We can be heroes just for one day

Standing by the wall

I will be king & you, you will be queen

And the guns shot above our heads

For ever and ever

And the shame was on the other side. We can beat them...

Inside: Palestine; Pride; Michael Green; and Tolpuddle 2019
railway enginemen’s tax free saver plans

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

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Chaos and confusion

W
E HAVE never been in the game of having preferences in contractual negotiations for franchises, even having different standards of industrial relations within certain groups. Our issue is, and always has been, with the model. Never has this been clearer than now, when we might have expected a period of calm after Mr Grayling going and Mr Shapps taking over. Alas, that is not the case. Confusion reigns.

The number of questions we have had over what has been announced continues to grow. Apparently, Southeastern is to be run again as the conditions aren’t right; Stagecoach and Arriva can take legal action over being excluded. Then First Trentitalia wins the former Virgin bid because it meets Williams – a report we have not yet had – and contains element of the old cap and collar process that means the franchisee cannot lose. Compounding this, Mr Shapps is looking into the viability of HS2 but the new West Coast franchise has been let to deliver elements of it. So why has it been let? It’s nice to know it’s business as usual – chaos and confusion remaining the order of the day – but Mr Shapps did complain about his constituency only having six services a day so let’s hope when he addresses that he will also address all those communities that have a limited service and deal with the double whammy because bus deregulation is losing 90 million journeys a year.

Mr Freeman, another transport minister, went on the media to complain that his train was late and his connection was not held. Obviously, he does not understand the fractionalised penalty driven privatised world. And, with the current mantra from Mr Shapps and Mr Williams, punctuality will only exacerbate this issue.

The annual RPI fare rise has been announced to universal condemnation from those forced to travel who have suffered years of austerity and no – or below RPI – pay rises. We should encourage travel to grow our local and national economies at the core of regenerating Britain as a public service.

Mr Johnson’s aversion to truth hasn’t changed with 20,000 ‘extra’ police promised – exactly the number who will retire over the next five years and would have been required, anyway. New money for the NHS is not new money at all and £1 billion less than required because of previous Tory cuts. A threat to prorogue Parliament to drive through his no deal Brexit by a man who will – with his two immediate predecessors – go down as the three worst premiers in history after Lord North. Whatever our views on Brexit, the democratic process must underpin what is done in all our names or civil unrest will be the result.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
Rail fares rise again

SLEF has condemned rail fare rises for hard-pressed passengers of 2.8% from January. ‘The Tories and the TOCs are driving up fares yet again,’ said GS Mick Whelan. ‘But all they are doing is driving people off our railways. It’s time to bring our network back into public ownership and run it properly, for passengers, not for profit.’

Tom Burridge, the BBC’s transport correspondent, in an analysis piece for the BBC News website, wrote: ‘The bitter irony for rail correspondents, in an analysis piece for the BBC network back into public ownership and run it properly, for passengers, not for profit. ’

Mick added: ‘The Tories want people to pay more for a poorer service and that’s not a great price. ’

New website, wrote: ‘The bitter irony for rail correspon dent, in an analysis piece for the BBC network back into public ownership and run it properly, for passengers, not for profit. ’

Britain is all too often undeserving of the price. ’

NEW website, wrote: ‘The bitter irony for rail correspon dent, in an analysis piece for the BBC network back into public ownership and run it properly, for passengers, not for profit. ’

‘The truth is that the Tories don’t know how to run a railway. But everyone in our industry knows the franchise model is broken, beyond repair, and that privatisation hasn’t worked. And all the Williams review has to offer is the prospect of a new version of the Strategic Rail Authority which didn’t work last time, either! We need to put the wheels and steel back together in a vertically-integrated publicly-owned railway fit for the 21st century. ’

Pregnant soap star had to sit on floor outside toilet

Former Coronation Street star Hayley Tamaddon, who played Andrea Beckett in the ITV1 soap, was forced to sit outside a toilet on a train from London to Manchester after Virgin cancelled the 1pm service on which she was booked.

Hayley tweeted: ‘Hey @VirginTrains had quite the rotten journey home to Manc today as my 1pm was cancelled from Euston. At 7 months pregnant I sat outside the toilet for the whole journey. Staff were amazing but as I had a 1st class ticket I’d like my money back. How do I do this?’

Hayley not happy with Virgin

Steam train blues

The Elsecar Heritage Railway in South Yorkshire, one of Britain’s smaller standard gauge heritage railway lines, is looking for experienced steam train drivers and firemen. ‘We have a real issue finding qualified, able crew for all our running days,’ says Richard Uttley. ‘We can’t pay them for the work, due to charity law, but can cover expenses for travel. If you are interested, you can email Richard at commercialdirector@elsecarrailway.co.uk

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

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

This is a decision [to leave InterRail] of the British train operators, it’s on them. It’s as if they see the Flygskam grassroots movement towards rail, and instead of welcoming it, deliberately go out of their way to stop it. UK has been part of InterRail since 1973. The Man in Seat 61 @seat6tyone

Watching litany of unfunded tax & spending promises pouring out from Johnson & Hunt, it’s obvious they are relying on that Magic Money Tree they were shouting about in the last election. Thanks to them, Labour has become confirmed as the voice of sound, economic, common sense. @johnmcdonnellMP

Just 6.5% of train drivers in England, Wales and Scotland are women, and 8% are from a minority ethnic background. New report from @ASLEFunion pushes for greater diversity, and measures like more part-time and flexible working. @fawcettsociety

Brilliant video @ASLEFunion. ASLEF is doing some fantastic work to increase diversity in the train driving sector & speaking up for all its members. Great to hear the perspective of young workers in our movement. @Unions21

You don’t actually like Rory Stewart, you realise? You’ve just been held hostage for so long you’re starting to identify with the ‘nice’ kidnapper who seems like he might let you keep the bucket you’ve been shitting in for the past three years. He is the bucket boy of politics. James Felton @JimMFelton

YOU DON’T KNOW MY NAME

Our report on the RMS spring forum (Journal, August) referred to Leroy Hawkins speaking about the fallout from the Windrush scandal. We should have said the speaker at Yarnfield Park was Leroy Richards. Sorry, Leroy! Mea culpa. Mea maxima culpa.

RETIRED MEMBERS’ SECTION AGM

ASLEF’s Retired Members’ Section annual general meeting will be held at 11am on Wednesday 9 October at the BR Sports & Social Club, Beaver Road, Ashford, Kent, TN23 7RR.

ELECTRONIC SUPersonic

Members can receive the ASLEF Journal – and reps can receive circulars – electronically if they choose. Please contact the admin dept at head office on 020 7324 2400.
Poppies whose roots are in man’s veins drop, and are ever dropping

Oh, George

George Freeman, a Tory transport minister in Boris Johnson’s government, launched a furious rant after rail staff refused to hold a Greater Anglia train for him. He had travelled from King’s Cross to Cambridge but the train was late and he missed the connection to Attleborough. Mr Freeman, MP for Mid Norfolk since 2010, became a junior minister at the DfT in Boris Johnson’s July reshuffle.

CONFERENCES & RALLIES

The Burston strike school rally at Burston, near Diss, in Norfolk is on Monday 20 to Wednesday 22 April 2020. 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. The STUC black workers’ conference is at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow, from Saturday 5 to Sunday 6 October. The STUC disabled workers’ conference is at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow, from Saturday 16 to Sunday 17 November. The Scottish Trades Union Congress is at the Concert Hall, Perth, from Monday 20 to Wednesday 22 April 2020.

500 CLUB: Martin Joyce, with number 133, won the August draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £438.

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

Patrick Flaney, a leading American exponent of queer fiction, tackles the notorious McCarthyite witch hunts of the late 1940s and ’50s, as well as the difficulties and dangers of being gay at a time when homosexuality was illegal, in his brilliant new Hollywood novel Night for Day (Atlantic Books, £16.99). At one point he cheekily compares Joseph McCarthy, the Republican senator for Wisconsin – who infamously promoted the ‘red scare’ of the House Un-American Activities Committee and the ‘lavender scare’ against suspected homosexuals – with another famous Joe. ‘He has to admit, privately of course, that the other great Joe of the moment [Stalin] got something right in his purges and show trials. Create fear and chaos, and you can do whatever the hell you want.’ Shades of Boris and Brexit? Patrick, who now teaches at Queen Mary, University of London, and is author of Absolution, Fallen Land and I Am No One, also references the railway. ‘Believing you might convince her to do anything other than what she wished was like sneezing into a passing freight train in hopes you might derail it.’

Kim Darroch, who resigned as the British ambassador to Washington after his emails to Downing Street and the Foreign Office – in which he described Donald Trump as ‘inexpert’, ‘insecure’ and ‘incompetent’ – were leaked to the Mail on Sunday, offered some positive advice, too. He advised ministers to ‘flood the zone’, cultivating the president’s chums to ensure they all get the same message; told Theresa May to telephone Trump ‘two or three times a month if not more’; and said ‘You need to start praising him for something he’s done recently. You need, whenever possible, to present them as wins for him.’

