 over unspectacular data protection issues, it was revealed that 3,214 workers were on a blacklist. These included not just construction workers but political activists, environmentalists, shop stewards and health & safety reps. And, given that the files on these workers were only 10% of the records of the Consulting Association, it’s possible the original TCA blacklist ran to tens of thousands.

**BLACKLISTING STILL GOES ON AT MAJOR PROJECTS LIKE CROSSRAIL**

The Consulting Association was funded by many of the major construction companies. This revelation resulted in a sustained campaign by the Blacklist Support Group and the GMB, UCATT and Unite unions who argued not just for an apology, and compensation, but for the right to work for these companies that had denied them work as well as prosecutions for the wrongdoing.

Ten years years later, blacklisting is still taking place on major projects like Crossrail. Companies have paid compensation but not admitted liability, no company director has been jailed, and many of the blacklisted workers have died before any kind of justice could be offered. More recently, police collusion in the blacklisting has also been unearthed.

The blacklisting saga tells us a lot about the kind of society in which we live. Although it is not possible to openly victimise union activists, as it was in the aftermath of the General Strike in 1926, it is possible for employers to do so when they hide behind secrecy and the services of expensive corporate lawyers.

Because penalties for blacklisting are so low and the protection afforded workers so flimsy there is no effective deterrent for rapaciously-minded employers. Indeed, one piece of legislation that did provide some help was abolished under Tony Blair’s first Labour government (1997-2001) when Fairness at Work legislation was brought in. New Labour shamefully refused to act despite the growing evidence of blacklisting and victimisation in the late 2000s.

**DEREGULATION OF THE LABOUR MARKET AFTER A BORIS BREXIT**

That said, blacklisting in Britain is nowhere near as bad as it is in the United States. From the blacklisting of actors and musicians like Leonard Bernstein, Paul Robeson and Orson Welles in the McCarthyite period to the firing of one union member for union activity every 14 minutes today, across the pond the situation is truly terrible. If Brexit, under Boris Johnson, Jacob Rees-Mogg and Nigel Farage, results in the further deregulation of the labour market as Britain strengthens its special relationship with President Trump, it’s not impossible that we could see the situation here become like it is over there.

No longer would it be a badge of honour to be blacklisted, as Billy Bragg suggested, but a nightmare for anyone to have progressive or left-leaning views in the workplace. This is another reason to support Labour Party policies on union rights. Whether through legislation, or public procurement policy, Labour is the only party committed to stopping blacklisting.
And the banner man held the banner high

**Norwich branch** was formed in 1891, just 11 years after our trade union, for locomotive engineers and firemen, was founded in 1880. One hundred years later, in 1991, we decided to celebrate our centenary with a new branch badge, designed by local reps Neville Weller and David Tyson. There has been a great tradition throughout ASLEF’s history of casting commemorative badges to celebrate landmark events.

Twenty-five years later, members cast another badge, to commemorate 125 years of Norwich branch, and to raise funds for a new branch banner; 250 badges were cast, some numbered and allocated to members, the number matching their seniority in the depot at the time.

**Canaries Hung in Cages**

The branch then instructed me to seek a suitable supplier and come up with a design that reflected our local and national identity. We engaged the York Disabled Workers’ Co-op as many other ASLEF branches use this firm and they have experience in making trade union banners. The design of the centenary and 125 year badges was used as a template.

In the top left and right hand corners are copies of the oval cast 32A plates displayed on steam locos allocated to Norwich depot. From 1933-35 a coding system was devised as a result of the reorganisation of loco operations and maintenance. Depots with an A code were the primary or main shed for a particular area with subsidiary sheds having the same number followed by B, C or D, etc. Norwich was the primary shed with sub-sheds at Ipswich, Lowestoft, Yarmouth South Town, Yarmouth Vauxhall, Yarmouth Beach and Melton Constable. There were further sub-sheds, of which Norwich had six, where locos were sent for heavy maintenance, at Cromer High, Dereham, Swaffham, Wells, Wymondham and Yarmouth South Town.

The principle colours of the banner – green with yellow tassels – refer to Norwich City who play in yellow and green and are known as the Canaries, a reference to the history of weaving in the city and the creation, in the 14th century, of the light worsted green cloth which brought prosperity to the city. It was revived in Norwich in the 17th century by Flemish weavers who brought canaries from the Caribbean and hung them in cages outside their shops in the city.

