

ASLEF

JOURNAL

The magazine of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen



JULY 2021

Free to members

Freight on rail after covid-19



ASLEF officers **Simon Weller, Nigel Gibson, Andy Hourigan,** and **Dicky Fisher;** **Maggie Simpson** of the RFG; plus company council reps **Seb Brady, James Glew, Barry Hare, Rab Lang, Peter Mason** and **Paul Zuczkowski** on the future for freight

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Rail is a green way of moving goods around the country

GS Mick Whelan

Whatever we do, we shall do it together in unity



'The real test will not be how we dealt with the pandemic – but how we deal with the aftermath'

WE HAVE, since March last year, faced unprecedented times and shown our duty, as key workers, to our communities and nation, and kept the country running, along with many others, for a greater good. Now you might think that this would be recognized by the government in Westminster but apparently not; it has, instead, become an agenda of cuts and change. Yes, we recognize that the privateers were bailed out, and some were not, depending on which figures you use, and money has been put into the industry, in necessary support, over the course of the pandemic.

But the model was collapsing before covid, which exacerbated an obvious need for greater subsidy, in the government's determination to keep private interests in our industry. All the things we have identified about the waste, duplication, and failings of the privatized rail network since 1993 are the rationale behind the Williams review to which the Transport Secretary has now added his name.

Much will be defended by 'the impact of the pandemic' but we have already seen two NRCs awarded, without competition, and no one has been able to explain to me in sensible terms why we need the private sector to run trains when the revenue risk now falls on the public purse. I remain of the long-standing view that transport, as one of the four factors of production, getting goods and services from A to B, generating business, industry, and tourism, even when run at a paper loss, creates genuine money in the economy for the good of all.

At a time when the world is endeavouring to save the planet, and create a better future for our children, long-term investment in our railways should be automatic as, on this small crowded island, the only way to achieve these aims is the mass transit of freight and people. But this is not, apparently, the view of the government. We accept that people may work differently, and footfall and capacity have to be regained, but wholesale reductions, allied to recent arbitrary fare increases, are not going to make us attractive, or drive the green agenda.

So we face uncertain times, with statements about removing duplication of services, wages being aligned to market rates, reductions in capacity and services, and discussions on headcount. This clearly leaves us with decisions on how we best protect our grade, and our industry, because these are government-led processes and decisions and, in a post-covid world, no one will care that this is an ideological and dogmatic attack on trade unions and public transport. There are industry talks to take place (again depending which figures you look at) on the £2 billion shortfall or Williams' £1.5 billion per year of savings the government says need to be addressed.

It is our belief that sitting with the industry, and the other unions, at this time is the best way to protect and determine our own futures through what is known as the Rail Industry Recovery Group. There are two other options: pretend it isn't happening and hope it goes away or leave it to the Treasury to demand percentile cuts across the board; neither of which offers any protection so can't be countenanced. The talks will not be one-way traffic. We have aspirations on reducing the driver's age, staff travel, protecting pensions, ERJA, and other issues we would hope to achieve. Looking at our age demographic, and the number of drivers due to retire over the next few years, those hoping for severance may well be unlucky. We went through a decade of government-led austerity relatively unscathed and we do not forget everything we have we paid for through productivity and flexibility which is ours and no one else's. Nothing has been agreed other than that we will participate; it would be naive not to but, whatever we do, we shall do it together in unity and solidarity.

In the interim we are still in the throes of a worldwide pandemic with liberation, or freedom day, once more delayed, deferred, or just messed up. I do despair of the rhetoric as I believe it does a disservice to those who lost their lives – many, I believe, unnecessarily. Sadly, as I write, cases are rising among younger people and the variants are of concern. Vaccination is a success albeit the only one the government has a right to take credit for. We should not rush back to business as usual – safety must be paramount – but further economic protection must be put in place for those in society who need it most. The real test will not be how we, as a nation, dealt with the pandemic but how we deal with the aftermath. Please stay safe...

Yours fraternally,
Mick Whelan, general

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Tories set to axe services and jobs

THE future of Britain's railways has been thrown into jeopardy just weeks after the government announced, on Wednesday 19 May, with a fanfare of trumpets, and a lot of brass neck, that it was setting up Great British Railways under the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail.

But on Tuesday 15 June the Tory government – under Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Transport Secretary Grant Shapps – announced the start of a process designed to cut £2 billion a year from the UK rail network.

An announcement by the Rail Industry Recovery Group said: 'Since the start of the covid-19 pandemic, the government has been funding the significant gap in rail finances created by the loss of passenger revenue. During this time, taxpayer support for rail services has increased significantly, while the industry's operating costs have, broadly, stayed at pre-pandemic

levels.

'The government's position is that the current financial commitment is not unlimited or sustainable. As a result, industry representatives have worked with the four recognised trades unions to agree an enabling framework agreement that sets out common principles and focus areas that will shape our work to create a sustainable recovery for our industry. At its core is a transition to a more secure, sustainable, future for our industry and those who work within it.'

That statement – described by the DfT as 'a little vanilla, deliberately anodyne' – hides a determination by the government to force through the biggest cuts to Britain's rail network since the Beeching cuts of the 1960s.

Mick Whelan, general secretary, said: 'The government is forcing cuts on our industry in the wake of the pandemic. We are currently engaging with the government, the

other rail unions, and all the other stakeholders in the rail industry, to protect our members – and to protect Britain's railway. Because the rail industry is vital to the UK; moving people and goods, passengers and packages, around this country.

'The railway is a vital artery for the body of Britain and we are determined to ensure it has a sustainable future – not just in the next few months and years, but down the decades in this 21st century.'

Rail workers have played a vital role in keeping the country moving since March last year, ensuring that key workers, and essential goods, have got to where they are needed. So it is galling to hear Grant Shapps disingenuously claim, 'Rail staff played an important part during the pandemic and their continued support will help us to build a safer, more reliable, and efficient railway for the future.'

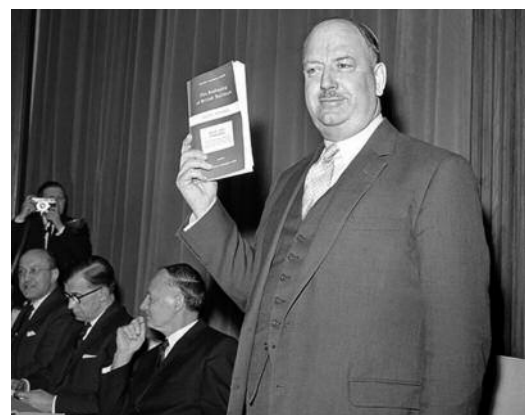
The government – the Treasury, DfT, and Number 10 – are said to believe that



cutting the number of passenger services, rowing back on investment and maintenance, slashing jobs, attacking workers' pensions, and tearing up our terms and conditions, is 'the way to keep Rishi Sunak happy'.

ASLEF, along with the other rail unions – the RMT, the TSSA, and Unite – are, at the moment, engaging with the RIRG and its EFA. Why? US President Lyndon B Johnson was once asked why he hadn't sacked FBI director J Edgar Hoover. 'Well, it's probably better to have him inside the tent pissing out, than outside the tent pissing in.'

We would rather be sitting at the table, talking, and helping plan a way forward for Britain's rail network, than not having any input. Because it gives us a chance to protect the jobs, pensions, and t&cs of our members. But we will walk away – and take appropriate action – if Johnson and Shapps do a Beeching on us.



Cutting the UK rail network: Boris Johnson, Grant Shapps, and Baron Richard Beeching

QUOTE...

'Child marriage is child abuse' – Sajid Javid
Conservative MP for Bromsgrove
...UNQUOTE


TWEETS OF THE MONTH

 Boris Johnson getting a lesson in international relations at the G7. US and EU leaders demonstrating scant regard for Johnson and do not trust him to uphold treaties or international law. Lot of pushback against the UK. Global Britain just hit the wall. @GrahameLucas

 UK-Australia trade deal, like Brexit itself, lots of blah and flag-waving bluster, with not much detail to back it up, and only Johnson promises to rely on... which have a habit of being worthless. @campbellclaret

 At one Kent-based company, the number of seasonal fruit pickers is down by over 90%, leading to serious concerns over the company's future. @BestForBritain

 Time for all Brexit 'patriots' to volunteer their services. Graham Simpson @grahamsi

 Britain! One sunny day: Wow! This is a surprise! Everyone outside! Let's barbecue everything! Two sunny days: This is the life. I love shorts. Let's sunbathe in the park or run through a sprinkler. Three sunny days: Make it stop. @SoVeryBritish

QUOTE...

'Test and trace doesn't work. The evidence is there for everyone to see' – James Naismith
Professor of Structural Biology, Oxford University
...UNQUOTE

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NOW BOSSES TELL BORIS TO DELIVER FOR TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

Richard Burge, chief executive of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, speaking after the credit rating agency Moody's downgraded Transport for London, said: 'This is further evidence that the government must agree a longer-term settlement with TfL – giving certainty about the network's viability and funding model during an uncertain time.'

Railway menu on the Darjeeling Express

A SMA KHAN, the chef, restaurateur, and political activist, has revealed the part that the railway – and trade unions – have played in her life. Asma, who runs Darjeeling Express in Garrick Street, Covent Garden, where the all-female kitchen brigade creates dishes inspired by the street food of Calcutta, where she was born and brought up, is very proud of her parents' passionate politics.

Her father, and grandfather, worked for trade unions in India 'and my father was always telling me, this is your chance to change the

world, to go out and make a difference to people's lives'. Her restaurant – the basis for her bestselling cookbook as well as an episode of the Netflix documentary *Chef's Table* – 'is a war cry for every woman in my culture who cooked with passion and love but no glory. We are storytellers, the custodians of recipes, yet we've always been sidelined.'

The 'railway menu' at her deli is a tribute to the food offered by hawkers at station stops on the long train journeys her family used to take across the sub-continent although she serves rather different meals at home.

'I have one child who loves Indian food, and another who detests it. They're very, very political, compassionate, and kind. They don't have very good food taste, but they have, at least, learned the politics.'

QUOTE...

'No one could find a way around the problem of the Prime Minister, just like a shopping trolley, smashing from one side of the aisle to the other'

– Dominic Cummings

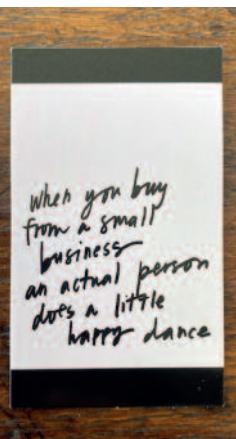
...UNQUOTE



Asma: the passion and politics of the kitchen (and the kitchen table)

HAPPY DANCE

Companies are much more touchy-feely now but this card, dropped into a package delivered during lockdown, may well take the custard cream. It says – in lettering designed to make you think it has been hand-written, which it isn't – 'when you buy from a small business an actual person does a little happy dance'. Yes, really...



500 CLUB: Martin Joyce, with number 133, won the June draw, scooping the Retired Members' Section jackpot of £514.

Off the Rails



ALAN JONES, industrial correspondent at PA Media, which many of us still call the Press Association, and which supplies stories, features, and pictures to every news organisation in the country, is the doyen of industrial reporters, respected by management, unions, and politicians of all parties for the accuracy and honesty – and speed – of his reporting. After reading last month's *Journal*, the Welsh wizard confessed: 'Can't believe it's been so long since that infamous Ratner speech. I was covering the Institute of Directors conference that day. His was the final speech and apparently he was told to "spice it up". I got hold of an embargoed copy and filed to our news desk. Within an hour of my story dropping, reporters and television crews arrived at the Royal Albert Hall to watch him give his speech. I was convinced he would change it – but he stuck to it, word for word, and the rest, as they say, is history! A front page apology in *The Sun* a few days later failed to stem the angry reaction and, before long, the company went out of business!' One for the memoirs, Mr Jones...



TRAIN DRIVERS have to be exceptionally careful about what we eat and drink in the hours before going on duty. Of course. Because safety on the permanent way is paramount. But the tests

that TOCs and FOCs have in place pick up some substances and not others. So as one delegate – whose blushes, as an entirely innocent party, we spare – told AAD, 'You could be off your tits on magic mushrooms and no test will pick it up...' Not that this is recommended, comrades. For clarity, all drink, drugs, and mushrooms with magical properties, are strictly verboten when working on the iron road.



SIMON WELLER was typically dry when interviewed live by Sarah Hewson about the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail on Sky News. Isn't it all terribly exciting and innovative? Well, no, not really. 'Innovative at extracting profit from the public purse,' observed the AGS. 'It's just a new way of shifting money from the public purse to the private sector.' Which rather blew the froth off the happy-clappy discussion right from the get-go. Simon went on to make a powerful case for some long-term strategic thinking and a commitment to make Britain's railways 'properly funded from top to bottom'.



