



ASLEF

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Raise the bar on crossing safety standards

I'm often asked why I feel so strongly about safety at open level crossings. It's because it is a safety feature that has declined drastically since I began my rail career. I can remember when all crossings were manned by a crossing keeper, invariably a man and usually with a wife and family. Then BR embarked on a programme to install open crossings that put thousands of rail staff out of work and tens of thousands of road and rail users – especially train drivers – at risk.

I still vividly remember an incident that happened 30 years ago, on 1 March – at Naas level crossing near Lydney in Gloucestershire. Driver Harry Hitchens and his Assistant Phil Bull, both Cardiff Canton men I knew personally, were killed when the train they were driving collided with a high sided vehicle. Harry was 59 at the time and Phil just 38 years old. The lorry driver also perished.

I told the branch afterwards that the people responsible for this deliberate sabotage of safety standards were killers. I still believe it. It is shameful that our members should be put at risk because of inadequate crossing arrangements.

Our members – not to mention other rail staff and the travelling public – deserve better.

Last month we saw the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) come up with some more proposals to (get ready for corporate-speak) 'help to achieve its vision of zero workforce and industry-caused passenger fatalities'. It wants higher penalties for motorists, tighter laws and the inspection of all automatic crossings. All well and good – but shouldn't this be happening anyway? At best, these steps will help limit the number of deaths – but they will not end them. And meanwhile, the carnage will continue.

It is shameful that we don't provide the same level crossing safety standards today that we did three decades ago.

Keith Norman
General Secretary



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✉ 9 Arwright Road London NW3 6AB ☎ 020 7317 8600

📠 020 7794 6406 📧 journal@aslef.org.uk 🌐 www.aslef.org.uk

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**More than
just a union**



Grasping MP condemns non-overtime train drivers

HARPENDEN MP and former Tory Cabinet minister Peter Lilley last month attacked Thameslink train drivers as 'militants taking coordinated action to prevent trains running'. The 'crime' of these 'extremists' was to exercise their legal and contractual right not to work overtime. 'God save us all from a Tory government,' says ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman. 'Is compulsory overtime one of the policies they haven't mentioned yet?'

The over-excited Hitchin and Harpenden MP frothed in Parliament about his constituents wanting compensation for

disruption 'caused by drivers refusing to work overtime or on rest days.' 'Exactly,' says Keith. 'The 'crime' of these drivers was not to work in excess of their conditioned hours. That is not an employee problem. It is a management problem - something obvious to all but the most blinkered.'

Keith stressed that it was not the union's job - or anyone else's for that matter - to try to force train drivers to work overtime or to come in on their rest days.

The union is pleased that Peter Lilley is not having to suffer like his constituents. This is because in 2007/08 he claimed the full

Parliamentary £23,083 'second homes' allowance - which is understandable as otherwise the train journey from his constituency is either a whopping 27 minutes from Harpenden to London or a massive 34 minutes from Hitchin. A rail season ticket would have cost the taxpayer £3,640.

Or maybe he just doesn't like trains. Last year he claimed £2,353 in car mileage and £109.94 for a Tom-Tom sat nav.

But certainly he's not adverse to a little overtime. Away from his MP day job he earned over £36,000 from advising a selection of companies.

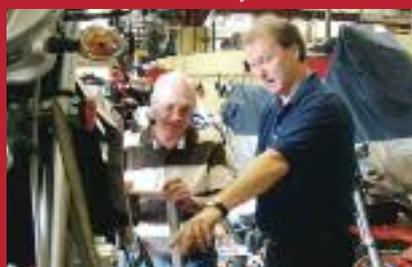
SOUTH WEST SHOWS VARIETY OF UNION LEARNING

THE South West 'Festival of Learning' in October showed the variety of courses available through the union's 'Proud to Educate' arm. Taster sessions in digital photography, IT, languages and reflexology were offered at Bristol Temple Meads. Basingstoke's family fun day involved drums, dance routines and sessions on Sign Language. At Willesden Junction tutors from Birkbeck College featured language learning with native speakers, while Salisbury introduced an 'IT learning bus', finishing the day with 37 new learners signing up for courses.

At Weymouth tasters on offer included plumbing, motorcycle maintenance, web design and sign language.

Project worker Emma Ramsay says, 'The message is that whatever subject you'd like to know more about, get in touch with your learner rep. We bet you'll be surprised at what's on offer.'