The ASLEF logo is supplemented in the scrolling with ‘The Commotion Time 1549’ a reference to the Kett rebellion which flared after the enclosure by rich and powerful local landlords of the common land on which the poor used to graze their animals. Robert Kett, a yeoman farmer, sympathised with the peasants and raised an army of 15,000 who camped on Mousehold Heath, just outside the city walls, in protest. The Duke of Somerset – Lord Protector as Edward VI was not of age – dispatched the Earl of Warwick with an army to put down the rebellion. More than 3,000 people were killed in the fighting that followed, with a further 300 executed after the rebellion was crushed. Kett was taken to the Tower of London, tried for treason, and hanged from the walls of Norwich castle where his body was left to rot.

**THE COMMOTION TIME 1549**

A gruesome end but a powerful symbol, nonetheless, of collective strength in action. A plaque commemorating ‘Commotion Time 1549’ in Wymondham refers to Kett and his struggle for a more just society’ and the branch wanted to draw attention to the history of action and solidarity in our region.

The scrolling on the bottom refers to three strikes that took place in living memory and were supported 100% by the ASLEF members of Norwich branch. The 1982 dispute was a two week all-out national strike called by the ASLEF executive after the imposition at certain depots of flexible rostering which broke the guaranteed eight hour day. The strike ended in an uncertain return to work and imposition of the rosters. Many said it was a political strike, with the government hell bent on breaking the trade union. Fact is, we’re still here! Later, regional, strikes in 1995 and 2009, after the industry was privatised, were over pay and led to significant gains as a result of solid support from ASLEF members.

**Lighted Flame of Unity**

The rear of the banner is more straightforward, with the four corners representing four principles of trade unionism: solidarity (top left), peace (top right), justice (bottom left) and equality.

The central design is taken from the ASLEF national banner which displays the lighted flame of unity and the word ‘Progress’ to symbolise the progressive nature of our union.

We can be proud of our heritage and the legacy left by our founders. Let’s hope the banner – which is mounted in the LDC office – has plenty of airings over the coming years and leaves its own legacy of which future ASLEF members will be proud.
Very Good Friday

UR Good Friday reunion was well attended with a good mix of active and retired members. We welcomed guests Mick Whelan, Dave Calfe, Dicky Fisher, Hugh Dunlinson and Dave Barraclough, who have been long-time friends of this branch, and 420 years’ worth of service was recognised in 12 presentations (four retirements and eight badges).

Over the last year we have said our goodbyes from the industry to Rob McMillan (29 years), Andy Green (44), Mick Boulanger (43) and Sir Bob Dunn (44) and wish them all a long and healthy retirement. Badges were presented to Bob Perry and Wayne Peach (40), Ian Heath, Steve Hudson, Dave Andrews and Nigel Harkness (35), Grahame Thorne (30), Dan Roberts (10). Well done to you all!

Mick gave his state of the nation speech before Roy Goodhead toasted ASLEF and before long the evening was over for another year with the merriment continuing in the Great Western public house. Nigel Harkness, Wolverhampton branch secretary


Three milestones

Mick Poultney presents Tony Fearn and Tony Middleton with their badges and EC president Dave Calfe presents Steve Bird with his

We’ve been having quite a busy time of things at Leicester, not least because of huge changes to our CrossCountry diagrams from 19 May, the first significant changes since December 2008.

We’ve had a couple of branch meetings in the last six weeks and, on 30 April, had the pleasure of CrossCountry company council as well as our EC member Dave Calfe who reported on national issues, notably pensions and MediGold. Several members have achieved milestones in ASLEF membership. Steve Bird (XC) was presented with his 20 year badge, Tony Fearn (DBC) with 40 and Tony Middleton (GBRF) with 30.

John Liddle, branch secretary

I’m not your stepping stone

EC7 Andy Hudd; Carolyn Harris, Labour MP for Swansea East; Julie James, Labour AM for Swansea West; DO7 Brian Corbett; Kevin Johns, ‘broadcaster, Christian, and passionate believer in social justice’, as well as Swansea City’s match day announcer at the Liberty stadium; and retired driver Steve Williams at the Friends of Stepping Stones 1979-2019 anniversary bash at the Marriott Hotel in Swansea. The Stepping Stones children’s centre provides services to pre-school children with disabilities.

Upcoming events

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

- **RIPPLE LANE – FRIDAY 6 SEPTEMBER**
  The annual jolly boys’ outing to Clacton – everybody welcome – meets at 12.00 in the Spoons opposite the pier and finishes in the old BRSA club after the bingo has ceased at 3pm.

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

- **LONGSIGHT – THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER**
  All grades welcome at our annual reunion from 13.00 at the Navigation Road BRSA Club next to the BR & Metrolink station. Always a great event with beer and buffet. For further information contact Colin Allsobrook (07771 374559) or Ray Bullen (07952 686495)

- **FRATTON – FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER**
  Railway reunion open to all rail and retired workers – drivers, guards, shunters, signalmen, platform staff and ticket office – from 12.00 to 18.00 at the BRSA Club next to Fratton station.