BRENDAN HAMMER – his user name, not his real name – from Tullamore, Ireland, on the *West Ham Till I Die* website posts, 'OT [off topic] the model train maker Hornby has posted a 28% profit. Does that make them the UK's most successful rail company?' To which a fellow fan replied, 'They have a great business model! Sigh...'



JOHN CRACE was wonderfully waspish again in *The Guardian* about Matt Hancock, the hapless Health Secretary: 'He is brilliant at remembering his own successes and rather less able when it comes to recalling his failures. If, indeed, there were any. Which he is fairly certain there weren't.'

Caitlin – I cannot wait to train again

CAITLIN Moran, who made her name at *Melody Maker*, presented the C4 music show *Naked City*, and wrote the best-selling feminist bible *How to be a Woman*, has revealed in her column in *The Times* that what she has missed most during lockdown is the thrill of a railway journey.

'My biggest returning joy is getting on a train and going somewhere. For work, for a holiday, to see friends or family – the reason and destination don't matter. It's the sheer traininess that's the thrill. Every part of it such a simple, deep pleasure.

'The excitement of getting to the station a deliberate half-hour early; the leisurely



Caitlin Moran: the 'sheer traininess' is the thrill



choosing of a magazine (*Viz*, *The New Yorker*) and 'train snack' (cheese baguette, crisps), before strolling down the platform, where a half mile-long travelling house is waiting to take you to somewhere exciting.

'Oh, sitting at a window seat, watching the station disappear, and knowing that, for the next few hours, you'll be rocketing through counties and farms, fields, and woods! The

exciting lumpiness of mountains in the distance; the sudden whoosh when you come out of a tunnel to find the train now runs alongside the coast and you can watch kids paddling and boats out at sea. And, all the time, someone else is driving – all you have to do is sit back and let the world entertain you.'

Now that should bring the passengers flocking back...

QUOTE...

'If Labour is to cut through, it must think big. It's only by setting out a bold, radical, vision that Labour will speak to people's experiences'

– Ed Miliband *The Guardian*

...UNQUOTE

ORR investigates how Hitachi trains 'fell between the cracks'

The Office of Rail and Road has launched a 'serious lessons to be learned' review into the cracks in the jacking plate and mount for the yew damper bracket on Hitachi Class 800 and 385 trains which saw them suddenly removed from service in May.

It wants to know if the train operating companies – GWR, LNER, TPE, and Hull Trains – knew about the problems before

they publicly came to light. The ORR is also to investigate the design, manufacture, and maintenance of the problem pieces and examine how 'responsibility for

inspection, repair, and remedial action' can be improved.

Ian Prosser, HM Chief Inspector of Railways, ORR, said: 'While we continue to engage with Hitachi

and train companies to oversee the development of a safe and suitable plan to make sure the right checks are being carried out to enable trains to run, now is the right time to ensure we understand more and the industry can learn lessons.'



The ORR wants to know what went so wrong with Class 800 and Class 385 trains

BRITRAIL PASS

The government says it will help the UK tourist industry, after 16 months of restrictions on travel, hospitality, and socialising, by launching a new BritRail pass for foreign visitors and allowing Britons cut-price off-peak travel across the UK on some days. Analysts say the best way to increase footfall is to reduce all fares and ensure services are covid safe.

KING'S UNCROSSED

Network Rail has completed its 'once in a generation' multi-million pound improvement scheme – involving the wholesale replacement of 40-year-old track layouts on the 1.5 mile approach to the station – to allow more trains to enter and exit King's Cross.

GOVE RAPPED

Michael Gove and the Cabinet Office have been criticised by a court over a 'secretive' and 'Orwellian' special unit which 'blacklists journalists' and 'obstructs the free flow of Freedom of Information requests'.

Points & Crossings: for clarification

A report from AAD in the *Journal* (June) under the headline *Fate of the Nation ends by saying the motion fell 26-47*. I believe this to be incorrect and the item in question, agenda item 12, which Comrade Hussein Ezzedine spoke on, in fact carried. This is very important for members living in Scotland, and consultation of the membership before the union comes to a policy decision. I trust this error will be corrected in the next *Journal*.

Hugh S Cumming Edinburgh No 2

There were two similar motions on this issue, item 12 from Edinburgh No 1, which was adopted, and item 48 from West London Electric, which fell, as we reported; Hussein spoke on both. He explains: 'The principle is the same, but West London were more

specific in stipulating the form of consultation that should take place which is, essentially, why it fell. I spoke in favour, but it was never going to get adopted. The difference is that the item which was passed leaves it open to the EC to decide how the consultation

and engagement should take place.

'Hugh is right, it is a very important matter for members in Scotland, one which, unless you are here, is probably hard to fully comprehend. The adoption of an item which both recognises the sovereign right of the people of Scotland to determine the form of government best suited to our needs, and makes it ASLEF policy to consult and engage widely on the issue, and only campaign after an exhaustive engagement with the members, is a significant development.

'And one which I think will be widely welcomed by members, regardless of which side of the constitutional debate they find themselves on. There's no chance this would have been adopted a few years ago and, during the debate, the GS recognised mistakes made in the past, and to learn from them. Though obviously no intention to mislead, highlighting that 48 fell, without the context of 12 being adopted, I agree is likely to lead to misunderstanding of the position conference took, and, as I say, it's an emotive subject.'

ASLEF plea for rail accessibility

A SLEF made the case for real rail accessibility at the Wales Trades Union Congress, held virtually by Zoom, on Tuesday 25 and Wednesday 26 May. Ian Thompson, Treherbert branch, and TfW company council secretary, sits on the general council of the Wales TUC, which has 48 member unions and represents more than 400,000 workers.

He said: 'There was a determined commitment of investment by the Welsh government, before the tragedy of covid hit us, to make stations accessible for all the citizens who use our now re-nationalised Transport for Wales network. Accessibility enables greater opportunity for everyone to use this green public transport network for work, travel, and leisure, and assists connectivity around all of Wales.'

'Accessibility helps increase passenger numbers, desperately needed post-covid, and boosts local economies around these stations.'



Ian: 'Make stations accessible for everyone'

It also assists the government to achieve its zero emissions target sooner by persuading more people to use green public transport instead of not-so-green private transport.

'Currently, out of 246 stations monitored by the Welsh government, only 19 have the highest step-free access rating of A, while 41 have the lowest rating of B3, which means a lot of stations need to be upgraded to make this sector of public transport accessible to all and for green public transport use to become normal instead of private transport.'

'It isn't only step-free accessibility that needs addressing; accessible toilets are required, too, on platforms, and stations, and

trains. Only with Welsh government funding have trains been brought up to PRM standard but some of our trains could not be modified, and hence these units are no longer being used on our network. This poor toilet access has a disproportionate effect on wheelchair users, and on every passenger using our trains, because the overwhelming majority of stations don't have any toilet facilities.'

'Installing more toilets is a priority, but they must be PRM compliant as well, and are radar key toilets which allow disabled passengers greater security. Without addressing this issue, along with step-free access, we won't encourage greater use of green transport by all of society.'

QUOTE...

'Andrew Neil's GB News looks like an edition of Newsnight where the researcher forgot to book guests to give expert opinion and/or the other side of a debate' – Sean O'Grady The Independent

...UNQUOTE

Shapps' HS2 pledge

ASLEF has welcomed an assurance by Grant Shapps, the Secretary of State for Transport, that the eastern leg of HS2 – which industry experts feared would be cut – will go ahead. The minister told the Policy Exchange think tank: 'We are going to complete HS2 and include HS2 on the eastern leg to Leeds.'

GS Mick Whelan

said: 'We know the government is looking to make cuts on its commitments, but we welcome this pledge because we have always argued that HS2 will only be able to maximise its benefits if it runs not just from London to the Midlands, but on to the north, and to Scotland, too, as an integrated transport

solution for the United Kingdom. HS2 is a major infrastructure project which will show the world that we understand the needs of a modern society and are prepared to invest in rail to create a green economy for the 21st century.'

Mick added: 'It's not about shaving a few minutes off the



Mick Whelan: 'It's about investing in the future'

journey time between London and Birmingham. It's about investing in our railways, the key to a modern public transport system, and freeing up pathways for freight and other passenger services.'

RIPPLE LANE JOLLY BOYS

Our outing to Clacton is going ahead on Friday 3 September. The agenda is the same, starting with donkey rides, followed by a visit to the beach theatre for the Punch & Judy show, and culminating in a midday trip to The Moon & Starfish, a Wetherspoons hostelry, opposite the pier. And from 14.00 a brisk walk to the Old BRSA next to Clacton station to finish the day and disband. Hope to see you on the day. **Cliff Blackwell RMS**

TONY ALLEN A METICULOUS AND GENEROUS MAN

We are sad to report that Tony Allen, a former member of Southern Region sectional council B, and one of the founding members of the south central DFC, has died.

Tony started in the footplate grade at Salisbury in the 1960s, before moving to Tunbridge Wells West, where he served as branch chair and a member of the LDC until its closure in 1985, when he moved to Seaford, again serving as a member of the LDC, until his election to sectional council B in 1990. When Seaford closed in 1994 he moved to Brighton where he remained until his retirement, due to ill health, in 1996.

Tony was a very active member of the trade union, attending a number of AADs representing both Eastbourne and Brighton districts. He was a studious delegate and ensured all the branches he represented were given a thorough report of proceedings.

The most noticeable comments made by people who knew or worked with him were how meticulous he was before, during, and after meetings.

He served on sectional council and the DFC during some of the most turbulent times in our history as the industry, and our representatives, were lined up for privatisation. At the

inception of the DFC he took on the role of chair, with Bill Eames as secretary, and Graham Morris the third member. The membership on Southern can be forever grateful for the way the DFC operation was set up and still operates today: a staff side, before any meeting with management, minutes of every meeting, and a monthly staff side meeting where the whole DFC agree the way forward on issues before them.

Tony was a generous activist. He always had time for members and other reps, giving freely of both his time and advice. Our condolences to his wife Barbara and his two daughters.

Roy Luxford Retired Members' Section and DO1 Graham Morris

Shadow of the Orient



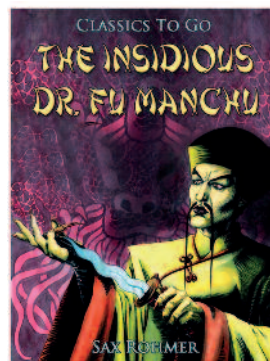
CHRISTIAN CARROLL, Waterloo Nine Elms, who moved a motion at conference against the rise of Sinophobia – the way Donald Trump calls covid-19 ‘the Chinese virus’, Prince Philip disparagingly referred to people with ‘slitty eyes’, and online trolls abuse Chinese restaurant staff – says it’s high time we consigned the Yellow Peril to the dustbin of history

BACK in May delegates at AAD unanimously adopted an emergency item submitted by Waterloo Nine Elms which raised concerns about – and spoke out against – the disturbing rise in Sinophobia which can be defined as the fear, dislike, or hatred of – and/or hostility towards – China, its people, and culture. It tends to target Chinese communities in the Western world and manifests itself in various forms including the perception of a danger – to Western civilisation – from the influence of the East, and an imagined threat to living standards in the West by migrants from East Asia.

Sinophobia is not new. In the 19th century, during the Opium Wars, anti-Chinese propaganda was commonplace in Britain. It led to negative stereotyping in newspapers, magazines, books, and wider society, much of which

remains in place today. Enduring examples include the evil supervillains Dr Fu Manchu and Ming the Merciless, and the generic term Yellow Peril which is still used as a rail industry colloquialism in relation to briefings for signalling and p-way alterations.

While some may see this as an innocent hangover from an increasingly distant, and fading, imperialist age, current statistics paint a picture of a far more disturbing reality. Whether spoken in ignorance, jest, or in hate, the British Chinese, East, and Southeast Asian community has long experienced an undercurrent of racism, but recent events have magnified it beyond words. Since the outbreak of the global covid-19 pandemic, reports of racially motivated hate crimes against people of Chinese or East Asian origin have increased significantly. This is not confined to name



Below: The Yellow Terror in all His Glory (1899 political cartoon), Sax Rohmer's pulp fiction supervillain Dr Fu Manchu (1913), and Marvel Comics' Yellow Claw (1956)



calling, but includes cases of damage to homes and business premises, being coughed and spat at, and acts of extreme physical violence. Victims are not confined to adults, with teenagers and very young children suffering attacks.

It is against this harrowing backdrop that the Covid-19 Anti-Racism Group was set up. CARG's aims include challenging misinformed articles, inflammatory words, and

misleading narratives in the media and public discourse; calling out racism towards British East Asian people and international students with formal complaints; and promoting positive stories of British East Asian contributions to British society.

ASLEF is committed nationally to supporting CARG and its work. Branches and district councils can also register as supporters. For more information visit www.carg.info/ or look CARG up on Facebook and Twitter.

QUOTE...

