Drinking tea with the taste of the Thames

Inside: Mike Goldwater’s evocative black and white images of London Underground in the 1970s; Paul Routledge takes a trip to the Far North; and Chris Proctor on what 2020 holds in store
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We continue to fight

The message of hope for the future of our industry contained in my last column has been derailed by the result of the general election. The opportunity to recreate the voice of working people through the revoking of Maggie’s laws, the Trade Union Act, and the Lobbying Act, which stifle the long-won freedoms of ordinary people, has been lost. Crossrail for the North, HS2 to Scotland, an end to DOO, reopening of branch lines, a rolling programme of electrification, a better future for freight, and the delivery of integrated transport won’t happen now. Fares won’t be cut by a third, there won’t be free travel for under 16s, and we won’t get a maximum temperature in drivers’ cabs.

But we get up every day, regardless of who is in power, to fight politically, socially, and industrially, as we have always done, for each other and our industry – just as we have for the last 140 years.

We have not seen austerity in the way the rest of our communities have, but we have families and friends and cannot and do not forget the issues outside our industry. Some of the most disturbing images of the election were all those polling stations that were usually food banks. So the battle against zero hours contracts and faux self-employment in our industry, and elsewhere, continues. We want to help to build a better, more civilized, society and on these, and a multitude of other issues you tell us about, we will continue to fight.

As social democrats we respect the result and will work within the democratic process – but part of that process are our international treaties and bodies such as the ILO to which, as a nation, we subscribe; and that enshrine the right to strike, the ultimate sanction against poor or dishonourable employers. So if the new government does attack our industry with minimum service requirements let’s send them a message they will understand. We will not be signing up and any company that does will be in immediate and continuous dispute with this trade union – and we will not be found wanting in protecting each other and our rights.

Because we will not betray the legacy of those railwaymen who, in 1880, had the vision and the courage to form our trade union as an industrial, political, and social pressure group. ASLEF is more important now than ever.

Yours fraternally
Mick Whelan, general secretary
HE result of the general election on Thursday 12 December means we are still waiting for a Labour government committed to bringing Britain’s railways back into public ownership – still waiting, too, to see a train driver sitting in the House of Commons.

Boris Johnson has the majority he needs to ‘Get Brexit Done’. The Conservatives won 365 seats; Labour 203; Scottish National Party 48; Liberal Democrats 11; Democratic Unionist Party 8; Sinn Féin 7; Alliance Party 2; Green Party 4; Social Democratic & Labour Party 48; Liberal Democrats 1; Plaid Cymru 4; Social Democratic & Labour Party 2; Green Party 1; Alliance Party 1.

It’s now 49 years since a member of ASLEF was elected as a Member of Parliament. Archie Manuel, Labour MP for Central Ayrshire, was elected in 1950, re-elected in 1951, lost the seat in 1955 but won it back in 1959 and held it until he stepped down in 1970. We haven’t had a train driver in Parliament since.

Julian Vaughan, of Northern Line North branch, and a Tube driver for 16 years, got 14,160 votes to finish second in North East Bedfordshire behind Richard Fuller, the Conservative who in 2017 lost the neighbouring seat of Bedford, which he had held since 2010. Julian was well ahead of the Lib Dem, independent and Green candidates.

Howard Kaye, of King’s Cross branch, a driver with LNER, and EC member for District 5 since 2012, finished second with 11,282 votes in Aldershot, which has elected a Conservative MP ever since the constituency was created in 1918. Howard, who stood against Jeremy Hunt in South West Surrey in 2015 and 2017, was well ahead of the Lib Dem and Green candidates.

Ed Mayne, of Feltham Electric branch, and a driver with South West Trains, took 10,226 votes to finish third behind Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Transport from 2016 to 2019, and the Lib Dem in Epsom & Ewell. Ed finished well ahead of the Green Party and an independent. Tom Corbin, of Salisbury branch, a driver with South Western Railway, and a Salisbury city councillor since 2013, won 9,675 votes in Sarum to finish third behind John Glen, the sitting Conservative, and the Lib Dem candidate, and well ahead of the Greens and an independent standing as, ahem, King Arthur.

The wait goes on

Wombles are organised work as a team

On the railway we get trained to step up for every emergency and incident that could be thrown at us, to take control, and make the site safe. Well, ladies and gentlemen, a group of our colleagues from Wimbledon Park were attending a gathering at the site of the Clapham train crash when there was a car accident directly across the road. Without hesitation, Chris Sneddon went across to assist the car driver who had been taken ill at the wheel while Steve Stickland and Steve Iacolino lay a wreath at the Clapham rail memorial and (left) spring into action after the car crash over the road Iacolino directed rush hour traffic around the accident until police and ambulance arrived. Mark Stickland said ‘We all kicked into gear as soon as we realised what had happened’. Well done, you have made me even prouder of being a Womble. Dave Bryce, Wimbledon 234 branch.

QUOTE...

‘If the government don’t invest in us then they are effectively strangling the economy. If investment isn’t made in the railway then how will people get around?’ – Andrew Haines, chief executive, Network Rail

...UNQUOTE

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

For 151 years, trade unionists have been fighting to win justice for working people. We’ve outlasted every government and every prime minister. A strong union movement is the best way for us to win the future we desire. Join in union today. @The_TUC

To everyone that’s supported me. Thank you. This isn’t the end. The real fight starts now. @aalishah

Momentum’s Laura Parker and other comfy leftists persist with the ‘it was Brexit, not Jeremy or our popular policies won lost it’ alibi. This is understandable but delusional. @michaelwhite

Angel Trains offers Northern Pacers to heritage railways and emergency services, donating proceeds to charity. @RailProMag

Heritage railways I get but what the f*** are the emergency services going to do with a 142xxx Pacer? @SimonWeller

ELECTRO MAN: Members can receive the ASLEF Journal and circulars electronically. Please contact admin dept on 020 7324 2400.
You should have seen Tuesday’s dream dancing in my head

HEN Angela Rayner, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, was campaigning with Deanne Ferguson in Morley & Outwood, she asked one young man what he wanted to do when he left school. ‘Be a train driver’, was the answer. And when Angela tweeted a video of their encounter, we knew what to do. Send him a box of ASLEF goodies! And, as you might imagine, he was thrilled.

His mum Nicki Bindley tweeted, with the picture above, ‘Thank you so much @ASLEFunion, you’ve made my boy’s day. He was so excited and is now more determined than ever to be a train driver!’

#IWantToBeATrainDriver.

‘proud mother,’ grandmother, Yorkshire woman, and Labour Party member. Love my family and my lunchtime supervisor job’ - added: ‘We’ve just had parents’ evening and he’s told his teachers all about it. He’s now planning on working really hard at school to make sure he can achieve his dream.’

And he wrote us a very nice, and neat, letter: ‘Dear general secretary, I am writing because I would like to say thank you for the wonderful things you sent me. I would also like to say when I start driving trains I would love to join ASLEF, it would be an honour. Yous sincerely, Jack Edward Bindley.’

Alan Moss, Longsight, tweeted: ‘This is brilliant. The look on the little guy’s face says it all.’

Bindley tweeted, with the picture above, ‘My boy’s face says it all.’

Off the Rails

AVANTI may not, after all, be the best name for a train company. FirstGroup and Trentitalia announced, with some fanfare, Avanti West Coast on Wednesday 27 November as the new name for the west coast main line franchise. ‘It’s Italian for “Forward!” and reflects a mission to deliver an innovative railway service ready for today and for the future’ gushed a particularly vacuous press release from the new operators. Trouble is, Avanti is also the name for a ‘real feel’ condom.

Durex claims ‘Avanti is one of our thinnest’ and promises ‘bare next to nothing feel’. Well, quite. Seems the shiny boys and girls in strategy and marketing, who dreamt up the ‘bright orange triangle, symbolising the extent of the 400 mile route’, didn’t do their homework. But the tweets – ‘Avanti condoms are more reliable than Avanti rail’ and ‘passengers are getting royally screwed by Avanti’ – have, predictably, started.

CONFERENCES & RALLIES

The Welsh Labour Party conference is at the Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Friday 27 to Sunday 29 March. The Scottish Trades Union Congress is at the Concert Hall, Perth, from Monday 20 to Wednesday 22 April. Workers’ Memorial Day is Tuesday 28 April.