Ian Jolly gets into motorbike maintenance at the Weymouth event



Labour asks for Manifesto priorities

AS the Labour Party begins to draw up its manifesto for this year's General Election, it has approached trade union affiliates to ask what are the priority issues in our industry.

ASLEF has responded saying they are:

- retaining the East Coast

mainline franchise indefinitely as a public company run on a not-for-profit basis - rather than re-letting it to the private sector.

- extending electrification beyond the Great Western Line to the Midland mainline and northern conurbations



around Sheffield and Leeds.

- backing a progressive rail freight policy reflecting the need for post-2014 funding certainty, revising freight facilities grants and supporting a planning policy which facilitates the construction of more freight terminals.

Asbestos death payout

THE family of a former Oxford railway worker who died from asbestos-related cancer last month received almost £100,000 in compensation. Dudley Maasz died in July 2006, a year after being diagnosed with mesothelioma, caused by asbestos exposure from working as an engine cleaner and fireman on the railways. BRB (Residuary) Ltd, agreed to pay £98,000.

Companynews

COMPANY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The following members have been elected: **Freightliner HeavyHaul Business Council** - Bro J Beat, Knottingley Branch, **Freightliner Intermodal Business Council** - Bro D Gloyn, Ipswich Branch, **Tubelines Functional Council** - Bro A Puncheon, Lillie Bridge Branch, **First Great Western (HSS) Company Council** - Bro S Austin, Paddington Branch, **First Great Western (LTV)**

Company Council - Bro I Finn, Reading Branch, **Northern Rail (East) Company Council** - Bro S Holley, Sheffield Midland Branch

REST DAY WORKING

ASLEF is prepared to sanction: Free Turn Working on **Freightliner Intermodal** until 27 February 2010 Rest Day Working on **London Midland** until 27 February 2010

● **RETIRED MEMBERS PRIZE DRAW RESULTS** 1st 003865 M Daley, 2nd 0062167 J.A. Bancroft, 3rd 0090593 PJ Morris, Mystery Prizes: 1 00466653 P. Sprules, 2 0043720 D Ship, 3 0006605 J Chambers. The RMS would like to thank all those who supported the raffle.

Tories and Labour vie for rail vote

RAIL is right at the top of issues that will determine the outcome of the General Election. It almost has the status of Tony Blair's 'education, education, education' mantra in 1997. And both Labour and the Tories are jostling with each other to say how 'train friendly' they are.

'We've been telling Labour for years that improved railways are a vote-winner,' says ASLEF's Keith Norman. 'Finally, just as we enter the final furlong, they've caught on to the fact that marginal constituencies are brimful of commuters and train passengers. Now the Tories have wised up to this as well, and issue promises faster than you can say 'failed franchise experiment.'

Keith says it's encouraging for our industry that the need to expand and improve rail is now central to the political agenda. 'It can only be beneficial to our members,' he says. 'Trains go nowhere without drivers. Perhaps our

worth will now be recognised.'

Both main parties say they support the ASLEF objectives of an expanded and electrified network incorporating high-speed trains.

'Of course there's a long way to go from a statement of principle to a practical programme – before the 1997 election Tony Blair said, 'There will be a publicly owned and publicly accountable railway system under a Labour government' – but it is a start.

'Both parties recognise that rail has environmental advantages, economic benefits – the Eddington Report estimated that congestion costs £22 billion a year – and social gains. Improvements in rail will be a litmus test by which we measure the credibility of politicians after the May election.'

Only last month Gordon Brown announced the formation of a new company to deliver high speed rail links between the north and

south, cutting the journey time from London to Scotland to just three hours. Regular commitments have been given on additional, longer and improved carriages. And Labour says it will lay on new routes beyond Paris, Brussels and Lille to enable non-stop rail to Amsterdam and Cologne.

For the Tories, David Cameron says his party outlined its commitment to roll out high speed rail before the government and says, 'If we are going to build a greener and more competitive Britain we need to rise to the high speed rail challenge.'



Clegg ✓



Cameron ✓



Brown ✓

FCC and freight action off, Eurostar goes ahead

ASLEF's executive committee called off a ASLEF's executive committee called off planned strikes of its 550-plus members working on First Capital Connect (FCC) after the company made an improved pay offer equating to 5% over two years. The new offer will be put to members in a ballot with the results declared on 14 January. Keith Norman said he hoped that as part of the process the company would 'address the causes of the current disagreement by recruiting more train drivers'.