'Matt Hancock is trying to rewrite history about PPE shortages' – Dr Rosena Allin-Khan Labour MP for Tooting

...UNQUOTE

Johnson and Shapps pick a fight with LU

ASLEF reacted angrily to conditions imposed by the Conservative government when, on Tuesday 1 June, it belatedly announced a new funding package for Transport for London to run until 11 December. DO8 Finn Brennan, ASLEF's organiser on the Underground, said: 'Bitter and protracted industrial disputes are an inevitable consequence of the government's decision to target London Underground workers.'

'Throughout the pandemic, workers on TfL turned up for duty every day. They risked their own safety, and that of their families,



Finn Brennan:
'Hypocritical cant'

so that essential services could continue to operate in our capital city. We knew that the words of praise from government ministers were nothing but hypocritical cant. Their real attitude has been shown by this decision to attack the pensions, job security, and working

conditions of those they called heroes just months ago.

'LU staff showed enormous courage, determination, and resilience in keeping services running during the pandemic. They will demonstrate those qualities again fighting to protect their conditions at work.'

'High quality, reliable public

transport will be vital to London's economic recovery. In deciding to pick a fight with the workers who deliver it, the government has made a serious mistake. The consequences will be protracted and bitter industrial disputes at a time when the focus should have been on rebuilding confidence in using public transport.'

FIRST ARE AWARDED FIRST NRC

The first of the new national rail contracts to be awarded by the government after publication of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail have gone to FirstGroup. The DfT said two-year NRCs for South Western Railway and TransPennine Express will run from 30 May this year, when the current emergency recovery measures agreements ran out, until May 2023.

Levelling up

GS Mick Whelan responded to the DfT's announcements – reannouncements, actually, of decisions already taken and initially announced many months ago – of rail upgrades for Leeds, Manchester, and York. He said: 'Whilst we welcome all rail investment, how much of this is overdue, or long-promised investment, and where is the real long-term plan needed to put rail at the centre of decarbonisation? And what about the rest of the region to form a true transport levelling-up agenda to drive economic recovery?'



Mick: 'Where is the long-term plan?'

RETIRED MEMBERS' SECTION

The coronavirus crisis means that head office is unable to send out letters reminding RMS members, who pay annually by cheque, that your membership is up for renewal. So if you know your renewal is due, please post a cheque, made payable to ASLEF, to head office in St John Street. An annual subscription is just £15. Thank you!

Everyone's a winner baby, that's the truth



CONRAD LANDIN was a news reporter, industrial correspondent, and then Scotland editor of the *Morning Star*. He is now co-editor of the *New Internationalist* magazine and has also written for the *Camden New Journal*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, the *London Review of Books*, and *Rail* magazine. Here he looks at how politicians who placed public ownership of public transport – buses, trams, and trains – at the heart of their manifestos won handsomely in May

THE elections in May were cause for much head-scratching – and blame-gaming – among leading figures in the Labour Party. As head honchos came to terms with the by-election loss in Hartlepool, the picture across the English local and mayoral elections was bleak, too.

Labour lost 327 council seats and eight councils – the seats in question were last contested in 2016 and 2017. Liam Byrne, who boasted he would 'easily beat' West Midlands metro mayor Andy Street, ended up losing by almost 50,000 votes.

But there were some crumbs of comfort, with Labour scoring increased majorities for Greater Manchester metro mayor Andy Burnham and his Merseyside counterpart Steve Rotherham.

Labour won the Cambridgeshire and West of England metro mayor positions from the Conservatives, and First Minister Mark Drakeford romped home in Wales with an increased majority in the Senedd.

'Bung up a Union flag'

Interviewed after the election, Labour deputy leader Angela Rayner said: 'What I heard on the doorstep is they didn't know what Keir Starmer stood for.' In Hartlepool, one organiser told *The Guardian* that party HQ was 'obsessed' with acquiring a Union flag for campaign headquarters. 'There was no fleshing out what the flag means, or what policies have changed, because we're now patriotic. It was just, "Bung up a Union flag".'

But, more thoughtfully, where Labour won, there was a common theme: the candidates and local campaigns put forward a bold policy prospectus. Most of all they said, loud and clear, that Britain's public transport system was not fit for purpose, and advocated state intervention to address three decades of failed privatisation projects.



The public ownership of public transport platforms of Andy Burnham and Mark Drakeford proved popular with voters

In Wales, the Labour government was not just making promises – it was being judged on its record. Since 2018, the Wales and Borders franchise was run by KeolisAmey, an unholy alliance of the French state, Madrid stock traders, and Quebec civil servants (through their pension fund).

But, when passenger numbers fell off a cliff thanks to covid, services were transferred to a new state-owned operator.

Writing in the *Journal* in March, ASLEF's executive committee vice-president (and EC member for District 7) Andy Hudd welcomed this move to 'bring the railway ever closer to public ownership', but recognised there is still work to be done. 'We believe this will bring about sustained investment and an holistic approach to planning that will help deliver a vertically-integrated railway run for the people of Wales – not foreign corporations – but this relies on proper investment from the UK government.' Now Labour has a working majority in its own right in the Senedd – the previous Labour administration relied on support from the one Liberal Democrat MS and a former Plaid Cymru independent – hopes have been raised that Andy's vision can be realised sooner rather than later.

'A force for good in Britain'

In March Andy Burnham announced plans to take Greater Manchester's bus services back under public control. Under this plan, buses would still be operated by private franchisees – but, like in London, the mayor would exercise control over fares, ticketing, and routes.

A similar scheme has been proposed by Liverpool metro mayor Steve Rotherham. After he was re-elected, significantly outperforming his party in concurrent elections in the region, Steve said: 'In the Liverpool city region I've been able to demonstrate socialism in practice. People shouldn't be afraid of socialism. Socialism is a force for good in our country.'

The best surprise for Labour in the May elections was Nik Johnson unseating the Tory incumbent, James Palmer, as metro mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. *Private Eye*'s Rotten Boroughs column, in which Palmer has been something of a fixture, serenaded his exit with the observation that his 'propensity for making grand



announcements was only matched by an unfortunate tendency for inexactitude'. One such grand announcement was the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro – or CAM, geddit? – a £2 billion glorified busway featuring 'driverless pods'. His Labour successor has scrapped the scheme, and says he has held meetings with Burnham to discuss a franchising model for buses.

When it comes to buses, Scotland has been ahead of the curve. Thanks to the efforts of trade unions, transport campaigners, and Scottish Labour, the last parliament legislated to remove the Thatcher-era ban on councils running their own bus services – north of the border, that is. (Edinburgh's publicly-owned Lothian Buses has 'grandfather rights' because it stayed in public ownership while other authorities were busy privatising their local bus networks.)

Scotland, of course, saw a rough night for Labour, with the party's support declining once again, as has been the case in every Holyrood election since 1999.

But, when it comes to the rails, the SNP was making its own hay from the popularity of accountable public transport. On top of promises to expand free bus travel (championed by Labour and the Greens in the last parliament) Transport Secretary Michael Matheson announced he would axe the Abellio ScotRail franchise (that's the Dutch state this time) from March next year.

The SNP has previously opposed parliamentary motions – placed by Labour and backed by ASLEF – calling for the same thing. But Abellio's failures have given Matheson, widely considered to be on the neoliberal wing of the SNP's exceedingly broad political church, a sticky wicket. And with the Westminster-commissioned Williams review into franchising much delayed, what nationalist government could resist the opportunity to get its own blueprint out first?

'Better signals'

Much as we may dream, most voters don't go to the polls thinking only of public transport. But support for accountability and public ownership does not come out of nowhere – it goes hand in hand with a bold, reforming agenda which catches the eye and convinces the public that this party is on their side. Perhaps the answer isn't a bigger flag – but better signals.

They need to know rail freight is vital to the British economy



SIMON WELLER, ASLEF's assistant general secretary, and lead officer for DB Cargo, opens our five page special report on the state of freight with a wry examination of the much-delayed Williams rail review, hastily rebranded by an opportunistic Secretary of State as the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail

THE biggest shake-up since privatisation is coming to the railways in the form of the Williams-Shapps rail review. Giving birth to Great British Railways – which sounds like something you would find on BBC2 on a Tuesday evening.

What strikes you when you read all 116 pages of the review is how little it offers the freight sector. It manages to mention freight on nearly every page, in the repeated mantra 'passengers and freight customers', but behind that repetition there is nothing solid to help our sector.

A key quote on page 18 reveals how the mention of freight is just lip service – an addition that is, basically, the product of a word processor's search and replace: 'Passengers and freight customers told Keith Williams loud and clear: enough is enough. They felt that day in, day out, trains were late, overcrowded, and journeys were stressful.'

Oh, yes, how many times have we heard DB Cargo and HeavyHaul complaining just how stressful a journey is? I can hear that policy work at the Department for Transport saying to the writer, 'Oh, just stick the word "freight" in every so often – that'll shut them up.'

No great surprise there, then, as the political machine is not that interested in the freight sector – containers and aggregates do not vote, passengers do, and the political focus will always be on the electorate.

But that misses an essential truth that rail freight is indispensable to the UK economy and, if we are to have any hope of reducing carbon emissions, then rail freight has to be part of it.

Whilst we have been carrying on during the pandemic providing key worker services, and keeping the nation's freight moving, we have seen the deserted stations and empty passenger trains with our own eyes. The Williams-Shapps review provides part of the government's response to this seismic shift in the railway's fortunes.

Despite that – and for freight there is something to be hopeful about – the pandemic has fundamentally affected the passenger railway's funding model. We have witnessed the demise of the commuter, and the crumbling of long-distance travel, with its



FOCs v TOCs – rail freight containers and aggregates don't get to vote at the polls, passengers do

allied drop in fare revenues.

This collapse of passenger numbers, and subsequent reduction in timetables, is not good for the train operating companies but has an unintended benefit for the rail freight operators.

That reduction in passenger timetables has made room for additional freight paths – a timely help as freight traffic begins to pick up following the downturn a few years ago. Regarding the uncertainty that faces the passenger work it looks, for a change, that the freight sector has an element of security.

In the context of new opportunities for freight, an increase in revenues for all the operators, and improved incomes, why do we see the once-mighty DB Cargo still proposing an increase in drivers' pension contributions at the same time as the pension fund deficit reduces? As well as demanding greater

flexibility, with relentless begging texts, and the misuse of rosters and diagramming?

At the same time as frenzied efforts to provide drivers for existing services, and bring in new work, we hear the CEO, Andrea Rossi, say there are no resourcing problems! We know that future work will not be secure if the company cannot provide the drivers, and drivers, that is, with the correct route knowledge.

Whilst they claim everything in the garden is rosy, we can see the lack of staffing resources now is going to be saving up problems for later – and they will be problems of the company's own making.

We are acutely aware of the shortages and are constantly reminding them that the driver resources need to be put in place – and that needs to start now. We will keep you informed of developments.



We're running fully loaded

RAB LANG, Motherwell branch, who was co-opted onto the DRS company council, reports on a busy and 'challenging' year

IT BECAME apparent in December 2020 that Bro K Bell, DRS company council rep for Scotland, would have to take time off work due to illness. When Kevin asked if I would co-opt into his position whilst he was off I was extremely honoured and, after talking it over with the rest of CC, and Andy Hourigan, I had no hesitation in accepting. Since the beginning of 2021 it has been both busy and extremely difficult. I am still the local rep for Motherwell and the day to day business of a freight train depot hasn't changed; if anything, it has been busier. Intermodal services, the bulk of our work at Motherwell, have seen trains running most days fully loaded. Rostering issues saw us getting further away from a four day working week but, after talks, we managed to avert some of the extra days being added.

My role as CC for Scotland has also been extremely busy. DRS has been merged with INS, and Andy and the CC have had numerous Teams meeting about the new NTS. We have forged good relations with the other trade unions as things progress. The CC has also been involved with management discussing the 2021/22 pay talks; these are ongoing and, as yet, we have nothing concrete to report.

The last few months have been extremely challenging, but enjoyable, and, thankfully, I can seek advice from Bros Andy Hourigan, Warren Brannin, and Seb Brady. Finally, I want to wish Bro K Bell a speedy recovery.

Freight moves into the 21st century to train new drivers



NIGEL GIBSON, District 5 Organiser, and lead officer for Freightliner Heavy Haul, Freightliner Intermodal, and GB Railfreight, reflects on problems for pensions, a new entrant in the sector, driver training, electing reps – and looks forward to meeting you in person at your branch now we don't have to do everything by Zoom

WE ARE now seeing a fundamental difference in the way in which pensions are being affected in the privately-owned freight sector. The latest scheme to suffer is at Freightliner, which is moving to a covenant three, meaning its investment strategy must change, and creating a significant deficit which must be made good. Given that the scheme is a 60:40 shared cost arrangement, it was necessary to make changes to the benefits and contribution rates, but we were able to reach agreement that the employer would pay £1.5 million into the scheme for each of the next three years. Whilst all this was extremely unpalatable, the alternative, of closing the scheme to new entrants, whilst making changes to terms & conditions to pay for those remaining in the scheme, was far less favourable. It's clear that the freight sector is suffering from being in the private sector and the question now is for how long can defined benefit schemes survive.