ASLEF’s annual assembly of delegates is at the Hilton Hotel in Cardiff from Monday 11 to Friday 15 May. The Wales TUC is at the Venue Cymru in Llandudno from Tuesday 19 to Thursday 21 May. The STUC LGBT+ conference is at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow, from Saturday 23 to Sunday 24 May. The STUC youth conference is at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow, from Saturday 27 to Sunday 28 June. The Durham Miners’ Gala is on Saturday 11 July. The Tolpuddle Martyrs’ festival, near Dorchester, is from Friday 17 to Sunday 19 July. The Burston strike school rally at Burston, near Diss in Norfolk, is on Sunday 6 September. The Trades Union Congress is at the Brighton Centre from Sunday 13 to Wednesday 16 September. The Labour Party conference is at the ACC convention centre in Liverpool from Saturday 19 to Wednesday 23 September.

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

'You should have seen Tuesday’s dream dancing in my head'

500 CLUB: The WRC, with number 171, won the December draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £430.
To the lighthouse

IAN MOORE, assistant branch secretary, Woking 235, reports on an exciting and successful branch initiative to help support local people living on the wrong side of the tracks.

At our branch meeting in March last year, Woking members agreed to form links with a local community support project called The Lighthouse, the collective name for a dozen different community support programmes all located in one place. A branch colleague and I visited and Alison showed us facilities where people could learn to cook, where new mums could bring their little ones to play, and where pensioners could come and sit for a coffee. There is real passion shown by the volunteers here to tackle isolation in the community.

But The Lighthouse isn’t just about socialising. Someone escaping from a history of domestic abuse, in the depths of depression, whatever. There is real passion shown by the volunteers here to tackle isolation in the community.

After discussing various options for supporting the project, we decided to put a food donation box in the mess room. We sent an email to members and asked them to buy one extra item on their weekly shop and pop it in the box. And they did! In some cases, they bought an extra bag of food for the box and, since March, Woking depot has donated 12 overflowing crates to the food bank and every time we empty it, it fills up again in days!

I want to say a massive thank you to the members of Woking branch for their continued support and also to say thank you to the people who – without prompt – get up each day and do something good for people they may never meet. They expect no reward, and ask nothing for themselves. Their drive is simply to help those below them on the ladder and offer a helping hand up to the next rung. The essence of trade unionism.

Congratulations, Geoff of GBRf

Geoff Brown (left) picks up his 45 year badge from GBRf company council rep Barry Hare. ‘Geoff is based at Peterborough and his tales of his time on the footplate entertain the new generation of drivers at the depot,’ says Barry. ‘We look forward to many more years working with Geoff brightening up our days. Massive achievement, Geoff. Congratulations!’

Good luck, Noel

Sad to report our brother Noel O’Hara has retired from London Underground after 34 years’ service.
Noel, as an ASLEF rep, working closely and tirelessly with members and reps in Jubilee East 272, a true gentleman, always ready to assist and fight for our members, extremely popular, and will be greatly missed. Even now he’s retired he expressed his disgust to me about being removed from What’s App groups, etc! He may have gone but the old tenacity remains! The GS was on hand to thank Noel for his loyal service. I think I speak for everyone in District 8 when I wish him all the best for the future. Gary Comfort.
Jubilee East

Aslef in action at the Woking food bank

QUOTE...
‘Now politicians are associated only with botched schemes: Brexit, the Iraq War, universal credit, rail privatisation, multiple NHS reorganisations.’ – Peter Wilby, New Statesman

‘He’s frit!’

DOS Nigel Gibson spotted this wonderful parody of Martin Hanford’s Where’s Wally? children’s books after Boris Johnson avoided being interviewed by Piers Morgan on Good Morning Britain by hiding in a fridge/freezer during a dawn raid on a factory in Pudsey in West Yorkshire.

TRAMLINK INQUEST OPENS

An inquest into the deaths of seven passengers on a tram at Sandilands in 2016 was opened by Sarah Ormrod-Walshe, senior coroner for south London, at Croydon town hall on Wednesday 11 December. The Crown Prosecution Service, acting on advice from the British Transport Police, announced on 31 October that the Tramlink driver, Alf Dorris, would not be charged with gross negligence manslaughter.

MARGAM: NO FORMAL LOOKOUT
An interim RAIB report into the deaths on the railway line at Margam has found that ‘no formal lookout was appointed’ and a third track worker came ‘very close’ to being hit.
No, he’s still here, you are not alone

ANDY BULLOCK, Freightliner
Intermodal business council, reports on a poignant naming
ceremony at Ipswich last month

Joint initiative between
Freightliner, the Samaritans and
Greater Anglia saw a loco named You Are
Never Alone which is one of the many phrases the
Samaritans use to tell people, who may be
suffering from mental health issues, that
there is always someone you can talk to at the end of the line.

A brief insight into the work the Samaritans do, along with the support
from TOCs and FOCs and Network Rail, was given before the
naming ceremony took place on the platform at Ipswich.

The Movember campaign last year was used to highlight
the issues of mental health awareness. Others in attendance were
Andy Bullock, Pete Mason and Mark Mulley of Freightliner
Intermodal business council; DOS Nigel Gibson; Neil
McNicholas and Andy Murphy of Freightliner; and Sandy Martin, Labour MP for
Ipswich since 2017, as well as a group of volunteers
from the Samaritans.

A short speech by the railway chaplain
was given before the unveiling of the nameplate which was performed by
drivers Dave Bray and Steve Read who were
good friends of a colleague who, sadly, took his own life
earlier this year.

QUOTE...
‘Is Boris Johnson dyeing his hair? He is, isn’t he? It can’t be that blonde at 55. He looks
like the love child of Billy Idol and Augustus Gloop.’ — David Baddiel

...UNQUOTE

Staying safe

ASLEF backed a joint project with the Scottish government
and British Transport Police to remind
‘partygoers and transport users’ ahead of
Christmas and Hogmanay, ‘to extend
the season of goodwill to rail staff and fellow passengers.’

Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF’s organiser in
Scotland, said: ‘We all want to let our hair
down and have a bit of fun over the festive
fortnight – at Christmas and New Year here in Scotland –
but every passenger, and every man and
woman who works on our railway, has the
right to go to work without being abused or attacked.
‘That’s why we are backing the BTP plea
for people to enjoy a drink, and a party, but
remember to treat each other – and train
drivers and station staff on the railways
here in Scotland – with respect.’

Chief Superintendent Eddie Wylie added:
‘Everyone has the right to a safe journey.’

Thanks for the memories

With a combined service of 87 years, Yoker
drivers John Paton and Colin McDonald have
decided it’s time to retire.

John started on the railway in 1967 as a
book marker at High Street East signal box,
went on to be a signaler at Milton junction
and, when the box shut, went to Bridgeotton
depot as a guard. With the closure of
Bridgeoton in 1987 he moved to Yoker as a
guard, then on to driving for the next 27
years of his career. So, all in, 52 years’ service.

Colin, with 35 years’ service, decided to
retire early, having always said he was going
at 55. He started as a second man at
Polmadie in 1984. Along with several
colleagues, Colin went to Selhurst for his
driving appointment, before returning home
to Yoker in 1987.

A great turnout for both of these popular
drivers was held in the Counting House in
Glasgow. We wish both of them a long and
healthy retirement.

Mick Kane, LLC secretary, Yoker

DO2 Kevin Lindsay with SNP Scottish government Transport Minister Michael Matheson, BTP officers, and railway staff

DO6 Dicky Fisher and ASLEF activists out on
the campaign trail with Labour candidate – as well as restaurant owner and kebab
connoisseur – Ibrahim Dogus in West Bromwich East.

NEAR MISS
The RAIB has launched an
investigation after a
group of rail workers
carrying out a track
inspection just south of
Kirtlebridge, on the west coast main
line, narrowly
avoided being struck
by a Virgin train
travelling at 125mph
in Dumfries and
Galloway just after
9am on 14 November.

ASLEF’s new powerbank with 4400mAh capacity
and LED. Suitable for smart phones and tablets. Product dimensions: 80 x 63mm. Price £10 (inc
p&p); email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online
shop at www.aslef.org.uk
The gasoline alley where I was born

E VERYONE knows about Rod Stewart’s passion for models. Usually tall, elegant, blonde, and beautiful. Less well known – at least until he appeared on the front cover of the December issue of Railway Modeller – is his passion for model railways.

