

ASLEF

JOURNAL

The magazine of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen



MAY 2021

Free to members

Elections 2021



Thursday 6 May: I'm your top prime cut of meat, I'm your choice, I wanna be elected. **Gregor Gall** goes back to school. And **Chris Proctor** takes a radical walk around Clerkenwell

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Wat Tyler and John Bull didn't bother with that ballot

GS Mick Whelan

It's your vote – so use it wisely



'We have restored AAD this year in a virtual format'

IN THE past year we have done many things to ensure that democracy, and the voice of our members, is at the core of everything we do; and have adjusted everything from the meeting structures to electoral rule changes to facilitate the union and its activities. The one thing we had to cancel last year was our annual conference, our annual assembly of delegates. We will rightfully restore AAD as a forum this year in a virtual format so that the issues that will guide future policy can be discussed. More importantly, 80 lay members from our 170-odd branches will get to scrutinize, criticize, or endorse what we have undertaken in the previous 12 months.

In all my time as your general secretary I have never sought or supported any motion to reduce accountability or scrutiny and look forward to the debates to come. In a year when so much has happened to our communities, and not just our lives, but in the lives of our children and grandchildren, I am surprised that there are not more political and social items up for discussion but, maybe, that will happen at future AADs when the pandemic is over. Each branch has the right to bring items forward every year on what we do, and what we should do; the power of change lies with the membership, via the branches, and I wish more would use it.

I saw a photograph on social media of a poster in Stratford that said 'Cronyism is English for corruption' and, given the many revelations about access and the giving of contracts to a favoured few, without proper scrutiny or due process, I believe a full public inquiry into all aspects of the handling of the pandemic needs to take place for the good of us all.

Despite this, we see Labour not doing well in the polls and it may be overly simplistic to put this down to the vaccination bounce. Maybe we have become a nation which believes 'I'm all right, Jack, everyone else can fend for themselves' but that is not the feedback I get when talking to people. We have key elections, both mayoral and council coming up in May, in London, and it is clear that the only person who has shown consistent concern for us, as workers and citizens, is Sadiq Khan, and the political football the government made of TfL is something of which to be ashamed. The failure to deal adequately with the situation in Northern Ireland, and the mistruths spoken by the Prime Minister that threaten stability and human life, are not about pro- or anti-Brexit, but a political failing and his lack of care about a return to civil war cannot be accepted. This propensity for failing to tell the truth needs to be addressed via the ballot box and the pandemic should not let us forget that ten years of uncaring Tory rule and unnecessary austerity have left many communities on their knees and this great nation unable to deal with the pandemic without a massive death toll.

Telling people to clap the NHS whilst actively selling it off to your mates behind the scenes is endemic of the cant and hypocrisy of this government. The Spanish Inquisition did not come up with cruelties such as the bedroom tax, and how universal credit was rolled out, or the treatment of the disabled and weakest in society. They will come with ready-made excuses post-pandemic to hide their callousness and future dogma unless we open our eyes and react now. The richest Tory councils are attracting the greatest support from central government whilst those with the greatest need are being sidelined, ignored, and then blamed for choices forced upon them after a decade of cuts. It's your vote. Use it wisely.

Rightly we have welcomed the high rate of vaccination but – and there is always a but – there is a long way to go. We want more trains, more capacity, and passengers returning to our industry, but it must be done in a safe and careful way. The pandemic is not over and, whilst we welcome a move to normal, we expect the appropriate protections to remain in place. We will see reductions in timetables, as it takes years for footfall to return, and there is a political will to reduce headcount and cost going forward, and no group will be immune to those attacks.

The future shape of the industry is unwritten and Williams will get pushed further and further back. Appointments have been made on rail reform and pensions at the DfT which I do not believe are about investment or promoting what we were told under the 1993 Railways Act. We must get ready to deal with the future on our terms in an effort to protect what we have. The end of the pandemic will signal the start of a harsh new economic reality but I am confident we can deal with the challenges ahead together. Please stay safe.

Yours fraternally,

Mick Whelan, general secretary, ASLEF

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Stonehaven: Network Rail landslip to blame for crash

A SLEF has welcomed an interim report by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch into the crash at Stonehaven in Aberdeenshire on Wednesday 12 August 2020 which claimed the lives of three people – driver Brett McCullough, 45, conductor Donald Dinnie, 58, and passenger Christopher Stuchbury, 62 – and in which six other people were seriously injured.

The RAIB, in its findings published on Monday 19 April, exonerated Brett. The RAIB has found that the crash, which cast a long shadow across Britain's rail industry, was caused by 'debris washed onto the track following heavy rainfall. The washout was caused by unusually heavy rain. The subsequent derailment resulted in the death of three people, injuries to the six other people in the train, and catastrophic damage.'

Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF's

organiser in Scotland, said: 'Blame for the accident has been laid firmly at the door of Network Rail for failing to maintain the area around the track. It was the landslip which caused the train to derail, with the subsequent loss of life, injuries, and catastrophic consequences. We are urging Network Rail to examine every mile of track, for which it is responsible, to ensure something like this can never happen again.'

Roderick Smith, a second-rate academic, appeared on *Reporting Scotland* on BBC1 to claim that the train was travelling more quickly than it should. We exposed this charlatan on the centre pages of the *Journal* (October) and pointed out that the service was within the permitted speed on this stretch of line, and that Brett was, as Kevin said, 'a fine driver doing his job perfectly correctly'.

The RAIB report underlines how wrong Smith was with his



Rail Accident Investigation: Interim Report

Derailment of a passenger train at Carmont, Aberdeenshire, 12 August 2020

Derailment of a passenger train at Carmont, Aberdeenshire, 12 August 2020



Summary

1 At around 09:37 hrs on Wednesday 12 August 2020, a passenger train collided with debris washed onto the track near Carmont, Aberdeenshire, following heavy rainfall. The subsequent derailment resulted in the death of three people, injuries to the six other people in the train and catastrophic damage.

RAIB's role and the context of this interim report

- 2 The Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) is responsible for conducting independent investigations into railway accidents in the UK. The purpose of its investigations is to improve safety, by establishing the causes of accidents and making recommendations, to reduce the likelihood of similar occurrences in the future or to mitigate their consequences.
- 3 RAIB is not a prosecuting body; its investigations are focused solely on safety improvement and do not ascribe blame or liability. The police and the *Office of Rail and Road* deal with any contraventions of the law. None of their statutory duties are changed by the RAIB investigation.
- 4 RAIB's investigation is running independently of the joint investigation instructed by the Lord Advocate to be carried out by Police Scotland, British Transport Police and by the railway industry's regulator, the Office of Rail and Road. However, all investigating agencies, and the industry, are co-operating fully with each other.
- 5 This interim report is based on evidence gathered and analysed to date and explains RAIB's preliminary findings. Further investigative work may cause some modification to these findings.
- 6 A final report will be published by RAIB on completion of its investigation. All RAIB investigation reports are available on [RAIB's website](#).
- 7 If found necessary, during its investigation RAIB may also issue urgent safety advice and make recommendations to such persons as are appropriate in the circumstances.

Report RI12021

3

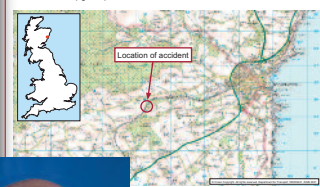
April 2021

risible claims and what a spectacular error of judgment it was for the BBC, desperate for a new angle, to give him airtime.

Background

Location

8 The accident occurred near milepost 22.1 on the railway between Montrose and Aberdeen. The two-track railway between Laurencekirk (210.5 miles) and Stonehaven (225 miles) was opened in 1869 by the Aberdeen Railway Company. From Carmont signal box (219.5 miles) the railway runs east-north-east on a curving alignment to follow the Carron Water valley towards the coast at Stonehaven (figure 1).



Kevin spoke to STV, the BBC, and Northsound after the report was published

QUOTE...

'The internet has made it easier to wage war on the truth. Yet, as shown by the Capitol uprising of selfie-snapping Trump rioters, social media also serves to lure the dumb, deluded and dangerous into the open. Seeing them all offers important, if unsettling, clarity' – Carl Hiaasen, Miami Herald

...UNQUOTE

Williams report delayed – again

The long-awaited Williams review into the future of the UK's rail industry has been delayed – yet again – this time because of a dogfight between 10 and 11 Downing Street.

The report was finished 18 months ago – when Keith Williams briefed ASLEF on his recommendations in November 2019 he told Mick Whelan that the structure he proposed would work whether the railway was in public ownership, under a Labour government, or in private hands, under the Tories – but the general election in December that year, followed by a three-way row between Williams, the DfT, and Downing Street over its conclusions, and then the coronavirus crisis, meant his review stayed at the bottom of the government's in-tray.

Now the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, are at daggers drawn over the cost of the railway – and Transport Secretary Grant



Grant Shapps (right) complains that the review by Keith Williams (left) has been subject to more delays than any rail service in Britain

Shapps and the DfT have been sidelined while the two biggest beasts in the cabinet slug it out.

Johnson wants a return, if not to normality, then to what he can plausibly describe as a 'new normal' to passengers and voters; while Sunak is frightened of the cost to the Treasury – and his own future prime ministerial ambitions. The rivalry between the two men – who are not friends – is threatening to undermine not just the UK's railway, but the country's economic recovery.

ASLEF: ON TRACK AND ONLINE

ASLEF's sparkling new website is almost ready to rock. Many months in the planning, it will have a 'soft launch' to iron out the initial, and inevitable, gremlins. Once it is fully live, and working properly, you will find a clearer, simpler, and better union site. Full details will appear in next month's *Journal*.

ASLEF: VIRTUALLY AAD THIS YEAR

ASLEF's annual assembly of delegates – which was to have been held in Cardiff last year – was cancelled because of the coronavirus crisis. This year AAD will be held, as a virtual rules conference, by Zoom, from Monday 17 to Friday 21 May.

TWEETS OF THE MONTH

BREAKING: Government offers rollover on TfL funding until 18 May.
@BBCTomEdwards

If they'd given Khan anything longer it would have been as good as admitting he had the election in the bag. Still no sign of the KPMG report? It must have been very disappointing. @ShruggedASLEF

Remember when we said threatening the Good Friday Agreement would restart troubles NI and were told we were unnecessarily scaremongering? @JLFphoto

France bans domestic flights as people told to take the train

French MPs have voted to suspend domestic airline flights when a journey can be made by direct train, in less than two and a half hours, as part of a series of climate and environment measures. It means the end of short internal flights from Orly airport, just south of Paris, to Nantes and Bordeaux, though connecting flights through Charles de Gaulle/Roissy, north of the capital, will continue. A climate commission originally recommended the scrapping of all flights between French destinations where an alternative direct train journey of less than four hours existed.

God's Wonderful Railway journal

THE *Great Western Star* is produced by a group of Great Western Railway enthusiasts and aimed at fellow GWR enthusiasts right around the world.

Personally, I was introduced to the GWR at the age of three, when my grandfather, newly retired from the Post Office, took me up into the local Great Western signal box where he knew at least two of the signalmen as they lived in the village.

As I grew up, I developed that love and regularly visited Swindon, as well as going on trips to other stations and sheds across the country. One advantage of growing up near

Oxford was that the station was visited regularly by Southern trains from Brighton and Bournemouth; Eastern trains across country from Cambridge; Midland and LNWR trains from the north and from Bletchley; with the majority being GWR trains from across the whole region.

We also got visits from BR Standards and, increasingly, as time went on, the diesel hydraulics and other diesels.

As a teenager, having got to know the local signalmen, I spent a lot of my time in the signal box,

operating the levers, collecting the tokens from branch line trains, and generally enjoying myself.

Over the years, we have all read many railway magazines, preservation magazines, and model railway magazines, but, with all due respect, many were and are very similar, month in and month out.

It is this that has caused us to launch the *Great Western Star*, namely, to offer the GWR enthusiast something different. After all, the GWR fraternity is, possibly, one of the biggest, if not the biggest, of its type around the world; and so deserves the best.

Rodney Pitt editor & publisher *Great Western Star*

QUOTE...

'We thought as a nation we were good at stuff. Turns out we aren't'—
Jeremy Warner *Daily Telegraph*

...UNQUOTE



The second edition of the *Great Western Star* (inset) and Kennington Junction signal box where Rodney spent many a happy hour operating the levers and having a great time as a young lad

NORTHERN POWERHOUSE TO NORTHERN POOR HOUSE

The government's cynical plans to reduce services in the north-west of England have led some activists – including EC3 John Metcalfe – to refer to the Tories' plans as 'proposals for the Northern poor house, not the Northern powerhouse'. The DfT is determined to level down, not to level up, say industry experts.