Varamis Rail

A new start-up company, Varamis Rail, has been in touch and is looking to use modified Class 321 units, initially between Scotland and Birmingham International, with the hope of bringing new work to our industry, creating a greener and more efficient 'hub and spoke' parcels service. We are pleased that Varamis has looked to engage with ASLEF and we look forward to working with Phil Read, the managing director, and a former train driver, along with his team, as the organisation develops.

Modernising driver training

It is good to see the industry moving into the modern world of driver training, and driver support, with real investment. Having seen the state-of-the-art facilities at Peterborough, where GB Railfreight has put together a purpose-built facility for driver training, which includes two full cab simulators and three fully functional classrooms on site, I think it shows a marked commitment to long-term recruitment and a move away from the historic reliance on poaching from other operators. Whilst acknowledging the key to quality training will be the person who facilitates and instructs, these facilities will provide the basis for our new members to benefit from the technology

that has been lacking in the majority of the freight sector. There are also ancillary benefits which can, of course, help support our members as they work through their career as a train driver.

Representation

ASLEF is reliant on its members on many levels, and I am not talking about the finances. We have a structure through the branches, and within our collective bargaining arrangements, which relies on members putting themselves forward and taking on representational roles. There appears to be a continued decline in the number of those prepared to come forward and we have a number of vacancies in the freight sector which have remained unfilled for months. I recognise that, on occasions, these roles may look unattractive; I recognise these roles can amount to a lot of grief for little return; and I recognise that these roles do not, in the traditional sense, cover a specific local geographical area but take on wider responsibilities – but without these positions being filled our representational structure is made far more difficult and the employers' work far easier and far less transparent.

Part of the problem, perhaps, is the perception that, as a rep, you will be expected to be on the phone and respond to social media messages and comments 24/7 but, in reality, that is not what our members should expect from you. I believe social media has made our reps' jobs much more difficult – but only if you choose to engage in a way that makes you an easy target. Our members need to consider the welfare of those they elect and

Challenging time



SEB BRADY, DRS company council, reflects on a busy but enjoyable few months in post

I WAS elected to the DRS company council south position at the end of 2020. It has been a very enjoyable, and busy, few months with the ever-changing situation of the ongoing pandemic. I have been the local rep at Crewe for a few years and grateful for the support of members at Crewe, Rugby, London, and

Investing in freight: the new state-of-the-art GBRf training facility at Peterborough

accept that tapping away on a keyboard is easy, while working with challenging employers is not so easy and, as members, we need to support the reps we elect in a constructive way.

Finally...

The freight sector has pulled itself back to pre-pandemic levels and, throughout the last year, we have worked hard to try and ensure there is a consistent approach to the measures in place to protect the interests of all our members. In the weeks and months ahead, we will be having further negotiations around how and what measures we take forward. We recognise that government restrictions are gradually being lifted and we will have to work with employers, and ASLEF's executive committee, to look at what changes need to be made, going forward, but no decision will be taken lightly. And as restrictions lift we will be glad to move away from Zoom meetings with management and look forward to getting round to see members again in the not too distant future.

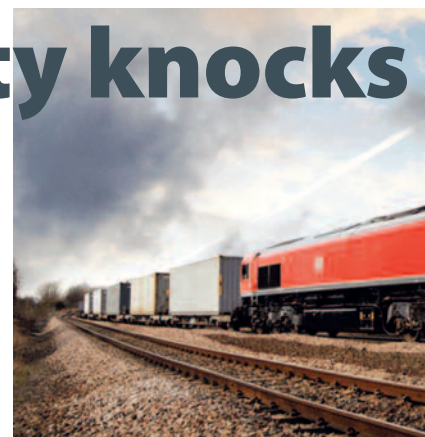
Stowmarket. As a council we have been busy introducing a new h&s policy for our reps to have clear guidelines for reporting and maintaining visits, which has been praised. We continually review our covid working agreements to make sure the risk of anyone catching this virus is minimal. DRS has merged with INS and PNTL to form NTS. The CC with our lead officer have been involved in the merger, and changes, and been assured that jobs are not at risk. I've loved becoming part of the company council team and look forward to the future with my colleagues Warren and Robert – with special thanks to Andy for his mentoring.



Rail freight – opportunity knocks



Over the last 16 months, since the coronavirus struck, and we first went into lockdown, it was our rail freight industry which moved goods and supplies around the country. Now, as we dare to look beyond the pandemic, **MAGGIE SIMPSON**, director general of the Rail Freight Group, argues that the industry is in a strong position to navigate the choppy waters ahead



There is, they say, light at the end of the tunnel

PUBLICATION of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail in mid-May marked the start of a process to change both the structure and operation of our industry. A new organisation, Great British Railways, will combine Network Rail and the passenger operators and be responsible for the planning and operation of the railways across the country. For many colleagues this is an unsettling time as the structure of the railways, as well as individual jobs and responsibilities, will inevitably be different. Yet, whatever your view of the proposals, change is coming, and the rail freight sector will have to navigate them to get a good outcome for its customers and staff.

The plan has some good commitments for

rail freight, including setting a target for growth, and giving the new organisation a legal duty to promote freight. There will also be a new central freight co-ordination team charged with overseeing developments across the network. However, there are other aspects of the plan which are likely to be more controversial, including changes to the process for getting track access, and for freight charges. There is certainly a lot of detail to be developed between now and next year when legislation is expected to be brought before Parliament.

For the most part, though, the freight sector can continue to operate much as today, and the most important matter at hand is to deliver growth, and help our customers reduce the carbon in their supply chains. We have seen increased ambition for more rail freight in the

last year, despite the many challenges of the pandemic, and service levels are now above where they were last year, in most areas.

Construction traffic is operating at record levels, including to help build HS2, as well as other infrastructure, and new homes. Intermodal traffic has also increased with new services, including the 37th daily service from Felixstowe, and there are new trains of domestic waste starting shortly.

Freight operators have also been working hard with Network Rail to make trains longer. A good number of intermodal trains now run at 775m – the distance from Euston to King's Cross down the Euston Road! Recent trials have seen a jumbo length aggregates train operating on the West Coast main line overnight, hauling 44 wagons and over 4,000t. There have been no

Strength of character



JAMES GLEW, DB Cargo company council secretary, praises the professionalism of freight drivers who worked through the pressure of increased workloads and the stress of the virus to keep supplies moving around the country

AS WE near the end – we hope – of the pandemic it has to be noted the importance of the work carried out over the last 16 months by you. The strength of character shown under the pressure of the workload, and the stress brought on by a global pandemic, is testament to the professionalism of the driving grade. And we hope this will be rewarded in the soon to come pay talks for 2021, which opened on Tuesday 29 June.

Recently, ASLEF, and the other three trade unions that represent DB Cargo staff, wrote a joint open letter to the CEO, raising concerns over an increase in incidents leading to disciplinary action, an over-reliance on overtime, and a favours culture. The response stated that the company has

absolutely no resourcing issues and there is no reliance on favours whatsoever. Each union distributed the letter and the reply so every member could see the concerns raised and the response given.

You may have noticed the recent mass recruitment drive that is underway. Whilst we will always welcome opportunities for new people to come into the grade, especially if the recruitment is diverse, and offers a chance for youngsters to come into the industry, it does seem at direct odds with the no-resourcing issue response just mentioned! As workload levels increase above pre-pandemic levels route learning appears to be slowing and, as work levels continue to grow, this will only slow further as the training of new recruits is not an overnight fix

as training takes time. However, regardless of how you may view the situation, recruitment can only be taken as a positive so soon after a global pandemic, especially when you take a close look at how other industries have suffered, and continue to do so.

We held a meeting over several points of order and how certain items are interpreted on rostering and diagramming. The meeting was positive, with lots cleared up to our satisfaction. Minutes and clarifications will be published in due course.

We also hope to complete our joint industrial relations training for local reps and managers – halted in early 2020 due to the pandemic – in July and August.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to Nick Whitehead, who retires in September. He has been a fine District 4 Organiser and was lead officer for DBC's predecessors, EWS and DB Schenker, and has served the freight industry well. We wish Nick all the best for his retirement and I'm sure he will enjoy spending some well-deserved quality time with wife Mandy and the rest of their family.

A clear



BARRY HALL, company council member, says, a reduction in pay, a reduction in work, a reduction in arrangements

THE company council worked hard to negotiate 100% pay for all frontline staff at a time when we were seeing thousands of people losing their jobs. I'm pleased to say, overall, members did appreciate our efforts and I'm delighted we managed no redundancies because, at one point, over 200 frontline staff were on furlough.

When the company council and district organiser entered pay talks, it was clear that the company wasn't offering anything



tunnel at last for freight on rail in Britain

significant issues with the train, showing that freight can increase its weight and length without any performance issues.

All this positive news shows that rail freight can – and is – playing a vital role in helping the economy recover and decarbonise. New research from the Rail Delivery Group values rail freight's contribution to the environment and economy at more than £2.5bn each year, with the potential for this to increase significantly if rail freight can make more use of electric trains in future. Those benefits are spread right across the country, too, mirroring supply chains that distribute goods to consumers and support exports. Rail freight's strong performance, and the value it creates, has been recognised by Keith Williams, and stands the sector in good stead to navigate the challenges ahead.

choice

**RE, GB Railfreight
council, reports on
function in the working
ough, and leave
ents**

substantial. There was an offer of 1.2% and that was not going to be increased. After some batting back and forth the company offered a reduction – albeit a small reduction – in the working week, but was not prepared to offer a percentage and a reduction.

The choice was clear – it was one or the other.

A reduction in the working week offered a slightly higher percentage than the 1.2% and as a reduction in the working week is in the ASLEF charter voted at

AAD by delegates – company councils should work towards a 32-hour week – the reduction was taken to the executive committee and was seen as favourable. Company council has been criticized by members who haven't seen a pay increase for the second year running; this is disappointing, because we can only work with what's on offer and place it in front of the EC for it to make a decision.

We have been working on ways to increase leave arrangements for our members, and this is looking positive. The offer of placing leave in links has been rejected by the company council, I'm pleased to say, as it's clear members aren't in favour.

More trains than drivers



PAUL ZUCZKOWSKI, Freightliner Heavy Haul business council secretary, talks pay, TUPE, training, and potash, and pays tribute to Daz

IT'S good news that, in the main, work levels on the Heavy Haul side of Freightliner have returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, the shortage of productive drivers, particularly in the south, currently means there are often more trains than drivers! Hopefully, this will ease as the training process gets back up to speed and more drivers complete their training and become productive. Talking of training, a new modular package for trainee drivers will shortly be rolled out across both sides of the company, a long overdue review, although Freightliner still lags behind the other major players in the freight sector by not having its own simulator.

The pay talks season started early on Heavy Haul, with a pay increase, no strings attached, being agreed for drivers at Westbury on ex-DBC t&cs who came over under TUPE when the Mendip contract began. Pay talks for all drivers should start at the end of the summer ahead of the January 2022 pay anniversary. TUPE reared its head again, this time in the north-east, where the potash contract from Boulby to Tees dock changed hands to DBC at fairly short notice. This saw 'in scope' drivers transfer across with the work at the start of May. We wish them all well. Finally, I'd like to pay thanks to my predecessor as HH business council secretary, Daz Smith, for all his hard work and dedication during his time on the business council.

How the world has changed!



PETER MASON, Freightliner Intermodal business council secretary, reports on driver establishment numbers, and increased workloads, and makes a plea for people to step up and take on a rep's role

HOW the world has changed since my last report, with every one of us affected by this pandemic. Ever-changing guidelines has led to the business council being in constant communication with the company. This time last year we held weekly meetings, with driver welfare our top priority, as well as the supply of cleaning materials. Along with all other freight operators, we reached an agreement on two in the cab which enabled the company to continue with essential driver training. The government has set out a roadmap for us all to return to some kind of normal and, when we do, we will be talking to management regarding how we maintain a high level of safety for all our drivers. It has been hard since the first lockdown was enforced but every driver has worked tirelessly to deliver a vital service and you should be proud of the job you have done.

Whilst covid has taken up much of our time, we have been in discussions over other matters, with a new driver training package being developed, with our full involvement, and hopefully bringing a better package for all future drivers. We have also been involved in updating the CDP policy, with changes being brought about by our concerns with how previous managers put their own play on words. Once the content has being agreed, the new format will be fed out to all our reps, and management, with those new to the rolls having first call. Next on our list is MFA, something that has been on the agenda since Jesus was a lad, and maybe we might find a solution soon!

Workload seems to have returned to pre-pandemic levels, given we lost some of the Maersk traffic, driver establishment numbers have not dropped, with assurances that our Doncaster depot, in particular, will not see a decline in numbers. A train crew depot opened in January at Trafford Park, with numbers to rise over the coming year to a full complement of 13. Pay talks will be on the agenda soon and we will be dealing with an entirely new management team; as usual, we will be looking to protect what we have.