Sir Rod’s layout – don’t you dare call it a train set – is 124ft long, 23ft wide, 26 years in the making, and sits in an attic at his home in Beverly Hills. It depicts a fictional US city, a cross between New York and Chicago in the mid-1940s, with coal wagons, warehouses, overspilling trash cans, and busy rush hour streets, all artfully bathed in a lush late afternoon North American sun. ‘I find beauty in what everyone else sees as ugly,’ says the 74-year-old rocker, who made his name with albums like Every Picture Tells a Story, Gasoline Alley, and An Old Raincoat Won’t Ever Let You Down. ‘Rugged skyscrapers, beaten-up warehouses, things that are very run down.’

Rod, who had a hit with his cover of the Tom Waits song Downtown Train in 1989, feared he would be mocked about his hobby which is why he kept his passion quiet for so long. Remember the old gag? Question: ‘What do model railway enthusiasts use for birth control?’ Answer: ‘Their personalities.’

Rod Stewart, Roger Daltrey, Neil Young, Eric Clapton, Jools Holland, Tom Hanks, and Pete Waterman (as well as Frank Sinatra and Buster Keaton playing with their Hornby layouts in the sky) would beg to differ.

Flower of Scotland

ASLEF activists were out in force on Monday 18 November outside Queen Street station, Glasgow, from 7.30 to 9.30am, and Haymarket station, Edinburgh, from 4.30 to 6.30pm, for a rail campaign day in Scotland.

Kevin Lindsay, our full-time organiser in Scotland, said: ‘The SNP showed its true colours – as Tartan Tories – by voting with the Conservatives at Holyrood to keep our railway in the hands of the privateers. If you want a publicly-owned railway in Scotland – and most people do – vote Labour at the general election.’

And GS Mick Whelan said: ‘The Scottish people deserve to own and run their own Scottish railway. Let’s bring it back into public ownership, let passengers have lower fares, and let’s invest any surpluses back into the Scottish rail network.’

Underneath the arches

The Arch Company, which paid £1.5 billion for 5,200 railway arches owned by Network Rail, has denied it will be an abusive landlord and railroad through crippling rent rises. The company insists it will ‘engage with tenants and communities in an open and responsive manner’. But small firms fear the company, which is funded by US private equity giant Blackstone and the global property investor Telereal Trillium, will do its best to force them out to bring in High Street chains on higher rents.

Michael Matheson, Transport Secretary in the SNP government at Holyrood, says a fleet of self-driving buses could be operating in Scotland by the end of this year. They will initially be on trial on a 14 mile route between the Edinburgh Park train/tram interchange and the ferry toll park and ride site in Fife but he is keen to roll them out across the country.

Our new topical tee-shirt, designed by those Hoxton hipsters at Philosophy Football, features Rik Mayall as the obnoxious anarchist Rick in The Young Ones, and this classic exchange: ‘He threw us off the train because you said ASLEF was an anagram for “total and complete bastard”.’ ‘And apart from everything else… it isn’t, even.’ £10 (inc p&p); email info@aslef.org.uk or visit our online shop at www.aslef.org.uk
The 136th Durham Miners’ Gala
will be held on Saturday 11 July 2020

Please support the Big Meeting by joining the Friends of Durham Miners’ Gala
www.friendsofdurhamminersgala.org
You can knit a sweater by the fireside

BY BILL DALE

ROLLING STOCK

‘When I get older, losing my hair
Many years from now
Will you still need me, will you still feed me
When I’m sixty-four
I could be handy, mending a fuse
When your lights have gone out'

AY Jackson, chair, welcomed us all to the weekend forum and called for a minute’s silence in memory of former national secretary Tony West.

GS Mick Whelan began his address by remembering Tony, and his enormous contribution to ASLEF, and went on to talk about the future with a new Secretary of State for Transport, the Williams rail review, the possible end of the franchise system, and the introduction of management contracts on Britain’s railways, or the renationalisation of the railway, depending on the result of the general election.

On freight, and with HS2 in mind, Mick said rail should move freight long haul, with lorries doing short haul, to protect the environment and tackle the climate emergency. He said there were great concerns over safety issues on the railway, for both staff and passengers.

ASLEF, he said, is financially stable and in a good place; with money set aside for development. The union is supporting the CWU action at Royal Mail, and will also support the Mayor of London as he has kept his promise not to touch LUL pensions or driverless trains.

EC president Dave Caife also paid tribute to Tony West, then spoke about a number of important issues affecting drivers. ASLEF attends Rail Safety & Standards Board meetings on behalf of train drivers and the RSSB looks to us for our views. CCTV in cabs is totally unacceptable, and there is an issue about data recorders being downloaded via satellite to follow a driver’s actions which we are addressing.

On freight, there has been a downturn over five years resulting in a loss of jobs. There is now driver recruitment from the streets for engineering trains with a progression to main line drivers. He said the whistle issue, over blowing the horn when a person does not move to a place of safety, and its hours of use, are being dealt with, as is the idea that there should be no route learning if the route is less than five miles.

ASLEF wants all cabs to meet with current high standards and be fit for purpose; not just new rolling stock.

‘Standing up for you’. She discussed personal injury accident claims, and the significant legal developments that affect these claims and related cases.

Court proceedings have to be commenced within three years of the date of an accident, and the burden of proof lies with the claimant although it can switch to the defendant in certain circumstances. Clare explained, in some detail, the changes that have been made to what arguments can be made about breach of duty and the consequences for employers who breach the Health & Safety at Work Act.

‘Qualified one way costs shifting’ and ‘fundamental dishonesty’, she said, ‘are very complex and can affect either claimant or defendant losing the case and having to pay all the costs’. The courts have clarified what they consider constitutes fundamental dishonesty. Interestingly, the legislation only affects claimants; there are no corresponding provisions for defendants that may be fundamentally dishonest in the presentation of their case. ‘Vicarious liability’ is another issue. This was an extremely well-presented and clearly-explained presentation by Clare.

On Saturday Ronnie Morrison, a member of the Transport & General Workers’ Union when it merged with Amicus in 2007 to form Unite, said his union recognised the importance of its retired members’ section – which has 250,000 members, of whom 60,000 pay just 55p per week – and the role of the National Pensioners’ Convention.

Leigh Wilks, president of York and district TUC, and Barry Bothamley, chair of Yorkshire & Humberside TUC, said it was special to talk to ASLEF as we are a small union, and the TUC is dominated by larger unions. The role of the TUC, they said, is to be a hub for union activists but it needs to be more communicative between Congress House, trades councils, and branches.

On Sunday Clare Timmins from Thompson solicitors addressed us on the topic of ‘Standing up for you’. She discussed personal injury accident claims, and the significant legal developments that affect these claims and related cases.

THE RMS 500 CLUB

A gentle reminder – and request – for all those who pay by cheque. When your renewal is due, it would be helpful – and greatly appreciated – if you would consider changing your payments to a standing order by completing the bank form on page 18 of the ASLEF Journal and advising head office of your change. This will save on administration of reminders being sent and processing the cheques. And, more importantly, your continuous payments will ensure you are always in the draw!
I believe 'cos I can see our future days

**What does 2020 hold in store for us? We asked CHRIS PROCTOR, our very own Michel de Nostredame, the reputed seer who wrote Les Prophéties, to peer into his crystal ball for the Journal**

**JANUARY JEST**
Great Britain wins the global 'Most Amusing Nation' competition following the election of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister. The ‘best one-liner’ prize goes to the Conservative Party campaign team for its pre-election gems ‘Forty new hospitals!’; ‘We’ll end low pay altogether!’; and ‘£25 billion to improve Britain’s roads!’ Compère ‘Bruiser’ Putin (no relation) says, ‘The genius of these punch lines is that some people actually believed they were true’

**FEBRUARY’S FOLLY**
Prince Andrew is appointed press relations officer at ASLEF after holding off strong challenges from Edward Hyde, Vlad the Impaler and Dr Crippen. No women candidates stood against him. Or indeed anywhere close by.

**MARCHING ON**
On 7 January, 8 March, 6 June, 12 October and 7 December, the Department for Transport announces exactly the same thing: the government is utterly committed to providing more carriages, greater capacity and longer platforms for our trains. The same number of people are taken in by this nonsense as they were in 2019, 2018, 2017, etc, when identical announcements were also made.