500 CLUB: Peter Cribb, with number 013, won the April draw, scooping the Retired Members' Section jackpot of £502.

Off the Rails



ACRONYMS and initialisms are always a tad tricky. Every industry uses abbreviations, and we forget that they can confuse civilians. So when we referred to the Rail Industry Coronavirus Forum as the RICF perhaps we shouldn't have been surprised when Alison Carter, a politics producer at Radio 5 Live, politely asked, 'What does RICF stand for, please?' Mind you, she likes trains. Tweeting @alicart she retweeted an image of *Small Railway Engines* from the *Thomas the Tank Engine* series with #LoveYourLibrary so perhaps she should have known...



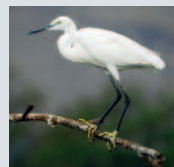
THAT, though, pales beside a query from Tom Payne, now associate news editor, but then transport correspondent, at the *Daily Mail*. He told us, in March 2020, 'I am trying to whip up a story about train operators not doing enough to prevent the spread of coronavirus – potentially putting drivers at a much higher risk of infection.' The GS told him, by email, 'The privatised train operating companies are ill-prepared for this coronavirus outbreak. They haven't told us of any plans to protect passengers, which is outrageous when you think of the potential dangers, and when you look at the measures that other countries have put in place to prevent the spread of the virus. It's time for Grant Shapps, and the DfT, to step in and give the TOCs a kick up the proverbial and insist they take the measures necessary to protect people working, and travelling, on Britain's railways.' That prompted this plaintive reply from Tom, by email, by return: 'What is a TOC?' This from a hack covering the transport brief. Never say the *Daily Mail* doesn't employ the brightest and the best.



PETER VERMEULEN, chief financial officer of the National Trust, is not known at head office in Swindon for his empathy. His track record at PwC, Merrill Lynch, and Deutsche Bank, might explain his tone-deaf and robotic interview in the *National Trust Magazine*: 'We tested our economic resilience and realised we were going to need to reduce our costs to cope with lower levels of trading. We'll save £100 million by changing the way we operate and reducing our payroll and budgets.' Note that sly phrase 'reducing our payroll'. He means sacking people. Vermeulen is a number cruncher who likes to use vacuous clichés, say colleagues, to ruin people's lives.



SIR DAVID AKERS JONES, Chief Secretary and Acting Governor of Hong Kong, before the colony's handover to China in 1997, once surprised the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee when he told them, with no apparent trace of irony, 'The Chinese style is not to rig elections; but they do like to know the results before they are held.'



TWITCHERS have enjoyed the letters in *The Times* about little egrets and the rate at which they are spreading, from east to west, across the country. One resident of Cornwall wrote to say, 'Egrets, we've had a few, but then again, too few to mention...'

Sewell report a 'whitewash'

A SLEF has condemned the Sewell report on racism – criticised in some quarters, with a deliberate and deadly pun, as a 'whitewash' – as an abdication of responsibility to those men, women, and children who are suffering abuse at the hands of racists.

'The best thing you can say about the Sewell report is that it is totally inadequate,' said GS Mick Whelan. 'The worst is that Boris Johnson chose the right man for the job – to write the report he wanted to see. Because, proverbially, there are none so blind as those who will not see. And this government does not want to see the systemic racism still rampant in this country. It is, frankly, shameful, if not surprising,

that the Conservative Party – a party historically riddled with racists – turns a cheerful blind eye to problems endemic in 21st century Britain.'

ASLEF's Black & Minority Ethnic committee said: 'The government's report on racial disparities will do more damage than good and should be rejected. To suggest that systemic racism is non-existent is an insult, and a kick in the teeth to those who have been, and are being, discriminated against. The report fails to acknowledge the past, and present, and we have no faith in it addressing issues in the future.'

'The Windrush scandal, the Grenfell disaster, the ethnic pay gap in Britain, and the disproportionate BAME covid



ASLEF's BAME committee: Ed d'Bell (D1), Trevor Robinson (D8), San Senik (D4), Peter Acheampong (D7), Floyd Doyle (D5), and Paul Patmore (D2); and Andrew Robinson (D6)

death rate, have all been attributed to systemic racism and yet these barely get a mention in the report.

'This behaviour from the government is nothing new. But ASLEF will continue to fight for

equality and justice, and for a society where the colour of your skin, your age, your gender, your sex, and any other protected characteristic, is no longer a barrier to education, jobs, health care, or housing.'

Solidarity across the Solent

Thank you for publicising last year's poppy badge in the *Journal*. There was a good response and all 400 HST badges were sold; our most successful campaign, so far, with £2,553.52p donated to the Royal British Legion. Portsmouth and Isle of Wight branch 164 now has a new badge for active and retired members; the first badge struck since the 1982 strike and long overdue. A set of two costs £12 plus £1.20 postage; email wdrailbadgeinfo@gmail.com

Martin Thompson Fratton SWR



164 active and retired badges

Andy steps up step-free plan

Andy Burnham wants every railway station in Greater Manchester to be made fully accessible by 2025 if he is elected for a second term as mayor. The Labour candidate will press Network Rail to hand over control of stations that fall short of standards set out in the Disability Discrimination Act. Only 38 of Greater Manchester's 93 stations have step-free access, making them DDA compliant.

QUOTE...

*'Scarlets want Sade, Smooth Operator, The Sound of Music, Do-Re-Mi, a long, long way to run. They're getting f***ing Slayer, they're getting heavy metal'*

Alex Sanderson, Sale Sharks

...UNQUOTE

PRINCE PHILIP: I'M NOT KING HEROD

The Duke of Edinburgh, who died on Friday 9 April, was famously forthright, funny, or rude, depending on taste. At a reception, with hacks present, one reptile boldly enquired: 'Sir, you and the Queen are much admired for your sense of duty. It must cause you much anxiety that some of the younger members of the family have let the team down?' 'Well, what were we supposed to do?' snapped Philip. 'Strangle them at birth?'

AND YOU CALL THAT A JOB?

When the Duke met Parmjit Dhanda, Labour MP for Gloucester, in 2002, he asked him what he did before he was elected to Parliament. 'I was a student and then a trade union official.' 'Huh,' snorted Philip. 'So you didn't do anything, then?'

I LIKE A MAN IN A UNIFORM

On a trip to South America in 1962 he told General Alfredo Stroessner, the very right-wing military dictator of Paraguay, 'It's a pleasure to be in a country that isn't ruled by its people.'

MONKEYS ON THE ROCK

Followed by photographers and reporters on a visit to Gibraltar in 1950, Philip squinted into the sun at the Barbary macaques and wondered aloud, 'Which are the press and which are the apes?'

AS THE SUN SET ON THE EMPIRE

Moments before the Union flag was lowered for the last time in Nairobi in 1963, as Kenya became independent, Prince Philip turned to Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta and murmured, possibly in jest, 'There's still time to change your mind, you know...'

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 found and cross off the list. Happy hunting!!

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

Anglia	Level	Platform	Stop
Banner	LNER	Rail	Terminus
Down	Logo	Railway	Timetable
Drainage	Lookout	Red	Token
Engine Shed	Normal	Route	Trainstaff
Failsafe	Off	Semaphore	Wheel
Feathers	One Two Five	Signal Box	Wrong Road
Green	Plated	Steam	Yellow
Guard			

On track for 21st century

A SLEF has enthusiastically embraced – as you might expect – the Future is Public Transport campaign launched on Tuesday 30 March by the International Transport Workers' Federation.

'Public transport is the transport of the future,' said GS Mick Whelan. 'It offers the best, the greenest, the most flexible, and the most cost-effective solutions as the world looks to move people and goods in the 21st century. Moving more freight to rail will ease congestion, and deaths, on our roads, as well as helping to reduce our carbon footprint. Moving passengers by public, rather than by private, transport in a covid-secure environment is the best way of getting people from one place to another. That's why we need to invest in trains, and buses, and integrated public transport solutions, as well as the



Mick: 'We need to invest in trains, and buses, and integrated public transport solutions'

associated infrastructure, as we emerge from this coronavirus pandemic.'

The ITF believes passionately that protecting public transport workers and services around the world is vital if we are to deliver a sustainable and green recovery from the covid-19 pandemic 'because, for our cities to thrive, people need affordable, reliable, and well-funded public transit systems'.

ITF GS Steve Cotton said: 'The covid crisis has threatened public transport services in cities and impacted the lives of millions, which is why public transport needs an urgent and immediate injection of funding from national governments to protect as well as create decent, green, public transport jobs.

'Because public transport services are the essential backbone of our cities and societies for the millions of people who rely on them every day – including frontline workers providing vital services during the pandemic, women, young people, and marginalised communities.'

Mick added: 'Neglecting public transport, allowing a decline in services, and slowing the necessary shift to clean transport is a major risk for jobs, for livelihoods, and to the climate action we need to ensure a healthier, cleaner, and much greener future.'

QUOTE...

'Very hard to argue the minimum sentence for serious sexual offences should be shorter than the maximum sentence for damaging a statue. Particularly this week. But Kit Malthouse, Minister for Crime & Policing, had a go' –

Mikey Smith Daily Mirror

...UNQUOTE

Strike threat over pay

The four unions representing workers on the railway in Scotland – ASLEF, the RMT, the TSSA, and Unite – have written to ScotRail warning about balloting for industrial action over pay.

A joint statement, on Tuesday 30 March, was signed by Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF's organiser in Scotland; Mick Hogg, regional organiser, the RMT; Gary Kelly, Scotland organiser, the TSSA; and Pat McIlvogue, industrial organiser, Unite. It said:

'Abellio ScotRail offered a self-financing pay rise of tens of pounds to the RMT, the TSSA, Unite, and ASLEF (Fleet) members. Abellio ScotRail has continually failed to engage in any productive way with the trade unions.

'Abellio has claimed it is under instructions from the Scottish government not to award any pay rise to rail workers.

'The Scottish



Kevin: 'The Scottish government is actively interfering in collective bargaining'

government is actively interfering in collective bargaining. This is a slap in the face to rail workers who have worked throughout the pandemic.

'At a time when rail workers are receiving no award for their hard work

the Scottish government has awarded Abellio £14 million in management fees. Rail workers, who are key/essential workers, are absolutely disgusted by the actions of the Scottish government and we will be consulting our members over industrial action.

'The trade unions are being forced into this action and remain available for meaningful discussions – but we remind Scottish voters that while some in government talk about standing up for Scottish workers, they are guilty of abandoning key workers such as rail workers.'

IAN WENDERLING: KING'S CROSS

King's Cross driver Ian Wenderling passed away unexpectedly on Saturday 13 March. Ian was a health & safety rep for GTR and will be missed.

Simon Stephens LL rep King's Cross and branch secretary

ROBERT MOSBY: LIVERPOOL STREET

Retired driver Robert Mosby, a member of ASLEF since 1967, and who worked at Liverpool Street for many years, has died.

Jerry Murphy

Deliveroo fails to deliver



Deliveroo makes its money off the backs – quite literally – of its underpaid workers

Shares in Deliveroo plummeted on its stock market debut after major investors warned that its business model – exploiting workers in the gig economy – has no future. Shares in the food delivery firm were offered to investors at 390p each, but dived in early trading to 275p – a staggering, and unprecedented, 30% fall. The company had hoped, rather greedily, and certainly optimistically, for a price of 460p. But savvy fund managers at Aberdeen Standard, Aviva, BMO Global, Legal & General, and M&G all said no, warning that founder Will Shu is 'over-ambitious, but under-performing, and his business model is 'dead in the water' after the Supreme Court verdict on Uber.

CCLA, which manages funds for the Church of England, charities, and local councils, refused to buy shares because some Deliveroo riders earn 'slave wages' of less than £2 an hour. The company claims – somewhat disingenuously and, possibly, illegally – that its workers are 'self-employed' meaning that they are not entitled to the minimum wage, holiday pay or sick leave.



Long train running

JOHN MATTHEWS, Unite union activist and author of *Freight Trains in the North of England*, makes a plea for your stories – and pictures – for his next book about trains

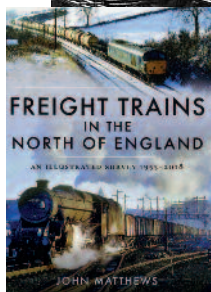
IT IS great to have this opportunity to contribute to the ASLEF *Journal* and, as a former shop steward for over 20 years, and a present Unite union member, I can only say that the train drivers' union is one of the very best.

As a young lad growing up in the late 1950s watching trains was exciting stuff, right from the local pick-up goods through to the crack main line expresses. Sunny summer days would be spent taking in the sights, the sounds, and the smells of the railway and those memories

stay long and hard.

The recent death of Vic Mitchell was particularly sad as Vic gave me the chance to put my first two books together for Middleton Press. These were followed last year when Pen & Sword published the freight book reviewed in the *Journal* in April.