Meanwhile drivers on Southern who were prepared to take action on 27 and 28 December and 3 January because the

company refused to recognise Monday, 28 December 2009 as a Bank Holiday have also called off proposed action as the company were convinced of the union's case.

Two freight firms - Freightliner Intermodal and Heavy Haul – were threatened with action over disciplinary procedures but the cases were resolved and talks over competence development procedures agreed. .

Action at Eurostar over the worth of international allowances dropping because of changes to the value of the Euro looked certain to go ahead as the Journal went to press.



UNION FORCES CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME BREAKTHROUGH

A ground-breaking judgement in Swansea County Court last month paved the way for train drivers across Britain to claim compensation for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) - an industrial injury that leaves the hands permanently disabled.

The decision initially affects three ASLEF members - Paul Studholme, Gary Thomas and Barry Rogan – who contracted CTS, but it has wide implications for train drivers across the UK. All three drivers developed the condition – often caused by pressure on a nerve in the wrist resulting from repetitive wrist action - while operating from Arriva Trains Wales, Carmarthen Depot. They drove 140, 142, 150, 152 and 153 units throughout South Wales along the Heart of Wales lines.

When their condition was diagnosed, Arriva Trains Wales denied liability saying the injuries were not caused by working conditions. ASLEF then instructed Thompsons Solicitors to pursue compensation claims through the courts, arguing the symptoms were caused by repetitive work, adopting awkward wrist postures and operating brake and power controls in cramped conditions. Members had complained of inadequate seats with little or no adjustment and no arm rests.

ASLEF's general secretary Keith Norman said, 'This ruling sets a precedent for train drivers across the country who suffer from CTS. These three drivers deserve our praise for sticking with this case and I'm proud of all the union's local and regional officials for persisting with it.'





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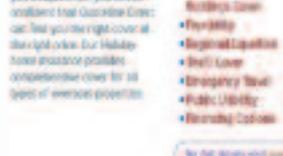


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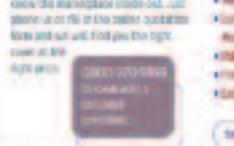
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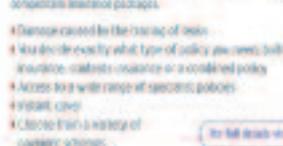
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Public funding for 'anti-union' rail franchises

THERE is now formal evidence that rail franchises, drawn up by Tories and backed by Labour, are actively anti-worker.

Franchise rail firms don't need to bother about having good industrial relations. If they cause a strike by bad treatment of employees or insulting pay offers, they're not too worried – because the taxpayer will compensate them.

This is the result of a clause that reads 'the Secretary of State, in his sole discretion, may decide to reimburse or ameliorate net losses of the Franchise Operator arising from industrial action (howsoever caused and of whatever nature)'.

This is really remarkable. It means companies can treat staff as badly as they choose – and get paid for doing it!

This only came into the public eye after Dave Calfe from the ASLEF executive committee had a two-year battle to prise information about this clause from the Department for Transport, using the Freedom of Information Act.

As a result of his persistence Blaydon MP Dave Anderson asked a direct Parliamentary Question – had the Department for Transport paid out money under this clause? Yes, came the eventual and reluctant reply.

He asked who it was paid to, and how much they got – but this information was not given to him because it was 'commercially confidential'.

Read that again. On the grounds of commercial confidentiality, the Labour government will not tell a Member of Parliament how much taxpayers' money had gone to subsidise an employer who had been inconvenienced by legal industrial action taken by a union affiliated to Labour!

This really is a scandal. It's the equivalent of the Tories agreeing to fund our members' wages during an industrial dispute. And worse, it actively protects franchises that have bad industrial relations practices.

Franchises make the government position utterly illogical. If we ask them to intervene on an issue, they say it's nothing to do with them. They are independent companies and the Department for Transport has no control over them. This is nonsense. Two companies – First Capital Connect and London Midland – were summoned to the Department last month and told to submit action plans to improve their performance.

This is clear intervention by the government, which leads to two conclusions. First it means it can intervene on issues we want raised with companies, like free staff travel. And second, if it does have to intervene, the logic is for the Department to oversee the whole railway in the public sector.

All they need to do is not renew franchises when they run out. I know ASLEF will be accused of bad manners again – but it is a fact that this is Labour Party policy.