Free buffet and raffle. ‘Come along and make it a great event,’ says Gary White. ‘And bring any photos of railway interest.’

Pirates of Penzance

Penzance welcomed DO7 Brian Corbett who gave a thorough talk on current happenings in our district and wider national and international issues. Boulanger also made presentations to two recently retired drivers, Bro Phil Jones and Bro Phil Stoddart, who both loyally served the union and branch. Brian and branch would like to thank them and wish them both a long and happy retirement.

Brian also presented Bro Rodrigo Freeman, who came to our branch just over a year ago, with his 15 year badge.

Mike Butler, branch secretary
Ask Cliff, he’ll know

It gives me great pleasure to introduce retired Bedford driver Cliff Watts, 96 this year, who has been a member of ASLEF since 1940, when he joined the railway as a cleaner before working his way up in the traditional manner.

Cliff is a remarkable man who attends our unofficial coffee mornings in Bedford on Wednesdays when his remarkable recollection of all things loco is amazing. He recently sent me his link from 1948 to 1958 including 600 firing trips on the 48177 brick train to Pancras. What an impression he made! Never mind all the stars of the films made there, Cliff was an immediate hit.

We all wonder if Cliff is the longest current serving member of ASLEF, having retained his membership into the RMS. He derives great pleasure from all that is happening in the industry through his avid reading of the Journal as well as sharing with those of us who have retired in more recent years. An amazing man whose longevity is much appreciated by us all at Bedford in the hope we can achieve his seniority.

Bill Davies, RMS
Bedford

Keith Stubnings
POPULAR GUY

Keith Stubnings started his working life as an apprentice tailor but later decided to join the railway at Stratford where he became a driver. He moved to Stonebridge Park which came under the umbrella of RFD. In those days he enjoyed the type of work but, as time moved on, and privatisation was looming, word went out that Freightliner Intermodal were opening a depot at Tilbury docks and were looking for drivers. Stubbo fitted the bill and the rest is history.

We all wonder if Cliff is the longest current serving member of ASLEF, having retained his membership into the RMS. He derives great pleasure from all that is happening in the industry through his avid reading of the Journal as well as sharing with those of us who have retired in more recent years. An amazing man whose longevity is much appreciated by us all at Bedford in the hope we can achieve his seniority.

Bill Davies, RMS
Bedford

Cliff Blackwell, RMS

BROMLEY: FIGHT TO THE FINISH

John Bromley, general secretary, in a plea for industrial unity, said: ‘The government’s attitude towards trade unions, and the government’s system of espionage, which we know is going on inside the trade unions, and their avowed intention of smashing trade unionism, as witness their attempt against the Police Union, have compelled us to see that, within the very near future, there has got to be a fight to the finish between trade unionism and the government. Therefore we must put the possibilities of a united force to fight capitalism before a desire to fight each other on our own domestic difficulties.’

AUTHORITIES AND ESPIONAGE

‘Methods are being adopted which will enable the authorities to have the advantage, and one of those methods is espionage. A Home Office circular has been sent out to the police. They are compiling data of ‘Who’s Who’ every labour movement and every town.’

THE RICH RIOT WHILE CHURCHILL ASKS TROOPS TO BREAK STRIKES

‘The starting price for making plain serge or gabardine coats and skirts devoid of trimming is 25 guineas, according to one Regent Street tailor, while evening gowns run readily to 80 guineas each. At the recent London fur sales, silver fox realised £350 a skin. So the rich riot whilst Mr Churchill asks commanding officers whether the soldiers can be trusted to act as strike breakers.’

EIGHT HOURS FOR WORK, SLEEP, AND EIGHT FOR WHAT YOU WILL

From the Millgate Monthly: ‘We mean to make things over, / We’re tired of toil for naught, / But scarce enough to live upon, / Never enough for thought. / We want to feel the sunshine, / We want to smell the flowers, / We’re sure that God has willed it, / And we mean to have eight hours. / So we’re rallying our forces / From all the textile mills – / Eight hours for work, / Eight hours for sleep, / Eight hours for what you will.’
The 500 Club

The 500 Club is a fundraising venture for ASLEF’s Retired Members’ Section. Numbers in the draw cost £4 each and, to begin making payments into club funds, all you have to do is complete the standing order form and return it to your bank. Alternatively, you can pay by cheque a year in advance; the cheque should be made payable to ASLEF RMS 500 Club.