We have seen the appointment of numerous new reps across all our depots and we want to wish them all the best in a challenging position in unprecedented times. Whilst it is good to see new people in these positions, we still lack people in certain areas, and have a shortage of health & safety reps. If you would like to become a rep, please contact any of us on the business council for help, advice, and support. And, hopefully, instead of Zoom calls, we can meet in person in time for our all-reps meeting in October.

A big thank you to our local reps



ANDY HOURIGAN, District 3
Organiser, and lead officer,
Direct Rail Services, was

shocked when the company handed out hefty bonuses to management but refused workers a pay rise

C OVID Britain has proved challenging for DRS, train crew, and ASLEF reps. Working with the company has been frustrating. The last 16 months has revealed what DRS is really like as the company tried a bit of 'pandemic profiteering' to take our hard fought terms & conditions.

Like most of the industry, DRS office staff worked from home, and there was a negotiated arrangement that drivers who were not required would be on standby so that mess rooms would not become dangerously saturated with train crew. Although this was negotiated, on many occasions DRS did not consult with ASLEF reps who, more often than not, struggled to get the company around the virtual table. For example, DRS imposed a document which, amongst other dangerous ideas, stated that drivers *must* wear a face mask whilst driving. This was immediately challenged by ASLEF reps and the company was strongly advised that this was not acceptable and not within the working arrangements. During the first months of the pandemic, there were major concerns that the health & safety of train crew was being compromised. Eventually DRS did get around the virtual table and enter into regular dialogue and our negotiators plotted a much safer working relationship.

The company attempted to profit from the pandemic as some Scottish depots came under attack when the contract for the Fife circle work was lost. Initially, the company wanted ASLEF to give up hard fought t&cs in exchange for the future of some of the depots. In a very heated virtual meeting ASLEF reps rejected this insulting opportunism and negotiated a much more pragmatic outcome to the loss of the Fife circle work. Thankfully, sterling work by DRS local reps allowed work to be moved around to ensure the survival of these threatened depots. These reps recognised the predicament and supported their colleagues and I want to personally say a big thank you to them for their comradeship and hard work.

There were many challenges during covid. One was to get the contracted rail head treatment trains running without compromising the driver's health. Although the real bread and butter are nuclear trains, which is government owned, DRS has a portfolio of external work and RHTT is a Network Rail contract which offers a vital service. We initially negotiated a safe



And all we got was a bleeding badge!

arrangement where train crew would use radios instead of having multiple persons in a cab which would not have compromised train crew. At the 11th hour a manager unilaterally withdrew from the radios agreement which threw the whole RHTT contract into jeopardy. There had been 40,000+ covid deaths but management insisted there should be multiple people in a cab as the contract was vital. One manager even insisted that using radios was riskier than getting covid! Sat safely at home, in front of a webcam, another manager downplayed covid deaths and said as his wife was working whilst wearing a mask he couldn't see why there shouldn't be lots of people in a cab, wearing masks, or driving with the windows open, even in winter. These dangerously stupid ideas were challenged and, eventually, it was agreed that the initial radio idea would be adopted. Later, they admitted that the arrangement to use radios had been a great success...

DRS regularly announced that they were 'keeping the lights on and the shelves stacked' so when the ASLEF negotiating team put in a pay submission for 2021, we believed recognition due to the company's most vital

resource – the drivers – would be forthcoming. So we were shocked when, on the eve of the first day of the – already stalled – pay negotiations, the company said the government had insisted that DRS could not offer a pay rise to any employee this year. So whilst management walked away with hefty bonuses, train crew have been snubbed with a 0% pay offer – oh, and a little badge reminding wearers we have been 'keeping the lights on and the shelves stacked'. Which is nice.

During the pandemic, DRS merged with INS, the nuclear shipping arm, and will be under the Nuclear Transport Solutions umbrella. Currently we are still in consultation with this group.

Positives achieved over the last few years include negotiating a third company council position, a health & safety rep at every location, an h&s handbook, a menopause policy, a continuous driving agreement, and an ASLEF best practice CDP policy. The team will soon be negotiating a CDP update, a mental health policy, and other ASLEF best practice ideas. It is also our intention to offer rep training – not over Zoom! – this year.

During the pandemic, company council secretary Kevin Bell got covid and became very poorly; he is still away from work, recovering, and we all wish him a speedy recovery.

There have been two new additions; Seb Brady is the elected representative for the south, and Rab Lang has been co-opted for the Scottish constituency.

Finally, I want to thank all the local level reps and health & safety reps for supporting us over the last few tough years. I believe we have a great ASLEF team within DRS.

Every inch of the network



DICKY FISHER, District 6
Organiser, and lead officer for
Colas, reports on the decision
by Network Rail to break up the
infrastructure monitoring contract,
and celebrates two no-strings pay rises

W HEN the railways were privatised in the 1990s, Serco bought Railtest from British Rail and was given the infrastructure monitoring contract for Railtrack (now Network Rail). Since then, the IM contract has changed hands twice, first from Serco to DB in 2010 and then from DB to Colas in 2015. The IM contract is, again, up for grabs. But, unlike in 2010 and 2015, when there was a straight TUPE transfer from one employer to another, this time, Network Rail has decided to split one contract into four parts: (i) high speed recording; (ii) medium speed; (iii) slow speed; (iv) maintenance.

This approach by Network Rail to further, and unnecessarily, fragmentise our industry will

undoubtedly bring new challenges to our negotiating team, when we discuss any transfers of work between Colas and new operators.

Company council rep Colin Campbell and I will be making it very clear that any transfers of drivers to new employers will need to take place through the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006. The unique nature of IM work, which is undertaken by fewer than 50 drivers, and has to cover every inch of the railway network, means it can only function effectively with the co-operation and goodwill of the workforce, something we will also be making clear to any new operators of IM trains.

On a more positive note, it is worth pointing out that, despite the difficulties of the covid pandemic, ASLEF negotiators have agreed 3% (2020) and 2% (2021) no strings pay increases with Colas and an apprenticeship agreement for new drivers is in place.

Such a positive role model



On 21 July we mark the 30th anniversary of the Newton rail tragedy when two drivers – ASLEF members Reginald McEwan and David Scott – and two passengers lost their lives. David's brother **STUART SCOTT, a member of Motherwell 137 branch, remembers a very dark day on the permanent way**

WEDNESDAY 21 July marks the 30th anniversary of the Newton rail disaster in which four people lost their lives. Both train drivers, Reginald McEwan, 61, and David Scott, 27, as well as two passengers, Kenneth Meehan, 20, and Tracy Donnachie, 18, were killed.

The accident is particularly poignant to me, as David was my brother. The events which unfolded early the next morning are still vivid in my mind, when we were first notified about the accident at around 06.00hrs. The depot manager from Yoker turned up at my parents' home to advise us that they thought David had been killed, but that he still hadn't been located amongst the wreckage. It's believed that, after applying the emergency brake, he attempted to escape through the passenger saloon, but with a combined impact speed of around 60mph there was little or no chance of survival for those involved.

David entered service with British Rail in 1982 as a traction trainee at Eastfield depot, graduated to drivers' assistant the same year, and became a relief driver at Glasgow Queen



David at Crianlarich as a young second man

Street in 1988. He was finally appointed as a driver at Yoker where he became a valued member of train crew. Known for his charismatic nature, and quick wit, as well as his artistic talent, he would have brightened up anyone's day.

Happily married to Karen for four years, he had recently become a doting father to Stewart, who was only eight months old at the



David and Karen on their wedding day

time of the accident. As the eldest of four – two sisters and me – David was someone we greatly admired, such a positive role model, inspiring me to follow in his footsteps to become a train driver.

I never knew Reginald – Reg to family and friends – but I did have the pleasure of meeting his wife and family at their home in Glasgow. They described him as a loving husband, father, and grandfather. With an impressive 43 years' service under his belt, he was looking forward to retirement and spending more time pottering about in his well-stocked garden.

Investigations determined that the accident was caused by driver error as well as insufficient track layout, but with the continuous efforts of ASLEF and the introduction of a train protection warning system (TPWS), drivers' reminder appliance (DRA), etc, railway safety has advanced tremendously over the past 30 years. This provides every member of staff, as well as the many passengers who travel on the rail network, with some reassurance that we can return home safely to our loved ones at the end of the day.

It shouldn't take a disaster to change the way we work



JIM WALSH, ScotRail company council chair, marks the 30th anniversary of the Newton rail crash with a moving tribute to the two drivers who died

IT IS with great sadness, and also a certain pride, that I write about a disaster that took place on 21 July 1991, when two commuter trains crashed just west of Newton railway station at Cambuslang near Glasgow. The junction had been remodelled just a month before the crash. At 21.55, 2P55, the 21:55 Newton-Glasgow Central Cathcart Circle service, a British Rail Class 303 unit driven by Reginald McEwan, left the

'down' platform at Newton. Meanwhile 2J66, the 20:55 Balloch-Motherwell service, a Class 314 unit driven by David Scott, was crossing from the fast West Coast main line tracks through a single-lead junction to enter the 'up' platform. The two trains collided head-on at the junction, killing both drivers, and two passengers, and injuring 22. The Class 303 overrode the buffer unit of the Class 314 and the trains

telescoped over one another. The leading coach of the 314 was completely destroyed.

David Scott, who started on the railway as a traction trainee at Eastfield depot, Springburn, and moved to Yoker depot in 1988, became a colleague of mine, and eventually a friend. He was a popular man with a great talent for drawing caricatures of his fellow drivers, and an ability to pick your best and worst features, causing great amusement and laughter. These drawings were posted in a cabinet at Yoker and are still there to this day. Pride came

with being a friend of David, and great sadness at losing a friend and colleague.

Although I didn't know Reg McEwan personally I'm told by Glasgow Central drivers that he was a gentleman in every sense of the word. Losing friends and colleagues in such a sad way never leaves you. It also needs saying that this accident changed the way Network Rail looked at single lead junctions and how they treated this appalling cost-saving method of running trains. Hopefully, it will never happen again, in these circumstances, but it should never be forgotten. And it shouldn't take a disaster to change our working conditions, which is why I'm a proud and long-serving member of a trade union like ASLEF because, with train drivers running a union, we will always have train drivers representing our needs.

Top man

BATTERSEA branch is very sad to report the passing of retired Victoria driver Ken Heydon on 19 April at the age of 81. Ken was born on 15 October 1939 and began his railway career at 15 as a cleaner at Salisbury on 11 January 1955. He progressed through the ranks before transferring to Feltham as a driver on 2 October 1967. When Feltham closed in January 1969 he moved to Stewarts Lane until its closure in 1974 when he went to Victoria mixed traction depot. In November 1983 Ken was part of the depot merger which saw the mixed traction and electric

depots merged on the introduction of the new Gatwick Railair services. Ken was a wonderful friend and colleague, always on hand to offer help and advice, and nothing was ever too much trouble for him. He had a lovely sense of humour and was very good company. He was a loyal ASLEF man and served as an LSR rep until his retirement in October 2004. He was a real branch stalwart at Battersea, served as branch secretary from 1994 to 1996, and covered several other roles within the branch over the years, and still attended branch after his retirement. He was very

instrumental in the formation and success of the Victoria social club, and very proud of how it developed over the years. He was an auditor until his illness, serving in that role for 20 years, and playing a key part in organising the driver reunions every April and October, the annual dinner dance, and the children's Christmas party the social club put on. Ken was a devoted husband, father and grandfather. He was married to Rita for 63 years, his son David is a driver at Redhill, and his grandson Richard is a driver at Bristol. He also leaves a daughter Valerie, and another son Desmond. When people talk about a gentlemen, well, Ken really was a true gentleman. He was loyal, helpful, kind; an absolute top man. Everyone who had the good fortune to know Ken knows we have lost one of the very best. Our thoughts are with Rita and her family at this very sad time.

Pas Luongo
Battersea 019 branch secretary with special thanks to David Heydon and Graham Hoy for your assistance



Ken Heydon: mainstay of Battersea branch

Upcoming Events

■ TOTON: FRIDAY 29 OCTOBER

In anticipation of the lifting of all covid-19 restrictions, the 2021 Toton old boys' reunion will be held at the Soldiers & Sailors Club, 421 Tamworth Road, Long Eaton, NG10 3JS, from 19.00. All welcome! email reginald.sargeant@gmail.com Please send your branch news, reports, articles, features, presentations, and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk

● Please send your branch news, reports, articles, features, presentations, and photographs to journal@aslef.org.uk

RAIL WORDSEARCH by Mick Moloney

HOW TO SOLVE: Word searches are solved by finding the words hidden somewhere in the grid. They might be found written across, down, or diagonally, and they may read backwards or forwards. Circle each word as you find it, cross off the list, and you can't go wrong. Happy hunting!