Coming right up to date, image collecting is nearly done for the follow-up title which, it won't surprise you, is called *Passenger Trains in the North of England: 1955-2020*, but if any ASLEF members would like to contribute any photographs or anecdotes there is still time to squeeze them in. Please email me at john-boy1951@hotmail.co.uk. The book is due out in late 2021 and thanks for the chance to tell you something about it in your *Journal*. Keep up the great work!



John's looking for a little help from his ASLEF friends for his next tome

Justice at last

ASLEF's general secretary Mick Whelan has welcomed the Appeal Court decision on Tuesday 23 March to squash the unjust verdicts on the Shrewsbury 24. 'It's only taken 49 years, but justice, finally, has been done,' said Mick. 'We always said that their convictions for unlawful assembly, conspiracy to intimidate, and affray, for picketing lawfully during the 1972 national builders' strike, were wrong. The only conspiracy was that of the Tory government, together with the construction companies, the police, and the legal system, to stop working men lawfully withdrawing their labour. We are delighted that they have cleared their names.'

The Appeal Court ruling was the result of years of hard work by the Shrewsbury 24 campaign to overturn the unjust prosecution of 24 building workers charged following the first



Construction workers Des Warren, who died in 2004, and Ricky Tomlinson, back in the day

national building workers' strike in 1972. They picketed building sites in Shrewsbury during the dispute and were prosecuted in 1973. Two of the men – Ricky Tomlinson, who went on to star in *The Royle Family*, and Des Warren, who has since died – were jailed. A campaign was set up in 2006, supported by national trade unions and local trades councils, as well as by supporters and activists, to overturn the convictions.

Another blow to democracy

ASLEF has called on Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab to protest about the repression of the People's Democratic Party in Turkey. The Halkların Demokratik Partisi was founded in 2012 as a democratic centre-left party to represent the interests of the oppressed Kurdish minority.

It is an associate member of the

European Party of Socialists based in Brussels and actively participated in peace negotiations between the Kurdistan Workers' Party and the ruling AKP government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

GS Mick Whelan said: 'The HDP is under ferocious and unwarranted attack by the AKP government, which has been squeezed out of key

cities in the local elections and faces immense economic problems exacerbated by the pandemic.

'The Chief Public Prosecutor in Turkey has filed a lawsuit with the constitutional court to ban the HDP. This comes shortly after President Erdoğan declared a new human rights action plan, designed to repress human rights in Turkey and entrench his position in power. His

AKP has launched a vicious campaign against the Kurds, and other minorities, in his country. Anyone who believes in free, democratic, and pluralist political structures should raise their voices against this move.

'That's why we are calling on Dominic Raab to do the right thing and protest to the Turkish ambassador, and through him to the Turkish government.'

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!

UK AIDS TAX HAVENS

Three British overseas territories – the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, and Bermuda – feature in the Tax Justice Network's top ten chart of global corporate tax abuse enablers. Hong Kong – which was a crown colony – and Jersey – a crown dependency – also feature. Other hideaways for the wealthy include the Netherlands; Switzerland; Luxembourg; Singapore; and the United Arab Emirates.

FREIGHT MERGER

The Canadian Pacific Railway, and Kansas City Southern, the two smallest class 1 railroads in North America, are to merge to create what they call 'the first US-Mexico-Canada' rail network.

QUOTE...

'In spring 2020 you had a situation where the Department for Health was just a smoking ruin in terms of procurement and PPE and all of that' – Dominic Cummings

...UNQUOTE

The ASLEF RMS 500 Club

Colleagues

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

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

Numbers in the draw cost £4 each per month. To begin making payments into club funds, all you have to do is complete the standing order form and return it to your bank. Alternatively, you can pay by cheque a year in advance; the cheque should be made payable to **ASLEF RMS 500 Club**. Payments need to reach the club account by 1st of every month and the draw takes place on 12th of every month – with the winning number, name, and prize printed on page 5 of the *ASLEF Journal*. Once you have arranged your method of payment **just complete the form and return it to Peter J Smith, Treasurer, RMS 500 Club, 6 Devonia Gardens, London, N18 1AF.**

The Retired Members' Section committee would like to thank you for your support and wish you luck in the draw!

Yours fraternally, Peter J Smith, treasurer, ASLEF Retired Members' Section 500 Club

ASLEF RMS 500 Club application form

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode.....

Telephone.....

email.....

Each number costs £4. You can purchase as many numbers as you like. I confirm that I wish to purchase _____ numbers as part of the 500 Club.

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

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

Delete (A) or (B) accordingly.

Signed.....

Date.....

Please return this coupon to:
**Peter Smith, Treasurer, RMS 500 Club,
6 Devonia Gardens, London, N18 1AF
and the standing order mandate
(right) to your bank (or via your
internet bank)**

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

To _____ Bank

Address _____

Please pay

BANK	BRANCH TITLE (NOT ADDRESS)	SORTING CODE NO.
Unity Trust Bank	Birmingham	60-83-01

For the credit of

BENEFICIARY'S NAME	ACCOUNT NUMBER
ASLEF RMS 500 CLUB ACCOUNT	2 0 2 0 1 1 9 3

The sum of

AMOUNT IN FIGURES	AMOUNT IN WORDS
£	

Commencing

DATE AND AMOUNT OF FIRST PAYMENT	DUE DATE AND FREQUENCY
£ and thereafter every	1 ST OF EVERY MONTH

*Until
Quoting the
reference

DATE AND AMOUNT OF LAST PAYMENT
£

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

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

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

ACCOUNT TO BE DEBITED	ACCOUNT NUMBER

Signature(s) _____

Date _____

Note: The Bank will not undertake to:

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

* Delete if not applicable

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

From covid to Black Lives Matter: fighting for racist-free workplaces



FLOYD DOYLE, a driver with Great Northern, and a member of our Cambridge branch, has represented District 5 on ASLEF's Black & Minority Ethnic Representatives' Committee since it was formed in 2000

Roger McKenzie, AGS of Unison, kicked off the TUC's Stand up to Racism conference, held by Zoom, on Saturday 27 February, by angrily asking how we went from black power protests in the 1960s to asking for our lives to matter in 2020? And how some people 'like' Black Lives Matter, treating it as a fashion by sharing a hashtag and doing nothing else! 'When your house is burning down and the firefighters come, you don't expect your neighbour to say, "What about my house?" We need to have an honest conversation with those on the left who see the racism but do nothing about it.'

Kevin Courtney, joint GS of the National Education Union, spoke about global racism, and how fascists hate unions, and Shavanah Taj, GS of the Wales TUC, said some people think racism in the workplace is not a problem because, in the past,

victims did not always report it. Mohammed Shafiq, PCS, spoke about the demonization of British Muslims, accused of spreading the coronavirus; the first five health workers who died of covid were all Muslim.

Ameen Hadi, Unison, told of members being racially abused, and told to 'go back home'; being offered high grade jobs but then given lower grade jobs. 'We saw off the BNP, and the EDL, now we need to get rid of a racist Tory government.' Sabby Dhalu, joint secretary, Stand up to Racism, reflected on black doctors and nurses being put on covid wards with no access to PPE, hence the high volume of infection.

There were five different workshops in the afternoon; I attended one titled After Trump and the Capitol Riot chaired by Nahella Ashraf, Stand up to Racism, with speakers including Virginia Roding, Unite Against Hate; Taranjit Chana, GMB; Amarjite Singh, CWU; Michael Bradley, Stand up to Racism; and Stiofán Ó Nualláin, author of *The Rise of the Far Right: Building a Trade Union Response*.

In the afternoon session chaired by Jane Loftus, CWU, Wilf Sullivan, TUC race equality officer, said there were no proper medical conditions in detention centres,



even in a pandemic. 'But Priti Patel says they don't want to give them better conditions as it would undermine the public's faith in the asylum system!' Frances O'Grady, TUC GS, talked of how the police are still getting away with deaths in custody. And Elise Bryant, an American activist with United Against Hate, sang about the deaths of black people in the States, and spoke of how black people have suffered violence for 400 years! We should book her! She's passionate, eloquent, and very, very good!

Margaret Greer, Unison, took a silent moment to remember all those murdered because they were black. 'The conqueror writes the history,' she told us. 'They came, they conquered, they wrote the history.' And she quoted the words of Martin Luther King: 'In



Stop racist attacks: it's time to put the pigs back in their pens

the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.'

Sarah Woolley, BFAWU, said that until Black Lives Matter as much as white lives, all lives don't matter and Maryam, of Black Lives Matter UK, added: 'People need to understand history from a black point of view. It's not just a moment, it's a movement, and we want action.'

Floyd was invited to chair the TUC black workers' conference at Congress House in London in 2017. 'A big honour,' notes AGS Simon Weller. 'Floyd was the first ASLEF member to chair a TUC conference since Ray Buckton, our GS from 1970 to 1987, back in the 1980s.'

Energy and purpose



ANDREW ROBINSON, a driver with West Midlands Trains, and a member of our Birmingham New Street branch in District 6, is the newest rep on ASLEF's BAME committee

The conference was a real success, with more than 2,000 people watching worldwide. Gloria Mills, chair of the TUC race relations committee, Unison national secretary, and head of equality, discussed the coronavirus and how the government's handling of information has impacted negatively on the BAME community. Minority groups have become scapegoats for the government's poor handling of the pandemic; which reveals the Tory government's entrenched racist views.

Shavanah Taj said that as BAME people are less likely to be in jobs that offer furlough, they have had to work through the pandemic. She also pointed out that, when

racial discrimination is brought to management's attention in the workplace, instead of finding solutions, the focus is often placed by employers on why the victim has not brought the matter to the forefront earlier. Pertinently, Shavanah added, 'We need to look for racism within our own structures, too.'

Sabby Dhalu explained that covid death rates ignore factors such as that the BAME community is more likely to live in overcrowded households and have lower paid frontline jobs as reasons for the higher infection rate. A biomedical scientist pointed out that skin colour is not a factor for covid; social conditions, unemployment, and a lack of BAME members in higher management roles are factors that leave them more susceptible to the virus.

Home Secretary Priti Patel was slammed for her negativity, her fight against the BLM movement, and her vicious attack on Marcus Rashford for supporting free school meals. A win for the poor does not only benefit the BAME community, it is vital for all society.

One of my favourite speakers was Roger McKenzie who was fuelled with energy and purpose. Roger said it's time for things to finally change adding that racism will always exist as long as there is white supremacy. Roger was clear; the BAME community has no power and it is a white choice whether to listen to or ignore the BAME community. Roger went on to say that we all need to recognise our own racism.

The day was filled with speakers from all over the world, including Shaka Hislop, who played for West Ham, Newcastle, Reading, and Trinidad & Tobago, who discussed his work within BLM workshops in the US, and Janet Newsham, who pointed out that trade union workplaces offer better protection for staff against covid.

The day was packed with union members who want to see change, reminding me why I put myself forward to become a BAME rep, and a great reminder that racism is something that has to be tackled within all levels of society all over the world, at the same time, and with the same zero tolerance.

Teachers open the door, but you go in by yourself



GREGOR GALL, who was Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Stirling, and then at the University of Bradford, and is now an affiliate research associate at the University of Glasgow, and editor of the *Scottish Left Review*, hopes a phoenix will rise out of the ashes of the Union Learning Fund

WITH a single, short, word – namely, ‘no’ – on Monday 1 March, Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for Education, brutally confirmed the Tories’ refusal to reconsider withdrawing the £12 million grant to the Union Learning Fund. This despite an overwhelmingly well-supported campaign run by the Trades Union Congress to save the fund. That curt ‘no’ was in response to a question in the House of Commons from Yvonne Fovargue, Labour MP for Makerfield: ‘Would the Secretary of State reconsider the decision to scrap this highly successful programme and fund it through the national skills programme?’

Without that £12 million, the Union Learning Fund in England and Wales will cease to continue, or even exist, in any recognisable form. If there is any silver lining to this very black cloud, it is that it made me think of the bigger picture and recall Vladimir Lenin’s famous observation, when summing up Karl Marx’s writings on the subject, that trade unions are ‘schools of the class struggle, schools of communism.’

‘Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today’ – **Malcolm X Washington Heights, NYC, 28 June 1964**

To be honest, it wasn’t so much the class struggle or the communism that I thought about. It was, rather, the schooling. Of course, unions have formal education courses on how to be a workplace or health & safety rep, or how to attain the skills need to be a female leader. Workers can also go on courses run by associated organisations like the Workers’ Educational Association and there is still the option to undertake an Open University degree. The OU was, according to Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson, his most significant achievement.

Yet seldom are unions or any other collective organisations of the working-class (like political parties, co-operatives, or tenants’ associations) acknowledged as providing schooling in citizenship behaviours and democratic participation as a result of their members taking part in the democratic



‘An investment in knowledge pays the best interest’ – Benjamin Franklin

processes of their organisations.