Payments need to reach the club account by 1st of every month and the draw takes place on 12th of every month – with the winning number, name, and prize printed on page 5 of the ASLEF Journal. Once you have arranged your method of payment, just complete the form and return it to the Admin Department at head office. The Retired Members’ Section committee would like to thank you for your support and wish you luck in the draw!

Yours fraternally, Mick Whelan, general secretary

**ASLEF RMS 500 Club application form**

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

Address.......................................................................................................................................Telephone No..................................................

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

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

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

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

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

Please return this half of the form to: Andrea Weston in the Admin Dept, ASLEF, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN and hand the other half, the standing order mandate, to your bank (or via your internet bank).

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### STANDING ORDER MANDATE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>BANK</th>
<th>BRANCH TITLE (NOT ADDRESS)</th>
<th>SORTING CODE NO.</th>
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<td>Birmingham</td>
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**Beneficiary’s Name**

ASLEF RMS 500 Club Account

**Account Number**

201093

**Date and Amount of First Payment**

£

**Due Date and Frequency**

1st of every month

**Date and Amount of Last Payment**

£

*Quoting the reference

*Until you receive further notice from me/us in writing and debit my/us account accordingly.

Please cancel any previous standing order or direct debit in favour of the beneficiary named above.

**Special Instructions**

- **Account to be Debit**
- **Account Number**

Signature(s)..........................................................................................................................Date..................................................
FRED CLARKE GOOD TALES AND GREAT MEMORIES

Brother Fred Clarke passed away on Thursday 18 April, two days after his 73rd birthday, sadly succumbing to the terrible cancer which, a decade earlier, he had fought bravely and successfully. Fred took early retirement after that battle and enjoyed a most fruitful, if short, retirement.

Fred’s illustrious career began as an engine cleaner at Heaton Mersey in 1962. He was promoted to fireman that December. When Heaton Mersey closed in February 1972, he moved under redundancy to Guide Bridge for a short stay before going to Peterborough. In February 1979 he moved to Buxton for his driving promotion before a final move in December 1999 to Manchester to tend the rails of the West Coast main line. He retired on 10 October 2009.

Fred embraced retirement as one should and was extremely active, enjoying quality time with his wife Sheila and family. He loved spending time with the retired drivers’ walking group taking in miles of our wonderful country, a great bunch of guys whose walks culminated in taking on water at a welcoming hoselty, and he will be sorely missed by the group.

Fred also joined our Longsight drivers’ historical tours to places like Prague, Krakow, Budapest, Berlin, Vienna, Munich, and Leipzig. We visited many former POW Camps and aviation museums and, after a day of education and sightseeing, enjoyed a good meal followed by a rather heavy session in the cities’ watering holes. Every trip culminated in good tales and great memories.

Longsight owes a huge debt to Fred. In 2006 we found ourselves without a branch secretary; with the position unfilled our branch, formed in June 1890, could have become history. Fred took up the mantle and our branch thrives today. He also loyaly served ASLEF as an LLC rep, AAD delegate and district council delegate.

On 17 May our comrade was laid to rest. As a mark of respect, and after speaking to Fred’s family, the District 3 banner was unfurled and proudly held in front of all those who came to pay their respects at the church, and after the service two loyal comrades led the path with the banner ahead of the funeral cortège to our brother’s committal. Later, at the working men’s club, glasses were raised, stories regaled and our friend and comrade fondly remembered. Rest in peace friend, mentor, comrade.

Alan Moss, Longsight

GERRY JONES ONE OF THE LAST

Gerry Jones was suddenly taken ill at Easter before passing on 21 April, one day short of his 87th birthday. Gerry was born in Llandinam, Powys, Mid Wales and joined the railway at Moat Lane on 10 November 1947 aged 15. He was one of the last to join GWR as British Railways was formed at the beginning of 1948. He began as a junior porter before moving on to cleaning and coaling the engines. Gerry moved to Wolverhampton to become a fireman, did national service from 1950 to 1952, and then moved from fireman to driver at Bescot, spending 18 years there during the transition from steam to diesel and finally electric. His last move was back to Wolverhampton where he finished his career driving freight and passenger trains. Gerry retired in 1996 after 49 years’ service. The funeral at Bushbury was full with 200 in attendance, including many retired and active colleagues from Wolverhampton, and our friend and comrade fondly remembered. Rest in peace friend, mentor, comrade.