The man in the Mirror – the story was picked up in the national press

Newsinbrief

○ LONDON SAYS YES TO PAY DEAL

London Underground members have accepted a two-year pay deal providing for 1.5% in the first year and RPI plus 0.5% in the second, reports District Organiser Steve Grant. There are no strings and, unlike another union, it was agreed without loss of money.

With most financial commentators predicting inflation of 2-3% early next year, members should obtain more than most public sector workers in the second year. ASLEF also obtained an agreement on redeployment of medically restricted Operators to 'guaranteed' CSA positions.

Steve adds, 'We have a challenging year ahead as we deal with management 'outcomes' from Valuing Time, the Operational Effectiveness programme, Operation Rainbow for attendance, the £1.3 billion pension deficit, the 2012 Olympics, upgrades, talk of train maintainers and even cleaners bringing trains onto mainline track and ongoing issues with the 'S' stock train.'

○ ECCENTRIC MEGA-TRUCKER ARRESTED

Mr Denby, chairman of Denby Transport and a mega-truck enthusiast, last month took his pet 82 foot mega lorry, which weighs more than a Challenger II tank, along the A46 outside Lincoln. He got as far as the nearest roundabout before police stopped him and his monster truck, which consists of two trailers attached to a cab and is 26ft longer than a standard lorry. The truck had difficulty getting round the roundabout and appeared not to have any brakes on the second trailer.

Mr Denby was aware that current regulations, backed by ASLEF, made his little jaunt illegal and presumably pulled the stunt in order to get a legal pronouncement.

After the drive he said, 'It's the same as any other truck'. Given that it is clearly not, being twice as long, the union would suggest Mr Denby arranges a visit to an optician.

○ X-RATED STATIONS

Manchester Victoria is now officially the worst station in the country, following a Department for Transport survey. In second place came south London's Clapham Junction while Crewe in Cheshire seized the bronze medal.

The rest of the Top (or, in fact, bottom) Ten are Barking, Stockport, Preston, Wigan North Western, Liverpool Central, Warrington Bank Quay and Luton.

Transport minister Lord Adonis said that while train travel has improved in recent years, conditions at stations have not kept pace. Funding is being put in place to commence improvement programmes.

○ EAST COAST CONUNDRUM

Within days of the government taking over the East Coast Mainline franchise, it announced plans to reduce fares after a review showed first-class carriages on the line were less than a third full on average, while standard-class carriages were less than two-thirds full.

Transport secretary Lord Adonis also wanted to 'look at how fares can be made more attractive' and is considering how to simplifying the complex fare structure.

So if the government appears to have strong positive ideas about how rail should operate - why doesn't it keep control by retaining franchises in public hands?

Executive hear views from the Selhurst messroom

NO less than four members of the Selhurst branch - Terry Allwright, Andy Cook, Andrew Johnson and Rob Lowndes - went along to this year's national weekend forum, and found it 'informative, interesting and good fun'.

Andrew Johnson says, 'It's been fantastic. This weekend I've met two Members of Parliament, I've had the General Secretary personally apologise to me for being late, and I've told the national leadership where they're going wrong!'

'Everyone is equal here - my opinion counts just as much as the President's.

'I've never had any contact with ASLEF members outside the branch before. But this weekend has made the union come alive for me, seeing it in a national context.

'We stayed in a good hotel, enjoyed splendid company and took part in lots of debates. It was about the union listening to its grassroots - rather than the other way round! To my surprise I was one of the first people on my feet, Why? Because I could!

'I raised a question about the EU that we'd been talking about in the messroom the day before. How's that? A debate in the messroom



Free! - the Selhurst Four!

is transformed into a discussion with the national executive! That's quicker than the internet and a lot more effective!

'It's a fantastic opportunity and should be better advertised. We knew about it because Andy Cook has an email list of 140 of our 190 branch members and he makes sure we're kept in the picture.

'I'd recommend it to anyone. It's your union, so have your say in what it does.'

Members take lead at National Forum

AT the end of November the union held its second weekend National Forum, the opportunity for 'ordinary' union members to meet to discuss our industrial aims and political direction with union executive members and officials in an informal way. Cliff Holloway in the chair set the tone. 'I don't mind hearing from officers - after lay members have spoken!' he declared.

'The Forum is another way of ensuring our union is open and transparent,' Keith Norman says. 'It's one of our strengths that there are no hierarchies in ASLEF. The opinions of national officers are no more valid or important than any other train driver in the UK.'

It was a message seized upon by the gathered 90 union members!