I’m not thinking that this would require some kind of formalisation – like having a recognised qualification or degree in citizenship. Rather, it would be that society, in general, and the media and government, in particular, would say that these collective organisations of the working-class add significant value to the creation of a decent and civilised society through this useful by-product.

‘Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world’ – **Nelson Mandela Madison Park High School, Boston, 23 June 1990**

The Tories and the ruling class have their debating societies at public schools like Eton and Harrow, and at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, to teach their offspring about public speaking. Then there are the MBAs at elite universities to teach them how to strategize and run their profit-making businesses. As you’d expect, these institutions are extremely well-resourced.

And, when Tony Blair trumpeted in 1996 that his three priorities upon becoming Prime Minister would be ‘education, education, education’, it was clear that it had never dawned on him that unions and other workers’ organisations already play this role.

The ‘poor relations’ are the unions, the Labour Party, and the tenants’ associations. They are not selective in their intakes and admission policies like the Tories and the ruling class. They take people without proven experience or any expertise. What motivates these people to get involved is a sense of collective responsibility and collective endeavour.

In taking part, they learn how to formulate and articulate agendas, make arguments, and win arguments, to listen as well as to speak, given that they have, as the saying goes ‘two ears but just one mouth’, take initiatives, lobby others to gain support, work out how to motivate and inspire others – and so on.

These are skills that cannot really be learnt in the classroom or lecture hall. Without wishing to become too starry eyed about it, they are part of life’s rich tapestry, when people become involved and active. During covid, this has meant learning about various aspects of information technology to carry on

doing those things. Long before covid, it meant knowing how to use social media, too.

Of course, not everything is completely rosy in this garden. There are cases of ‘empty vessels making most noise’ as he – yes, ‘he’ – who shouts the loudest will be most heard. There are also cases of research officers becoming senior union leaders and special political advisers becoming MPs when they have had no prior experience of representing workers in any capacity. Indeed, the proportion of trade unionists becoming Labour MPs, MSPs, and AMs has declined despite affiliated unions like ASLEF putting forward their own members to be candidates.

That said, how else can we explain how ‘ordinary’ shopfloor workers end up being leaders of other men and women, whether as local councillors, shop stewards, union officials, and sometimes, even these days, the odd Labour Member of Parliament.

‘Ask me my three main priorities for government, and I tell you: education, education, and education’ – **Tony Blair Labour Party conference, Blackpool, 1 October 1996**

ASLEF’s general secretary, Mick Whelan, is a case in point. His mother worked in a sweet shop at Euston station, and his father was a bricklayer. He credits his dad, in particular, with politicising him. Mick intended to go to university but went to work as a bank clerk after his father suffered injuries from a fall from scaffolding and was unable to continue working. Mick began working on the railway as a guard in 1984. He was, first, a member of the NUR and then a rep for the union. In 1988, when he became a freight driver, he joined ASLEF, the train drivers’ union, becoming a local rep, then company council secretary for Railfreight Distribution and then English Welsh Scottish Railway International. He was elected District 6 Organiser in 2000 and GS in 2011.

Along the way, he learnt from his union involvement the kind of skills and attributes that go to making a person a leader of men and women. Not everybody may want to become a union general secretary. They may be happy as a local rep. But the skill set needed is cut from the same cloth – the experience of a trade union. It is well beyond time that these skills, and the sources of them, were recognised properly in society.

Thursday 6 May Elections: 2021

VOTERS go to the polls on Thursday 6 May to elect MSPs to the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood; Senedd Members in Cardiff; the Mayor of London and Greater London Authority; seven metro mayors; five local authority mayors; and 5,000 councillors serving on 21 county councils and 124 unitary, district, and borough councils in England; as well as 35 police and crime commissioners in England and four in Wales. There is also a by-election in Hartlepool for a seat at Westminster.

ASLEF is a small craft union. We have 21,129 active members and a further 2,593 retired members. Tiny numbers compared with trade unions such as Unison, Unite, and the GMB. But our density is extraordinary. So

one has to belong to a union – the closed shop is illegal in Britain – but 96% of the train drivers in England, Scotland, and Wales choose to belong to ASLEF.

Our aims, aspirations, and ideals are, essentially, the same now as when ASLEF was founded in 1880 and are enshrined in our rule book: 'To secure the best terms and conditions for train drivers; to negotiate on behalf of our members with the train and freight operating companies; to promote a pride in the job; to champion equality in our industry; to provide education services; and to work for a fairer, more just, and more equitable society. A socialist society.'

ASLEF is affiliated to the Labour Party and our officers and activists work, politically as well as industrially, to protect our members and improve the railway industry. That's why the elections on 6 May are so important. Because they will set the agenda – as well as the tone – for each of us, and the vital job we do, for the next few years.



THANKS FOR THE SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT, ASLEF

I'd like to convey a message of thanks to the ASLEF executive committee for their kind donation to my election campaign fund for the upcoming local elections. With the restrictions that have been placed on campaigning in person this will go towards an extra leaflet in the Pelaw & Heworth area, and into online campaigning. The support ASLEF has shown me only goes to strengthen the feelings of pride I have in being a member of this union. Your solidarity is always appreciated!

Vinnie Humphries Gateshead & Newcastle branch 082

QUOTE...

'I met Sadiq Khan the other day. He's been in my fan club since he was 16. And he's a human rights lawyer, and the first Muslim Mayor of London. I like him' – Sting

...UNQUOTE

A fairer Scotland

ANAS Sarwar, new leader of the Scottish Labour Party, has put a recovery plan for Scotland's NHS, following the devastating impact of the pandemic, at the heart of his campaign. He says Scottish Labour's proposals for the health service, post-covid, will 'unite our country', as opposed to having 'an obsession with what divides us'. He says: 'Covid has reminded us of the value of our NHS, but



Anas: 'Focusing on our country's recovery'

the past year has not come without a cost. Waiting times have soared, there are missing cancer patients, a growing mental health crisis, and an exhausted workforce.'

Referring to bitter SNP infighting and Big Eck's new Alba party, he added: 'It's clear that only Scottish Labour is focused on what unites

us so that, together, we can build a stronger recovery for a fairer Scotland.'

Scottish Labour is guaranteeing a job for every young Scot by investing in a National Training Fund and a Business Restart Fund; investing in schools to ensure IT support in every primary and secondary school; and wants the government to use the UN climate change conference in Glasgow in November to invest in green jobs and climate justice.

Scottish Labour is not in favour of another independence referendum, but when Douglas Ross, leader of the Scottish Conservative Party, suggested a 'pro-union coalition', Anas told him to 'grow up'. 'In case you hadn't noticed, Scotland is in the middle of a pandemic. This election is not some kind of game, it is about focusing on a national recovery.'

Only Labour can deliver

MARK Drakeford, First Minister of Wales, has unveiled six pledges – on covid recovery; creating jobs; the environment; young people; police and community support officer numbers; and giving care workers a real living wage – saying 'these are the pledges we take to the country' and adding that only the Labour Party 'can and will deliver all its promises, no ifs, no buts.'

Welsh Labour has pledged to launch a covid catch-up programme for schools and the NHS, including a new medical school in North Wales; to launch a 'young person's guarantee' of a place in work, education, training, or self-employment for all those aged under 25; to abolish more single-use plastics and create a new national forest; to guarantee the real living wage for all social care workers; to fund 100 additional police and community support officers; and to deliver urgent job creation with a low-carbon housebuilding revolution.

He says the commitment on the health service and education is 'the most comprehensive programme of catch up support



Mark Drakeford: 'No ifs, no buts'

ever seen for our public services' and promised that a Labour government will launch an NHS recovery plan 'on day one' and hire more than 1,800 additional tutoring staff to ensure 'no child is left behind' as a result of the pandemic.

The young person's guarantee will include the creation of 125,000 new apprenticeships. 'Labour will stand with them as they face the worst economic crisis we've ever seen.'

As well as guaranteeing the real living wage for care workers, Labour will continue to cap non-residential care fees and maintain the £50,000 capital limit to help people retain more of their savings before paying for care in old age.

QUOTE...

'I'm your top prime cut of meat, I'm your choice, I wanna be elected. I'm your Yankee Doodle Dandy in a gold Rolls Royce, I wanna be elected. Kids want a saviour, don't need a fake, I wanna be elected. We're all gonna rock to the rules that I make, I wanna be elected, elected, elected' – Alice Cooper, Elected

...UNQUOTE

Thank you for your support

I would like to thank all branches, the EC, and District 5, who kindly donated to my campaign in the forthcoming county council elections to become, if elected, a county councillor for the Labour Party in Bourne North & Morton. Your kind donations are paying for leaflets to be delivered by Royal Mail to all residents of Bourne and Morton. It's your kind generosity that has given Bourne Labour Party – for the first time in more than 20 years – the opportunity to show there are people willing to stand up against the Tory Party in South Lincolnshire. Thank you all, again; I am truly humbled by the support I'm receiving from ASLEF and our membership, and, hopefully, I will be able to write again saying I have been elected.

Barry Hare
ASLEF company council, GB Railfreight



Barry Hare's housing promise to the voters of Bourne North & Morton in South Lincolnshire

ASLEF IN ACTION

ASLEF activists standing for election include: Darran Brown (Preston) for Chorley council; Kerry Cassidy (Plymouth) for Cornwall county council; Simon Cassidy (Western Region Supervisors) for Cornwall county council; Graham Croucher (Bletchley) for West Northamptonshire council; Daniel Davis (Reading) for Swindon borough council; Vinnie Humphries (Gateshead & Newcastle) for Gateshead borough council; and Howard Kaye (King's Cross) for Surrey county council. Good luck, brothers and sisters!

Relevance of trade unions

THIS pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance, and enduring relevance, of trade unions – from the way they have fought for sick pay for workers in the gig economy, and opposed the disgraceful practice of fire and rehire, to the brilliant job they have done standing up for teachers and our children and making sure workplaces are covid-secure.

There can be no doubt that the conditions and treatment experienced by workers during this terrible period in our history would have been far worse were it not for the tireless efforts of union leaders and representatives.

Their actions over this last year have helped to save lives, prevent financial hardship, and ensure that working people are treated with dignity and respect.

As Mayor of London, and a lifelong trade unionist, none of this comes as any surprise to me. Time and again, throughout my life, I've seen the positive difference trade unions can make on behalf of working men and women. It's why I know that trade unions will continue to have a vital role to play



Sadiq: 'I'm a lifelong trade unionist'

– not just in helping to protect their members for as long as this crisis lasts, but in building the better, more equal, future we all want to see.

A future in which we have a new settlement for our key workers that doesn't merely pay them lip service, but truly recognises their value to our society and rewards them with fair pay.

This crisis has forced us to step back and reflect on who the key workers really are that keep our country running and our city moving. In addition to our heroic NHS staff, and the brave members of our emergency services, it's clear that our society and economy would not have been able to function without transport workers, teachers, cleaners, care staff, shop workers, delivery drivers, and posties.

As the son of a bus driver, and as a working-class boy from a south London council estate, the success of the trade union movement will always be a cause close to my heart. Trade unionism runs in my blood. As a young child, I saw how my dad benefited hugely from being unionised. Unlike my mum,

who was a seamstress, and wasn't in a union, my dad received decent pay and good terms and conditions precisely because he was a member of a trade union. When he was assaulted at work one day, the union intervened on his behalf to make sure he was given enough time off to properly rest and recover before getting back behind the wheel.

Growing up, such experiences left a deep impression on me. They shaped my view of the trade union movement and convinced me of the indispensable role unions have in our society as advocates for working people.

By organising to represent the interests of millions of working people, trade unions have been a powerful force for social change throughout our history – fighting for fair pay, dignity at work, and crucial protections for their members, including vital health and safety legislation. That's why, since taking office, I've been determined to reach out and build a constructive working relationship with the unions.

In contrast to the previous mayor, who routinely demonised trade union leaders, and saw them as a threat to counter, rather than as partners with whom to work, I've made sure that the unions have a seat at the table. I've brought back quarterly meetings with the London, East and South East TUC, as well as the transport unions, so we can work through any issues that might arise.

This approach doesn't just benefit trade union members, it

benefits all Londoners – and the evidence speaks for itself. Not only have we been able to negotiate a new pay deal for London's 25,000 bus drivers, but because of positive relations with the transport unions we managed to get the Night Tube up and running and reduce the number of days lost to strikes across the TfL network by almost 75%. We've used new contract negotiations to improve terms and conditions for cleaners on the London Underground. And taken important steps to improve transport worker safety during the pandemic, including sealing driver's cabs.