**APRIL SHOWER**
For the first time since 1126, the UK has no senior overseer of the country’s finances. Despite bribes, threats and pleadings, no one is prepared to move into 11 Downing Street, a precondition of the job of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Many said that rather than live next door to Carrie and Boris’s deafening domestic discourse, they’d prefer to rock up at Albert Square. The soap opera has previously featured Allegra Mostyn-Owen, Marina Wheeler, Petronella Wyatt, and Helen Macintyre.

**MAY OUI**
ASLEF’s annual assembly of delegates is cancelled as union activists declare themselves ‘entirely satisfied with their wages, conditions, hours, health & safety arrangements, rosters and managers’. Mick Whelan says he doesn’t believe the news. ‘I can accept most of them,’ he says, ‘but – a satisfied health & safety rep or member? I don’t think so!'

**JUNE WIT FIELD**
The HS2 project is finally completed! Only joking! Instead, the government issues a number of reasons why the new line is still on the drawing board rather than the track. ‘We were badly advised by Larry the Cat.’ ‘HS’ doesn’t stand for ‘high speed’; it is short for ‘Hello sailor’. ‘A gust of wind blew the blueprint out of the window. It’s a blow.’

**JULY JAPES**
The government goes on holiday, exiting the country en masse. ‘Now you’ll see what it’s like without us!’ declares the PM. Productivity soars along with spirits: spontaneous dancing in the street causes good-natured traffic delays; drivers are lifted from their cabs, toasted and taken home to bed; parks are commandeered for singalong performances of Mary Poppins; foreigners are greeted with friendly cheers at Channel ports; the NHS declares itself over-funded and starts a public loan service; 3,000 homeless families move into the Mogg mansion; Queen does jig.

**AUGUST COMPANY**
Crossrail is finally completed! Faced with evidence that the capital is now a mound of earth covered in large holes, the government explains that Crossrail was never intended to be a railway. A statement says, ‘It is the largest and most impressive archeological dig for decades. Also, it has made people cross with rail, thus fulfilling the promise implicit in its name.’

**SEPT-IC**
The European Union votes to disband. ‘Without the United Kingdom, we are nothing,’ say the French representatives. German MEPs wave union flags saying, ‘If it is good for the moose it is fine for the sander’ (although this may be the result of a translation inaccuracy). The Polish statement is ignored as no one realises they are EU members. Mr Farage of Orpington, Kent, leaves the building with egg stains on his jacket and a mound of expense forms. Pointing at the latter, he says, ‘This is what is has all been about. This is what matters.’

**RED OCTOBER**
Shortly before the US Presidential election, Donald Trump pulls out of the race. In a dignified interview, the Donald tells the nation, ‘The country needs to build communities, extend fraternity and goodwill, stop worshipping money and care for the environment. We need honesty from the administration, the Oval Office and the media.’ Some Americans are so moved they cannot watch the entire interview and go outside to watch piglets fly overhead, migrating over the wall to Mexico.

**NOVEMBER NIGHTS**
Early November sees a Daily Mail campaign to have effigies of Jeremy Corbyn burned in place of those of Guy Fawkes. ‘Robert Catesby and Guido Fawkes were only murdering bigoted terrorists,’ the editor of Beyond the Pail explains. ‘But Jeremy Corbyn is a socialist.’

**DECEMBER HOOT**
The first official sighting of Santa Claus has been recorded by a Scotsman, Mr L O K Ness-Monster. Mr Ness-Monster displayed grainy black and white photographs taken on a dash cam on a moped in the fog. Nicola Sturgeon insisted that only a biased English person could fail to be convinced by the evidence. ‘If Santa isn’t real,’ she said, ‘then I’m a Tartan Tory.’ Subsequent polls in Glasgow show plummeting faith in the existence of Father Christmas.
IKE Goldwater picked up a camera as a boy, discovered he had a talent for taking pictures, and hasn’t been seen without a lens ever since.


And his exhibitions include Famine in Africa at the Side Gallery, Newcastle, in 1985; Positive Lives, a touring project about HIV and AIDS in 1995; NHS at 50 at the Photographers’ Gallery, London, in 1998; and Between Revolution and War at the Camilo Minero, San Salvador, in 2014.

These pictures, taken in the 1970s, were his first professional project. ‘When it was still acceptable to talk, kiss, and even smoke on the London Underground,’ muses Martin Ushborne of Hoxton Mini Press, ‘Mike spent years documenting chance moments of intimacy and humour across this iconic network of tunnels beneath the capital.’

The pictures – of lovers, buskers, and footie fans; Saturday night partygoers and tired commuters, deep in thought, desperate to get home at the end of the working day – conjure up what Lucy Davies, of the Telegraph, describes in her introduction as ‘this vast and rambling network, opened in 1863, and famously simplified by Frank Pick’s diagrammatic map of 1933.

‘Some stations were lit only by individual hanging bulbs in white light shades, immersing travellers in a dim, Hades-like gloom. It made taking photographs incredibly difficult, forcing Mike to function at the very limit of his film’s capabilities, but it gives his pictures a wonderfully brooding, unearthly cast. He had to hide his camera from Underground staff, who would stop him taking pictures if they caught him.’

Finn Brennan, ASLEF’s organiser on the Underground, says: ‘Although, at first, these photos seem to evoke a world that has gone, there is much that is the same today. Lovers still kiss on Underground platforms, middle-aged men in suits are still tired and confused after a long evening out, and football fans still head to Wembley Central.

‘In many ways the Underground is a better and safer place than it was in the 1970s. An unpopular view, I know, among those who believe everything was better in the old days! But underinvestment as London’s population declined, poor pay and conditions for staff, and few of the safety features we now take for granted, meant it was often a very unwelcoming place, especially for women or those at risk, during the heyday of the National Front.

‘But, whatever changes, the Underground and its workforce remain at the heart of the city.’

A beautiful new book by Mike Goldwater brings together 87 of his favourite images taken on the London Underground from 1970 to 1980

Waterloo & City line 1979

Baker Street 1979

Oxford Circus 1979 (above); Tottenham Court Road 1977 (inset)
WELL LET THE BOYS ALL SING AND THE BOYS ALL SHOUT FOR TOMORROW

London Underground 1970-1980 by Mike Goldwater (Hoxton Mini Press, £16.95) is the sixth volume in the publisher’s Vintage Britain series. The press is a small independent publisher based – its name notwithstanding – in Hackney, east London. ‘Our goal is to bring good photography to a wide audience,’ says Ann Waldvogel. ‘Arty books should be beautiful but they needn’t be big or expensive. It’s a series dedicated to rediscovering the best photographs taken in Britain in the mid- to late-20th century.’

EVERYBODY SAYS IT’S JUST LIKE ROCK’N’ROLL

Mike Goldwater has carried out photographic assignments all over the world. As the publishers, Martin Usborne and Ann Waldvogel, dryly note, ‘he now travels for free on the Underground.’ This, though, is a picture from the archives when Mike was paying tribute to Marc Bolan’s 20th Century Boy look, and taking these London Underground pics.
My heart’s in the Highlands a-ch
of Wick on the east side of Caithness and Thurso on the west. To avoid mountains that run down to the sea, the line meandered deeply inland, across treacherous bogland.

As the crow flies it’s only 35 miles, but double that by train, with few stops and some of those merely for shooting lodges like Borrobol and Salzacraggie stations. The route diverged at Georgemas Junction (and still does), reaching Wick and Thurso in 1874. It may not be the Wild West, but the Wild North took some taming.

The London, Midland & Scottish Railway took over the route after absorbing the Highland Railway in the big four grouping of 1923. In a bid to attract tourists, the company inaugurated two named trains in 1936: The Orcadian, a morning service, and the John O’Groats, which ran in the evening, each knocking an hour off the five hour schedule.

SUSPENDED AT OUTBREAK OF WAR
Both were suspended at the outbreak of the Second World War, and only The Orcadian resumed post-war service. It was abandoned in 1964, not long after diesel locomotives superseded steam in the Far North. In both world wars, Jellicoe Specials, named after the Admiral of the Fleet who commanded the Royal Navy at the Battle of Jutland in 1916, carrying naval personnel and material, ran direct from London Euston to Thurso, taking 22 hours to cover the length of the country.