Discussing political issues, participants talked about

- the union increasing the profile of low state pensions
- only backing MPs who are prepared to back ASLEF policies and people - where were they when our FFC drivers were called 'irresponsible' for not working overtime?
- how it's possible to encourage members to be active in the political process
- if we need to approach politics differently as the background of our membership changes
- challenging the selection of candidates who just 'want to be an MP' rather than being motivated by a desire to serve working class interests
- asking how to persuade branches to affiliate to their local Labour parties.

One telling remark was, 'This Forum is aimed at bringing the union back to the members. It's what Labour needs to be doing.'

On the structure of the union, participants



Far left: Keith Norman - 'It's your union. Tell us what you want.' Left: Alan Donnolly - seen here with Sunday chairperson Colette Gibson - said, 'Our job is to leave the union in a better state than we found it. This is part of the process.'

debated

- whether we should seek to have our officers seconded from companies so they have a job to go to if they are not re-elected
- the need to build a relationship with our younger, as well as our traditional members
- whether branch meetings still work and what we can do to encourage members to attend.

In a session on communication the meeting considered that despite the methods we use - circulars, notice boards, the Journal, email, websites, meetings, depot visits, text alerts, Facebook groups, word of mouth - our message does not always get across.

Members discussed

- how to make information relevant to members who only want to know about things that will affect them directly
 - how to ensure we are ready for action when there is a crisis
 - that even though people increasingly visit the website for information, we should never forget the relevance of the notice-board. People want information in 'bite-size chunks'.
- On the structure of the union, there were discussions about
- whether individual votes for company



The weekend offered an opportunity for informal exchanges of opinions and information.

council reps would help to involve people

- if branches should be organised along company rather than geographic lines
- if freight members should have unique branches.

Add to this discussions about what advantages we get from the TUC, how to promote the green agenda to our advantage, the importance of light rail and contributions from former cabinet minister Michael Meacher and Wolverhampton constituency hopeful Emma Reynolds - and you have an idea of a vibrant, useful and well-spent couple of days.

Next year - why don't you come along? You're invited!

FINDING HOPE IN AUSCHWITZ HORROR



ASLEF members at the rails of evil: where the trains ran into the camp

AT A District Council meeting 18 months ago when the more radical element at Bletchley branch suggested we should visit Auschwitz. We all asked ourselves, 'Should we do it? Is it feasible? And do we really want to commit ourselves to visit one of the grimmest places on earth during autumn?' We all knew that whatever we might gain from the experience, it was never going to be a walk in the park.

But in October over 30 ASLEF activists, officers and members from nearly all DC6 branches finally mustered at Krakow airport. We were ready, if not fully prepared, for a pilgrimage and guided tour of the preserved infrastructure built to enact modern history's bleakest moments and man's brutal hostility to his fellow man.

We had put out a circular having little idea of the response we would get. I personally felt a sense of pride to discover over 30 members willing to pay a couple of hundred pounds to pay their homage to the innocent dead. It was heartening that we'd never met many of the people on the trip. We weren't all 'the usual suspects'.

ANOTHER TIME IT COULD HAVE BEEN US

Most trade unionists know the history of the Holocaust. And they are also aware that if we had been around then, we would in all probability have numbered among the fascist victims, either in a brutal concentration camp or an unmarked grave. And most of us are also aware that not far below the surface intolerance, racism, homophobia, and bigotry still remain in the psyche of most humans in one form or another.

ASLEF is a small cog in a big wheel that tries within its structure to overcome these traits and set a framework example of an organisation within the workplace that

should be a model of how people should work together and live together.

Most of us look forward to the day that our union's equalities committees do not need to exist, having completed their mission. It is tragic to think that in the 60 years that have passed since Auschwitz was constructed, we have still not learned the lessons of the past. Artificial and unnecessary divisions in our society still exist at work, locally, nationally, and especially internationally.

AN EXPERIENCE BEYOND WORDS

The time we spent at the camp was affecting beyond words. Grown men who wouldn't bat an eyelid at a family funeral were visibly moved at what they saw, both poignant and dreadful at the same time. As we reflected on



Electrified fences and lookouts border this place of never-ending shame



Where humanity ends: barbed wire and walls as far as the eye can see

the horrors that had taken place here, we also asked ourselves how long we thought we would have lasted under a fascist regime. We might not have got as far as getting off the train.