Arrow

Brake

Bristol

Canopy

Cleaner

Colour light

Conductor

Control Room

Deltic

Distant

Electrification

Fast line

Firebox

Flagman

Gantry

Gatwick

Golden

Govia

Thameslink

E	S	O	U	T	H	E	R	N	R	E	G	I	O	N	D	F	E	L	L
C	L	J	K	N	I	L	S	E	M	A	H	T	A	I	V	O	G	U	O
N	N	E	M	V	C	N	M	E	B	S	A	R	O	I	Z	P	G	Q	N
A	F	W	C	O	N	T	R	O	L	R	O	O	M	E	G	R	Z	D	
Z	R	X	D	T	I	O	D	M	R	E	D	N	E	T	A	W	E	Y	O
N	I	R	K	G	R	N	E	K	C	I	W	T	A	G	M	N	E	E	N
E	C	Z	O	L	Q	I	W	E	R	T	T	W	E	T	Y	A	N	N	K
P	L	G	R	W	A	Y	C	O	N	D	U	C	T	O	R	M	F	O	I
O	E	N	I	L	T	S	A	F	I	M	P	E	R	I	N	G	O	L	N
S	A	S	S	T	N	A	T	S	I	D	F	A	R	M	E	A	R	O	G
R	N	E	L	N	E	D	L	O	G	C	D	O	O	W	D	L	D	M	S
U	E	Y	A	C	A	N	O	P	Y	O	A	S	T	R	R	F	O	P	C
H	R	D	N	M	M	A	Y	B	N	R	W	T	Y	P	O	E	C	A	R
T	O	S	D	S	L	E	B	R	A	R	L	S	I	T	M	I	I	C	O
K	E	R	L	S	T	H	G	I	L	R	U	O	L	O	C	W	T	A	S
W	H	T	I	E	H	E	M	S	E	V	O	T	H	M	N	E	L	R	S
I	M	A	N	X	G	A	N	T	R	Y	I	M	E	I	S	E	E	L	A
C	J	I	E	O	U	R	N	O	L	H	G	U	O	R	N	E	D	S	E
K	L	Q	E	K	A	R	B	L	U	E	R	I	F	I	R	E	B	O	X
B	A	C	E	D	A	F	E	T	E	M	P	L	E	M	E	A	D	S	Q

Solution to Wordsearch in June issue:

S	R	E	U	Y	L	I	A	R	D	R	I	H	T	H	K	L	Y	T	A
C	T	X	M	Z	D	A	E	H	R	E	V	O	W	O	P	X	I	N	S
O	C	A	V	B	J	F	E	H	L	P	Q	R	X	M	E	C	R	T	Y
T	L	D	Y	S	L	O	C	O	J	H	R	N	E	W	K	W	E	N	B
R	G	H	W	I	Q	Z	D	H	E	J	K	A	W	E	X	C	H	U	N
A	B	R	W	D	O	W	N	M	A	I	N	F	I	S	N	E	A	G	O
I	G	F	X	U	V	N	M	E	J	L	W	K	S	H	M	I	N	C	I
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G	N	T	S	S	O	R	C	A	L	R	X	V	C	V	I	B	T	E	R
B	T	O	I	D	A	R	O	X	S	W	M	E	M	W	I	P	S	D	A
A	F	R	E	I	G	H	T	E	U	F	O	R	B	B	U	V	F	E	R
L	A	Y	W	K	L	C	O	G	N	R	E	S	T	D	A	V	G	H	T
L	D	Z	E	P	I	T	T	D	I	E	L	R	V	M	N	O	P	X	C
A	E	B	R	G	P	E	T	I	X	Y	E	F	F	U	B	Z	V	B	I
S	F	G	C	Q	I	P	O	R	U	N	N	I	N	G	R	A	I	L	R
T	T	C	N	D	R	X	N	B	N	B	C	O	U	P	L	E	D	U	T
R	S	B	I	E	S	E	L	T	R	A	C	T	I	O	N	V	R	E	C
D	A	I	A	C	B	G	R	A	D	I	E	N	T	V	I	V	R	T	E
K	O	L	R	V	I	A	D	U	C	T	Z	H	T	M	W	P	O	O	L
L	C	N	T	U	N	N	E	L	Y	S	S	E	C	Q	U	N	E	M	E

Our woman from Yorkshire

I am writing, on behalf of Leeds branch, to wish Sister Pauline Cawood all the best on her retirement from Northern Trains. Pauline has been a staunch ASLEF member since joining the grade in 1998, holding many positions, latterly as branch secretary, and LLC rep, and has sat on several committees; she was one of the first reps to join the ASLEF

women's committee.

Pauline loved driving trains, and I am sure she won't mind me saying that she was very proud to be a driver. It was remarkable to see her at work in her role as LLC rep, holding the room with her professionalism and knowledge, a great asset as a rep to all drivers and, equally, a thorn in the side of many a manager!

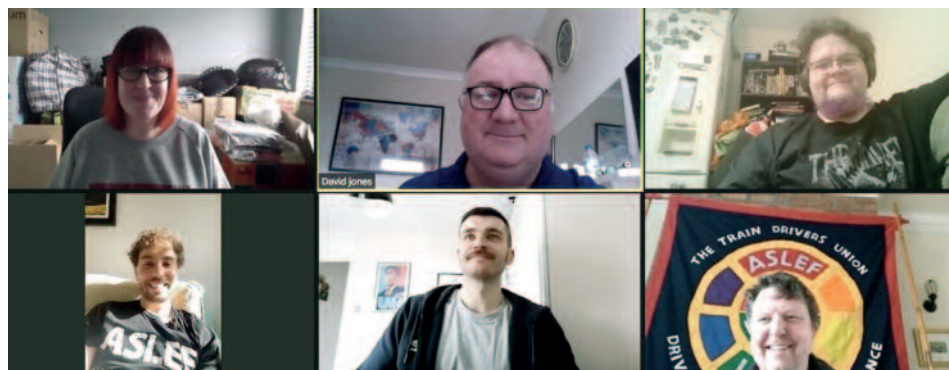
She was a regular attendee at AAD, no stranger at head office when company council rep, and known by comrades up and down the country for being forthright, and not afraid to speak out; indeed, one ex-GS branded her 'That woman from Yorkshire', to which he was told, in no uncertain terms, that Pauline was 'Our woman from Yorkshire'. Best wishes, Pauline,



Our woman Pauline ruffled a few feathers, but was a great rep

for a long, happy and well-deserved retirement.

Adam Sykes
Leeds 116 branch secretary



It's a protest, not a parade



GRAHAM O'MARA, of Bletchley branch, reports on the TUC's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans + online conference held on Thursday 25 and Friday 26 February

SINCE being accepted for who I am, at my workplace, I feel secure, and safe, and wanted to represent ASLEF at last year's conference. Having the support of the Bletchley branch, I was nominated to attend. Well, we all know what happened last year, and still is happening now; it was postponed until this year and then as an online event.

ASLEF was asked to talk on two topics up for discussion. One, given by James Sutherland, Newton Heath, was about the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on members of the LGBT+ community. The other by Darran Brown, Preston, was about non-binary representation and support in the workplace.

Lee James, ASLEF's equalities adviser, David Jones, of Swansea branch, James, Darran, and I all forwarded questions to the chair of each session, to make sure the TUC is fully aware of the issues we thought about as the talks were given.

James talked at length about the mental health and safety of LGBT+ people when the support structures they should have might not be accessible (such as having to stay in unsafe environments). One of the points he made was that the LGBT+ community had, as recently portrayed in Russell T Davies' HBO Max drama *It's a Sin*, a lot of experience in dealing with pandemics. The mental health impacts, isolation, the false information given to people, and so on. We must, as a trade union, and as humans, do as much as we can to help



Darran driving his keys against intolerance; and our delegates (plus Lee and Craig from head office) at the LGBT+ virtual conference

and support all LGBT+ people.

Darran talked on a subject close to my heart, as the partner I live with is non-binary, and any support we can give to the trans part of the LGBT+ community is important. He made good points about how we can support the non-binary community, and highlighted TUC training modules as a source of information for ASLEF reps to use to gain knowledge vital in a modern railway.

Among the questions asked were do we, as a community, do enough to celebrate the fact that the Stonewall riots more than 50 years ago were organised by women (and trans women at that) of colour? Whilst pointing out that it was a protest, not a parade. Something the Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill 2021 would love to do away with. Should we, as a country, stop the cosy arrangements, at things like Remembrance Sunday, when countries with less than stellar LGBT+ support have representation? And will the TUC condemn the actions of Graham Linehan (and others like him) through any union of which he might be a member?

After conference finished ASLEF, with the UCU, CWU, and GMB, hosted a fringe event on sex workers' rights and LGBT+ equality. While it seems odd, to some, that we support this, it is important. Sex work is not a crime, but the government keeps trying to change how it is run and this leads to violence. Sex workers cannot ask for help from authority as they will most likely be harassed if they do.

All in all, a very informative conference, and it shows what can be done when needs must. I hope the next one will be in person but it would be good if future conferences were also shown online.



RAILWAY SERVICE Throughout the pandemic railway workers have played their part in keeping this country moving. Retired Barnham driver Bob Dorkings and Par driver Paul Edwards have produced a covid service badge in nine versions: BR red; BR blue; BR black; Eastern Region blue; Midland Region maroon; North-Eastern Region orange; Southern Region green; Scottish Region light blue; and Western Region brown. Each badge costs £5 (plus £2.50 p&p) from rdorkings@yahoo.com or paul.edwards1962@sky.com



KEYWORKER badge to recognise the hard work of all railway and other keyworkers this year. £5 plus £1 p&p from Fiona Lumsden (MTR Elizabeth line and Paddington branch). Please email georgiaf44@hotmail.com



DARLINGTON 125th anniversary badge 1895-2020. All badges individually numbered. £6.50 inc p&p. Please contact branch secretary John Clark by email at johnclark162@gmail.com



NORWOOD depot special pin badges including Cowden 25th anniversary. £3 each or £5 the pair (inc p&p). Proceeds to Norwood Drivers' Social Club. Email Stuart Boxall at stubbyboxall@gmail.com



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



PORTSMOUTH and ISLE OF WIGHT branch 164 has struck a new badge for active and retired members. Set of two £12 plus £1.20 postage; email wdrailbadgeinfo@gmail.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.



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



CASH paid for original pre 90s railway photographic slides or negatives. Please contact GBRf Tonbridge driver (and railwayana collector) John Waddington at johnwaddo@yahoo.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 grantmu32@btinternet.com

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

SIMON DAVIES

WHAT HAPPENS IN AACHEN SHOULD STAY IN AACHEN

SIMON Davies had emergency surgery in November 2018 following the discovery of a brain tumour. He recovered and, in his own unique manner, continued with his life, vowing it would not affect him, and he did indeed continue and defied everybody with his steadfast mentality. Unfortunately, in late 2020 the tumour returned and, sadly, he succumbed to it and passed away on Tuesday 11 May at the young age of 47.

Following in the footsteps of his father Ron, Simon joined the railway in 1998 as a train manager at Preston, moving into the driving grade on the West Coast main line at Manchester in 2000. He immediately became 'one of the troops' and forged many lasting friendships. Prior to joining the permanent way he did lots of different jobs and could, literally, turn his hand to anything; converting and restoring motor cars and motorcycles, renovating houses, he even had a stint at breeding alpacas!

I had the pleasure of spending so much time with Simon, and have so many wonderful memories, and forever embedded in my mind is an ICE train to Aachen whilst doing a stint of Eurorailing. What happens in Aachen should stay in Aachen, though the caper has reduced people to tears of laughter, as we were like a comedy duo travelling on the trains around Europe, basically drinking, visiting record shops, and laughing from morning to night.

In 2011 the BBC put out a request across the industry, looking for a train driver to take part in a TV programme called *Toughest Place to Be a...* The word went round and, from hundreds of applicants from TOCs and FOCs around the country, Simon was chosen to go to Peru to drive trains in the most perilous conditions. Simon was, without a doubt, the right person to undertake the task of driving huge freight trains in the Andes, as he was not fazed at all and our comrades in Peru welcomed him and friendships were forged.

Simon was a regular on our drivers' Jolly Boys' historical trips around Europe, his roommate our good friend and comrade Big Col; they were a double act and their escapades were the stuff of railway



Shades of Simon: 'One of the troops'

legend. His sense of humour was legendary and his company brought laughter. Simon was once carrying out his safety brief when a driver manager asked the group, 'What would you do if you had a fire on your train?' Simon responded, with razor sharp wit, 'I'd go faster, like the *Memphis Belle*, to put it out'. The group broke into laughter, but the manager was not amused. Good old Simon!

He was a good judge of character and unswervingly loyal to friends. If Simon did not like you, and his judgement was always on the mark, he let you know but, if you were a friend, he could be counted on and his friendship was a treasured commodity.