I'm appealing to you to help me defeat the hard-right, anti-union, Tory candidate who would seek to undo all of the progress we have made together. The London mayoral election is a two-horse race between me and the Tory candidate, and we cannot afford to be complacent. A Tory victory would be disastrous for the rights and wellbeing of working Londoners, lead to a reversal of the huge strides my administration has taken to clean up London's polluted air, build more genuinely affordable homes, and make public transport more affordable for millions of Londoners.

A Labour victory in May is, ultimately, how we can ensure we have an administration focused on delivering for working people, standing up for London, and making our city an even better place to live and work after this pandemic than it was before.

Sadiq Khan Mayor of London

QUOTE...

'It's the economy, stupid' – James Carville, the Rajin' Cajun, Bill Clinton's political strategist

...UNQUOTE

The long, hard road to public ownership



CONRAD LANDIN was, until March, working for Richard Leonard as head of communications at the Scottish Labour Party, and, before that, he was a news reporter, industrial correspondent, and then Scotland editor of the *Morning Star*. He has also written for the *Camden New Journal*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, the *London Review of Books*, and *Rail* magazine. Here he looks at the long campaign to bring the railway in Scotland back into public hands

WHEN Michael Matheson, Transport Secretary in the SNP government, announced in March that ScotRail is to be brought back into public hands next year, there were few screams of surprise. With Scottish politics at its most heated since devolution, the one thing on which politicians can agree is that ScotRail isn't working.

But there was nothing inevitable about the demise of franchising in Scotland. Indeed, the private sector has only been shown the door thanks to the campaigning and organising efforts of ASLEF, alongside other rail unions, passengers, and – latterly – opposition parties at Holyrood.

‘A bus company running a railway with accountants in charge who didn't have a clue what they were doing’

Kevin Lindsay, who became ASLEF's organiser in Scotland in 2001, says it was hard to get a hearing in the immediate aftermath of privatisation in 1997. ‘There was no Scottish Parliament to protest,’ he says. ‘Everything was done through Westminster, at a national level, rather than in Scotland. We took part in the protests, did the leafleting, everything you'd expect, but it generally fell on deaf ears in Scotland.’

Franchisee National Express, Kevin says, was ‘a bus company running a railway, and they put accountants in charge who didn't have a clue what they were doing’. Private sector bosses severely underestimated the level of good operational skill in British Rail. In 2004 National Express handed the reins to a new franchisee which – by then at least – had more railway nous. ‘I remember the day FirstGroup took over, telling [Mary Dickson, First ScotRail managing director] that we welcomed them to the railway in Scotland but I looked forward to the day when her type were no longer in the railway. We were campaigning then for a publicly-owned, publicly-accountable railway, but we didn't have political support at all. It's only in the



Kevin Lindsay has spent 20 years, as ASLEF's organiser in Scotland, campaigning for ScotRail to be brought back into public hands



latter years of the SNP government that we started to make any progress.’

At the Scottish Parliament elections in 2007, the incumbent Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition saw little need for change. ‘In preparation for the next Scottish franchise, Scottish Labour will fully examine all options, to ensure value for money and greater public accountability,’ First Minister Jack McConnell wrote in the *ASLEF Journal*.

The following year, with Labour now in opposition north of the border, the *Journal* announced that ‘thanks to ASLEF lobbying, the Scottish Labour Party manifesto includes proposals for a new structure for Scottish rail’. The party asserted that a ‘not for profit’ model ‘needs to be fully examined as part of the preparation for the next franchise’. The union saw the potential for Scotland to act as a test bed for renationalisation: ministers, rail workers and passengers across Britain could see how a non-profit model fared in comparison to the private franchisees.

At Westminster, however, Labour's Glaswegian rail minister Tom Harris was having none of it. ‘The government has no plans to leave one franchise in the public sector to act as a comparator,’ he candidly admitted in a letter to ASLEF. Despite the fact that franchising was now devolved to Edinburgh, any suggestion that Scotland could go off-piste left Tony Blair's New Labour government distinctly piste off.

‘Perverse and verging on the ridiculous that foreign governments can bid for UK rail franchises but UK public bodies cannot’

Labour's cautious reform package never saw the light of day as the Scottish Parliament elections in 2011 resulted in an overall majority for the SNP. But the cogs of policy were moving in the ranks of the governing party, too. In 2012 Alex Neil, the Scottish government's Infrastructure Secretary, wrote to Justine Greening, the Tory Transport Secretary at Westminster, saying it was ‘perverse and verging on the ridiculous’ that foreign governments could bid for UK rail franchises but UK public bodies could not.

The real game changer for ASLEF was when

the SNP government shifted its approach to trade union engagement ahead of the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014. With every vote up for grabs in a definitive poll on Scotland's future, ministers at least listened to trade union voices – even if they often did not agree with them. It was in the years following that Scottish ministers secured from Westminster the potential for the state to bid against private companies for the franchise. Opposition parties also turned up the heat on franchising, with public ownership of ScotRail becoming a central plank of Richard Leonard's leadership of Scottish Labour from 2017.

Kevin, who has sat on the working group looking at a public sector bid, says the trade unions only ever saw this as a stepping stone for making the case for full public ownership. ‘We never actually believed at any stage that it would come to fruition. We believed it was a cop-out by the SNP.’

‘If there's the political will to do it, it will happen’

Now, with the Williams review into franchising forthcoming, the SNP has gone a step further. ‘The costs and risks’ of a new franchising round ‘would be significant’ and do not justify ‘scarce time and resources’ when the whole UK-wide system is in doubt, Matheson told MSPs at Holyrood. So when Abellio's franchise ends on 31 March 2022 services will be taken over by the Operator of Last Resort – that is, ‘within the public sector, by an arms-length company owned and controlled by the Scottish government’.

This still falls short of permanent, vertically-integrated, public ownership – which the SNP professes to support. ‘They're arguing they don't have the necessary tools to do it,’ says Kevin. ‘I disagree with that. I think if there's the political will to do it, it will happen. And then, if anyone isn't happy with that, they'd need to challenge it in the Scottish courts.’

Once again, in the face of ministerial obfuscation, the future of ScotRail will be determined not by politicians, but by those who demand change – and that is what ASLEF will continue to do.

Timely tribute to those who died in the Tay



Brian Johnstone is adept at finding inspiration in unlikely places, such as a collage of tickets collected from passengers on the train that plunged off the Tay Rail Bridge during a storm a few weeks before ASLEF was formed. KEITH RICHMOND reflects on that tragedy and a writer who marks and maps the human mind

AS A North British Railway train, consisting of a locomotive, its tender, five passenger carriages, and a luggage van, running from Burntisland, on the north shore of the Firth of Forth, to Dundee, on the north bank of the Firth of Tay, crossed the Tay Rail Bridge shortly after 7.15pm on Sunday 28 December 1879, the bridge, designed by Sir Thomas Bouch, collapsed, killing everyone on board.

A court of inquiry held under section 7 of the Regulation of Railways Act 1871 found that 'Bouch is, in our opinion, mainly to blame' and his reputation never recovered. The railway was, for a while, at least, better scrutinised for architects, builders, and railway companies playing fast and loose with safety in a bid to cut costs and boost profits.

And, significantly, six weeks after the accident, the first registered lodge of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen was founded in Sheffield, partly because the railway was an industry in which deaths and injuries exceeded those of every other except mining.

The tragedy on the Tay is probably best remembered for William McGonagall's dreadful poem *The Tay Bridge Disaster* which is so (unintentionally) awful that it is usually regarded as comic. It begins:

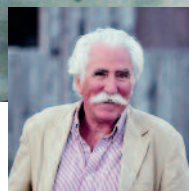
*Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay!
Alas! I am very sorry to say
That ninety lives have been taken away
On the last Sabbath day of 1879,
Which will be remember'd for a very long time.*

It is, sadly, doggerel – McGonagall is often described as one of the world's worst published poets – but another, and considerably better, Scottish poet has just published a new collection, *The Marks on the Map* (Arc Publications, £10.99), packed with poignant reflections on the past and the marks it makes on the present.

Fifty-six tickets for Dundee had been collected, at St Fort station, from passengers on the train before it crossed the bridge. Those punched tickets were used to create a collage,



The bridge after the storm; Brian Johnstone; contemporary engraving of rescuers looking in vain for survivors on the morning after the tragedy; Brian's new volume of verse; and a collage of 56 punched ticket stubs collected at St Fort station



with four portraits of railwaymen killed in the crash, taken by an unknown photographer, and kept in the online archive of The Library of 19th Century Photography. That image inspired Johnstone to write a rather more profound poem about the disaster:

The Last Train from St Fort

*They have the stubs, some fifty-six of these,
all punched, a blank triangle
nicked from every ticket's edge,*

*arranged into this neat display, framed up
and photographed, a wreath
of non-arrival commemorating those*

*they dredged out of the Firth, bedraggled
in their city clothes, or navy's gear,
sandbanks seeping from the seams,*

*and carted lifeless through the streets
they would have stepped on to that night
but for the force and angle of the wind,*

*and workmanship so bad it might have been
deliberate neglect; or some sick joke,
like that the men made later*

*from his name, damned Bouch: the bodger
who had flung them from the edge
of certainty; dashed Victorian assurance*

*that their Bradshaw was reliable,
the engineering sound; nothing could delay
the locomotive, not yet renamed The Diver*

*as it would be later, hauled out of the deep,
uncoupled from its ruined rolling stock
to ride the rails another day,*

*the monument from which it plunged
unwary through the chasm of the gale:
those stubs of pillars strung across the Tay.*

Brian Johnstone was born in Edinburgh in 1950, but has lived in Fife since 1972, now at



Largoward on the edge of the East Neuk. He was a primary school teacher for 22 years, and only started writing seriously in the early 1990s. He also performs with Richard Ingham and Louise Major in the jazz group Trio Verso and his pamphlet *Juke Box Jeopardy* was shortlisted for the Callum MacDonald Memorial Award in 2019.

Another powerful poem, this time of the more recent past, draws on an account of an incident during the Falklands War by Charles Fernyhough in his book *Pieces of Light*:

Detail

*They called a spade, a spade; a grave,
a grave; and duty unequivocal. His, to lead
the burial detail out to what the islanders
called camp. Body bags scarce, they laid them out
as if for night, each sleeping sack a winding sheet.*

*Too late, his flinch as soil went in, the weight
of his spade mistimed, the load misaimed,
revealing the face of his mate below. Too late
to turn, too late to escape the stare that said,
I am not dead, although he knew it was a lie.*

*They called a scare, a scare; a shock, a shock;
endurance indispensable. His, to yomp away
into the future, that face ever there: a friend
who never said to him, Don't bury me, but says it
every waking hour in all the trenches of his brain.*

We had to adapt



PAUL MILES, a freight driver with DB Cargo, a member of Westbury branch, and the District 7 rep on ASLEF's new Disabled Members' Forum, reports on a challenging year

AFTER ratification by our EC, and being elected to represent D7 on ASLEF's newly-formed Disabled Members' Forum, came a first visit to head office for many group members. Then came the coronavirus. Like all committees and working groups we had to adapt to new methods of moving forward, without any physical contact, and that has been a huge challenge. Each district, with the exception of District 6, has a rep in situ and the

enthusiasm amongst forum members is encouraging.

We elected a chair, and secretary, set up a WhatsApp group, and attended this year's two day TUC disabled workers' conference (by Zoom) in March. We launched an ASLEF-endorsed poster campaign to raise awareness in depots and mess rooms and took on TUC training in topics such as the 2010 Equality Act and disability discrimination law. As a health & safety rep I also completed many courses relevant to the role in the DMF, the latest being my stage three h&s diploma.

We affiliated to the Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance of disabled people and organisations; and formed links with other trade unions. Virtual visits to branch meetings are available throughout District 7; my contact details can be found in both the ASLEF contacts book and through head office.

#proudtobeinaslef



Steve Greene (socially distanced, of course) receives his 35 year badge

Steve Greene is one of many drivers receiving their badges during this pandemic as our union continues to function. Bro Gary Bayford also received his 35 year badge with Bro Richard Eddison, Bro Paul Frewer, and Bro Roy Juggapah receiving their 30 year badges. Special mention to Bro Steve Jestico and Bro Colin Dyke who each received their 45 years' loyalty badges. This year alone we have, in total, 330 years' worth of loyalty to ASLEF: #proudtobeinaslef.

Paul Cutmore
Chingford 248 branch secretary

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

FRED OLIVER RUGBY MAN

Fred was born on 27 April 1926, one of twins, in Rugby, where they spent their youth. They both joined the Navy in 1944. Fred was demobbed in 1947 and got a job on the railway at Rugby. Starting as a knocker upper, he went on to become a cleaner, then fireman, and finally driver in the 1960s. Two of the most notable episodes in his career were when he fired the breakdown train to help clear up after the tragic Harrow crash in 1957 and he was also fireman on the royal train, obtaining a certificate from the Queen. Fred was well respected and had a good long career, finally retiring shortly before his birthday in 1990. Three days later his only child Ian joined the railway as



Fred was in the Navy

Rugby train crew. Fred enjoyed a long retirement but, sadly, lost his wife in 2012 and, with the help of friends, chose to stay at his home in his twilight. He passed peacefully aged 94 on Wednesday 10 February. Despite covid restrictions, his twin Victor, son Ian, and a good contingent of friends and former colleagues paid their last respects.