In the beginning, for its extensive system, the Highland Railway built an impressive four-fifths of a round house in Inverness, with 32 roads approached under an arch topped by a water tank. At the height of steam, it boasted 60 locos, mainly LMS Black Fives from the 1930s and coded 60A in British Rail days.

To serve the Far North, there were small depots at Helmsdale (60C) and Wick (60D), with sub-shed Thurso; all three with only a handful allocation, gradually closing after steam gave way to diesel. I remember going there in 1959 as a young railway enthusiast. You had to choose between Wick and Thurso, as you couldn’t do both.

Rather against its will, the Highland Railway was a paternalist company, being obliged to build houses for its employees in far-flung places. But it refused to deal with trade unions, including ASLEF. Staff had to make ‘petitions’ to the board, and directors granted what they pleased.

UNION MEMBERSHIP ROSE SHARPLY
That changed when union membership rose sharply during the Great War of 1914-18, enabling ASLEF, whose branch was formed in 1916, and the NUR to negotiate terms and conditions – but only after a week-long strike in 1919 during which one blackleg train was driven to Lairg by the manager of the Inverness electricity works.

Nationalisation in 1948 heralded the closure of branch lines and the closure of 20 intermediate stations between Inverness and Wick although some have since reopened. Worse was to follow in 1963 when the infamous Beeching Report recommended the closure of all lines north of Inverness.

The Far North was reprieved – possibly on national security grounds – but Inverness footplate numbers fell, particularly after dieselisation. They stabilised at 40 (four full-time at Wick). There are four trains each way from Inverness along the whole route, with only one on Sunday, which, as we found, is very well patronised.

In the summer, it’s popular with tourists. Scots author Moray McLaren, drawn back to his roots, wrote in 1930: ‘The Highland Railway does not rob anything of the grandeur of the scenery through which it passes. It is so insignificant, its trains pass so seldom, and so slowly, it no more takes away the desolation of the Highlands for the traveller than does the sight of an Atlantic liner minimize for the swimmer the vastness of the ocean.’

Where next for this once-threatened survivor? Bill Reeve, director of rail for Transport Scotland, insists: ‘The future of the line is not in doubt. The questions now are how to best to develop the line and its services, be it passenger and freight. The Scottish government understands the contribution this line makes to the economy, and the communities it serves, and is committed to its future success. Track and line speed improvements, level crossing upgrades, new maintenance staff, and RETB signalling developments are all evidence of this. And, yes, the investment case for a passing place between Inverness and Dingwall is under discussion.’

FAST LIL GOT THE 158 UP TO 75MPH
The Far North is run by ScotRail, which is part of the Dutch operator Abellio. The Scottish Labour Party, with ASLEF support, wants to nationalise the system but the ruling SNP government has set its face against public ownership. The union’s main beef with management is the drafting in of senior executives from outside. ‘The people who run the railway now don’t understand the railway,’ says Andrew Gardner.

Returning on the 12.30 Sunday service from Thurso, Lilian Slater is in the cab. With four years’ driving experience, she might earn the title of Fast Lil. I swear she took the old 158 up to the maximum 75mph limit on several sections, and we made most stops well in time despite the lashing rain and high winds.

And, with classic Highland brevity, when I asked ‘Is the job difficult?’ she replied ‘No, not really.’ Not for those who can do it, clearly. After a couple of hours’ rest, she has to take the train all the way back to Wick – a formidable shift. I don’t think I could do that on the cushions!

PAUL ROUTLEDGE – who writes a column each Friday in the Daily Mirror – is a veteran political and industrial reporter and the son of a railwayman. Paul worked for The Times, leaving for The Observer when Rupert Murdoch moved his newspapers to Wapping, the Independent on Sunday, Daily Mirror, Tribune and Huddersfield Examiner (he lives in North Yorkshire).

CHARLIE WHELAN – who trades on Twitter as a ‘fly fisher who doesn’t like spinning’ – was a press secretary (well, spin doctor) to Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when Labour was last in government, and then political director of Unite. Charlie is now a freelance writer, broadcaster, and fly fisherman who lives in Grantown-on-Spey.
Eat, drink, and be merry

Sixty former and current Toton colleagues and their partners enjoyed the 2019 depot reunion at the Sportsman in Long Eaton, Derbyshire, on Friday 25 October doing what railway people have always done – chatting, drinking and eating. Many colleagues were in their 70s and 80s and our oldest, John Scattergood, was just a few days short of his 93rd birthday, with his 90-year-old wife beside him. Donations and an auction of two Toton mugs commissioned by Phil Gadd, who travelled from his Bristol base, raised £370 to ensure that another depot reunion will take place in 2020. Thank you, Phil, for the mugs and a jigsaw (which everyone agreed should be given to the widow of former colleague and ASLEF president Sean Madden) and to everyone for their donations. Reg Sargeant, RMS

BADGES AND BEER

DO1 Graham Morris gave us an update on issues in District 1 and what’s happening across the country. He took questions from members before making long service presentations to retired member J Carney, who received his 45 year badge, and R Williams, who received his 40 year badge; he also presented badges from five to 30 years to members in attendance.

Mark Jenkins, Eastbourne branch secretary

Lest we forget

Carmarthen 045 branch came together on Friday 8 November to remember the men of the Great Western Railway who lost their lives during the Great War of 1914-18. A memorial plaque, sponsored by ASLEF, TfW, the RMT, Carmarthen Round Table, and West Wales Signallers, was unveiled at the railway station last year with EC member Andy Hudd laying a wreath on behalf of ASLEF. Hannah Tuck, the railway chaplain, delivered a poignant service followed by the laying of poppy wreaths and the sounding of the last post. Steven John, a local historian, undertook research with the assistance of branch chair Simon Biggs into the personal stories of the eight men who made the ultimate sacrifice. Simon set out to ensure that a permanent memorial was erected at Carmarthen railway station so future generations would not forget the sacrifice that those men made. At a branch meeting, we moved to part fund the cost of the memorial plaque alongside other industry partners. Every year we will, as a depot and community, come together to remember those who fought, those who lost their lives, and who carry the emotional and physical scars of all our country’s conflicts.

Chris Owen, branch secretary

upcoming events

- EASTLEIGH – SATURDAY 14 MARCH
  Reunion from 12.0 at the Eastleigh Railway Institute, Romsey Road, Eastleigh, Hants, SO50 9FE. All grades welcome.

- BRIGHTON – TUESDAY 5 MAY
  The 10th annual Brighton & Sussex branches reunion for all ASLEF members, past and present, from 14.00 at the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont, off Dyke Road, Brighton, BN1 3TF. ‘ASLEF members from other branches will also be made very welcome,’ says Paul Edwards (07402 478278).
RIP Westy

On Monday 11 November, not only were we remembering the fallen, we were gathered at Eltham crematorium in Bexleyheath, south-east London, to remember our dear friend and comrade Bro Tony West. The service was very emotional and focused on Tony’s family life, with a passionate and moving speech from his son-in-law on behalf of Tony’s daughters.

The place was packed – it was standing room only – with the congregation comprising people who had travelled the length and breadth of the country to pay their respects to a great man.

Tony was a lifelong member of ASLEF and Stratford branch, holding many positions; from the heart of the depot, right up to national level as AGS, and latterly the RMS. He joined ASLEF in 1962 and was witness to, and instrumental in providing, many of the benefits we receive today, with salaries, conditions, and protections in employment, and represented (successfully) many members reading this article! Tony went on to represent our retired members, and pensioners in wider society, and was always, without fail, there to help those in need of assistance or advice.

Tony was a man of stature, a powerful man, and a man of respect – when Tony spoke, he spoke with conviction, integrity and honesty, and he commanded an audience. He was an integral part of the fabric of Stratford branch’s history, and will be remembered fondly by all who had the pleasure and privilege to know him.

At the service, the Stratford branch banner made an appearance as a fitting tribute. We hope his family took a little comfort in knowing how well we all thought of him.

At the wake, more speeches were made and we learnt more about Tony the trade unionist, the railwayman and the stalwart that he was. I heard someone say the word ‘legend’ is thrown around too easily these days, and that is correct; but Tony was the definition of the word – part of our collective success but now, sadly, part of our history, although his memory will never be forgotten.