But it wasn't all negative. It was uplifting to feel the camaraderie that grew here among the people in DC6 – and beyond. We watched lots and lots of young people from all over the world, schoolchildren and students visiting like us, supporting one another. To see their reactions in this place of death and dread made me believe that the seeds of 'hope not hate' were being sown and there will be a future without discrimination, bigotry and ignorance.

So what could have been a miserable cold pilgrimage to a place of overwhelming misery became uplifting and positive. When the idea was first mooted, we weren't sure it was going to be useful. But now we're sure we speak for everyone who gathered at the airport in Poland that morning when we say, yes, absolutely, it was. None of us will ever forget the experience and hopefully we will all be better people for it.

Our thanks to the hospitable people of Krakow, our tour guides, Bro Dick Fisher of Bletchley branch for organising the trip, Bro Kevin Bowdery of Euston branch for taking the pictures, and to District Organiser Mick Whelan for his unwavering guidance and enthusiasm throughout. Finally to our fellow members in District 6 - those who came and those who couldn't - who unswervingly supported this trip.

If any other district is considering visiting this site, we'd advise them to contact www.escape2poland.co.uk who did everything we asked of them and more.

Report Cliff Hollway (Euston) and Don Doyle (Bletchley)



Some of the ASLEF contingent pass through this place where the helpless and innocent were murdered



A quiet tribute to the thousands who passed this Polish junction

Bombardier: a case for special treatment

'ASLEF ISN'T OPPOSED TO COMPETITION,' SAYS NATIONAL ORGANISER SIMON WELLER. 'BUT WE ARE AGAINST STUPIDITY. SO WE'RE AGAINST STUPID COMPETITION. BOMBARDIER IS A GOOD EXAMPLE.'

SIMON was talking as he, with executive committee members Dave Calfe, Marz Colombini and Nigel Gibson, left the Bombardier factory in Derby last month. They'd been for a tour of the factory and informal meetings with managers and local Unite union reps.

Bombardier is the last of the UK's train builders and is still the largest in the world, ahead of Alstom and Siemens. It also puts together signalling and light rail equipment and has interests in the high speed rail market in the UK. In China it is working on an order involving producing the fastest passenger train in the world; among other projects it is producing rolling stock for London's Victoria Line and Overland operation.

Yet despite this activity and success, the 2,600 people who work at the Derby site work with their fingers crossed. Well, obviously not literally or it wouldn't be good for health and safety or quality control. But there is real concern over where the next order is coming from.

LEVEL PLAYING FIELDS?

Whilst the UK management team would not comment on UK jobs, the local reps were more forthcoming. One problem according to the local reps is the fact that the rules of European competition don't award any 'plus points' for giving - in Gordon Brown's words - 'British Jobs for British Workers'. There is just a scent of suspicion that the UK applies these rules far more rigidly than other countries. Or is it coincidence that the French only use Freanche-built based Alstom units and 80% of German stock is produced in that country? Outside Europe, the Japanese don't accept any tenders from foreign companies.

The lack of security in the UK compared with other countries causes problems with planning. In the long-term it means staff are not retained, and their skills are lost, and it makes it more difficult to justify investment in apprenticeships. The site seems to be permanently on a peak or a trough.

The day of the ASLEF visit to the factory the



blue-collar workforce was made up of 430 employees and 481 temporary staff - figures that speak for themselves.

CAD'S MOVED ON

One fascinating area the executive visited was the Industrial Design section. The 3-D designs generated by modern Computer Aided Design (CAD) have moved on dramatically. The images are no longer an 'artist's impression'. They are images directly produced by the mechanical technical information. They show exactly what will happen as a result of the design information. There is such confidence in the technology now that huge orders are given on the basis of these animated detailed rotating pictures.

The message about specifications is equally clear. 'We make what people want. We liaise with the people placing the order and make what they say they want. If you want a door that closes slowly and has no room for passengers - we'll do that for you!'

IN THE SHEDS

Away from the computer-filled design area we find a more traditionally industrial scene of tall sheds stretching away into the far distance and pits running under production lines. Although we're given protective glasses and ear-plugs the noise is nothing like the factories of decades ago, although this could be because the operation is more assembly than manufacturing components.



Each worker has his own work space to prevent them getting in each others' way, typical of the concern for safety as well as efficiency. It all has the air of a humanised Henry Ford establishment. At the end of the lines, five different trains are being put together.