Tony Venson
Rugby 177 branch secretary

TOTON OLD BOYS' REUNION

In anticipation of the lifting of all covid-19 restrictions, the 2021 Toton Old Boy' Reunion will be held at the Sportsman pub, Derby Road, Long Eaton, Derbyshire, NG10 4HA, from 19.30 on Friday 29 October. All welcome! Details from Reg Sargeant: email reginald.sargeant@gmail.com

Life on the footplate with Crohn's disease

I am a freight driver, and have been working on the footplate with Crohn's disease since 1992. Crohn's disease is an inflammatory bowel disorder which causes inflammation of your digestive tract, which can lead to abdominal pain, severe diarrhoea, fatigue, weight loss, and malnutrition. Any part of the small or large intestine can be involved, and it may be continuous or involve multiple segments. In some people, the disease is confined to the colon, part of the large intestine. Signs and symptoms can range from mild to severe. They usually develop gradually, but sometimes will come on suddenly, without warning.

Working in the freight sector with Crohn's disease, and during the pandemic, hasn't been without its challenges. I have learnt to manage this problem but sometimes life, and the job, can throw up unexpected things that cause stress which is one of the trigger points for me.

Being a freight driver, with such poor facilities, unlike colleagues in the passenger sector, has meant there are many foods I cannot eat leading up to a shift where I know there will be little, if any, opportunity to access a toilet. The pandemic has meant many station toilets, and toilets in public places, are closed or have restricted access which, in turn, adds to stress and means driving shifts that see me in the seat for five hours without a break have to be managed.

Because Crohn's disease is what you would describe as a hidden disability, sympathy and empathy are sometimes missed in the workplace. Mess room banter, a badly worded text message or email, can sometimes trigger a flare up. Items such as a radar key to access toilets have helped but people suffering from this unsociable disease are usually sensitive to stress and have to be very careful by managing trigger points to stay in remission.

Having to tell line managers or colleagues you have a disease that affects your physical and mental health and wellbeing is hard to talk about which is one of the reasons I stepped up to represent my district on the DMF – to not only raise awareness but to play a part in shaping union policy.

Paul Miles

Covid – we can't work from home



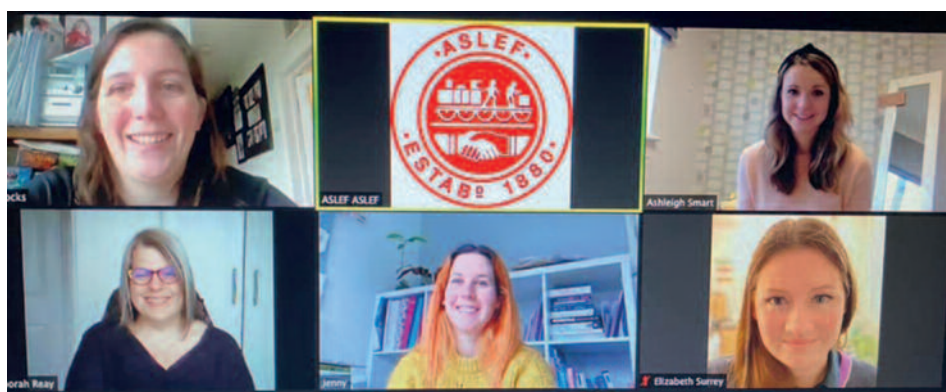
JENNY WRAY, York branch, and District 4 rep on ASLEF's Women's Representatives' Committee, reports from the TUC women's conference in March

I ATTENDED the TUC women's conference from Wednesday 3 to Friday 5 March, completely online on Zoom. It was my first time attending a conference, and the experience was very rewarding and empowering, even from the comfort of my craft room.

The first day began with a debate detailing the ways covid has affected members, and their unions' strategies to combat the unequal impact on women. Liz Cocks (D6) gave a heartfelt speech about the difficulty of childcare during covid, especially for train drivers – since we can't drive trains from home! Liz concluded by asking the TUC to lobby the government for more resources for mental health provision.

The first evening session highlighted the incredible role h&s reps have been doing in the last year, and how many women are more at-risk at work than men, due to poor-fitting PPE or their frontline roles. The session also examined the lack of female h&s reps and how we can get more women involved, by mentoring. Some speakers thought the pandemic has helped engage more women trade unionists because it is now much easier to access meetings online, especially when juggling childcare.

Next was 'black women and the impacts of coronavirus' which stressed the importance of individual impact assessments – including for the family and the people they care for. Speakers emphasised that we don't need any more reports on racism; we need action to



ASLEF's delegation to the TUC women's conference Zoom in to speak (clockwise from top left): Liz Cocks, Ashleigh Smart, Elizabeth Surrey, Jenny Wray, and Deborah Reay

address the discrimination and disproportionate impact that these reports have documented.

The second day began with a debate about ending gender-based violence and harassment. Elizabeth Surrey (D5) spoke about coercive control, explaining how this is often overlooked, or misunderstood, with horrendous long-term effects. ASLEF's contribution continued with our well-attended fringe session: 'Ctrl, alt, delete – the online abuse of women' hosted by Deborah Reay (D8), exploring how the internet is yet another weapon for perpetrators to wield. The WRC has submitted motions to AAD and the WTUC calling for social media policies to be updated, and for revenge porn to be legally categorised as a sexual offence and be included in the Domestic Abuse Bill.

The final day (which I'm sure we can all agree was the best day!) was when I did my first public speaking, in the debate about strengthening women's rights and

representation at work. Only 7.5% of train drivers are women so our specific needs are often overlooked, leading to outdated practices and a lack of female-inclusive policies. Since ASLEF's WRC was formed in 2000 the committee has been strengthening the rights of women train drivers through motions and research.

Finally, the session on 'ending inequalities in black women's maternal health care' centred on the barriers and failings, the institutional racism, and the harrowing statistics – black women are four times more likely than white women to die during pregnancy and childbirth.

After three days of distressing statistics, and painful personal stories, of struggles during the pandemic it would be easy to come away feeling despondent, but the sense of support, the connectedness, and the simple action points mean I gained a sense of purpose and assertiveness and the drive to keep fighting for a fair and equal workplace.

WALTER BELL MET THE QUEEN

Brother Walter Bell died at 05.30 on Thursday 25 March. It was his birthday the previous day and he was 94. Walter started on the railway at St Boswell's in 1941 in the c&w dept before moving to motive power as a cleaner. He served as a fireman at Galashiels, then as a driver at St Margarets and Millerhill, Edinburgh. He'd done 51 years' service when he retired. When the new railway line between Edinburgh and Galashiels was opened, he was invited by ScotRail to travel on the opening ceremony train, as he was one of the oldest drivers to have worked that line. Walter was then invited to meet the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh, who were also on the train, for the opening ceremony. Security asked, when he came out, who he was, as everybody else invited to meet the Queen only had nine minutes 'And you've had 15!' He was interviewed on TV, and by the newspapers, about the day's events. Jim Bell Littleover, Derby



Walter shared the front page of the *Edinburgh Evening News* with the Queen in 2015

ALAN HUGHES CHICKENS AND DUCKS

Alan came to Rugby depot in 1959, after starting at Bangor, and lived at the lodge for a few years. He married around 1965 and had a family. Alan was a very quiet individual, generally never creating many waves, and were you to work with him he would talk about his allotment, chickens, and ducks, which he enjoyed immensely. Alan took voluntary severance in 1995, when a lot of experience left the industry. Sadly, two years ago Alan was diagnosed with cancer, and he passed away on Wednesday 3 March, aged 79.

Tony Venson
Rugby 177 branch secretary

THOMAS HARLEY NO MORE HEROES

IT IS with the heaviest of hearts that I report the sad and untimely passing of Thomas Alexander Harley at the terribly young age of 58. We are proud, in this trade union, to pronounce each other as brothers and sisters and I was honoured to look on Tam as my railway big brother. We were interviewed on the same day, were successful, started on the same day as trainmen D at Grangemouth, moved together to drive at Edinburgh Waverley in 1991, and had a few adventures along the way.

To say Tam was a character is akin to saying Lionel Messi can kick a ball or that laddie Pavarotti can hold a tune. He was fearless, funny, generous, honest, and true; with first class honours in not giving a shit about reputations. He was an outstanding friend to many not only on the railway but across the social spectrum. His philosophy on friendship was simple. It didn't involve money, gifts, or falseness. Being his friend meant he would run through brick walls for you, if you needed him, and no questions asked. He involved me in adventures, and told me of others, that if anyone else had narrated you would think they were exercising their literary imagination, as his would have Irvine Welsh blushing, before collapsing in fits of laughter.

No More Heroes? Well, Tam was a punk, playing in bands from a young age, at the



Tam Harley, with wife Margaret, lit up a room

explosion of the movement, and becoming a very accomplished guitarist. His musical tastes inevitably evolved over the years and any recommendation was almost always excellent.

No More Heroes? One night, while working the Fife circle, his guard was accosted by a ne'er-do-well (that's Scottish for wee thug) brandishing a machete of negotiable length. The guard jumped back onto the train, fearing for his life, and shouted to Tam on the cab-to-cab that he was calling the police as this bloke was going all *Braveheart* on the platform and was best left until the local constabulary appeared. But he was still threatening the guard. Now most of us, me included, would have remained in the cab and waited for the police. Not bold Tam! He gets out of the cab onto the platform and says use that thing or he would find somewhere on the gentleman to hide it! The man with the machete used the only common sense he showed that evening

and threw the weapon into the undergrowth. Wise move! But unwisely he got a piece of wood and struck our boy on the back as he was getting back into the cab. In the melee that followed fractures, abrasions, and bruises were sustained; none by Tam. In legal parlance, he 'restrained and subdued the assailant'. The police arrived, found the weapon, and arrested the ne'er-do-well. Tam received no recognition, nor did he want any; his mate had been threatened and Tam had stood up for him.

Tam was hugely respected at both Edinburgh Waverley, where he drove for 15 years, and Glasgow Queen Street where he drove until having to take medical retirement four years ago.

He is survived by his wife, Margaret, his three daughters, Donna, Roslyn, and Marie, and his much-adored grandchildren. Family meant everything to him.

As a footnote – or, more appropriately, kneenote – we were playing football, when much younger, something else that Tam excelled at; think Roy Keane with more of an edge. I noticed Tam had an Indian ink capital T tattooed on his knee. I enquired and he explained, in his usual flowery manner, that it was just in case he forgot his name! Well, you didn't, pal, and neither will all your friends and colleagues in Scotland's railway.

Rest easy, brother, the world has all of a sudden got mightily quieter.

Tam McKendrick Grangemouth 145 branch secretary and D2 council chair

MIKE POOLE FRIENDS ACROSS THE RAIL NETWORK

It is with a very heavy heart that I announce the passing of retired CrossCountry driver Michael Poole who died, suddenly and unexpectedly, in the early hours of Monday 21 December aged only 67. Mike began his railway career in the mid '80s as a carriage cleaner with BR Western Region, progressing quickly through roles, which included platform staff at Weston-super-Mare, booking office clerk at Yatton, Puxton signal box, ticket examiner and guard at Bristol Bath Road, second man, and then driver at Bath Road. When the split came, after privatisation, he opted to stay on local work. After the closure of Bath Road he moved to Collett House, this becoming Wales and West Trains, where he remained until 2001, when he transferred to what was then Virgin Trains, and is now



Mike: 24 December 1952 to 21 December 2020

CrossCountry, until his retirement in 2016. During Mike's 30-plus years working on the railway he

made many friends across the network, from Penzance to Derby and beyond, and I feel privileged to refer him as a friend, colleague, and father-in-law.

Mike loved his holidays; if he wasn't working he was either planning a holiday or going on holiday. I had the privilege of joining him and his wife, along with my family, on some of these, seeing many of the Greek islands and, two years ago, going on a Caribbean

cruise which, after much persuading, he agreed to go on and loved. As a child Mike used to holiday in Kent, near Camber Sands, on the south coast, and dearly wished to visit again, which in 2018 we were able to do. Mike insisted we did the journey by train, from Yatton to Appleby station.