Christopher Meyer, a predecessor, recalls that when he was appointed ambassador in 1997, he was told by Tony Blair’s chief of staff Jonathan Powell ‘to get up the arse of the White House and stay there’. Which remains official British policy, whoever is Prime Minister and whichever party is in power. PMs, though, live in a bubble. Meyer, in his memoirs, records that when Bill Clinton faced impeachment over his sexual misdeeds, Blair asked, ‘What exactly is the charge against Clinton? I mean, what is he supposed to have done?’

Bev Quist, familiar to members as one of our crack admin team at head office, married freight driver Colin Thornhill, of Willesden branch, on Saturday 27 July. A romance that evolved during Colin’s visits to Smithfield over the last couple of years. ‘ASLEF has given me a lot over the years,’ smiles Bev. ‘Who knew a husband would be part of that? How lucky am I!’

John Ruskin, in The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849), writes of the pointlessness of turning railway stations into temples to fine architecture – as the Victorians often did – because ‘the whole system of railroad travelling is addressed to people who, being in a hurry, are therefore, for the time being, miserable’ and whose ability and willingness to appreciate beauty was, he thought, necessarily dulled.
**Spirit of the age**

NEW exhibition at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in south London celebrates, among other artists, the machine age Modernist Cyril Power and his fascination with a new era of mass transit.

Cutting Edge: Modernist British Printmaking brings together 120 prints, drawings and posters by Claude Flight and eight of his students, all clearly influenced by the Futurist, Cubist and Vorticist movements, celebrating modern 1930s Britain, and including these three, er, Powerful pieces...

The Tube Station proclaims the London Underground as one of the most potent symbols of the new industrial age; Whence and Whither? depicts a crowd of commuters descending on an escalator in packed, but perfect, mechanical unison; while Tube Train explores the alienation of urban living with passengers preferring to read a newspaper (the historical precedent for mobile phones and iPads) rather than engage in conversation with fellow passengers.

Handbrake turn after ASLEF slams RDG

The Rail Delivery Group did a rapid U-turn after criticism – led by ASLEF – of its decision to pull out of InterRail. The RDG – and the privatised TOCs it represents – wanted to force young people to buy the much more expensive BritRail Pass. We said: ‘The UK has been part of InterRail (which allows people to travel around Europe on a single ticket) since 1973. Not any more. The RDG is doing its level best to drive people off Britain’s railways.’

‘Another cracker from the Rubbish Delivery Group!’ was a typical comment on social media.

The RDG – which is only interested in delivering higher prices and bigger profits for the TOCs, not in delivering a better service for passengers – was surprised by the storm of criticism and promptly performed a spectacular U-turn. Followed by

Mixed up messaging from Michael Green

Grant Shapps, who got into trouble when he tried to flog gullible punters a dodgy get rich quick scheme under the pseudonym Michael Green after he had been elected Tory MP for Welwyn Hatfield, has replaced Chris ‘Failing’ Grayling as Secretary of State for Transport.

But ‘Billy Three Names’ – he also used the nom de guerre Sebastian Fox for the second job he initially denied having – has begun badly, sending out mixed messages to the rail industry.

‘Grant Shapps gives FirstGroup the West Coast,’ said GS Mick Whelan. ‘Then, in the same breath, says he’s reviewing HS2. Confusing messages from the Transport Secretary leaves the industry not knowing what he and the DfT are up to. Just for a change...’

Terry’s all gold

Jubilee East held its second reunion, and a joint branch meeting with Wembley Park, on Thursday 1 August. The event was attended by numerous reps from across the combine, reports were given on the dispute on the Jubilee line, which has now been resolved, and long service awards were presented by EC8 Terry Wilkinson. Gary Comfort made presentations to members, including recently retired Frank O’Flaherty and Ian Rebbeck (Ian was represented by his wife and daughter).

The branch would like to thank everyone for making it such a successful and enjoyable day.

Jubilee East branch reporter

**Rail trespasser jailed**

Terry Maher, 44, of Camden, north London, has been jailed for a year for blocking trains between London, Kent and France by climbing on top of a tunnel overlooking railway lines near St Pancras station. Maher, carrying the flag of St George, power banks for his phone, and warm clothing, stayed for 13 hours, complaining about the delay in Brexit. Blackfriars crown court was told he had caused 88 trains to be cancelled and 22,000 people had their travel plans affected.

**Power to the people: The Tube Station; Whence and Whither? and Tube Train**

**Quote...**

‘To put it in classical terms we can all understand, Boris Johnson is the guy who puts the anus into Coriolanus.’
– Marina Hyde, The Guardian

...UNQUOTE

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‘The secret to improving rail transport in my view is you need to find the right arse to kick.’ – Boris Johnson

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**Power to the people: The Tube Station; Whence and Whither? and Tube Train**
Victory for common sense

The East Lancashire line from Preston to Colne would be upgraded and extended to Skipton, across the Pennines, under a Labour government said Shadow Transport Secretary Andy McDonald, giving a ‘cast iron’ guarantee during a speech at Colne station. He said: ‘Labour is committed to upgrading and electrifying the East Lancashire line from Preston through Blackburn and Burnley to Colne. We are also committed to extending the line across the Pennines to Skipton and connecting it to Leeds. There is little point in doing that if we do not improve the rest of the line. This is about improving the connectivity of East Lancashire which has been short-changed on transport by the Conservatives – like the rest of the north.’

Andy McDonald: ‘Cast iron guarantee’

‘The railway needs officers who understand the way the railway works, and how to keep rail workers – on trains and at stations – as well as passengers safe. ‘We have lobbied the SNP government hard since it announced its plans, and we are delighted that Humza Yousaf has listened to what we had to say. It is, frankly, a victory for common sense.’

Labour Unions

TULO – the Trade Union & Labour Party Liaison Organisation – which co-ordinates the activities of the 12 trade unions which affiliate to the Labour Party, has changed its name to Labour Unions. Those unions are ASLEF; the Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union; Community; Communication Workers Union; Fire Brigades Union; GMB; Musicians Union; National Union of Mineworkers; TSSA; Unison; Unite; and USDAW. Our GS Mick Whelan became TULO chair in 2016 and the organisation’s director is Helen Pearce. Its website is labourunions.org and you can find tweets @labourunionsuk

QUOTE…

’Boris Johnson is a man who has what might politely be described as an “unusual relationship with the truth”, as one official told me.’ – Laura Kuenssberg, political editor, BBC News

…UNQUOTE

FISH’N’CHIPS IN NEWSPAPER

A passionate Brexiteer called James O’Brien, live on LBC, to say she wanted a No Deal Brexit so she could ‘eat fish’n’chips from a newspaper again.’ O’Brien, perplexed, asked if she blamed the EU for the ban. ‘Yes, it was something they did.’ Actually, it was the UK government under the Food Safety Act (1990), he pointed out.

DRUNK DRIVER FACES £26,000 BILL

Thomas Dixon, 28, of Melton Mowbray, who was pulled, drunk, from his Ford Fiesta shortly before it was struck by a freight train, faces a £26,000 bill for disruption to the railway after crashing his car at Asfordby level crossing in Kirby Bellars. The incident delayed 69 trains, Leicester crown court was told.

HAIR TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

A busy London Northwestern Railway service from Bletchley to Euston was delayed for several minutes at Harrow & Wealdstone station after a passenger’s hair extensions were trapped in a carriage door.

Struggle for justice

Aamer Anwar, one of Scotland’s leading human rights lawyers, will give the seventh annual Jimmy Reid Foundation lecture in the Bute Hall, Glasgow University, at 6.30pm on Thursday 10 October. He will talk about the struggle for justice, equality and freedom in Scotland. Tickets are £10 (£6 unwaged) from reidfoundation.org (but free to Reid Foundation members).

Mouldy old dough

A commuter pocketed £27,602 from Network Rail after ‘possibly slipping’ on pigeon poo at Paddington station. NR says it has paid out £1 million in five years for slips, trips and falls at its stations across the UK.

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
Jeremy: our party and the poison of anti-Semitism

ABOUR leader Jeremy Corbyn has written to party members and supporters saying that anti-Semitism has no place in the Labour Party. He wrote: ‘The struggle for liberation of all people is never complete and must always be renewed. As a movement, we educate ourselves and each other to better stand in solidarity with and unite all those facing oppression and discrimination. ‘That’s why we are launching education materials for our members and supporters to help them confront bigotry, wherever it arises. Over the coming months, the party will produce educational materials on a number of specific forms of racism and bigotry. Our first materials are on anti-Semitism, recognising that anti-Jewish bigotry has reared its head in our movement. ‘Hatred towards Jewish people is rising in many parts of the world. Our party is not immune from that poison – and we must drive it out from our movement. While other political parties and some of the media exaggerate and distort the scale of the problem in our party, we must face up to the unsettling truth that a small number of Labour members hold anti-Semitic views and a larger number don’t recognise anti-Semitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories.

The evidence is clear enough. The worst cases of anti-Semitism in our party have included Holocaust denial, crude Jewish banker stereotypes, conspiracy theories blaming Israel for 9/11 or every war on the Rothschild family, and even one member who appeared to believe that Hitler had been misunderstood. ‘So please engage with the materials we are producing, which will be placed on a page on our website, along with other resources, so our movement can be the strongest anti-racist force in our country. I have learned so much, I hope you will too, so that together we can fight these evils.