The GS made a passionate and emotional speech that captivated the audience and made us reflect, smile, laugh, and shed a tear – and Mick reminded us of a phrase that many had heard Tony say; when he gave you his hand for a mighty handshake – a handshake that was as solid as his word – he would say ‘Here’s my hand, here’s my heart.’ Well, Tony, as we bid you farewell, you had all our hands with you, and you had all our hearts!

RIP Westy, a legend and a gentleman.

John Thorpe, branch secretary

We turn back time – and the pages of the Locomotive Journal – to January 1920 and victory for the union against blacklegs, and the mystery of the missing GS photos

WITH HOPE AND ENTHUSIASM

The editor extends to all readers his sincerest good wishes for a very Happy New Year. May 1920 see the ASLEF go from strength to strength and victory to victory. As another year dawns we can look backward with satisfaction and forward with hope and enthusiasm.

BLACKLEGS OFF FOOTPLATE

We have pulled off an important victory for all branches having members on the Caledonian. This company was alone in retaining the services of men who volunteered as blacklegs during the recent strike. This fact was very irsksome to our members. We communicated with the Prime Minister, who acquainted the Minister of Transport, and on Tuesday 16 December, Messrs Bromley, Walker, and Squance had a long interview with Mr Matheson, who agreed to return to Scotland to investigate at once. The result is a complete victory, as Mr Matheson agrees to remove all the strike blacklegs from the footplate, and if they are kept in the company’s service at all they will be in positions which cannot prejudice any of our members.

NATIONALISE THE RAILWAYS

Mr Lloyd George has stated at Manchester, and other coalition speakers have stated elsewhere, that they intend to challenge the Labour Party’s claim to nationalise the mines and railways, and to make this the paramount issue at the next election.

THE LISTS ARE BEING CLEARED

A section of the Liberal Party has grown weary of the coalition, and is up in arms against those so-called Liberals who are the mainstay of Tory controllers. This cleavage is getting wider, and leaves Liberalism hopelessly divided, some clinging to the Tory Party, and some destined to join the Labour Party. The lists are being cleared for the great contest between Capital and Labour.

PHOTO OF GENERAL SECRETARY

The December issue of the Journal should have contained a photograph of the general secretary, but some complaints are being received that each copy did not contain such a photo.
The ASLEF RMS 500 Club

Colleagues

The 500 Club is a fundraising venture for ASLEF’s Retired Members’ Section.

Conditions of Membership: Only retired and working members of ASLEF, including district councils and branches, plus permanent staff employed by ASLEF, can make an application to join the RMS 500 Club. The application form and standing order form can only be completed and submitted by the ASLEF member, or staff member.

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 ........................................................................
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Postcode ......................................................................
Telephone ......................................................................
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).
Delete (A) or (B) accordingly.

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

Please return this coupon to: RMS 500 Club, Admin Dept, ASLEF, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN and hand the standing order mandate (right), to your bank (or via your internet bank)

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

To ................................................................. Bank
Address ........................................................................
..................................................................................
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Please pay

Unity Trust Bank .........................................................
Branch Title (Not Address) Birmingham
Sorting Code No. 66-83-01

For the credit of

Beneficiary’s Name ..........................................................
Account Number..........................................................

The sum of

Amount in Figures

Amount in Words

£ ..............................................................................

Commencing

£ ..............................................................................
and thereafter every

1st of every month

Also include

Date of First Payment

Due Date and Frequency

Date and Amount of Last Payment

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

Quoting the reference

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Account to be Debited

Account Number

Signature(s).................................................................
Date ...............................................................

Note: The Bank will not undertake to:
(i) make any reference to Value Added Tax or other indeterminate element
(ii) advise payer’s address to beneficiary
(iii) advise beneficiary of inability to pay
(iv) request beneficiary’s banker to advise beneficiary of receipt

*Delete if not applicable
If the amounts of the periodic payments vary, they should be incorporated in a schedule overleaf
SEAN MADDEN A WORKING-CLASS HERO IS SOMETHING TO BE. WELL, JUST FOLLOW ME…

Sean Madden, our esteemed colleague, and a former president of ASLEF’s executive committee, died on Thursday 7 November after battling cancer almost since the day he retired 11 years ago.

Over the last ten years our group of retired ex-locomotives has met in the Three Horseshoes every other week, sitting under the engine nameplate the Old Contemptibles to chew the fat and reminisce. We were (after a couple of drinks) a noisy committee who always sat in the same seats, Sean in the middle as our chair and someone we looked up to for advice and good sense. He couldn’t be double sized (as Scott the landlord soon realised) and had sound knowledge, forged by many years as a union official – starting in the 1960s as a young man concerned for our futures in a vastly shrinking railway system – who progressed to the EC.

Sean had a brilliant sense of humour and was a great raconteur, many of his stories involving his lifelong mate Peter Mee. Pete first encountered Sean, contentedly sucking on his dummy, in his pram as their mothers chatted, and decided to purloin the article, a dummy being a prize in the post-war years, but, as he made a grab for the pacifier, Sean foiled the attempt and, after a fearsome tug, Excalibur remained in place – immovable, and a lesson learned.

Twenty years later the duo were having their hair arranged in outlandish style in Teasy-Weasy Raymond’s hairdressing emporium, shortly before catching a train back from London. Later, on the train, their reflections in the window convinced them to visit the toilet to scrape the pomaded lacquered travesty out, realising that Ilkeston, Derbyshire, still emerging from the Dark Ages, wasn’t ready for these new-fangled ideas, which would have set the dogs barking, even finding themselves chased out of town, or worse, put in stocks in the market place, and shamed! He could bring these stories to life.

Sean, our colleague, Brother, and mate, was a dyed in the wool Ilkestonian. He had high principles which never wavered and we were bewildered by his courage and resolution over the last few years. Sean was a big Beatles fan; John Lennon wrote Working-Class Hero and that’s how we will remember him. Our heartfelt sympathies to Janet, Christopher and the family.

Jim Canning and the other Old Contemptibles: Peter, Bob, John, Stuart, Keith, Tony and Dennis

COLIN FOSTER VAST KNOWLEDGE OF THE RAILWAY

Friends and family attended Saltwell crematorium in Gateshead on Tuesday 22 October to mark the passing of Collingwood ‘Colin’ Foster, who died on 10 October at the age of 88. Like his father before him, Colin was named after the great Northumbrian, Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, who served alongside Horatio Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Colin had a great sense of humour, was proud of his north-east roots, and serving in the British Army as part of his national service enjoyed telling Geordie jokes to his fellow servicemen. He started his footplate career at Gateshead (52A) as a cleaner, and progressed to fireman, passed fireman, and driver. Because Gateshead was a main line shed, he drove the larger steam locomotives such as A4 and A3 Pacifics on the east coast main line to King’s Cross and Edinburgh from Newcastle. As diesel locomotives began to replace steam, he went on to drive Deltics, Class 40s, and so on, before working on high speed trains and, finally, Class 91s. Colin was a great pleasure to work with, eager to pass on his vast knowledge of railways, and we also appreciated his mischievous sense of fun.

John M Scott MB E, former chair, Gateshead & Newcastle

RUSSELL SPENCE CRACKING JOKES

Former Darlington branch secretary Russell Spence passed away on 6 November at the age of 57. He was a driver for 25 years and a member of ASLEF throughout that time. A keen pool and snooker player, he is remembered for sporting a mullet whilst wielding the cue and cracking jokes.

In his capacity as a union rep, Russ was knowledgeable, passionate, friendly, and respected by colleagues who regarded him highly as a minder driver and could rely on his straightforward no-nonsense approach to overcoming adversity. Russ was instrumental in the struggle to reopen Darlington depot as a recruitment point in 2001, after its closure at privatisation.

Unfortunately, that year he was involved in a serious road traffic collision. The injuries he suffered, and resultant long-term effects on his health, forced early retirement, throughout which he remained a member of the RMS and a regular attendee at Bank Top staff reunions.

Russ will be sadly missed by wife Maxine, his daughters and grandchildren, and all who knew and remember him.

John Clark, branch secretary, Darlington

KEITH TURNER SMILES AND LAUGHTER

It is with great sadness I have to inform you of the passing of our friend and former colleague Keith Aloysius Turner. Keith was one of those big characters any train crew depot is blessed to have; his smile and laughter were infectious!

May you rest in eternal peace, Keith. From all your friends, past and present, on the Bakerloo, Central, Jubilee and Hammersmith & City lines.