Alan Moss, Longsight

JOHN TOWNER STAUNCH AND LOYAL

I regret to report the death of Brother John Towner, 83, who started at Tonbridge in 1956 after serving with the Queen’s Own Royal West Kent regiment in Germany on national service. I knew John since I started as a cleaner at Tonbridge in August 1965. He was eventually appointed driver and remained at Tonbridge all his working life until retiring after a full and uninterrupted career as a professional railwayman. John was a staunch and loyal ASLEF man who never wavered in his support for our union and the struggles of others, particularly the NUM in their heroic struggle against the Thatcher government. We visited the Kent miners frequently during the strike to hand over funds that we raised from Tonbridge men, who donated on a monthly basis for the duration of the dispute. He was an ASLEF man until the day he died, being a member of the RMS. We also picketed together during our strike in 1982 and travelled to neighbouring depots to show support. He was a good, honest and humble man who will be sadly missed.

Edwin Renahan, RMS

SIMON JENNER BUILT UP BRANCH

Bro Simon Jenner, who leaves a son, Jonathan, and daughter, Rebecca, was a loyal ASLEF member from 28 September 2000. He became Hastings branch secretary when the branch wasn’t strong; Simon took this challenge on and built the branch up and made us strong again. He attended AAD and District 1 Council and will be deeply missed. Goodbye, Bro…

Ricky McCaill, Hastings

Fred in the driver’s cab; and the District 3 banner leads his funeral cortège to the committal

BRIAN TAGG WORKING HOBBY

Our dear friend and colleague Brian Tagg passed away on 3 May. Following a fall on an escalator last October, causing a serious head injury, he remained hospitalised. He was a staunch ASLEF man and served on the RMS committee doing sterling work on behalf of members, and will be greatly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

Bill Dale, RMS

Brian – a passionate Gooner

Dad was born on 31 May 1940 in London, living in Hackney and Stamford Hill as a boy. He started out as a mechanic at a local garage after leaving school, then joined the railway at the age of 17. He started at Stratford, then moved to King’s Cross. Dad was a fireman on the steam, then became a driver, working out of Cricklewood, Charing Cross, and Marylebone before going back to King’s Cross. He worked out of every terminal in London. Dad met Brenda at a dance hall in London in 1957; they married in 1963, moved to Luton in 1966, and had two children, Darren and Dawn. He had five grandchildren – Beau, 17, May, 16, Mason, 15, Brooke, 12 and Harry, 12. Dad was a hardworking man who always put his family first. He was lucky enough to really enjoy his job – he always referred to his job as a working hobby, especially when working on steam trains. Dad retired in 2001 after 46 years’ service. His hobbies included watching his grandsons playing football, watching Arsenal, and motorbike racing as he had motorbikes when he was younger. We all miss him – and his great sense of humour – so much.

Dawn Pender (Brian’s daughter)
Star of David, $$, hammer and sickle and Steven Hill

One thing I can’t accuse Brexit cultists of never doing is making me laugh. Latest having a nurse stitch up my sides is Steven Hill from Manchester (Journal, June), a man who talks about votes, trade unionists and, somehow, manages to entwine liberalism and Marxism as if they are remotely similar. Yep, that old chestnut, and one that reminds me of the first bits of graffiti I saw in Spain after the fall of Franco. A Star of David, followed by a plus sign, followed by a dollar sign, then an equals sign, and, finally, the hammer and sickle. I still don’t know what the blazes that one was about, and it makes as much sense as Marxist-liberalism.

Brother Hill regurgitates the 17.4 million figure, as if this encapsulates the nation when one considers the referenda for independence and the results in favour in proportion to the electorate, not votes cast, by Slovenia (85%), Croatia (77.9%), Estonia (64%), Latvia (64.5%), Lithuania (90.23%), and even Bosnia (63.36%), the vote to Leave at 37.4% of the electorate looks rather limp. In any half-decent democracy this figure would never be seen as an endorsement to a question where you only get one chance to decide.

Labour’s latest stance to back a People’s Vote makes sense, whatever the alternative to the May Deal on the paper is: Remain or No Deal. Only those scared of losing the vote – Brexiteers – could object. This stance and other social, environmental and fiscal reform offered by Labour, has forced Brother Hill to cut links with them, after being a lifelong voter and trade unionist. It seems he was happy to nod his head in agreement to Tony Blair’s war of terror, but objects to raising taxes on the super rich? Apparently New Labour did more for ‘millions of working-class people’ than anything Jeremy Corbyn proposes. PPP on London’s Tube, zero council houses, a war to keep lads from deprived areas of the country in work. The only positive thing you can say is that the Tories would have been worse, which is a pretty damning view of British politics. But any Brexit cultist will tell you it was all the fault of Brussels. Silly me.