Howard’s way

Howard Kaye, a member of King’s Cross branch, has been re-elected unopposed as executive committee member for District 5. Howard, a train driver all his working life, and passionate West Ham fan, was first elected to the EC in September 2012 when his predecessor, Nigel Gibson, became district organiser. Howard, a former ASLEF trustee, and company councillor, who drives for LNER, was also re-elected unopposed in 2015. His new four-year term runs from January 2020 to December 2023.

MONEY MONEY MONEY

Accounts published by HS2 Ltd show that chief executive Mark Thurston received a pay package of £651,488 last year – which includes a £46,000 performance bonus. ‘Transport bosses are traditionally the highest paid public servants in the country,’ notes Graeme Paton, transport correspondent of The Times, in his report, ‘with those in the rail industry, in particular, receiving the biggest remuneration packages.’

CALL FOR FREE TUBE TRAVEL

A new report by the left-wing think tank Common Wealth, with Greenpeace and We Own It, has called for a ‘transformative overhaul’ of public transport, housing, and energy policy to improve our quality of life and save the planet. Road Map to a Green New Deal makes the case for a capital city with free Tube travel, a better bus service – and without polluting private cars.

THE BIG MEETING

ASLEF activists in action at the Durham Miners’ Gala on Saturday 13 July and (right) GS Mick Whelan with Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn on the balcony of the County Hotel.

RSSB TARGETS NUMB BUM SEATS

The Rail Safety & Standards Board has published new recommendations for train seat designers after hundreds of complaints from passengers that sitting on badly-designed, uncomfortable seats leave them with a ‘numb bum’. The RSSB hopes its report, Defining the Requirements of a Seat Comfort Selection Process, will end criticism that commuters are forced to travel ‘cattle class’ by companies concerned only with cramming as many people as possible into a carriage.

SUNDERLAND TO NEWCASTLE

Sunderland branch has closed and all members have been transferred to Gateshead & Newcastle branch.

QUOTE...

‘If Emily Thornberry were an animal, she’d be a cat. The air of feline superiority. The stately, sauntering grandeur. The preening insouciance. The slow, sleek, unsettling smile. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone quite so supremely, serenely, imperiously catlike. I bet no one in her office dares open a newspaper in case she comes along and curls up on it.’ – Michael Deacon, Daily Telegraph

UNQUOTE
Serco asleep at the wheel

CONRAD LANDIN lifts the lid on the troubled Serco group, which runs the Caledonian Sleeper service, and is keen to turn refugees out onto the streets telling them it’s time ‘to move on’

ERC O, Serco, out of Glasgow! That was the cry at the city’s Central station in August as activists from Scotland’s fast-growing tenants’ union Living Rent protested on the Caledonian Sleeper’s platform. The flagship train service has not been without its own problems in recent months – with the introduction of shiny new Mark 5 carriages beset with service failures, and even a brakes failure at Edinburgh Waverley which led to a train coming to a halt 650 metres down the line from its stopping point.

But these tenants were here for another reason. Until Mears group takes over this month, Serco holds the Home Office contract for housing refugees in Glasgow. And it recently resumed a programme of changing the locks of those who have been unsuccessful in their asylum applications – even though many are appealing and could yet be granted leave to remain.

Serco describes its controversial policy, in classically condescending jargon, as a ‘move on protocol’. But Glasgow City Council leader Susan Aitken says the situation threatens to unleash a ‘humanitarian crisis’ in Scotland’s largest city.

In April the Govan Law Centre failed to get the courts to strike down the programme as a whole, but now lawyers are taking cases on behalf of individual refugees. More than 50 interdicts against Serco have now been secured in Glasgow Sheriff Court.

On Wednesday 7 August, Living Rent members congregated at Glasgow Central station, in the hope of generating publicity and raising awareness of Serco’s other activities among customers and staff.

But boarding the train to flier passengers inside, they stumbled across Caledonian Sleeper managing director Ryan Flaherty. Not his lucky day! And when activists challenged him over his company’s policy on evictions, he was not a happy bunny. Flaherty shouted: ‘This is my train. Get off my train! They obliged, but proceeded to read a statement against the lock-changing policy on the platform.

It’s no surprise that Serco wouldn’t want a less glamorous part of its business empire rubbing off on its flagship railway. But the sleeper, once famed for its convenience, and relative reliability, has recently been in the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Public Performance Measure data reveals that just 60% of London to Edinburgh trains arrived within 10 minutes of their scheduled arrival time between 25 May and 22 June. The figure was at 66.7% for Glasgow and Edinburgh to London, and 70.8% for London to Glasgow. Meanwhile, company accounts show that CS made a loss of £3.3 million in the year to 31 March. Over the same year, CS

Protesters make their point #lockoutserco received £23.39 million from Transport Scotland in franchise payments, and £23.32 million in ticket sales.

The directors’ strategic report reveals that the company has secured ‘the right to seek adjustments to the financial terms of the franchise agreement’ and ‘exit the contract’ if it is not turning a profit by 2022.

GS Mick Whelan said ‘It is a problem of franchising.’ He argues that even within the realms of the broken railway bidding system, ministers should never have awarded this contract to Serco.

‘Why you would give any service to Serco that’s not a rail operating company, that had no engines, that had no drivers, that had no operating experience? There’s no rhyme or reason for what they’ve done, and it hasn’t been a great success.’

Then again, Serco has become synonymous with failure, from the electronic prisoner tagging scandal, to the Yarl’s Wood detention centre, to falsification of NHS data. Critics wonder what it will take for ministers to tell their chums at Serco that enough is finally enough.

Another great day

IAN JOLLY, Northam union learning and branch equality rep, reports on the 160 trip to Tolfest in Dorset

T STARTED overcast, but we would not let that dampen our spirits as Northam branch boarded our transport, driven by retired member Alan Taylor. All loaded up, we set off, only to have a mechanical issue on the way, but this was sorted by our mechanical expert Alan Loughlin! Arriving at 11.30am we unloaded and set up by the ASLEF van. AGS Simon Weller and EC1 Marz Colombini were busy at the

ASLEF marquee, chatting to everyone who came in. The sun was starting to shine, the whole area was filled with unions from all over, and it was good to see Jeremy Corbyn walking around shaking people’s hands and chatting to as many as he could.

Before the banner parade Ed d’Bell and his father Eddie laid on a fantastic spread of chicken curry and rice. Thank you both! The parade began and the sky was full of colour from all the banners. Alan Taylor and Ed carried ours with pride, then Mr Eagle took over. It was great that two partners – Jane and Maureen, who both seemed to enjoy themselves – came down to show their support. A little liquid refreshment helped, no doubt! The day ended relaxing in the glorious sunshine chatting to our trade union brothers and sisters. Another great day at Topuddle!

Please turn to page 15 for Jen Thornton’s Tolfest cricket report and Peter Wright’s piece about John Taylor

‘So we waved our hands as we marched along, and the people smiled as we sang our song’; and another excellent curry prepared by Ed d’Bell and his father Eddie
If we aren’t quantified then we don’t exist

SUSAN GREENWELL reports from the TUC LGBT+ conference at Congress House in London

A SLEF sent six members – its largest delegation yet – to the TUC’s LGBT+ conference on Thursday 4 and Friday 5 July. It included Hugh Cumming (D2), Darran Brown (D3), Susan Greenwell (D4), Rachel Harper and David Jones (D7) and Matt Whyte (D8) accompanied by our equalities adviser Lee James.

Conference was opened by Maria Exall, chair of the TUC’s LGBT+ committee, who asked us to stand for a minute’s silence for Lyra McKee, the journalist and NUJ member who was murdered on the Creggan estate in Derry on 18 April. Speakers paid tribute to Lyra, who had a huge impact on so many in the LGBT+ community in Northern Ireland.

Frances O’Grady, general secretary of the TUC, attacked the hatred shown to LGBT+ people by some politicians – naming and shaming Boris Johnson, Esther McVey, Angela Rayner, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, and Chingford branch, reports from the TUC’s LGTB+ conference at Congress House in London.

Angela Rayner, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, spoke about the urgent need for inclusive sex and relationship education across our schools while S Chelvan, a barrister at No 5 Chambers, talked about the issues facing the LGBT+ asylum seekers he represents – some of whom were told to video themselves ‘in action’ to prove they are gay!

ASLEF’s motion, about LGBT+ rights around the world, called on the TUC to pinpoint countries where such rights are lacking. Matt moved the motion, which was supported by five other unions, and adopted with an amendment by Unison.

David seconded the FBU’s motion for a question relating to sexual orientation and gender identity to be included in the 2021 UK census, saying ‘If we aren’t quantified, we don’t exist’.

Darran seconded USDAW’s motion on tackling LGBT+ hate crime and reflected ‘Where does hate crime happen? The sad answer is – everywhere.’

Rachel moved an emergency motion on the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education statement about gender identity which declared that ‘Gender is not decided upon by individuals but imputed by God’ thus rejecting trans and non-binary people. Rachel said, ‘I am tired of having to justify my existence.’

David also seconded the GMB’s emergency motion on LGBT+ inclusive education. He called for LGBT+ inclusion throughout the education system, not just in state-run education.

On Friday lunchtime we showed support for a fringe event hosted by LGBT+ Labour chaired by Lucia Buffone, Paddington branch, GWR company council, and co-chair of LGBT+ Labour, at which Angela Eagle, Heather Peto, and Rohit Dasgupta spoke about defending LGBT+ rights in an era of populist politics.