Gary Jarman, branch secretary, Hammersmith & City 267

JIMMY FAULKNER DEPOT CHARACTER

Jimmy Faulkner, friend, colleague and depot character, has died at 89. He began his footplate career on 6 July 1948 at Wigan GC shed. A move across to Springs branch shed, then Patricroft, until closure, was followed by final moves under r&r to Newton Heath and Manchester Victoria until retirement. Jimmy and his wife retired to their new home on the west coast of Ireland but he never lost touch with his roots and never missed the Newton Heath retired drivers’ reunion, always enjoying a good chinwag with Ron Brady.

John Black, Newton Heath RMS

JOHN ROBINSON SADLY MISSED

It is with great sadness we announce the recent passing of John Robinson, a driver for Virgin at Liverpool. John had just achieved 41 years of driving. I would like to thank everyone for the lovely messages and support our family have received.

John was a very popular man and will be so sadly missed.

Sharon, his partner, and his two sons
Letters

Are air-conditioned cabs really the answer for all?

I read with interest the article in the Journal (November, p17) regarding the SQUASH campaign and the idea that all cabs should be air-conditioned. Whilst there is no doubt that cabs should be properly heated and, with increasingly warmer summers, cooled, I am not convinced that air-conditioning is the answer to better cabs. I am sure I am not the only driver to suffer with asthma, and dry heating systems don’t help my health. Whilst not ideal, the cab heaters in second generation units such as Class 158s were much better for me, as they don’t dry out the air, as the air-con units in later build trains do.

I have recently signed some of our latest traction, and find that the air-con system turns itself on, even when you’ve turned it off! I cannot drive with the window open, because it’s too noisy at line speed, and with a central driving position, I’m unable to close a window on the move (cannot reach it!) so have to suffer dry humid air in the cab which does nothing for my health.

Perhaps it didn’t make the news outside the north-west of England, but seven people died in Barrow-in-Furness in 2002 after an outbreak of Legionnaires’ disease, caused by a poorly maintained air-conditioning unit. Do we, who suffer from poorly maintained trains, really think that cab air-con units will be properly maintained? Only recently, I asked when the filters in the water cooler in the mess room had last been serviced, and no-one knew the answer. If those are not serviced, why would a cab air-con system be maintained any better?

I love my career as a train driver, but find these dry heat systems an increasing issue. If it can be maintained any better? Only recently, I asked when the filters in the water cooler in the mess room had last been serviced, and no-one knew the answer. If those are not serviced, why would a cab air-con system be maintained any better?

My love as a career train driver, but find these dry heat systems an increasing issue. If it can be maintained any better?

Stewart Higham, TPE, Manchester

Network Rail route master is on the wrong track

Did you see the interview with Sir Peter Hendy in the November issue of The Railway Magazine? He really poked the northern beehive by saying that he feels Piccadilly station does not need extra through platforms 15 and 16. This also means no extra tracks from Piccadilly to Castlefield junction. Why, only as recently as Tuesday 8 October, I monitored the progress of five trains – four passenger, one freight – attempting to cross Manchester one morning from west to east. All five left their places of origin on time, were all running early as they approached Bottleneck Central, but all were between 12 and 16 minutes late at Oxford Road, even before they had crossed the two tracks to reach Piccadilly.

Mel Thorley, RMS Longsight

I volunteered to drive steam locos on a heritage line and was told to start as an engine cleaner – again...

I refer to Bro Rimell’s letter (Journal, December) in which he mentions that certain heritage railways are struggling to locate suitable drivers and firemen. He suggests that main line drivers might be in a position to alleviate the problem. Before I retired I was on the steam roster at my depot and, a short while before I finished, drove 5029 Nunney Castle from Plymouth to Exeter. Soon after I retired I approached the South Devon Railway and offered to volunteer my services as a steam driver. The response was that I would be welcome, on condition that I started as a cleaner! Not being prepared to wind the clock back over 40 years, my employment with SDR ended before it started!

Denis A Lewis, Kingsteignton, Devon

I was lost for words

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all my friends and colleagues for their good wishes and messages of support over the last 20 months. I would also, on behalf of my family and myself, like to thank everyone who contributed to the hardship fund for their generosity. I was genuinely touched by such a gesture. It also underpinned to me the importance of being part of the railway and ASLEF family. It has been a difficult journey but thanks to you, the brain injury team at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, and ScotRail occupational health, it has been made as supported as it possibly could be. Thanks, too, to my branch and Jim Baxter who kept in touch with offers of support and advice.

Michael Lavery, ASLEF Scottish supervisors’ branch

Help on a difficult journey

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Michael Lavery, ASLEF Scottish supervisors’ branch

Lots of Low Hall laughs

I have just come back from the ASLEF Retired Members’ Section forum held at the NUM’s Low Hall, Scally, near Scarborough. It was my first time and I didn’t know what to expect, but I had a really good time. Thirty-one of us ‘students’ enjoyed guest speakers from our own union, the broader labour movement of the local area, and a solicitor from Thompsons. Ray Jackson expertly chaired and we had lively discussions! We also had good chats and a lot of laughs in the bar, and I would thoroughly recommend it to any retired member. The staff were lovely and made us welcome. Thank you for the opportunity to go, and I’ll be putting my name and Dave’s down for next year.

Tracey Longman, Bedford

Berlin im licht und dunkel

With reference to recent articles in the Journal on fascism, I wondered whether you had come across any novels by Philip Kerr (1956-2018). His Berlin noir trilogy – March Violets, The Pale Criminal and A German Requiem – is set in the 1930s and 1940s just before and after the Second World War. The author’s turns of phrase and use of synonym are brilliant, sometimes in a light-hearted vein, whilst highlighting the truly dark times in Germany. An interesting and excellent read, notwithstanding the horrible events in that country in that period.

Roy Lingham, Bridlington

I read with interest the article in the Journal (November, p17) regarding the SQUASH campaign and the idea that all cabs should be air-conditioned. Whilst there is no doubt that cabs should be properly heated and, with increasingly warmer summers, cooled, I am not convinced that air-conditioning is the answer to better cabs. I am sure I am not the only driver to suffer with asthma, and dry heating systems don’t help my health. Whilst not ideal, the cab heaters in second generation units such as Class 158s were much better for me, as they don’t dry out the air, as the air-con units in later build trains do.

I have recently signed some of our latest traction, and find that the air-con system turns itself on, even when you’ve turned it off! I cannot drive with the window open, because it’s too noisy at line speed, and with a central driving position, I’m unable to close a window on the move (cannot reach it!) so have to suffer dry humid air in the cab which does nothing for my health.

Perhaps it didn’t make the news outside the north-west of England, but seven people died in Barrow-in-Furness in 2002 after an outbreak of Legionnaires’ disease, caused by a poorly maintained air-conditioning unit. Do we, who suffer from poorly maintained trains, really think that cab air-con units will be properly maintained? Only recently, I asked when the filters in the water cooler in the mess room had last been serviced, and no-one knew the answer. If those are not serviced, why would a cab air-con system be maintained any better?

I love my career as a train driver, but find these dry heat systems an increasing issue. If it begins to affect my health, will I be forced to give up a job I love, because of a dry heating system that’s fitted in our cabs? I certainly hope not.

Stewart Higham, TPE, Manchester Piccadilly

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Pity the poor pensioners
With Britain having the lowest state pensions in Western Europe, do we want pensioners to have to visit food banks this Christmas?
P Begley, Bedford

Thanks, Paul and Maeve
This is just a quick heartfelt thank you to my union representatives, Paul O’Keefe and Maeve Hanley, who both assisted me in my recent illness and the dealings with a not so helpful management team. I have heard it said in the past that membership of ASLEF was ‘an expensive diary’. Not so. As the reps go above and beyond in helping you through troubled times and ASLEF membership, in my eyes, is worth every penny. I shall miss all my times and ASLEF membership, in my eyes, is and beyond in helping you through troubled

Tony West: a gentleman and true railwayman
Having just read your article relating to Tony West, following his passing, it prompted me to write and echo the sentiments expressed by many ASLEF members. I joined the railway in 1987 and, in the early 1990s, as regional train crew manager in the old Anglia region, spent many hours in meetings and hearings with Tony in his then role as District Secretary.

Tony was a passionate and committed ASLEF officer who represented his members stoically whilst also balancing this with a fair degree of pragmatism. Above all else, he was a gentleman and, in my formative years, was a true railwayman.