Brother Hill is clearly an angry man. He claims that right-wingers are merely good honest folk – like him – who just haven’t been listened to. Shooting an MP is the result of ‘liberal elites’ not listening to them and doing what they want. But he doesn’t list what hasn’t been listened to. Instead he introduces ‘the new age hippy brigade’, headed by Greta Thunberg, someone with clearly greater intelligence and courage than Brother Hill, that’s got his back up. Apparently Thunberg wants us back living in the Stone Age and Brother Hill actually believes this twaddle. The only thing ‘stone age’ round here are the repetitive and credulous claptrap about elites, liberals, and Marxists that he spouts. With respect, Thunberg is likely to still be on the planet long after Brother Hill and I have departed, so what she and her fellow millennials choose for their future is their business. But not everyone who supports her wants to live in fields. People like me who voted Green in the EU elections don’t see the Stone Age in the way Brother Hill and his ilk view the Second World War. I want to see a cleaner planet. I want improvements in technology that will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, such as improved battery storage. I’d like to see a return to electricity-providers paying solar panel owners for their unwanted electricity, which was removed by the Tories. I want to see proper investment in transport, particularly railways. Brother Hill works in Manchester. It is self-evident to me that for a city its size to have a metro system which goes into street tram line in the city, when in most comparable cities in Europe they would continue underground, displays a half-arsed approach to transport by successive British governments, both Labour and Tory. But, then again, it’s actually the EU’s hatred of Britain that is at fault for this. My mistake.

Finally, it is somewhat ironic that Brother Hill has this sneering contempt for Thunberg, someone we shouldn’t forget is still a schoolgirl, given his whole letter is about democracy, the point in voting, and people being ignored by the (yawn) ‘liberal elite’. Let me explain to Brother Hill one solid fact: if it weren’t for people like Greta Thunberg, there’d be no vote for him to cast to make his country poorer, there’d be no legal trade unions that have made his life financially comfortable and his working hours bearable, and there’d be no weekends to spend writing angry letters. What a shame that the one thing the previous ‘do-gooding’ generation of Thunbergs have woefully failed in, is giving a political education to Brother Hill.

Patrick Redmond, Rickmansworth depot, London Underground

Silent night trains – despite the RSSB and NR giving in, I still use the horn when I consider it necessary

I read with interest the article ‘Mum: silent night trains killed my kid’ (Journal, May) the issue also being critiqued on several legal sites I follow, too. Though the debates regarding ‘duty of care’ and ‘trespass’ are relevant the general secretary is right to highlight the concerns regarding the prescribed use (or lack) of the horn in the railway environment.

The RSSB and Network Rail cowered to pressure regarding the audible warning device. This pressure had worked its way up from local councillors representing new build properties near railway land. Using the masked popularity tonic of noise pollution they convinced the RSSB to radically reduce the times a driver was required to use the horn. They conveniently neglected to mention the persistent background noise of motorways, nearby flight paths, or the midnight taxi driver whose language is the car horn, amongst many other noise pollutants that local authorities welcomed regarding the escalation of property prices.

It was claimed that the amenity of the populous would benefit, that lives would be saved. I thought it then a false claim and I cannot find any data now to support it. What I do know is that incidents do occur which would have been prevented if the use of the horn was as prescribed pre-2007. Level crossings as our GS states are the leading concern in this matter.

This typifies the formulaic patronising attitude that governing bodies (the RSSB et al) dispense to the true welfare of the occupants of our grade. Just because a driver didn’t have to do something does not exempt that driver from mental anguish in the future. Anything that contributes to eradicating this ordeal should be mandatory. I still use the horn when I consider it necessary; not when some desk-sitting bureaucrat who values votes over lives dictates to me.

Wayne Larmar, Watford
The way of the world 2019

Stars but no stripes on this union flag

I am responding to the letter from Tom Burns, Perth, titled ‘Founding fathers wanted a United States of Europe’ (Journal, May). And I have sought advice, and researched this issue, and not taken things at face value, or at someone’s word. It is right that Jean Monnet dedicated himself to the cause of European integration. He was the inspiration behind the Schuman Plan, which foresaw the merger of West European heavy industry. Despite finishing formal education at the age of 16, and against all odds, Monnet became a man of many roles: international businessman, financier, diplomat and statesman. However, he was never elected to any public office and, therefore, never had the formal political power to enforce his views. Last time I checked, he’s not God, or secretly controlling the minds of every European politician and legislator since the 1950s.