His loyalty to ASLEF was unswerving, too; he was an activist, and fully supportive of our union. Simon was ever present at ASLEF events such as TUC marches, workers' memorial day, and always showed his respect for peers and mentors by attending retirement events. His counsel meant the world to me, and many others. Whenever I hear a song by the icon that is David Bowie I fondly remember the shining light that is Simon because his musical tastes further forged our bond.

Simon leaves behind his wife Joanna and three children – Pip, Quinn and Fraser – who are a testament to his outgoing nature, as they can be found on horseback, playing rugby, felling trees, and seldom sat on a computer game. Simon's funeral on Monday 24 May was a humanist service and it was touching to see the District 3 banner held aloft by Brothers Richardson and Stocks. In a fitting testament to a true character, at the social gathering afterwards, in a venue close to the old Woodhead railway, tales were exchanged, laughter ensued, and Simon was given a fitting send-off. RIP my friend and comrade.

Alan Moss *Avanti West Coast company council representative*

BILL BAXENDALE ONE OF A KIND AND SORELY MISSED



Baxy: main man at Springs Branch

I was saddened to hear that retired member Bro Bill Baxendale passed recently. Bill, or 'Baxy', as he was known, was the focal point for ASLEF at Springs Branch depot, being a long-serving Wigan branch secretary, and totally committed to ASLEF and its policies. Bill served as chair of the LDC for many years, before rising to sectional council, and was also instrumental in setting up the Wigan area welfare fund, organising events from 1978 until he retired in 1992. When Bill retired, instead of relaxing, like most people, he set up and ran the Retired Members' Section Wigan branch, organising Christmas evenings, and regular coach trips for the retired members to keep them active and informed about pensions. Baxy was one of a kind, always putting others before himself, and left big shoes to fill when he retired. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him, and our thoughts go to his family and friends.

Graham Fazackerley *ex-Springs Branch*

JOCK BROCKIE ONE OF THE GREAT GUYS

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of RMS member Brother Jock (John) Brockie after 66 years membership in ASLEF which is another landmark for the auld retired members of Edinburgh No 2 branch. Jock was a gentleman who attended the Auld Man's Do (the retired drivers' night) regularly and always told a few stories and a few jokes. But never a bad word was said by Jock (unless under his breath) towards his fellow workers from days gone by. He will be sadly missed by all.

Thanks for being one of the great guys from whom we learnt so very much early on in our railway careers, and another gentleman who will never be forgotten. RIP Jock.

Rab Wicksted *Edinburgh No 2 branch secretary and all the members who knew you in Edinburgh No 2*

ANDREW RAMSAY

COMMITMENT TO THE CAUSE

Andy Ramsay died on Thursday 20 May suddenly, but peacefully, in Dundee. After a career spanning almost 50 years on the railway, Andy was a much-lauded member of the union. His sense of fairness, his humility, and his principles did much to improve the conditions of members over many years. His time at Stratford branch, where he was branch secretary for over 25 years, and his time on sectional council, further extended his commitment to the cause. Andy retired in 1996 and returned to Scotland in 2005. He was also a much loved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. Our lives were the richer for having him in it, and he will be sorely missed.

Monica Morley *daughter*

MARK FLEMING

FANTASTIC ABILITY FOR WORKING TRAINS SMOOTHLY

IT IS my sad duty to report the death of former Saltley driver Mark Fleming, or Spit, as he was known by almost everyone, who passed away peacefully on Saturday 10 April 2021 aged 59 at the Douglas Macmillan Hospice in Stoke after losing his battle against cancer.

Born in South Wales, Mark had a very difficult childhood and was happy to become part of the railway family as soon as he could. He began his career in August 1977 as a junior railman at Cardiff before making the move north to Carlisle in June 1980 as a guard working various trains in the area, but never happier than when working across the Settle and Carlisle route behind one of his beloved Class 40 locos.

Mark moved south to Derby in 1985 as a guard before a move to Saltley in 1989 for promotion to the driving grade, a time he described as one of the happiest in his career. One of the highlights was when he worked 1Z47 the Crewe to Llandridnod Wells charter with one of his beloved Class 40s – 40145 – on 3 March 2007. I well remember Spit digging out some of his BR blue uniform to fully look the part with the blue liveried loco!

During the later part of his time at Saltley he took on the position of minder driver. It is fair to say that, at times, it could be difficult to engage with Mark but, above all else, he was a first class railwayman and many of his trainees will testify to this. He was always happy to pass on his railway knowledge and had a fantastic ability for working trains in a smooth and controlled way. I can recall Spit telling me of some raucous rides he had in brake vans when working MGR coal trains along the Denby colliery branch line north of Derby and I suspect these trips gave Mark an appreciation for the man on the back!

Along with railways Mark's other passion in life was chasing and photographing his beloved West Midlands buses. He followed his beloved Fleetline and Metrobuses all around the Midlands and to other areas of the country when they were sold on; not an easy hobby when, as Mark would happily admit, he was

not a big fan of crowds and, sometimes, people in general! Although one person he was always more than happy to meet and share a pint with was his great friend, the late Ron 'the Bus' Morgan.

Although there were a covid-limited number of mourners at Spit's funeral it is planned to have a day celebrating his life which will most likely take place behind a Class 40 loco and will certainly involve a pint or two. Cheers Spit! Rest in Peace, mate.

Jason Hickling Saltley branch reporter



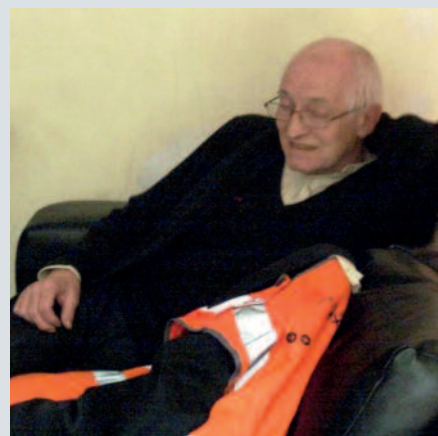
Spit with the late Ron the Bus and on his beloved British Rail 40145 at New Street



JON BOYLE GREAT MUSIC LOVER

It is with a heavy heart that I report the passing of retired Gatwick Express driver Jon Boyle, on Tuesday 18 May, who, unfortunately, only got to spend a few short years in retirement with his wife Margaret and family. Jon joined British Rail on 15 July 1991 after being made redundant from De La Rue printers, starting his basic training at Waterloo Southside training school. He became a train man D at London Bridge before moving to Victoria Central for his driving position. Jon was then moved to the new Gatwick Express franchise, under PTR&R, in March 1994. Jon was very passionate about Gatwick Express where he became a driving instructor/trainer, helping to launch the careers of many new recruits. During his retirement celebration, held by Battersea branch, Jon was delighted to see so many faces of those he had helped and trained. He was a great lover of music, often whistling his way through an entire song, and having a morning chat over coffee. Often the call went round, 'Where's Jon?' only to find him curled up on the tatty old depot sofa. He will be greatly missed by friends and colleagues who hope to be able soon to raise a glass to Jon despite these testing times.

Nick Warner Gatwick Express LSR secretary



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



Are Palestinians freedom fighters – or terrorists?

Before anyone attacks us for being anti-Semites, let's look at the definition of anti-Semitism. Simply put, this is hatred towards Jews. So why is it when an individual or a state criticises Israel, in support of Palestinians, refugees in their own country, that Zionists are quick to label them with this?

I am a Muslim and my co-author John has Jewish heritage. It is important to note this dispute has nothing to do with religion – it is territorial. Together we hope to bring a balanced report and, perhaps, a way out of this terrible conflict that has lasted for far too long.

In 1917 the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, a former Conservative Prime Minister, published the Balfour Declaration which supported a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. Lord Rothschild, leader

of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain, expressed a wish for a Jewish state. Prior to 1917 Palestine was under the control of the Ottoman Empire, allies of Germany and Austria in the Great War of 1914-18. Palestine, and Transjordan, became a British mandate under the League of Nations in 1920. Israel was born in 1948. During the Six Day War of 1967, fought against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, Israel captured parts of the Gaza Strip, parts of the West Bank, and Western Galilee. Countless United Nations resolutions have been passed but Israel refuses to give back these territories. In the original Palestine mandate Jerusalem is part of Palestine West Bank but, after the 1967 war, Israel claimed holy city.

The recent conflict in May resulted in the Palestinians winning the media war. Peaceful demonstrations were staged right across the globe. Thank God for social media and independent news outlets. The sad fact is the loss of lives on both sides.

So how can we resolve this? The two state solution? Two independent nations, living side by side, but not viable unless Israel hands back the occupied territories. At present Israel occupies 78% of the land it captured in 1967.

Miko Peled, a former IDF officer, who lost his 13-year-old daughter in a suicide bomber attack in 1997, proposes, a one state solution, a bi-national state anchored in common humanity, with Jews and Palestinians living together in one state as equals. Perhaps we could call it Palestine-Israel or the Holy Land. A referendum

would have to be called to let the people decide their future.

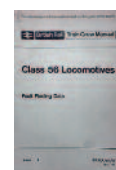
Ghulam Khan Birmingham New Street

ASLEF is a special union

After 28 years on the footplate I have now been medically retired from SWR. I'm happy with the closure and want to put on record my thanks to all the Waterloo LDC for their invaluable help in keeping me going over the past few years. In particular, I'd like to mention Mark Prenter, for information on the pension scheme, and my old mucker Dave 'Banjo' Johnson, for his support, even prior to his appointment as a rep. Special mention to Martin Dye, who could not have maximized my leaving package any further, what a top fella! And, of course, h&s rep Tim Castro for going above and beyond.

The railway truly is a special industry, Waterloo is a special depot, and ASLEF is a special union with unrivalled camaraderie. I am truly blessed to have made so many lifelong pals. Too many to mention but you know who you are and I look forward to seeing you all in the future. Bye for now, and thanks again.

Russell Liddell Waterloo Nine Elms



BRITISH RAIL TRAIN CREW MANUALS 33056 SERIES WANTED for my personal collection. Good price paid for all wanted manuals. email Tony Middleton, GBRf driver, at D428@me.com

ANDY RAMSAY SAD PASSING OF OUR FRIEND, OUR MATE AND A SPECIAL MAN



Andy: the lighted flame

IT IS with sadness that I report the passing of Andy Ramsay. Our thoughts and condolences are with his wife Shelly and daughters Elaine and Monica. Andy, a Scotsman born and bred, became branch secretary of the biggest footplate depot in England. Those who knew and worked with him recognised that Andy was a special man.

He was employed as a cleaner at Dundee in 1951, and became a fireman at Haymarket in 1956. He later spent a short period at King's Cross and eventually arrived at Stratford, in East London, a long way from Arbroath, in the late 1960s.

Andy, on arrival at Stratford, quickly made his mark in the ASLEF branch room. He was soon involved with the social committee, then elected to the Local Departmental Committee, and finally branch secretary, following Len Mills into the job.

During his railway career, with its ups and downs, and perhaps more downs than ups, life was not easy. There was the national strike in 1955 – a two week fight by the Society to protect differentials. Then the Beeching cuts in the 1960s – cutting Britain's railways by almost half. The Transport Act of 1965 reduced rail freight and the loss of common carriers status. There was dieselisation and electrification. The 1965 manning agreement. Job cuts in the 1970s. And the flexible rostering so-called agreement in 1982 (312 hours in an eight week cycle to enable the industry to run without overtime). So much for management speak!

Throughout this difficult period Andy was always active, playing a role in protecting our members' interests. He used his knowledge, which he freely gave to others, be they cleaner, fireman, driver's assistant, driver, or, indeed, manager. Many benefited from his knowledge and many have cause to be grateful for Andy's sound advice, help, and representation. He was our friend, our mate, who shared our problems. He was a loyal man; loyal to his workmates, loyal to his union, ASLEF; and, above all, loyal to his family and his friends.

Sadly, sometimes we are not always able to express our appreciation until it's too late. Andy, many thanks for your friendship and loyalty. You will be sorely missed.

Low Adams GS 1993-1998 with former DO7 Brian Corbett and Cliff Holloway ex-Euston

No peace without justice



HUSSEIN EZZEDINE,
branch
secretary
and also
the branch
equality rep

of Edinburgh No 1, made a passionate speech to AAD about the plight of the Palestinian people. This is what he said...

I'M FED up talking about emergencies in Palestine, after an emergency lasting more than 70 years. But, when the state of Israel has escalated its violence, Palestinians are calling on us to protest, to demonstrate our solidarity, and to take action. As they continue to resist the ongoing programme of ethnic cleansing.

We must, of course, answer this call as generation after generation endures more suffering. Because, unfortunately, for decades much of the UK trade union movement was complicit – supportive of Zionism – and there are still elements of that today, but we can be proud in ASLEF to be unequivocal in our support for the victims of settler-colonialism, ethnic cleansing, discrimination, and apartheid.