The 230 delegates attending conference decided the motion to be sent to the main Trades Union Congress in Brighton would be about homophobic and transphobic hate crime. Darran and Rachel were also re-elected unopposed to the TUC’s LGBT+ committee. All in all, a good conference. But with hate crime on the rise we are all not equal yet!

Keep right on to the end of the road

BILL DALE, Retired Members’ Section committee member, and Chingford branch, reports on the National Pensioners’ Convention parliament

RIOR to the official opening of the NPC parliament, held in Blackpool from Tuesday 11 to Thursday 13 June, delegates were invited to see the film Unsung Hero: The Jack Jones Story. If you have not seen this, it is well worth doing so.

The usual march from Blackpool Tower to the Winter Gardens took place before the opening by Councillor Fred Jackson, followed by contributions from chair Ron Douglas, GS Jan Shortt and other top table speakers.

For the first time we had the Daily Mail attend (I know!) to cover the strong feelings

ASLEF in action: Dave Court, Ray Jackson, Mick Barker, Bill Dale and Susan Howe of delegates over the withdrawal of the TV licence for the over 75s. A report appeared in the paper with a picture of our march.

There were keynote speeches on the environment, Windrush, and Brexit, as well as sessions on digital exclusion, housing, fuel poverty, intergenerational fairness, social care, transport and ageing without children.

An excellent final session featured Eddie Lynch, the Older People’s Commissioner for Northern Ireland, and Emma Lewell-Buck, Labour MP for South Shields, in a Q&A session with delegates.

This NPC parliament was one of the most informative and passionate for some time. With the number of delegates slowly increasing, including many first time attendees, the atmosphere was galvanised by the BBC’s announcement about the future of the TV licence.

Jan said we need to make known our disgust by protesting against this government – and the BBC – over the withdrawal of free TV licences for the over 75s. The pensioners’ parliament closed by singing the song inspired by Jack Jones: Keep Right on to the End of the Road.

NPC London region took our protest to the BBC at Broadcasting House on Friday 21 June. To bring our protest to a wider audience we then marched – slow walking – down to Oxford Circus closing off all the access roads at the junction for ten minutes. Motorists, taxi drivers and the general public were all giving their support.
When does an innocent bit of fun turn into something far more serious?

CAROLYN HARRIS, Labour MP for Swansea East, deputy leader of Welsh Labour, and chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gambling Related Harm, explains why she is trying to protect the vulnerable from the vultures of the gambling industry.

UYING a scratchcard when you pop to the newsagents. A day at the races with friends. £20 on your team to win the league this season. Fun with the kids in the arcades on your day trip to the seaside.

Some of these are probably familiar to most people. An innocent bit of fun. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose but, either way, it’s within your means and you enjoy it.

But when does that innocent bit of fun turn into something far more serious?

I HAVE SEEN THE DEVASTATION THAT GAMBLING ADDICTION CAN CAUSE

As chair of the Gambling Related Harm All Party Parliamentary Group, I have witnessed first hand the devastation that gambling addiction can cause.

I have sat with grown men as they have cried about the money – sometimes hundreds of thousands of pounds – that they have lost over the years. About the relationships that have broken down because of their addiction and the children they no longer see.

I have heard stories from people who have lost their jobs, committed crimes, and been to prison – all because of their addiction.

Professional men and women who have lost everything – careers, family, friends, and their dignity – because what started as a bit of fun, got way out of hand.

I have listened to heartbroken parents, consumed by a devastating anger and a need for answers, as they have told me about their son who has taken his own life because he could no longer cope with the demons of his gambling addiction.

And I have heard from an industry which, still, despite the evidence, continues to refuse to take action and acknowledge the real tragedy that gambling addiction can cause.

The good news is that the APPG is a stalwart group of MPs and peers determined to take on the industry. A group that has already been instrumental in the stake reduction on fixed odds betting terminals and is now looking at the regulation of online gambling and what needs to be done to support and protect the most vulnerable.

GAMBLING ADDICTION CAN AFFECT ANYONE FROM ANY WALK OF LIFE

The truth is that, like any addiction, an addiction to gambling can affect anyone from any walk of life. It does not discriminate – male or female, young or old, rich or poor, black or white. But, unlike some other addictions, there are no physical clues and addicts become very good at denying there is a problem – even to themselves.

There may be some of you reading this with whom this resonates. Maybe you are noticing a pattern in your own behaviour, or that of a family member or colleague. The first step is admitting the problem and the next is doing something about it.

IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW, NEEDS HELP IT IS AVAILABLE

If you think that you, or someone you know, needs help then there is help available:

- Gamban (www.gamban.com) is software you can download onto your machines and devices that will effectively block gambling websites and apps.
- Gamcare (www.gamcare.org.uk) is a national provider of free information, advice and support for those with a gambling addiction.
- The National Gambling HelpLine can be contacted on 0808 8020 133 for confidential advice and support for those affected by a gambling addiction.
- GamStop (www.gamstop.co.uk) allows you to put controls in place to restrict online gambling activities.
- Gamblers Anonymous (www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk) have a forum, chat room, and can tell you the location of your closest Gamblers Anonymous meeting.
I – I wish you could swim like the dolphins, like dolphins can swim

DEBORAH REAY, Northern Line North branch secretary, and chair of ASLEF’s Women’s Representatives’ Committee, reports on her fact finding visit with Lee James, ASLEF’s equalities adviser, to the West Bank of the River Jordan

N APRIL, Lee James and I were part of an historic delegation of 16 women from various trade unions who visited Palestine. The trip was a result of demands made at the TUC women’s conference. The motion called for us to do more to support the rights of Palestinian people, to end the occupation, and to visit Palestine to hear first-hand accounts of life, with its violence, oppression and intimidation.

Our wonderful guide for the week was Noor, a Palestinian who drove us about all week, sorted any problems and gave us the low down a Palestinian who drove us about all week, sorted any problems and gave us the low down on what’s what in Palestine and Israel.

The first night was quite relaxed as we wandered around Jerusalem, an historic centre for Christian, Islamic, and Abrahamic religions as well as Judaism. That’s where the relaxation ended; the next five days were non-stop.

HEBRON AND EAST JERUSALEM
The first things we noticed were the checkpoints, which are everywhere. Palestinians have to queue, sometimes up to three hours, but Israelis go straight through.

Our first stop was the Mosque of Ibrahim/Tomb of the Patriots. This beautiful building, believed to be the burial place of the prophets Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was turned into half synagogue and half mosque when the Israelis took over the site in 1967. It was the scene of a massacre in 1994 when an extremist Israeli settler killed 29 people while they prayed and injured 150 others.

We went on to the Al-Ibrahami Boys’ School. We had to go through another two checkpoints to get to this incredibly run-down school. The teachers try to make it nice for the kids but they have very little money. The children have to go through three checkpoints every day and are often bullied, intimidated, and occasionally tearagged. We then tried to go to Shuhada Street in Hebron which used to be a thriving area lined with small shops and businesses, all now closed. After the massacre by the extremist Israeli settler at the Mosque of Ibrahim, the Israelis decided to punish the Palestinians by welding shut the street facing doors, effectively turning it into a ghost street. Palestinians are not allowed to go down there, and the people who still live on the street have had to put steps up to the rear windows as they are not allowed to use the front doors.

We had problems accessing the street as we were with Palestinians. The soldier was very polite when I asked why, but a soldier on a previous checkpoint radioed through and forbade us from going through.

We went on to meet representatives of the General Union of Palestinian Teachers and the Palestine Polytechnic University, a uni founded in Hebron by the University Graduates’ Union in 1978. They told us about the challenges facing those wanting to work, learn or simply exist in peace with their families in the West Bank and Gaza.

One of the people we met was Tanya Rubenstein from the Coalition of Women for Peace, a group of Israeli and Palestinian women committed to ending the occupation, creating a more just society, enhancing women’s inclusion and participation in public discourse. Tanya is an Israeli Jew and has been ostracised by many of her friends and family and accused of being anti-Semitic. The irony isn’t lost on her.

THE VILLAGE OF NABI SALEH
We went to Nabi Saleh, a small village about 12 miles north of Ramallah, where we met the Tamimis, a family of activists who have paid dearly. Manal Tamimi, the matriarch, welcomed all 16 of us into her home and told us how she has lost three of her family. Mustafa, 28, was protesting with other young men from the village. Mushaab, 17, was shot at close range during protests and 21-year-old Izz was killed during a raid on the village. Most of Manal’s family have been imprisoned on trumped-up charges; her 16-year-old son is currently in prison for throwing a stone.

Manal spoke of the night raids, the tear gas, and the violence and explained that, just the night before, there had been a raid on their home and her family had been teargassed.