Mike was very family orientated, having two daughters and two grandchildren. During his retirement, many holidays and days out were spent with family. Though if we went on the train, or near a

station, he would soon get talking to a member of staff, whether he knew them or not. He was that kind of guy, friendly and willing to help or advise anyone, especially railway. Mike will be greatly missed but be fondly remembered by his family and colleagues. His funeral was held on Friday 15 January at Weston crematorium. Donations can be made in Mike's memory, if you wish, to Clevedon Pier Trust.

Martyn Balman (son-in-law) GWR driver, Bristol branch

STEVE POTTS PASSION FOR FISHING AND MOTORBIKES



Steve: family man sadly missed by workmates

Bristol Bath Road, Res, and EWS retired driver Steven Potts died, at home, on Monday 3 August 2020. He was 59. His funeral was held at Sedgemoor crematorium on Friday 14 August. Steve started on the railway at Bath Road depot as a driver's assistant in 1979. He was promoted to driver in 1988. When the depot split in 1994/5, he elected to be a driver at the Res depot at Barton Hill in Bristol. He was senior enough to be placed in the top link, driving class one Royal Mail services between Bristol, Derby, and Plymouth. He retired from the railway under the EWS ill-health scheme in 2013. Outside work Steve had a passion for fishing and motorbikes. He loved to go fishing from his home in Portishead and enjoyed riding his various motorbikes around Somerset. He was also a proud family man, being a beloved dad and granddad. He will be much missed by his family, friends, and work mates. Rest in Peace, Steve, taken from us too soon! Bernard Kennedy Bristol 036 branch secretary

RUSSELL MATON COME IN FOR A CUPPA

'I've put the kettle on, come in for a quick cup of tea and a chat. I'll have a "secret sugar" in mine.' These gentle words, accompanied by a beguiling smile, were what lured people into the LDC office and would usually herald a one or two hour perambulatory natter full of personal stories and anecdotes that might, occasionally, have had a valid or salient railway point, but, regardless, always left you feeling a bit better about the world in general.

They are words, though, that we at Farnham depot and on SWR won't have the privilege of hearing again as Russell Maton tragically lost his two month battle with covid early on Sunday 7 March. He passed away surrounded by his wife and four children, the family he adored, in Basingstoke Hospital.

Russell Guy Maton joined British Rail via the Youth Opportunity Scheme on 20 October 1986. He made his way to the driving grade via a number of disparate roles including platform staff, shunter at North Camp oil terminal, Farnham ticket office clerk (where his speed on the APTIS machine was legendary), then Woking where he joined the footplate and became a driver in the early 2000s. He transferred back to Farnham in 2005 to be closer to his home town of Alton.

In 2013 he was overwhelmingly voted into the role of LDC and, alongside Barry Foster, initially, revived branch meetings, so that



Russell Maton : Farnham driver and LDC rep

previous attendance records were smashed and greater numbers of drivers were more engaged with the union than ever before. The landlord of The Hop Blossom offered the back room for free, on the basis that he had a good 'wet' night whenever we held a meeting.

Russ's compassion for all people, of all grades, and from all backgrounds, was his main motivation for becoming a union rep. He had a quiet, steely, determination to always do what was right by his colleagues, and was respected by local management, fellow union reps, and company directors for this resolve.

This altruistic nature continued outside of work, with his willingness to help all and sundry. He was a Special Constable for a time, an accomplished mechanic, and was constantly helping people move house, doing bits of shopping, and fixing bathrooms and boilers for friends and his beloved family. A trip to the supermarket for a bottle of milk would often take an hour or two as he was a well-known local character and would get engaged in conversations around the topics of the day.

Russ leaves behind his wonderful wife Angela and four children, Jodie, Greg, Marcus, and Edward, to whom our deepest sympathies and hopes for peace are sent. He also leaves a legacy of kindness, decency, and an awful filing system, that will take both his family and his colleagues months to sort out!

Russ, we will miss your genial affability, the flick of your hair as you settled down for that 'quick chat', your considerate decency to all, and your infectious chortle. Taken too soon, by an evil and indiscriminate virus. Rest in peace our hirsute friend.

Shaun McCallion

Farnham 252 branch chair

'No one is actually dead until the ripples they cause in the world die away. The span of someone's life is only the core of their actual existence'
– Terry Pratchett

HARRY 'SIDEROD' SYGROVE

My dear friend Harry Sygrove, aka Siderod to his mates, passed on Sunday 21 February, aged 95, at Fieldhead Park nursing home in Mirfield, West Yorkshire. Harry left school at 14 and went straight to Ardsley MPD but was told he couldn't join the railway until he was 17, so got a job at Wensley coach builders in Wakefield.

On his 17th birthday he was back, and was taken on as an engine cleaner at Ardsley, where he stayed until the depot closed, and he moved to Wakefield.

He said that one of the highlights of his life was playing *The Last Post* on his bugle, in the Boys' Brigade, at the memorial in the middle of Wakefield, on Remembrance Sunday, when he was



Harry Sygrove, as a young man, playing *The Last Post* and (right) more recently

just 13; he did it again the following year on stage at the Theatre Royal, Wakefield.

Another was driving the Queen on the royal train from London to Wakefield; he was handed a letter of thanks and a five pound note. When he got home he gave it to his wife.

Doris said 'I'm going to get it framed' and Harry said, 'Nay, lass, £5 is a lot of money; that's next week's shopping paid for!'

On one occasion we worked a steam train to Manchester and got relieved to work another train back to Wakefield. Harry realised he'd forgotten his snap so went off to get a couple of pies. No sooner had he gone that our back working rolled up to find no Harry. Fifteen minutes later he turned up to find Manchester gridlocked as he was stopping the job. All Harry said was, 'Shut up and eat the



pie, lad!'

When Wakefield closed he went to Healey Mills in 1968 until he retired in 1991.

Harry was a gentleman in every way, always smart, and well-respected.

He leaves a son, Brian, and daughter, Gwen, who looked after him until his health got worse.

Our condolences to Brian, Gwen, Julie, Steve, and Sam.

Walter Covell
ex-Healey Mills

DOUG BASSETT QUITE A CHARACTER

Doug Bassett – one of three Bassetts on the railway as his father and uncle were also drivers at Tonbridge – has died. He was 93 and a very loyal ASLE&F member. Doug was quite a character and a pleasure to work with; his claim to fame was that if the speed board was at 20 'You do not have to go at 20', so when commuters saw him up the front they knew they would be late home. Whether he was ever caught speeding I do not know, but at every board he always drove at a lower speed. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

Dave Weddle RMS Tonbridge

ROGER MOUNTFORD

My brother Roger Mountford passed away on Wednesday 24 February. Roger joined London Underground in October 1970 as a guard at Hammersmith (Metropolitan line) then Baker Street. After becoming a driver in 1976 he worked Edgware and Golders Green (Northern line), finishing as a depot driver at Golders Green and Morden.
Heather Capsey (sister) Telford

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**



Freight and a fatigue index

I wholly agree with driver Stuart Parry and his letter re Freightliner Heavy Haul's fatigue index (*Journal*, April). Working for Freightliner Intermodal we are, in relation to our FLHH brothers and sisters, incredibly lucky with our t&cs and rostering practices. After several years working for another FOC whose fatigue index appeared to be 'Just do it' I feel somewhat healthier, less stressed, and actually now enjoy my job.

However, I feel that Mick's response to driver Parry was a proper cop out. 'It is a shame that there is no regulation, only recommendations, on drivers' hours in the 21st century.' Isn't that partly what we pay our subs for? To push for improved regulation and working practices? And, in turn, drive down hours? I'm sure the guys at Peterborough HH have many thoughts on this, especially after their recent Intermodal Peterborough to Stowmarket debacle (now ceased through their own pressure).

I struggle to understand how truck drivers can only drive for x number of hours a week, with their max 41 tonne vehicles, but freight on rail, with our 1,000-plus tonne trains and poorly executed fatigue index, can do whatever the FOC can push through. Shouldn't we all be singing from that one gloriously sunny hymn sheet, to assist in our wellbeing, highlighted by EC3 John Metcalfe on page 6? And shouldn't any fatigue index now introduced also take into account travel time to and from our homes? It's my understanding that Network Rail has a handle on this, in that new employees must live within 45 minutes' travel from their home depot. A bit more positivity, please, on fatigue and its issues.

Kelvin Moody Freightliner Intermodal, Ipswich, Suffolk

GS Mick Whelan says: 'I also said that we always aspire to get best practice into every negotiation, which we do, and do not only push this hard industrially, but politically, too, and with all the different stakeholders in the railway industry. The problem is that we do not always get what we want, when we want it. That doesn't stop us trying. We continue to press for best practice, on the fatigue index, as on everything else, at every company with which we negotiate.'

Oh, wonder! How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, that has such people in't! New to thee

So what happens now, as we look to emerge from the pandemic? A dystopian future, our *Brave New World*, that has shown very little international collaboration in the face of a crisis. After this covid calamity, will we really change our ways? An end to wars, to arms dealers and their vile trade? To half the world existing on a dollar a day? Will the rich relinquish even a portion of their wealth? I wouldn't hold your breath...

It's pretty certain that however society emerges, it will not be a return to life as we knew it. With covid passports, or similar, proposed, more intrusion into our privacy in the name of safety and security appears inevitable. As for all being in this together, we are ordered to stay at home and not socialise, yet a plethora of performers are given exemptions, complete with nice haircuts! Or am I missing something?

As for the rail industry, so much uncertainty. Not so long ago the talk was of reversing Beeching, now more cuts are speculated if numbers don't return. Mr Johnson's erstwhile statement of rail travel not being safe still resonates with many and has probably deterred many for good.

Combined with changes to people's work/lifestyles the railway has to reinvent its *raison d'être*. In this mess, at least our GS fully recognises the problems ahead and how society should refocus its priorities. If only those in government would take note.

Jeff Morgan Retired Members' Section

Driving down the hours

Fatigue is an emotive subject, especially for drivers from the freight industry, where booking on between 22.00 to 03.00 is commonplace, with turn lengths 11-plus hours long, and poor facilities.

But when drivers moan at reps they need to be careful that they are whiter than white; invariably staff complaining about fatigue still work rest days, happy to move time bands, and sit at the end of a phone waiting for that phone call from control.

I was a BC rep for Freightliner Heavy Haul for eight years and fatigue was always top of our agenda. When I was first appointed we only had 119 guaranteed rest days, with a five day week, and no time bands or limits on night working written into the t&cs.

Although change seems slower in the freight industry, there are now, on FLHH, 156 rest days (four day week) and 36 annual leave days, three time bands, and restrictions on the length of night turns and working into annual leave. The new roster package being implemented means fatigue will be calculated proactively, not reactively, and should stop the favoured few getting all the work, and should allow all staff to sign up routes so work is more evenly spread.

There are now additional financial safeguards for drivers who are unable to carry on working in the industry, plus we were the only freight company to negotiate a pay rise for 2020/21. So I think it can be seen that ASLEF has been 'driving down the hours' and fighting, and gaining, improved t&cs.

Yes, there is still a long way to go, but it is a start.

Paul Barber Freightliner Heavy Haul

ASLEF subs this year

Given the covid crisis I, like many in the industry, did not receive a pay rise in 2020 and we have already been told not to expect one in 2021. Might I suggest the EC shows some support with their members by voting to suspend any rises with ASLEF subscriptions until things return to normal or certainly for next year? And maybe EC members could also elect not to receive any increase in their salary? We are all supposed to be in this together.

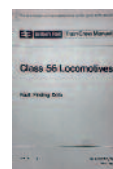
Gavin Turner Bristol HSS, GWR

Mick says: 'Thank you, Gavin. ASLEF's EC decided earlier this year not to raise subs this year. The eight members of our executive committee, one elected from each of our eight districts, are not paid by this trade union. They are all train drivers, paid by their TOCs and FOCs, the same as every other driver.'

Lorimer and our first HQ

I'm sure everyone will have seen the sad news of Peter Lorimer passing. He was the landlord of the Commercial pub in Leeds for many years; this was the original ASLEF HQ. Interesting article in the *Journal*.

Steve McNally retired member



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

DARREN 'DAZ' TRAPPETT # BE MORE DARREN

IT IS with great sadness that I have to report the death of West Midlands driver Darren Trappett on Wednesday 3 February after a short battle with covid-19. Darren's funeral on 19 March, due to covid restrictions, was by invitation only. A slow procession was arranged by the family, allowing people to say goodbye from the street, in a socially distanced way, which many did.

Daz joined the railway at 16, straight from school, in September 1992 on a YTS scheme at Bescot. He had many customer-facing roles including revenue protection, and senior conductor at Wolverhampton, where he was company council for the RMT. Getting promotion to trainee driver in March 2014, and fulfilling his childhood dream, he naturally joined ASLEF, the train drivers' trade union.