We need to change the narrative. You don't get to drop an entire colony on top of an inhabited land, grind the inhabitants into the dirt for decades, and then claim self-defence every time they retaliate! The UN has stated that the violence is moving towards full-scale war. It isn't. Full-scale war

would require both sides to have the capability to wage a full-scale war. When one side in this conflict has one of the most advanced militaries in the world – indeed, is a nuclear power – while the other has a few home made rockets, small arms, and stones to throw, shame on anyone who frames this crisis as some kind of equally matched conflict between warring nations.

‘There is an occupier, and an occupied’

The narrative must change, and we should avoid the intentionally misleading narrative which is – at best – of ‘an insoluble and complex conflict’, with both sides responsible.

It isn't. It is, actually, very simple. There is an occupier, and an occupied. There are the ethnic cleaners, and the ethnically cleansed.

There is discrimination, and the victims of that discrimination. Let us be clear – Zionism is racism. We talk a lot about equality, but there can be no equality in a state which, by its very nature, places one people above another.

For more than 70 years, Israel has denied Palestinians their fundamental rights and has refused to comply with international law. This is only possible because of international support from a handful of governments, including our own, and facilitated by complicit corporations and other institutions. Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories is illegal under international law so, by definition, Palestinian resistance to that occupation is legitimate.



Mariam Barghouti: ‘Palestinians are destined to be a demographic threat’

For over 70 years Palestinians have been resisting the brutal realities of this colonial project and what has become the world's longest military occupation of modern times. It matters not whether that resistance is peaceful or violent. They are gunned down while protesting; bombed periodically; and denied basic human rights, including freedom of movement, and freedom from want or fear.

People are asking what we can do – well, we can donate to Medical Aid for Palestinians to help with the immediate crisis, but, beyond that, the answer is boycott, divestment, and sanctions. Appeals for Israel to live up to its obligations under international law, and to our government to condemn Israel, are fine but, after 73 years, have proved to be ineffective.

We must uphold the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity. Israel is occupying – and colonising – land, discriminating against Palestinian citizens of Israel, and denying Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. The BDS campaign to pressure Israel

to comply with international law is having an impact. Strategic action will make a difference – pressure on governments, institutions, universities, pension funds, and companies that are complicit. BDS is not dogma, but a strategy for effective solidarity – in a country as small, and trade-dependent, as Israel it could work.

‘A people that cannot return’

‘When we take the diplomatic road, our people are dragged in a debate over our humanity,’ said the Palestinian writer Mariam Barghouti. ‘When we resist with arms, we are terrorists, and killed. When we resist through non-violence, we are targeted and vilified. When we protest with our tongues, we are put in prison. When we rise up in protest we are sniped down and killed. When we are simply born Palestinian, we are destined to be a demographic threat, a people that cannot return home and, with all of this, what option are we left with? A silent death? Because god forbid oppressors get uncomfortable.’

We must ensure those oppressors have no opportunity to get comfortable.

Reprisal attack on railwaymen



Further to the piece about the Mallow shootings in County Cork in 1921 by Robert O'Connell, chair, Northern Line North, in the ASLEF Journal (December) rail historian **PETER RIGNEY**, a former industrial officer of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, wrote in the *Irish Examiner*:

THE Locomotive Journal reported ‘Mallow Outrage – five members shot, three killed’ and described how the executive of the union was threatening a general railway strike throughout Great Britain unless an inquiry

was established and guarantees given as to the safety of Irish railwaymen. John Bromley, general secretary, had visited Cork in December 1920 and in the *Journal* described ‘drunkenness among recent Royal Irish Constabulary recruits’.

There was rivalry between ASLEF and the NUR and, in an intelligence report to Michael Collins, the unions were described as being ‘at loggerheads and always trying to get one up on each other’.

‘Regardless of the rivalry, ASLEF and the NUR kept the Mallow shootings and the behaviour of the police in the national news cycle but the military inquiry unsurprisingly exonerated the police.’

‘But the British policy of reprisals was coming under increasingly sharp criticism and the Mallow shootings in County Cork were a prime example of the British scoring an ‘own goal’.

Pensions aren't a gift – they're deferred wages



DAVE TYSON joined the railway industry in 1980, became a local rep at Norwich in 1987, and, later, president of ASLEF's executive committee. He has been a trustee director of the Railways Pension Scheme since 2001 and, at AAD in May, gave his final report to conference. Here he reflects on what has been achieved in the last challenging year – and on the problems we face in the future

WE LIVE in unusual times. I recently read a biography of President Franklin D Roosevelt and the dark days of the mid-1930s bear a resemblance to the situation in which we find ourselves today. FDR pumped billions of dollars into the US economy in his New Deal and got the nation back to work through investment in infrastructure projects, which also brought in employment rights, the minimum wage, and pensions. The policy was designed to stimulate the economy, thus ensuring recovery. Much of this applies today though, funnily enough, Roosevelt was branded 'a communist' by his enemies and our government seems more interested in dismantling employment rights!

Today, governments around the world will have to step up to the mark to bring about a recovery which, like FDR, will mean investing in infrastructure, much of which will be in the fight against climate change, with further investment and development of the green economy, and big investors such as pension schemes will play their part, too.

The value of the Railways Pension Scheme is almost back to pre-pandemic levels and, in the past year, the investment transformation programme has saved the scheme a whopping £250 million.

But the industry is in a state of flux and, on the back of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, it is widely expected that the government will bring forward changes in areas such as employment benefits, in which pensions are included, and a recent job advertised by the DfT was seeking a suitable candidate to lead a team 'on the implementation of benefits and pensions reform' in the railways industry, the salary was in excess of £80,000 part-time, so it's a case of 'watch this space'.

We are still facing the prospect of increasing contributions on some schemes, along with benefit changes, and there are also issues with member and employer affordability being the major challenge. These issues are ongoing but it appears to me that



some employers are deluded if they believe that member contribution rates of 30% are affordable, as this equates to something just under £800 per four weeks for a member on a salary of £34,000, so there needs to be more discussion.

It also seems clear that some employers, who do not have the benefit of government support, are using the current covid situation to force changes on their workforce, none more so than one scheme, where the section has been unilaterally closed, not only to new entrants, but also to future accrual, forcing members to take up the less beneficial defined contributions offering or no pension at all. This is an issue being addressed by ASLEF and the trustees alike.

QUOTE...

*"You're mugging old ladies every bit as much if you pinch their pension fund" – Ben Elton **Meltdown***

...UNQUOTE

There are many other issues the trustees are having to adjust to or tackle, including new legislation that has given the Pensions Regulator more powers which, I believe, is in response to the actions of the likes of Sir Philip Green, who sold BHS for £1 knowing full well that the pension fund was in deficit. TPR was heavily criticised for its lack of action – and teeth – in the matter.

New legislation has created 'master trusts' – which the RPS is deemed to be, due to its DC and AVC offerings – which brings more bureaucracy, 'one to one' monitoring, and alterations to trustees' tenure.

Further legislation was given royal assent this year on the principles of long-term funding and determining the manner in which tri-annual valuations can be conducted. Initially the proposals failed to account for schemes that were still open to new employees, so your trustees lobbied the government on amendments, which proved to be successful.

The current Work & Pensions Minister has also brought forward legislation that requires pension schemes with over £5 billion of assets

to report on the carbon footprint of those assets, no mean task given that the value of the RPS stands at £33 billion and we have some 15,000 different assets! However, we have a sustainable ownership team who are highly motivated, engaged, and, in my view, ahead of the field on this.

The single biggest threat that faces not only our pension scheme, but our planet, and humanity itself, is climate change. The evidence is overwhelming; the actions of man and his love for fossil fuels is causing huge damage to the fabric of our planet. Pollution, intense farming, and human activity are causing damage that, if action is not taken now, will lead to catastrophic changes to the earth's climate.

What can a pension scheme do to help move towards a carbon neutral economy? Well, we can do a great deal, and have been acting for some time now. We have purchased a wind farm in Scotland and, more recently, a biomass power plant in Lincolnshire. Our property portfolio now has strict criteria on the manner in which buildings are constructed; the Gretna Shopping Village in Scotland has won awards for its eco policies and we are partnering with Cambridge city council to re-develop the Beehive Shopping Centre.

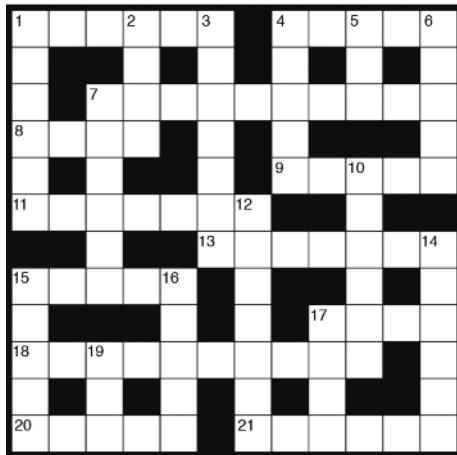
We can and will play our part, and seek to engage with the companies we invest in to make sure that they act in a sustainable and socially responsible manner. We will seek to make sure that they move to carbon neutral as soon as possible and, where we encounter resistance, work with other asset owners to form a collaborative approach to implementing change. The final option will be to divest from companies that refuse to alter; this is the last option as divestment is costly.

It is not just about what the trustees think, it is also about engaging with members on what you think is a sustainable investment.

And we always have to apply our 'fiduciary' responsibilities; that is, we have to act in the interests of all our 350,000 members and employers. I wish you all the very best for the future and may your struggles, through this most challenging of times, bring forward every success.

Prize Crossword

Prize crossword 183 by Tom Williams



Solution to Prize Crossword 182

Across: 3 Cupid 6 Tornado 7 Plasma 8 Check 9 Elephant 12 Flint 14 Carer 15 Ligature 18 Ladle 19 Source 20 Shallot 21 Yolks

Down: 1 Freezing 2 Jacket 3 Copper 4 Peach 5 Demon 6 Tactful 10 Airedale 11 Torrent 13 Duress 14 Cellar 16 Ivory 17 April



Congratulations to **Heather Morton of Moseley, Birmingham**, 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

If you successfully complete this month's Prize Crossword please send the solution by post to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 4NN (or take a photo on your mobile phone of the grid and send the image to journal@aslef.org.uk) by Friday 16 July

Across

- 1 University grounds and buildings
- 4 Implore
- 7 Having widely different opinions (5,5)
- 8 Bog moss
- 9 Grey-brown striped cat
- 11 Experienced actor
- 13 Multicoloured arch
- 15 Broken piece of pottery
- 17 Oval-stoned fruit
- 18 Full range of words employed
- 20 Automated machine-man
- 21 Mountain top

Down

- 1 Soft flooring
- 2 Plan of a play
- 3 Railtrack support
- 4 Sow with seeds
- 5 Epoch
- 6 Little poem to be sung
- 7 Indian temple
- 10 Fizzy like champagne
- 12 Countryside strolls
- 14 Australian marsupial
- 15 Break off a relationship
- 16 Sum to be deducted
- 17 Stiffly formal
- 19 Taxi

On Track

Job cuts force Trust boss out



No Kwik Fix for Tim Parker who is no longer lord of the National Trust manor

TIM Parker was forced to step down as chair of the National Trust after a revolt by members about the job cuts he has presided over at the 126-year-old charity. In the *Journal* (May) we revealed how Peter Vermeulen, the Trust's chief financial officer, talked, in a tone-deaf interview published in the *National Trust Magazine*, of 'testing our economic resilience' and 'reducing costs to cope with lower levels of trading'. The sort of accountant's gobbledegook – straight out of *The Office* or *W1A* – you would expect from a man who plied his trade at PwC, Merrill Lynch, and Deutsche Bank, but not the sort of thing that National Trust members wanted to hear, even from a number cruncher. 'We'll save £100 million by changing the way we operate,' he boasted, 'and reducing our payroll and budgets.'

Parker backed the Vermeulen plan and sacked 1,300 members of staff, a brutal decision that led to a dramatic loss of morale among people still on the payroll, as well as putting vital conservation projects on hold. Mike Clancy, general secretary of the Prospect union, described the redundancies as 'devastating for those losing the jobs they love' but the Trust cheerfully described them as 'a reasonable way to move forward'.

Parker, a former Treasury economist who has also been chief executive of Clarks shoes, Kwik-Fit, and the AA, has now paid the price for these poor decisions. He announced his decision to walk the plank a day after a motion to this year's AGM said members had no confidence in his leadership and demanded his resignation. A Restore Trust campaign also attacked the charity's 'one-sided' view of history following a controversial slavery report, but the redundancies and cuts forced him out. Parker admitted: 'The past 15 months, since the first covid-19 lockdown, have been exceptionally challenging.'

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'.



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There has never been a more important time to join a trade union.

When a group of workers act and speak together, their employer has to listen. That's how unions make things better at work.

Nearly 5.5 million people are in a union. Many have been on the frontline during the pandemic, from our brilliant NHS workers to retail staff and care workers.

Unions protect jobs, stop people being treated unfairly and make workplaces safer. During the pandemic that's been more important than ever.

“My trade union stands between me and an uncertain future.”

Key worker, Liverpool



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