In the real world, we tend not to rely on the supposed personal thoughts of a single long-dead individual as proof of very much at all – certainly not anything even vaguely relevant to the actual development of a complex and multifaceted organisation whose constitutional and legal texts have evolved enormously over the past 70 years under the direct, but highly diffuse, leadership of constitutional and legal texts have evolved to the actual development of a complex and multifaceted organisation whose
to the police. To quote George Orwell: ‘The further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it.’ This is the reality of the world in which we are now living. Phil Stodart. RMS Penzance

Sovereign nation again

If I remember correctly ASLEF backed a vote for Brexit in 2016, which I wholeheartedly agreed with. I never wanted to join the Common Market in 1973 and voted to leave in 1975! I have absolutely no faith in the Labour Party delivering on a real and meaningful withdrawal from the EU, where the ECJ has no say in British law, where we are free to trade with the rest of the world, and we become a sovereign nation once again! Don’t forget, we had to turn our back on the British Commonwealth of Nations when we joined this undemocratic German/French club.

You say vote Labour but, as you know, the vast majority of Labour MPs would quite happily support a second referendum or, even more self-indulgently, revoke Article 50 altogether! The Labour Party are not consistent on Europe as they were dead against joining in 1957. Therefore, as I place British freedom and our self-respect in the world ahead of party politics, there is no way I can vote for them. Obviously Brexit doesn’t really mean much to ASLEF after all. Peter Ward by email

Bring on the Brexit Party

There’s no point in voting anymore! Democracy in this country was lost on 29 March 2019! I don’t trust any of the current politicians. Bring on the Brexit Party. Shaun Beck by email

Lords – irony without peer

A new report from the House of Lords has proposed scrapping the triple lock on state pensions; removing the bus pass, winter fuel allowance and free TV licence for the over 75s; and making universal benefits subject to tax, scathingly referring to these concessions as ‘outdated’. I think it’s ironic all this comes from a bunch of peers paid £300 a day just for turning up and enjoying a subsidised meal at public expense. P Begley. Bedford

Good to see the ‘n’ word

British Steel should be nationalised, urges Labour, it says on the BBC website, about the threat to jobs in Scunthorpe. Isn’t it wonderful to see the ‘n’ word in print? I have been using it since I learned how to talk. Mel Thorley. Longsight

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

THE KING’S CROSS STORY

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

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Who are the Darling Buddies of May?

CHRIS PROCTOR reflects on the woeful premiership of Theresa May and wonders where it places her in the pantheon of the all-time worst Prime Ministers of Britain. There are, as he wryly notes, rather a lot of contenders for the title...

I N YEARS to come, when drivers have a SPAD, miss a station or run a train into the buffers, someone will say, ‘Well, well, you’ve made a right Theresa of that!’

Our former Prime Minister has earned her place in history. In the past we’ve had leaders who have been incompetent (Alec Douglas-Home). We’ve had PMs who have been arrogant (Ted Heath). We’ve had premiers who have been failures (Anthony Eden). But never before in the history of this sceptred isle have we seen all these traits embodied in a single person.

Congratulations, Mrs M! You have earned the right to be formally recognised as a disaster of monumental scale.

EPITOMISED THE NEVER SAY DIE, EVEN WHEN YOU’RE DEAD SPIRIT

Yes, I admit there are other candidates for the accolade of ‘Most Awful PM’, but I am unflinching in my support for Mrs May. Praise where it’s due. Few people before her showed such a capacity for being so impressively and regularly wrong.

Freshly elected as Tory Party leader, she declared, ‘As we leave the European Union, we will forge a bold, new, positive role for ourselves in the world.’ That didn’t entirely turn out as predicted.

But it was more accurate than her perception in January 2017 that, ‘After all the division and discord, the country is coming together.’

Theresa May epitomised the ‘never say die, even when you’re dead’ spirit. Early in December 2017 she announced, ‘We will leave the EU on 29 March 2019.’ The rest of the country fell about cackling. The odds were the same as ASLEF giving Chris Grayling honorary life membership.

Faced with the fact that it wasn’t going to happen, did Mrs May waver? Not a bit of it! She got more precise: ‘We will be leaving the EU on 29 March 2019 at 11pm.’ Not 10 pm or 11:55. Oh, no, 11 pm on the dot!

WELL-DESERVED OBSURITY

I don’t want to be unfair to other candidates for the title Most Awful Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Alec Douglas-Home, for example, did look ludicrous as he gave up his hereditary seat in the House of Lords in 1963, wriggled onto the benches in the Commons so he could be Prime Minister, got kicked out after less than a year and then scuttled back to the Lords and well-deserved obscurity.

And Anthony Eden proved a bit of a hoot during the Suez Crisis, to the extent that Nye Bevan said that if he was sincere in what he was saying, ‘Then he is too stupid to be a Prime Minister.’ Not all that stupid, however: when The Observer accused him of lying to Parliament, and his own party was baying for his blood in 1956, he had the good sense to head off on holiday to Jamaica.