This was an emotional visit and what Manal thought of 16 women from the West crying in her living room was anybody’s guess…

PALESTINE: AN ISSUE THAT CONCERNS US ALL
ASLEF, as a trade union, stands in solidarity with workers around the world. Palestinians living under Israeli occupation struggle every day; to find work, to get permits to work, to get past checkpoints, and to negotiate proper wages and decent working conditions. They struggle to get access to adequate housing, basic sanitation, health care, food and water. Many have been displaced and forced into exile. It is because of these injustices that ASLEF, along with many other trade unions, is affiliated to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and is calling for a lifting of the ongoing blockade and for Israeli compliance with international law with regard to the people of Palestine. By raising awareness of the plight of the Palestinians, by developing international solidarity, and by bringing political, economic, and social pressure to bear, we aim to bring hope to the Palestinian people and to realise their ambitions for justice and a lasting peace in the region.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign works for peace and justice for Palestinians, in support of international law and human rights. It is opposed to all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism. Find out more at www.palestinecampaign.org

MAY DAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST
We met with trade unionists who told us about their difficulties in finding work, organising workers, and accessing union members to effect positive change in an economy that is beyond stagnation. The minimum wage for Palestinians is set at around a quarter of the minimum wage for Israelis. Why? When goods cost the same regardless of who is buying them?
Discrimination is not yet recognised in law for employees, yet restrictive laws stifle the ability of workers to take strike action, with many professions being banned from striking at all.

Unemployment is around the 60% mark and has the greatest effect on society with socio-economic deprivation impacting on health, wellbeing, education and prospects.

Mental ill-health is at epidemic levels with, as you can imagine, stress and trauma affecting many and one-third of all Palestinians have no access to health care.

JENIN THE MARTYRS’ CAPITAL

We saw the impact of the massacre in Jenin, a huge refugee camp. Fifteen years ago, the Israeli army bombarded and assaulted the Jenin refugee camp for more than 10 days. This was part of Israel’s Operation Defensive Shield, during which it sent troops into the heart of six major cities in the occupied West Bank and surrounding towns and refugee camps that were ostensibly under Palestinian Authority control.

Israel barred members of a UN commission of inquiry from conducting an investigation, but a subsequent report compiled by the Secretary General concluded that at least 52 Palestinians were killed in the camp.

Of all the amazing people we met, Mona Jalamh sticks in my mind. After the massacre, she created a nursery from the remains of her old home. Children come to the nursery every day and Mona charges one shekel (approximately 25p) which goes towards feeding the children, although Mona also uses her own money to subsidise the cost.

Most of the children are severely traumatised, their only knowledge of ‘blonde faces’ are those of the Israeli soldiers who come in the night to take their older brothers.

Mona and the other teachers have made this a place of love, where the children can play and learn without fear. We sat in with a class of children ranging in age from two and half up to six. The children were learning English and were having so much fun with their teacher, it was an absolute pleasure to watch.

Since the second intifada, 2,000 Palestinian children have been injured or killed, often being used as human shields, whilst almost 7000 more every year are processed through the Israeli legal system, mostly for the crime of throwing stones. One of our guides was imprisoned from the age of 11 for eight years for throwing a stone.

We heard so many stories of ill-treatment, human rights abuses and, to be honest, pure spite in some cases. Palestinian ambulances with critically ill people have to wait at a checkpoint for an Israeli ambulance, as Palestinian ambulances are not allowed into Israel, and many people die waiting.

Many Israelis are also opposed to the occupation, but it is not their voices we hear in our media. Whether this is through fear of the backlash they would face or just that they are not interviewed is unclear.

The Palestinians we met had next to nothing, yet they were willing to share what little they had with us, comparatively wealthy Westerners. Not one person asked for money, although obviously this would help, they just wanted us to tell their side of the story.

We can be heroes – just for one day

TANYA RUBINSTEIN, co-ordinator of the Coalition of Women for Peace, explains what her group does, and the background to the present conflict in Palestine

The Coalition of Women for Peace was established in 2000, during the second intifada, as a joining of forces of feminist and women’s organizations, groups, and individual activists working against the occupation. It has gone through a lot of shifts over the years, but the basis of the group is a gathering of Jewish and Palestinian women, working together to end the occupation and bring about a just peace. As a group we offer our solidarity and support to women who live under occupation and women who are marginalized in society.

In recent years, there has been a growing force to stifle and stop the resistance against the occupation, and the work being done for human rights and peace. The government and right-wing NGOs join forces locally and internationally to stop the progress that has been made for freedom of expression and human rights struggles, and stop anyone and anything that gets in the way of making profit, taking land and building power of those most privileged.

One of the ways that’s being done is by creating fragmentation within the peace movement, creating distinction between those of us who are legitimate and those who are ‘too radical’ and creating physical and psychological barriers with separation walls, border control and public smear campaigns.

As feminists, we believe in working together, in supporting each other, as a radical tool of creating change. As a movement, our resources and access to power are much more scarce than the privileged, rich and powerful leaders and stakeholders who have a lot to gain from our silence and the perpetuation of the social structures that keep them in power. One of the main resources we have is our sense of justice, and the wide scope of struggles for justice that can bring together huge masses struggling for the same thing. The struggle against the occupation, against the patriarchy, against LGBTQphobia, for peace and human security, are, for me, one and the same.

In these times of global shifts to the right, we see activists all over the world under surveillance, threats and violence. It happens here with activists in Gaza being shot and killed or injured in their fight for freedom, we see demonstrations in the West Bank met with military invasions into villages and mass arrests and we see demonstrations and actions inside Israel and in many countries around the world incited against.

In this harsh and seemingly hopeless reality, we see great strength in our mutual support. Meeting with the amazing women of your union is, for us, a breath of fresh air, knowing that we are part of something greater, of a global movement for change, working together as a network that, hopefully, will eventually change the norms we live in to create a world that is welcoming, nurturing and accepting of everyone who is now marginalized and discriminated against.

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Workers, began to organize under the Council against Fascism, and trade unions, led London, on Sunday 4 October 1936. Stepney, in the heart of the Jewish East End, announced a provocative march through the wake of the rise to power of Mussolini with MacDonald in 1931 he formed the New Party which, 18 months later, and after a visit to Mussolini in Italy, became the British Union of Fascists.

Wake of the battle of Cable Street. ‘Rightly celebrated,’ as Ruth Smeeth, Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent North, says, ‘as a great victory’ and ‘the day the tide turned in the fight against fascism in Britain.’

‘We do not believe in government through the voting booth’
– General Francisco Franco, 1938

The blackshirts, in Britain and on the continent, had friends in high places. The Duke of Windsor – the title given to Edward VIII after he abdicated in 1936 – went to Germany in October 1937, meeting Hitler at his Berghof retreat in Bavaria, and enthusiastically straightened his right arm in a full Nazi salute to der Führer.

When the Germans invaded France he moved to Spain – under Franco and the Fascist Falange – then Portugal. Lord Caldecote warned Winston Churchill that the Duke ‘is well known to be pro-Nazi and may become the centre of intrigue.’

‘When everything was cowardice, treachery, and betrayal and when the Saracen hordes from far outside Europe swept right across that continent, and would’ve come on over our own Britain too, if they hadn’t been stopped’
– Oswald Mosley

‘When I joined the militia,’ writes George Orwell in Homage to Catalonia, ‘I promised to kill one Fascist – after all, if each of us killed one, they would soon be extinct.’

In the second of three articles KEITH RICHMOND examines the impact of fascism in Britain and Spain in the 1930s in the wake of the rise to power of Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany

At first an ardent Tory, Mosley was elected as Conservative MP for Harrow in 1918, but then sat as an independent, and joined Labour in 1924 after Ramsay MacDonald had, perhaps not coincidentally, just formed the first Labour government. When Mosley fell out with MacDonald in 1931 he formed the New Party, which 18 months later, and after a visit to Mussolini in Italy, became the British Union of Fascists.

This virulently anti-Semitic party announced a provocative march through Stepney, in the heart of the Jewish East End of London, on Sunday 4 October 1936. The Communist Party, Independent Labour Party, Labour League of Youth, Jewish People’s Council against Fascism, and trade unions, led by the National Union of Tailor & Garment Workers, began to organize under the rallying cries of ‘Down with Fascism!’ and ‘They shall not pass!’

Six thousand policemen – including the entire Metropolitan Police mounted division – tried to force a way through the East End for 5,000 blackshirts to march, brutally and indiscriminately beating anti-Fascist volunteers in what became known as the Battle of Cable Street. ‘Rightly celebrated,’ as Ruth Smeeth, Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent North, says, ‘as a great victory’ and ‘the day the tide turned in the fight against fascism in Britain.’

The Battle of Cable Street; Oswald Mosley

In fact the Germans, had they successfully invaded Britain, planned to install the Duke as king under a Nazi regime. Churchill, who knew he was ‘in close touch with German agents’ packed him off to become Governor of the Bahamas, where he was kept under surveillance by the Secret Intelligence Service, which had information from the FBI that Wallis Simpson had an affair with the German ambassador in London, Joachim von Ribbentrop, in 1936, passing on information.

‘When everything was cowardice, treachery, and betrayal and when the Saracen hordes from far outside Europe swept right across that continent, and would’ve come on over our own Britain too, if they hadn’t been stopped’
– Oswald Mosley

‘When I joined the militia,’ writes George Orwell in Homage to Catalonia, ‘I promised to kill one Fascist – after all, if each of us killed one, they would soon be extinct.’

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR 1936-39

In the 1930s, the democratically-elected left-wing Republican government in Spain introduced sweeping social and economic reforms to improve the lives of industrial workers and peasant farmers. Conservatives – the rich, the powerful and the Roman Catholic church – were furious and, in July 1936, the army, led by General Francisco Franco, tried to overthrow the legitimate government by force. Thousands of Spaniards rallied to the Republican cause, the coup failed, and the country was plunged into a bloody civil war.