Darren was easy going and down to earth and universally popular across all depots and with all people. He was inclusive, sociable, caring, lived life to the full, and game for a laugh. His cheeky grin and infectious smile was enough to have the whole mess room in fits of giggles. He loved DIY, but it didn't always go to plan. He told us how he had built a garden wall, and was so proud, taking photos of his accomplishment. It turned out he had forgotten to put cement in the mix, meaning his wall was built with sand and water only. Suffice to say it fell over. But he was always up for a laugh and knew how to take a joke. He wasn't very tall and, when he got promotion to driver, the inevitable booster seat jokes started. He took them, gracefully, in his stride and would always join in the mess room banter.

Darren was also known as a bit of a Del Boy – Trappett's *Fools and Horses* – a trait that stretched back to when he was at school, selling packets of crisps in the playground for a 400% profit. He was always trying to persuade people to use TopCashback, a website where 'You get £20 cash back if you



Darren Trappett with his ASLEF lanyard; with his family; and on an RMT picket line before joining ASLEF, the train drivers' union



buy through them'. If there was a deal to be done Daz would know about it. Making deals with the duty train crew manager for rest days and overtime, and always giggling at the deals he had struck. His bargain chasing even went to peeling off free stickers and collection cards of McDonalds coffee cups for a free brew. He seemed to have an endless supply of cards and stickers and would laugh at anyone who actually paid for a cup of coffee. I'm sure he never actually purchased a cup of coffee since becoming a driver.

Above all, Darren was a family man. He met his wife Emma at the Snow Dome in Tamworth and said to his younger brother Lee, 'I think this is the one for me.' They were married for almost 17 years and had twin girls Jessica and Sienna. He was extremely proud of his family and would spend hours telling us about them and what they had

been up to. He was always proud to show us pictures his daughters had drawn or certificates and awards they had won. Even showing us a video they took part in when they won a family trip to Butlins. It starts with Daz trying to figure out how to record themselves and Emma laughing at him. The video was a firm favourite with everyone at work and shows what a fun-loving and devoted partner and father he was.

Darren was also a staunch Aston Villa fan, always trying, and failing, to persuade Emma and the girls to become supporters. 'Darren never let anything get him down,' said Emma. 'You know he was everything to me and our girls and families but I want you to all keep him in your hearts. This is an extremely tough time as life will never be the same without him but, if you get mad, sad, or ever despair, please just think, what would Darren do? #BeMoreDarren.'

Daz had the biggest heart and his passing has left us deeply saddened, with a huge hole in the West Midlands Railway and extended railway family. A caricature of Darren and some of his most memorable moments now hangs in the New Street mess room, making everyone smile as they walk by. I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who donated to Darren's GoFundMe collection.

A substantial amount was raised and been presented to his family, along with a matching caricature of Daz and charm bracelets in the claret and blue colours of Aston Villa with a train on for his daughters. Rest in Peace Daz, gone but never forgotten. #BeMoreDarren
Debbie Insull Birmingham New Street 141 branch reporter

UNDERGROUND OVERGROUND

Retired Barnham driver Bob Dorkings and Par driver Paul Edwards have produced a covid-19 railway service badge to mark the efforts of London Underground and Overground staff during the pandemic. 'TfL workers continued to work because they, too, are key/critical workers,' says Bob. 'There are 11 versions, one for each of the 11 Underground lines, plus a London Overground version. Each badge has a white top half, with the red portal logo, while the bottom has the relevant line colour.' Each badge costs £5.00 (plus p&p which will vary from £2.50 to £6.00 depending on order) with all proceeds to NHS workers; email Bob at rdorkings@yahoo.com



Central line LU railway service badge

JOHN 'BUDGIE' HOBDEN

John Hobden was nicknamed Budgie as everywhere he sat, he sat on one leg. He was a young driver when I started and we liked to get with the young drivers as the majority of drivers were much older. He was on the LDC for as long as I can remember and worked very hard to get the lovely work we had at Tonbridge. The area we covered had many tractions, what a depot, there was always a waiting list to get there. John was 90 and, very sadly, his daughter died three weeks before him.

**Rest in peace, John, another very loyal ASLEF member.
Dave Weddle Tonbridge RMS reporter**

Wat Tyler: 'We come not as thieves and robbers. We come seeking social justice'



CHRIS PROCTOR has written for *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *the Morning Star*, *New Statesman* and *Tribune* as well as spending eight years 'before the mast' in the policy department of ASLEF, where he helped the GS – first Keith Norman and then Mick Whelan – to put together the *Journal* each month. Here he takes a socially-distanced walk in the streets, and down the years, around head office

NEXT time you're visiting ASLEF's head office in Clerkenwell – and members are always welcome to call in and say hello – try to find an hour to have a look around the area. There's not a street here without a story to tell: and most of those tales are about rebellions, protests, or uprisings. Is it a coincidence that this should be where our union found its home?

Peter Ackroyd would say no. In his 'biography' of London he argues that the different parts of the city develop characteristics that remain, despite the best efforts of developers. Immigrants took over the East End; the rich moved to Chelsea; protest gravitated towards Clerkenwell. And they're still there.

The oldest outsiders were the Roman Catholic soldier-monks of the Knights of St John, an order set up in 603. Like the people in many of these stories, they had a mission – to care for sick pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land – and they acted on it. The Medieval gateway that led to their priory still stands, although the gatehouse is now the HQ of St John's Ambulance. Over the years it has also been a workplace for Samuel Johnson, a home for the artist William Hogarth, and a pub.

'Do the rich and poor inhabit the same city?' – Peter Ackroyd *London: The Biography*

You get to the gateway by turning up Passing Alley, which is where ASLEF's fire escape leads. The passage, previously called Pissing Alley, was renamed in the 1790s, but something of the old days remains. That fragrance just won't go away...

Over the road is Clerkenwell Green, where the Marx Memorial Library stands. This is where Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (using the *nom de guerre* Lenin) edited *Iskra* (The Spark) between 1902 and 1903, each edition smuggled into Russia. But the Green's rebellious past stretches back much further. Wat Tyler led the Peasants' Revolt here from Essex (and Kent) in 1381; his followers took the



opportunity to set the Priory alight. It was a target not only because the Order had become obscenely rich, but because its Prior was Sir Robert Hales, the Lord High Treasurer, who was responsible for collecting the poll tax, the most egregious of the rebels' grievances.

The Green was also the location for a huge trade union rally in 1838 to greet the return, from transportation to Australia, of George Loveless, the first of the Tolpuddle Martyrs to make it home. He had been sentenced to a seven year stretch for 'administering unlawful oaths' in Dorset – actually, for having the temerity to help to form one of the first British trade unions, the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers.

'I exhort you to consider that now the time is come, appointed to us by God, in which ye may, if ye will, cast off the yoke of bondage, and recover liberty' – John Ball sermon, 12 June 1381

Over the railway line Farringdon Road runs along the route of the now subterranean Fleet River. Here the Congregational Memorial Hall stood, which, on 27 February 1900, hosted a meeting of socialists and trade unionists who formed the Labour Representation Committee, the immediate forerunner of the Labour Party. A plaque at 5 Fleet Place still marks the event.

More dramatic episodes took place to the north-east of the Green, where the Clerkenwell House of Detention was established in 1617. It will hardly be a surprise, by now, to hear that the prison was destroyed by fire during a protest: this time the Gordon Riots in 1780. This rebellion opposed attempts to allow Catholics to become full citizens, and is named after Lord George Gordon, head of the Protestant Association. Charles Dickens provides a dramatic account of the events in *Barnaby Rudge*.

In 1878 the re-named Clerkenwell Prison was the setting for another drama when it was targeted by the Irish Republican Brotherhood. A gunpowder explosion on 13 December was the focal point of an attempt to spring from jail Richard O'Sullivan Burke, an arms supplier to the Fenian nationalists. The Clerkenwell Outrage, as it became known, killed 12 people



The Museum of the order of St John; John Ball preaches to protesters during the Great Rising (or Peasants' Revolt) of 1381; Lenin's desk; and Labour Party plaque

and wounded 120.

It was unsuccessful in freeing Burke, and among those executed for taking part in the bombing was Michael Barrett. He earned the dubious distinction of being the last person to be publicly hanged in the UK, just down the road outside Newgate Prison where the Old Bailey now stands. Barrett died on 26 May 1868 and the Clerkenwell Prison lasted only another 22 years. It was demolished in 1890 and the site became a school until 1971 when it was converted into flats.

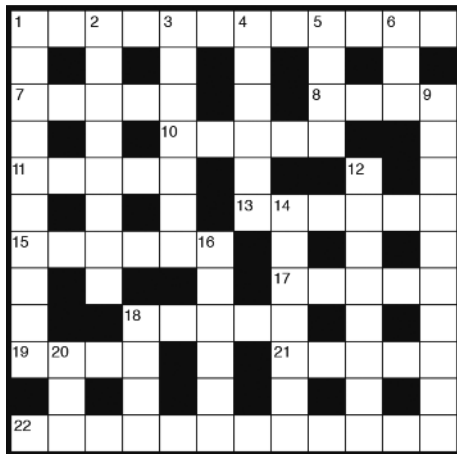
'When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life' – Samuel Johnson to James Boswell, 20 September 1777

But history never quite goes away: it just arises again in an altered form. Who would have guessed that the vaults beneath the original building would still be in use 130 years later: not as a place of confinement, but as a film set? *Sherlock Holmes*, *Spooks* and *St Trinian's 2* all used the tunnels. And, during the London Blitz, they were employed as air-raid shelters.

It feels right that ASLEF should have gravitated to an area with such a rich history of political activism and idealism. Before we moved to St John Street in 2011, our head office was 'the big house' in Arkwright Road in leafy Hampstead. It was a magnificent wood-panelled building once owned by the Beecham family (there's a flat available there now for only £4,000 a week!) but radical Clerkenwell is surely a more fitting home for our trade union.

Prize Crossword

Prize crossword 181 by Tom Williams



Solution to Prize Crossword 180

Across: 1 Gander 7 Prowl 8 Lemonade 9 Lathe 10 Stew 12 Rain 13 Stay 14 Taps 15 Shoo 17 Smug 19 Whale 20 Tranquil 21 Crest 22 Eighty **Down:** 1 Gales 2 Number plates 3 Reason 4 Spell 5 Mouth-to-mouth 6 Sleepy 11 Was 13 SOS 14 Thwack 15 Savage 16 Jetty 18 Golly

Congratulations to **Nathan Savage** of **Warlingham, Surrey**, who was last month's winner. The winner of this month's Prize Crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25.



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

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 14 May

Across

- 1 Gesture of encouragement (3,2,3,4)
- 7 Fat-fried bun
- 8 Sudden loud noise
- 10 Not yesterday or tomorrow... Now
- 11 Strainer
- 13 An ankle wrench?
- 15 Parliamentary vacation
- 17 Frock or gown
- 18 Trademark
- 19 A good or bad reputation?
- 21 Eskimo dwelling
- 22 Subject of everlasting mirth (8,4)

Down

- 1 Person travelling on foot
- 2 A proneness
- 3 Chatters idly
- 4 Vast mobs
- 5 Newborn child
- 6 Tin container
- 9 Sharpening tool
- 12 Battle of Napoleon's defeat
- 14 Stuffing or wadding
- 16 Large prawns often fried in batter
- 18 Broad, baked or haricot
- 20 Termite

On Track

Not enough rich kids at Oxbridge



Eastbourne College: Ex oriente salus

ONLINE platforms like eBay have eaten into the grip on the market once held by the likes of *Loot, Exchange & Mart* and the Friday Media Group but you can still find a copy of the *Friday Ad* in your local Chinese takeaway. I did, anyway. FMG published its first 'brand and advertisement' freesheet at Uckfield, in Sussex, in 1975 and, 30 years later, was printing 70 different editions and 1.1 million copies each week across the south-east of England. Waiting for my sweet and sour chicken balls, egg fried rice, and crispy duck, I flicked through the edition serving Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, and Tunbridge Wells to find this peerless piece of paid-for drivel:

'Eastbourne College, an independent school on the south coast, reports the highest number of Oxbridge offers in four years. It goes without saying [why say it, then?] that competition for Oxbridge places is fierce. The universities receive, on average, between five and seven applications for every place. To make matters more challenging, according to their 2019 admissions reports, around 69% of Oxbridge offers go to students from the state sector; and this year was no exception.'

Well, fancy that! This was part of a three page advertorial, disingenuously dressed up as, er, Community News, to promote a private school – where fees to board are £36,975 per year – with less than stellar GCSE and A-level results. But what sticks in the craw is not the puff – 'the six girls who [have] just received the equivalent of Mr Wonka's Golden Ticket' – but the idea that it is somehow unfair, and utterly reprehensible, that 69% of the undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge are young men and women who attended state schools! Yes, the barbarians are at the gates...

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



findyourunion.tuc.org.uk

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