Visits to the West Indies are invariably a bad move for a Prime Minister. In the 1970s, James Callaghan jollied back nicely bronzed from that region to a frosty and strike-ridden UK to tell waiting journalists he’d been swimming and there wasn’t a crisis at all. No one believed him.

Theresa May’s inability to stop a good time to call a general election is rivalled only by Arthur Balfour, who in 1905 became the only Prime Minister to lose his own seat at the same time as steering his party to electoral disaster. A nice double whammy, there.

Until Theresa, the Most Disastrous PM award had been regularly assigned to Lord North who single-handedly lost the UK its American colonies. He picked a fight with them in such an appalling way that the French, Spanish, Dutch (and more or less everyone else) sided with the fledging Yanks.

But, in retrospect, Frederick North, the second Earl of Guildford, was an amateur. He messed up, lost support and popped off. Not Mrs May.

Oh no. In January she presented a Brexit Bill to Parliament despite being told that no one liked it. She lost. So she presented the same Bill, but in nicer wrapping paper, in March. She lost again. And so she presented the same Bill...

THE COUNTRY’S BEEN THERSA’D

Was she downhearted? Not a bit! Her spokesperson revealed that there was room for optimism. How so? Well, she lost by 149 votes in January but only by 58 in March. Presumably the logic was that if she kept going she could have a majority by the time Prince William takes over the throne.

But, by the same token, her popularity rating slipped from 37% at the end of 2017 to 21% by April this year. So, by this logic, even she would have to accept that, by the summer, she’d have no pals at all, in or out of Parliament. There would, ahem, be no darling buddies of May.

So, cheerio, Mrs May, and well done for being the worst Prime Minister to date. The good news is that you’ve gone. The bad news is that some other gawk will be taking over: and, meanwhile, the whole country’s been Theresa’d.
On Track

Weird mix of wishful thinking and lies


His first posting, in 1963, at the age of 21, was to Vietnam and, as Our Man by George Packer (Jonathan Cape, £25) makes clear, there was, at that time, no debate about the right – some even said moral duty – of America to be there. But it wasn’t long before Holbrooke had serious misgivings about US strategy in south-east Asia. He knew the gung-ho reports of American success being wired back to Washington by the CIA were a ‘weird and wonderful’ mix of wishful thinking and outright lies.

American GIs – known as grunts – were the boots on the ground in Vietnam

He also realized, long before anyone else, that the traditional military solution of dispatching more troops would not work, either. Holbrooke admitted, though his superiors didn’t want to listen, that the ‘simple, horrible truth [is] we didn’t belong there, we had no business doing what we were doing’.

As Packer observes, and this was something it would take American politicians a long time to learn, Vietnam – the first war the United States had lost – was also the first sign in the 20th century that America, victorious in 1918 and 1945, could not always bend the world to its will.

A lesson the US, and Holbrooke, had yet to learn before its ill-starred invasions of Iraq in 1990 and 2001 and the neoliberal NATO intervention in Bosnia in 1995. This book, notionally a biography of one quintessentially establishment man, is actually a fascinating examination of the (few) successes and (many) failures of US foreign policy over the last fifty years. ‘Our feeling that we could do anything gave us the Marshall Plan and Vietnam, peace at Dayton and the endless Afghan war.’

Keith Richmond

Prize Crossword

Crossword 159 by Tom Williams

Across
1 Spanish capital
4 Finger or toe
7 Advantaged
8 Unsightly blood
9 Pet name for a cat
11 Dense grassy tuft
13 School language
15 Judy’s puppet show sidekick
17 Arrange in advance
18 Can be altered like seat belts
20 Covered in grime
21 A bequest of personal property

Down
1 Tiny person
2 Steak undercooked
3 End of a marriage
4 Dr Who enemy
5 Pop group’s one-night stand
6 Hot drink laced with whisky
7 Gaol
10 Threefold
12 Bighead (4-3)
14 Desiring food
15 Tartan
16 Sledge dog
17 A stopper
19 Make a discordant sound

Solution to Crossword 158

Across: 3 Franc 6 Dredger 7 Appear 8 Laden 9 Cockrel 12 Leery 14 Ruler 15 Hornpipe 18 Algae 19 Citric 20 Ecology 21 Guess

Down: 1 Headgear 2 Agency 3 France 4 Apple 5 Crane 6 Delilah 10 Religion 11 Larceny 13 Pieces 14 Reason 16 Owing 17 Nerve

Congratulations to D Woodhams, of Hersham, Surrey, 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 158th prize crossword in the June 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 July

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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’.

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

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

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