Franco’s Nationalist army was backed by right-wing Falangist irregulars as well as soldiers from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as Hitler and Mussolini used Spain as a testing ground for the tactics, troops and weapons they would deploy in the Second World War. The governments of Britain and France, wedded to an ill-conceived policy of appeasement of the great dictators, agreed on a cynical policy of non-intervention because, cabinet papers subsequently revealed, they feared socialism, and the power of the workers, more than they feared the Nazis and the Fascists who had wealthy and influential friends in England.

But, on the Republican side, volunteers in the International Brigades flocked to answer Joan Miró’s call to Aidez L’Espagne, many of them living, fighting and dying under a slogan used by anti-Fascists ever since: ‘No Pasarán!’
There is power in a factory power in the land, power in the hand of the worker

SLEF activists joined thousands of trade unionists from around the country at the annual Tolpuddle Martyrs festival in Dorset in July. The festival runs over a weekend, encompassing music, speakers and a banner parade – there were ASLEF banners from Districts 1, 5 and 7; Exeter, Northern Line North, Salisbury, Southampton and Weymouth branches; as well as the WRC banner and our new national banner – through the village on Sunday afternoon. The route runs in one direction and then loops back on itself, so saying ‘Hello’ to comrades coming the other way is one of the highlights, and not something you usually find on a march. On Saturday evening, ASLEF and the GMB joined forces to cook a BBQ for the amassed campers.

The ASLEF barbie has become a key fixture of Tolpuddle and an important gathering place for people to catch up with comrades from all over the country. This year, our chefs were EC1 Marz Colombini, GMB GS Tim Roache, and Paul Maloney, GMB southern region secretary, and included everything from halloumi to burgers and some rather fancy seasoned pork chops. A small amount of alcohol was, of course, also consumed during the evening!

Following the BBQ was a three-way cricket tournament between teams from the TUC, GMB and ASLEF. ASLEF lost to the TUC but beat the GMB. Highlights included Marz getting out to a spectacular catch from TUC GS Frances O’Grady at extra cover, and Debbie Reay, Northern Line North, producing the best bowling over of the evening – one wicket for one run with four dot balls – catching and bowling her victim. Cricket talent clearly runs in the family, as Debbie’s son Chris took a catch at deep midwicket to hold off the GMB.

In a fitting tribute to the recent Cricket World Cup final, the first game was tied and was settled with a rather dramatic super over which the TUC eventually won 11-8. ECS Howard Kaye was the match umpire and scorer, and oversaw both games with great calm and very little dissent from disgruntled players.

Speakers included Matt Collins, of Hope Not Hate, in conversation with Kevin Maguire of the Daily Mirror about Matt’s new book, written with Robbie Mullen, a former member of National Action, who worked with HNH to foil a plot to murder an MP.

The assembled crowds also heard from Frances O’Grady – whose speech reminded us about the wider movement of which we are part, here and across the world – and Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner who brought the house down with her passionate commitment to a new national education service to enable everyone to learn throughout life.

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn was the headline speaker on Sunday, and very well received. Jeremy shared Labour’s pledges to bring utilities and other services into public ownership, and recommitted the party to repealing anti-trade union legislation that prevents workers from organising effectively. The biggest cheer of the afternoon – as heard by ASLEF, anyway – was when he reconfirmed Labour’s commitment to nationalising the railways and creating a rail system in public ownership run for people, not profit.

Cleaner and greener

We have just produced new campaign materials on the subjects of electrification, moving from road to rail freight, and greening the railway as part of an integrated national transport strategy. Tolpuddle was the launch weekend for this new campaign, and support came from Jeremy, Angela, Frances, Tim, and Vicky Phillips of Thompsons solicitors, BFAWU GS Ronnie Draper, Ibrahim Doğuṣ, Mayor of Lambeth, and musician Joe Solo. Videos and campaign materials are available on the ASLEF website www.aslef.org.uk and our social media channels.

40 not out

EC1 Marz Colombini, against a backdrop of assembled members and banners, explained that there are a number of traditions associated with ASLEF at Tolpuddle. One is our Saturday BBQ and the annual sporting challenge that follows and the excellent curry lunch provided on Sunday by Eddie d’Bell. Another is that, with Weymouth branch being, in ASLEF terms, the home team at Tolfest, the occasion is often the scene for presenting loyalty badges. This year to John Taylor, formerly of Waterloo Nine Elms, who was presented with a badge recognising 40 years’ membership of, and loyalty to, ASLEF. It was appropriate that John

Marz congratulates John on 40 years received his award from Marz because, as a driver instructor in the past, it was John who taught our future EC member to drive trains!

Peter Wright, Weymouth

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Beating heart of this trade union

WO ASLEF branches – Stirling Caley and Grangemouth – held a joint meeting and we would like to place on record our gratitude to the GS, DO and EC member for their fantastic contribution to a great night. Mick, Kevin and Jim gave three excellent reports on the current state of all things ASLEF, nationally and locally. Great debate was had with typical Scottish passion! All with the greatest respect from all present. Topped off with a retirement presentation by the GS to Bro Robbie Gray from Stirling Caley branch. Have a long and happy one, Robbie. Those present then helped towards their five a day by consuming compressed apples and whichever fruit contributes to lager! What more can a train driver ask for? A chance to get things off your chest; a chance to question and debate with our decision makers; and then an opportunity to assist the publicans of Central Scotland. All in all a great night. The branch is the beating heart of this trade union and we need these nights; we also need to encourage more of our colleagues to come along to keep this beating heart strong and proud.

Tam McKendrick and Davy O’Rourke, branch secretaries

Some sort of record!

Southampton Northam 160 welcomed old friend and company council rep Nigel Cummins to our July branch meeting. Nigel has been a longstanding and loyal friend to Northam since its opening in July 2003. He has successfully represented many of our members and supported the LDC, particularly recently. His retirement next year will be a big loss to company council, Northam branch, and ASLEF. The branch thanked Nigel for all his hard work and dedication, particularly the last 20 years on company council, which must be some sort of record! The chair presented him with the last Northam 2003 opening badge (only 100 originally produced). We wish Nigel all the best for his well-deserved retirement and look forward to welcoming him as a retired member in the future.

Alan Loughlin, branch secretary

Mind the gap

Watford celebrated those who have been members of ASLEF for many years at our June meeting: Steve Doyle (15 years) and John Fife (30) with chair Paul Spreckley and vice-chair Kev Corcoran.

Jon Zinzan, branch secretary

TEARING DOWN ASLEF MATERIAL

A busy Jubilee East 272 branch took place in July and it was special for a number of reasons! First, it was my last branch as a local rep; the result of a local election was counted by our Ec member Terry o’Flaherty, who was forced to leave due to ill health. He said ASLEF and the reps made it seamless and wanted his thanks passed on. We wish him all the best.

Gary Comfort, branch secretary
Good time had by all

At the July Test Train Operators branch meeting a number of long service badges were presented by EC8 Terry Wilkinson. The branch was well attended and a good time was had by all.

Branch reporter

A day at the races

Nikki Newing (third left) was on the money with David Sachon of TUFM at Lingfield Park

ASLEF – in the shape of finance manager Nikki Newing, who knows a thing or two about horse flesh – judged the best turned out horse at Lingfield Park and presented the £50 prize, sponsored by Trade Union Fund Managers, to the hardworking groom of Terri Rules, a four year old bay filly, just before the TUFM Handicap on Wednesday 17 July in which she came home second, at 13/2, behind the 3/1 favourite Come On Dave.

Old friends

Newton Heath retired drivers and guards met, once again blessed by superb weather, at the Millgate, Failsworth. Thanks to Andy Gee and Johnny Pat for their continued organisation and the usual excellent buffet plus John’s booze raffle. Great to meet again old friends and colleagues. Our thanks to the branch and special thanks to 105 members for their continued financial support for this very special reunion.

John Black, Newton Heath RMS

We turn back time – and the pages of the Locomotive Journal – to September 1919 and the King’s Speech, the coalition government, and a warning to the war cabinet

SUPER-PRODUCERS, PROFITEERS, AND MONEYLENDERS

‘We have a respect for the king, which does not seem to be shared by the people who advise his speeches,’ says the New Age. ‘Nobody will accuse the King of being in the capitalist conspiracy to maintain and strengthen the stranglehold of capitalism upon the working-classes of the country. Yet, if his purpose had been to avow his alliance with the super-producers, profiteers, and moneylenders, his speech at the Guildhall on Tuesday last could scarcely have been better composed. His flattering references to City finance were as undeserved as many decorations.’

DUKES, MARQUISES AND EARS

Who constitute the coalition? The Dukes, Marquises, Earls, and other grades of the aristocracy almost to a man and woman. The great industrial monopolists and financial magnates. The profiteers and war contractors who have made fabulous super-profits out of the Great War, and hope to continue the process under favour of their present benefactors. The Imperialists, Protectionists, and Conscriptionists.