Andy Heath, managing director, Merseyrail Electrics

Westy: The Bridge Builder
Tony West with equalities adviser Lee James and (right) the poet Will Allen Dromgoole

Tony West signed off his last Points West column, as ASLEF’s assistant general secretary, in the Locomotive Journal in December 2000 with this poem by Will Allen Dromgoole (1860-1934) a prolific poet, playwright, novelist and journalist who, for 30 years, wrote for the Nashville Banner in Tennessee and who founded the Waco Women’s Press Club in Texas. The poem is as relevant today, says AGS Simon Weller, as it was when she wrote it and when Tony used it to close his column.

‘It gives a real measure of the man,’ says Simon, ‘and his dedication to the next generation, and the future of ASLEF’:

An old man going a lone highway, Came, at evening cold and grey, To a chasm, vast and deep and wide, Through which was flowing a sullen tide. The old man crossed in the twilight dim, The sullen stream had no fear for him; But he turned, when safe on the other side, And built a bridge to span the tide.

‘Old man,’ said a fellow pilgrim near, ‘You are wasting strength with building here; Your journey will end with the ending day, You never again will pass this way; You’ve crossed the chasm, deep and wide, Why build this bridge at evening tide?’

The builder lifted his old grey head. ‘Good friend, in the path I have come,’ he said, ‘There followed after me today A youth whose feet must pass this way. This chasm, that has been as naught to me, To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be; He, too, must cross in the twilight dim; Good friend, I am building this bridge for him!’
You ain’t the Nazz you’re just a buzz some kinda temporary

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

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

OR five halcyon years, from 1969 to 1974, Ian Hunter was the main man – lead singer, rhythm guitarist, and principal songwriter – of Mott the Hoople, who ripped it up live and enjoyed hits with "Honoloochie Boogie", All the Way From Memphis, Roll Away the Stone, The Golden Age of Rock’n’Roll and David Bowie’s All the Young Dudes. Hunter’s afterlife, following his five years of fame, has spawned, so far, 14 studio albums with dozens of carefully crafted songs which, though they might not have been hits – with the exception of Once Bitten Twice Shy, with Mick Ronson, and Ships, which made the US top ten for, er, Barry Manilow – are as good as anything he wrote in his heyday. And Ian Hunter Patterson proved, last April, a couple of months before his 80th birthday, when he strutted his stuff at the Shepherd’s Bush Empire with Luther Grosvenor (aka Ariel Bender), Morgan Fisher, and the Rant Band, that he still knows how to rock the casbah.

‘Now it’s a mighty long way down rock’n’roll’ From the Liverpool docks to the Hollywood Bowl | ‘You climb up the mountains and you fall down the holes’
– Ian Hunter, All the Way From Memphis

Rock’n’Roll Sweepstakes by Campbell Devine (Omnibus Press, £13.99) is the first of two volumes of authorised biography. It’s 520 pages, but takes us only to the end of 1974; with 50 pages from Ian’s birth in Oswestry, Shropshire, to the day he joined Mott, the rest is really the story of the group, not the man. The problem is that Mott, more than any other band, told their own story in songs such as One of the Boys, Hymn for the Dudes and The Ballad of Mott the Hoople; Campbell Devine is a fan, not a writer, a reluctant editor of the interviews he’s done, who turns out pedestrian prose; and Ian Hunter, in Diary of a Rock’n’Roll Star (Omnibus, £18.99), does it so much better. That said, if you spent your pocket money on vinyl in the ’70s, and want to know more about how I changed my name in search of fame to find the Midas touch | Oh, I wish I’d never wanted then, what I want now, twice as much you will, as I did, enjoy this book.

‘Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world’ – Percy Bysshe Shelley, A Defence of Poetry

The Oxford University Press series of A Very Short Introductions has, since it was launched in 1995, carefully and concisely covered more than 600 topics, from Classics (the first title, by Mary Beard), Communism, and Capitalism, to The Reformation, Atheism, and, er, Witchcraft. They are typically well written and an excellent primer in the subject. Such is Poetry: A Very Short Introduction by Bernard O’Donoghue (OUP, £8.99) who specialised in Medieval English and modern Irish poetry as a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and then Wadham, translating the Middle English Arthurian romance Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the 14th century allegorical dream vision Piers Plowman as well as editing The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney. He is also a considerable poet in his own right – with collections such as Gunpowder, Farmers Cross and The Seasons of Cullen Church – which means that, in this slim volume, he speaks with authority as well as clarity about what poetry is, and is not.

‘The fever of exams, a boy in love with me, we are called the ‘red house: there was Marx’ and the socialism we lived for’
– Beata Duncan, Goethe

Beata Duncan (1921-2015) was a German Jew who fled Berlin, and the Nazis, in 1934, studied History at Birkbeck College and English at University College, London, and established a reputation as a poet and performer, sharing platforms with Alan Brownjohn, Margaret Drabble and Hugo Williams. Breaking Glass (WriteSideLeft, £8.99), with its echoes of Kristallnacht, is a collection of 50 poems reflecting her early years, and fears, as a refugee from fascism. ‘What does a German abroad say | to another? Are you a Jew too?’ These evocative poems are powerful, poignant, and sometimes profoundly personal – A Bitterness of Temper is an anguished piece about her father, who treated her mother rather badly – beautifully written – with lovely lines like ‘the relentless rhythm of restless strings’ – and echo down the decades with pertinent observations about dictators and despots, racists, nationalists, and anti-Semites. Jackie Wills, in her new collection A Friable Earth (Arc, £9.99), engages with contemporary concerns about climate change in an historical context. She examines the soil – ‘gubber and gawm’ in Sussex dialect – and confesses ‘I’ve beasted it, breaking it up for years’; in Road from the North she encounters ‘farmworkers, rubber bullets | and burning vines’; and when she sees the old address her father wrote on an empty envelope she grows young again and reflects, ‘I hear his Jacqueline, | the four beats of 3 Stream Farm Close, the tremor of my teens.’
The power of a programme on the Tube

Nicholas Lezard: Down and Out in Brighton, Faversham and London

‘A couple of weeks ago, I was sitting at a Tube station at about half past nine when an extremely attractive young woman came up to me and smiled. She pointed at the theatre programme I was carrying and asked if I’d enjoyed the play. She had a French accent. I said yes, there were only two actors in it, but they were very good. She mentioned that she’d seen a two-hander at the National a few weeks ago. What was the name again? I told her, as I’d seen it myself. “What did you think?” At this point I coughed in an embarrassed way and said that I was afraid I’d missed the start of it. She asked if she could see it again? I told her, as I’d seen it myself. “You can see more of Tom Williams’s crosswords, word games and puzzles at wordgames.co.uk”

Keith Richmond

ASLEF’s legal services

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

Prize Crossword

Crossword 165 by Tom Williams

Across
1 Portuguese capital
2 Funny actor
7 The jaw-petalled antirrhinum
8 Small branch
9 Machine for shaping wood
11 Journey down
13 Day of worship
15 Duck sound
18 Outer body tissue
19 Pond amphibians
20 Tom with red hair?
21 Vale of Elysium

Down
1 Catalogued
2 Sound of a gun
3 Serviettes
4 Deep orange-pink
5 Saucerless beaker
6 Narrow paddle boat
7 Spanish afternoon nap
10 Cheers or ta
12 Mending with interwoven stitches
14 Building to house aircraft
15 Fertile female in bee colony
16 Rounded doorhandles
17 Stitched together
19 Cat’s foot

Solution to Crossword 164

Across:
1 Liverpudlian 7 Bonus 8 Imps 10 Utter
11 Royal 13 Repeat 15 Thrush 17 Badge
18 Polar 19 Yell 21 Alive 22 Bantamweight

Down:
1 Laboratory 2 Vineyard 3 Results
4 Ulster 5 Lair 6 Alp 9 Settlement 12 Seedling
14 Embrace 16 Helium 18 Plot 20 Era

Congratulations to Tom Bell, of Chelmsford, Essex, who was last month’s winner. The winner of this month’s Prize Crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25.

You can see more of Tom Williams’s crosswords, word games and puzzles at wordgames.co.uk

Thanks for all your responses to the 164th prize crossword in the December edition of the ASLEF Journal. If you successfully complete this month’s crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 January.
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