WARNING TO THE WAR CABINET

We refer to the negotiations for our national programme. These have been unusually protracted and delicate, and have involved many long discussions with the Railway Executive and Cabinet ministers. The discussions came to a head in August, when we were able to send out to branches the final word of the Railway Executive. Up to 20 August there had been received at head office nearly 200 resolutions from branches, of more or less serious import, but all asserting our just claim to our national programme for locomotive workers.

AMERICAN RAILWAY SENSATION

Organised labour in America, and notably the members of the Railway Brotherhoods, have thrilled the world. Their united demand for nationalised railways, and the abolition of private profit out of their labour, is the outstanding event of the month in railway affairs the world over, and they merit the thanks and congratulations of Will Workman in every clime.
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).

ASLEF RMS 500 Club application form

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RAY STAFF REF OF THE YEAR

Coming from a railway family, Ray started his footplate career as a cleaner at Ipswich. He had a break in service when he went off to do his national service in Hong Kong and Korea in the Army, serving in two regiments – the Royal Norfolk and the Black Watch. On his return Ray got married and transferred to Stratford to later become a driver where he remained until retirement. Ray was very popular, getting heavily into 30A’s depot activities with old mates Casso and Ronnie Tuft, organising football and cricket and finally hanging up his boots at the age of 45. Ray was a family man with two sons and a number of grandchildren to keep him on his toes. He enjoyed pottering in the garden with his wife Jean but, sadly, could not tell the difference between a plant and a weed so he just stuck to doing the heavy work. He also enjoyed TV quiz shows. After the service we all went back to the Eastbrook pub in Dagenham for a pint and reminisce and a bit of a tale telling. Ray was a very lovely man and will be much missed.

Cliff Blackwell, Retired Members’ Section

JOHN WHITTINGTON MEETING THE QUEEN

Ex-Marylebone driver John – Dick to his friends – Whittington has died aged 89. He came to us from the Southern for the last of the steam out of Marylebone in 1987 and enjoyed his final working years doing just that. An active and lively member of the branch, with food not being safe when Dick was around, it was this that led to ‘piegate’ where a doctored pie was left for his consumption... When he retired at 65 in 1994 he and his wife moved from their railway cottage at Edenbridge to South Molton in Devon. Having worked all his life, Dick couldn’t resist one last job, and got involved with the local narrow gauge steam railway; old habits die hard. He even let me ride on the footplate with him, where I nicked his hard-earned cup of tea. Pay back.

Dick had led an active career on the Southern and took pride in telling us about meeting the Queen to be awarded for bravery at work after an incident on the track and, during retirement, he got to meet her again after helping to return a steam engine to the UK from South Africa. He enjoyed retirement, taking an active role in the community, becoming a spokesperson for

BILLY BRAND ASLEF IN HIS BLOOD

With sadness, I report the death of ASLEF stalwart Bill Brand at the age of 97. Bill had the Society in his blood. Born at Egremont in Cumbria, his family moved to Salford, and he began his footplate career at Patricroft steam shed. Bill served in the armed forces, in Burma, and returned until shed closure in 1968 brought a move to Newton Heath. He was LDC, sectional council B, district council chairman, at a time of regular shed closures and movement of men under BR to nominated sheds and depots. Bill always worked hard to carry out the excellent conditions afforded under PTR and will forever be remembered when ASLEF is mentioned.

John Black, Newton Heath RMS

PETER CARPENTER COME ON YOU IRONS

Peter began his railway career at Stratford and later moved to Clacton where he retired. He was a jolly person to whom you took an instant shine, always enjoying a laugh and a joke and a pint at the end of a shift (if still open). An East London lad who enjoyed his football, he was an avid West Ham supporter. The service was held at Weoley crematorium in Essex to a full house. The family invited everybody back to the old BRS Club at Clacton for an ale or two (John Smiths) to celebrate his life and tell a few stories. He will be sorely missed by all who had the pleasure of meeting him.

Cliff Blackwell, Retired Members’ Section

HEWIE CAREY DRY WIT

Hewie Carey, who has died at the age of 93, began his footplate career at Patricroft steam shed in 1947, where he remained until it closed in 1968, when he had a PTR move to Newton Heath and then Manchester Victoria until retirement. He was popular with his colleagues, known for his dry wit and sense of humour, and a real pleasure to know and work with.

John Black, Newton Heath RMS

GEORGE HOLLANDS NUMBER SNATCHER

George Hollands passed away in February having reached the grand age of 93, leaving his wife May, to whom he was married for 70 years, and daughter Sandra. George started on the railway aged 13½ as a number snatcher at Tunbridge Wells, went on to the signal box at Tunbridge and then up to London Bridge. He got fed up with the near misses from German bombs so signed up to the Navy at 16! After the war he went back to the railway at Tunbridge Wells west station as a cleaner, working his way up to fireman then driver. He transferred to Tonbridge in the 1950s where he stayed ‘til retirement in 1991. Many will remember him as Gunsmoke and for his many jokes and tricks! Southern Locomon, his book about his days on the steam, was published in 1982. George loved nothing more than going fishing with his many friends and three sons. He also enjoyed cooking, having learnt about spices whilst in the Far East, always sharing his curries, chutneys and, if you were lucky, his highly prized onion bhajis!

Sandra Bilsby (George’s daughter)

TOMMY DONE WORCESTER CENTURIAN

100-year-old steam driver Tommy Done has recently passed away after a short illness. You very kindly printed a short history of his life as a railwayman – at Barry, Rogerstone, and Worcester – in the Journal in January which he was thrilled to see. His workmates celebrated his 100th birthday with him at a party at the Crow Hotel in Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire, in November 2018.

Chris Wilkinson, Worcester Locomotive Society
How about making every worker a shareholder?

Mick Whelan has condemned Keith Williams (Journal, August) for taking a backwards step, instead of moving forward, and suggesting that a Fat Controller figure running another quango is the best way to solve the problems afflicting Britain’s railway network since privatisation. Williams, it seems, has ruled out re-nationalisation.

I believe nationalisation of the rail network in 1948 was the best option to get the network back into a reasonable state after the ravages of the Second World War. However, because of interference by various governments, and the lack of a sensible forward-thinking management, nationalisation became an horrendous expense on the exchequer.

Like many, I believe privatisation has to go, and the sooner the better, but I do not believe that re-nationalisation of the network is the answer to the failed privatisation system. So here is my suggestion of how our rail network could be sensibly run.

First, get rid of the plethora of TOCs as soon as possible, and replace them with five companies akin to the old British Railways regions. The companies would have shareholders, but not external ones. The only shareholders would be the employees.

At the start of the business, everyone who is employed, from CEO down, would be given a single share, and that share can be owned only by the person to whom it is given. It cannot be sold on to anyone, neither inside nor outside the company, and when the shareholder leaves the company, or retires, or dies in service, that share, after its value has been paid to its owner, or estate, is destroyed. A new share can only be issued to a new employee.

Initially the shares would have no value. However, if the business succeeds, shareholders would be paid quarterly bonuses, half as cash, half to add value to their shares. This should give an incentive for staff to remain loyal and have pride in their company.

An example of how employees could benefit can be shown by looking at Northern Rail. Its accounts as at January 2016 show 5,002 employees – 3,361 operational; 893 engineering, finance, and marketing.

Many thanks, comrades

Colleagues, could I please place on record my thanks to all those branches who nominated me and enabled me to be re-elected unopposed as your executive committee member District No 5. Since I was first elected onto the EC, I have always been totally accountable to the branches and members within District 5 and over the next four years I commit to the same level of accountability. Comrades, many thanks.

Howard Kaye, ECS

Another nail in the coffin

It’s great to see the TOCs doing their best for the environment, trying to get us out of our cars and use the trains more. If I thought that then I would have failed my DB&A test. As well years of above inflation ticket price rises, to the mercy of the market place.

I recall DO Nigel Gibson lamenting, a couple of years ago, that the FOCs were engaged in a race to the bottom. Nothing much seems to have changed.

JP Morgan, Ipswich (retired)

If rail freight disappeared, who would notice, apart from those of us who work in the industry and care?

I read the latest report on the state of rail freight (Journal, August) with great interest. It’s two years since I took retirement, having worked in the privatised railway for Freightliner Intermodal from its inception until I decided to go. Sadly, reading the ASLEF report, it struck me as same story, different day. Putting it politely!

An ongoing battle with the numerous FOCs over issues which are, in theory, relatively straightforward, and supposedly agreed, seems to be the norm. We noticed in Freightliner that, when the original management team started to retire, new management had different interpretations and applications of agreements.

The rail freight business has long been a regressive industry, contracting from a universal waggonload industry, with marshalling yards nationwide, via transitions and cutting back, to fully-fitted, speedlink, block loads, and sectorisation, to privatisation and the core-flow industry it is today. Political disinterest and apathy, the massive decline of heavy industry, poor management decisions (the loss of virtually all Royal Mail traffic), and an over-dependency on specific traffic (such as coal) to provide flows, have all contributed to this position.

The attitude of the DfT to rail freight, and ministers who have no knowledge of the railway, leaves me unconvinced that there will be any change. Lots of fine words, but no action. And, as the FOCs are the truly privatised face of railway operations, they are left to the mercy of the market place.

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Howard Kaye, ECS
SINCELEY AND FRATERNALLY

I am writing to express my sincere thanks to Dave Calfé, EC president, and Mick Whelan, general secretary, for the help they’ve provided me, and especially my family, during a very difficult time in all of our lives. I must also give heartfelt thanks to Vicky Phillips at Thompson’s solicitors who, as well as always being so kind and considerate, was able to introduce us to the particular expert solicitors we needed to help get us through the worst of it. I will never be able to thank you all enough to repay the kindness we’ve been shown. I would also like to say thank you to the rest of my friends within ASLEF who have been so supportive and there for me when I’ve needed them, especially during those times when I thought I didn’t. You know who you are and I’m blessed to know you.

Mark Herron, Bletchley

my car than use the train. Bravo, SWR! Putting another nail in the environmental coffin. As a footnote, car parks are free in Scotland!

Paul Barber, business council secretary, Freightliner Heavy Haul

It’s nice to kick back and not get up at silly o’clock

I recently left the job I love after 31 years, paid off through the sickness scheme negotiated by our union. Nigel Cummins, our colleague and company council rep based at Salisbury, has been a diamond and I will be forever thankful for what he has done, and his representation. And then there is our union which must be one of the best in the world for the representation and conditions it gains for us. People who haven’t worked outside the industry do not realise how lucky we are.

It has been wonderful working in one of the most diverse, humorous and interesting industries in the country. I miss my workmates, and the banter, plus driving through the countryside, but I’ve worked for the last 40 years so it’s nice to kick back (and not get up at silly o’clock). Many thanks again to everybody for your friendship, your kindness, and your priceless humour. Take it easy out there.

Kris Jendesen 1598 (how’s that for a Salisbury pay number?)

Ronks on the right track

At this time of political turmoil I could really do with half an hour with the late Bill Ronksley to straighten me out, re-rail me, and put me back on the right track.

Bill Davies, RMS Bedford

Common goals on climate

Extinction Rebellion is focused on the climate crisis. A critically important, and often overlooked, fact is that the crisis is a workers’ issue. Workers have been exploited by major corporations and the government and will be disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. The rail and tube network should be put at the forefront of tackling this crisis as a mass transportation alternative to emitting vehicles. The workers ASLEF represents should, therefore, be fully supported. We think a show of solidarity in the future, such as the simple gesture of XR people joining strikers on a picket line, would go a long way to show a united front.

James Marshall, XR London

Mick says: ‘That would be secondary action. But we do believe in tackling the climate crisis by getting freight off our roads and onto the cleaner, greener railway.’

Retirement certificates

Reading the Journal I see quite a lot of retiring members receiving retirement certificates. I took early retirement in 2013 after 46 years in the railway industry, of which nearly 40 years were spent as an ASLEF member (and still is, through the RMS). Do I take it that every retiring member receives a certificate as I have never received one.

Gordon Revell by email

I started on the railway in January 1961 and joined the union the same month. I finished in 2007 after taking redundancy. I was wondering, as I never received a certificate, how would I be able to get one? I am still in the union after 57 years. Paul Bamforth, Mexborough, Yorkshire

Mick says: ‘Our admin dept at head office has sorted these certificates for you.’

Are friends electric?

Would it be possible to receive the monthly Journal via email instead of the printed version and, if so, how do I arrange that, please?

Jonathan Wall, East Midlands Trains

Mick says: ‘The Journal is put up on the ASLEF website at the start of every month and is downloadable as a pdf. We also tweet a link to the Journal @ASLEFunion.’

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

The King’s Cross Story

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

442 Pig poppy badge in support of the Royal British Legion. £6 each plus £1 postage per order from Martin Thompson at Fratton depot; email wdrailbadgeinfo@gmail.com

INTER-CITY 125 farewell badge, individually numbered, only 125 produced. £10 inc p&p. PayPal to Greg Burton (Paddington branch) at intercityexpress125@hotmail.co.uk

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 grantm32@btinternet.com

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September 2019 I The ASLEF Journal
The night they drove old Dixie down

Racist tweets by President Trump reminded C H R I S P R O C T O R that, for some in the US, the Civil War never ended. Or, at least, the wrong side won. And the president is pouring petrol on the flames lit by those who like to dance in front of burning crosses and the Confederate flag.

E A L L sniggered when Donald Trump told a surprised nation that US forces had ‘taken over the airports’ during the American War of Independence from Britain. ‘Our army manned the air, it rammed the ramparts, it took over the airports, it did everything it had to do.’

The US President was talking about a war fought from 1775–1783 while the first plane didn’t take to the air until 1903. So it was always unlikely that there were airports more than a century before the Wright brothers’ first flight. But that’s the Donald for you. Although US history is not as straightforward as it seems.

Take the American Civil War that began in 1861. Any American schoolbook will tell you the basic facts: the North won, it abolished slavery, and it ended in 1865. Except…

‘Hurrah! Hurrah! For Southern rights hurrah! Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star’ – Harry McCarthy

Did the North win? One piece of evidence that the Allies won the Second World War is an absence of statues of Adolf Hitler littering our cities. The US, on the other hand, has all kinds of monuments dedicated to Robert E Lee, the Confederate commander who slaughtered thousands as he backed slavery, supported discrimination, and became a leading symbol of militant white supremacists.

Yet his name features on three US military facilities, scores of US monuments and sculptures, and two public holidays. Civil rights activists are still murdered in his name. In 2017 Alex Fields, a white supremacist, drove his car into a crowd protesting against a statue of Lee, erected in 1924 in Charlottesville, Virginia, murdering 32-year-old Heather Heyer.

And not everyone on the Union side was entirely committed to the cause. Abraham Lincoln’s in-laws owned slaves, and the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 had more holes than Crossrail. It freed slaves only in the Confederate states that were fighting, conveniently leaving out Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Tennessee, and West Virginia; and the Proclamation was dependent on a Union victory.

When slavery was eventually declared illegal throughout the United States of America, it often made little practical difference to the freed slaves. Lacking land, or capital, many became sharecroppers for their previous owners, forced to give a (frequently oppressive) portion of their crop to the semi-feudal ‘lord’. If they didn’t sign annual contracts with the landowners, they could be arrested.

Any notion that being free would lead to civil rights for ex-slaves was further from the truth than a Donald Trump tweet, bound as they were by the notorious Jim Crow laws. Named after a blacked-up white minstrel, these were state and local laws that enforced racial segregation in public facilities, including transport and education; and which made it illegal for blacks to serve on juries, testify against whites, or serve in state militias. The military didn’t start de-segregation until 1948, and it didn’t officially end until 1953.

‘Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored’ – The Battle Hymn of the Republic

The evil legacy of the Confederacy still plays a major part in US politics. Trump was playing for racist votes when he was reluctant to condemn the Charlottesville rioters, doubtless recalling former KKK leader David Duke who said he should ‘take a good look in the mirror and remember it was white Americans who put you in the presidency’.

Trump looked: which is why, launching his re-election bid in June, he vowed that Immigration and Customs Enforcement would ‘conduct a massive operation to round up millions of people and remove them from the country’; the same intolerant and superior world view of the Confederate States of America.

The ghost of the Civil War still casts a long shadow over the United States. It’s never quite gone away. That is what many of us find alarming. But it’s also what Donald Trump is relying on as he sets off on the campaign trail again, looking for the votes of racist whites and raking over the ashes of a conflict that has never been properly resolved.
Sieg Heil, Jeeves!

The decision to lay a memorial stone at Westminster Abbey – alongside such literary giants as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens – to commemorate Pelham Grenville Wodehouse (1881-1975) has caused jaws to drop. Comic stories featuring the monocle-sporting Old Etonian Psmith, his hapless chum Bingo Little, that jolly gentleman of leisure, Bertie Wooster, his valet Jeeves, and other denizens of the Drones club and Blandings Castle set, made Wodehouse exceedingly wealthy. And extremely right-wing.

Wodehouse moved to Le Touquet in the Pas-de-Calais in 1934 to avoid paying tax in Britain. He turned down a seat on an RAF plane leaving France as German panzers swept across the country, and in 1941 he made five Fascist-friendly broadcasts from Berlin to the United States, which had not then entered the Second World War. Joseph Goebbels realized their enormous propaganda value, and the talks were subsequently broadcast to Britain, too.

These light-hearted fireside chats – while not in the same league as broadcasts by William Joyce, aka the Anglo-Irish Fascist Lord Haw-Haw, who was hanged for treason in 1946 – gave succour to the enemy. Wodehouse was condemned – notably by the BBC and Daily Mirror – as a collaborator, Nazi propagandist, and traitor.

Worried that he, too, would face justice – and dangle at the end of a rope like his Fascist friends – Wodehouse never came back to Britain. He fled to the US in 1947 to live in a penthouse on the Upper East Side of Manhattan and then at Remsenburg on Long Island. In 1965 the British government said he could return to the UK without fear of prosecution but he chose not to.

Even ardent admirers of his novels admit Wodehouse was an ‘odious anti-Semite’ whose broadcasts, as the former Conservative MP Gyles Brandreth says, ‘undoubtedly gave comfort to the enemy during the darkest days of the war’. And the Rev Alexander Faludy, vicar of Wallsend, drew attention in the Church Times to the author’s ‘entirely voluntary advocacy for the French far-right Action Française movement in the inter-war period.’

Keith Richmond
TUC Congress 2019

The 151st annual Trades Union Congress is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 8 to Wednesday 11 September