Although to the new visitor the site looks huge, we're assured that it occupies a mere fraction of what it did a few decades back. The 1.5 mile test track divides this site, with the rest of the land now used for industrial units, and Bombardier no longer stretches to the other side of the town.

In those heady days every component would be made on site, but ease of transportation and specialisation means that today assembly has outstripped manufacture.

'I remember the site in its glory days - and to be honest I see no reason why it shouldn't return to those heights,' says ASLEF's general secretary Keith Norman. 'We support both management and union in their attempts to ensure a continuation for UK rail coach building.

'I think one basic problem is that British governments trot round like well-trained poodles eager to implement every last clause of competition regulations - while other governments tend to be much more lax.

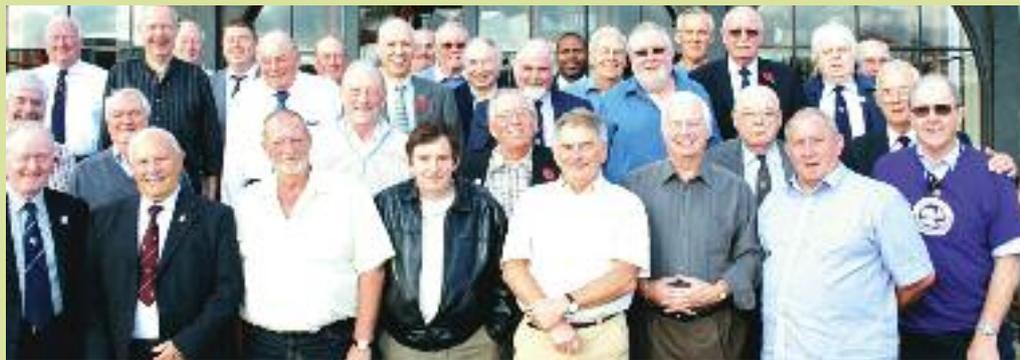
'Even without bothering about the rights and wrongs of the issue, these different approaches mean there is no fair competition. Bombardier deserves that at least.'

TWO VIEWS OF A PLEASURABLE RETIRED MEMBERS' FORUM

As it was the first time I was selected to attend the RMS weekend forum I looked forward to it eagerly. I knew I would meet colleagues from all over the country, and I also knew there would be no shortage of interesting anecdotes recalling our various working careers. Equally importantly we were to be addressed by invited speakers, although disappointingly (and not for want of trying) our organisers were unable to secure the attendance of a sitting or prospective Labour MP.

Thirty RMS members totalling some 1,315 years of railway service and union knowledge attended. The youngest was 50 years and the oldest 91- so you can imagine the wealth of experience at the meeting at Low Hall, Scalby near Scarborough. It was fitting, given our history of involvement with the miners that the building is owned by the NUM.

All the speakers had currently links with the union with the exception of the mining union's



The union's Retired Members' Section annual Forum provided thirty very sound advertisements for retirement!

general secretary Chris Kitchen. Each in turn created keen interest and lively debate.

Many thanks to the RMS officers and committee and Lee James from Head Office for organising a successful and enjoyable forum and to our president Alan Donnelly, vice-president Tosh McDonald and regional organiser Nicky Whitehead for their attendance and contributions. The venue, accommodation, meals and staff were all first class. It was a pleasure to meet fellow colleagues, talk of the old times and hear and debate current issues.

Bill Dale – Retired Member - Chingford Branch

COLOMBIA SPEAKER 'HIGHLIGHT'

The weekend forum provided the opportunity to enjoy an entertaining weekend in lovely surrounds with old friends and colleagues enjoying a mixture of serious debate and good-natured banter.

But for me the highlight was the outstanding speech by Richard Burgon of Thompsons Solicitors. He gave a vivid account of how he witnessed at first-hand the extreme poverty of many of the Colombian people and how people in that country are imprisoned, tortured and even killed for the 'crime' of being an active members of a trade union.

John Pipe – Retired Member – Norwich

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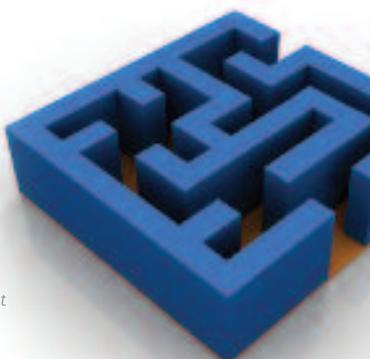
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ASLEF's Open Freight Forums

ADVANCE NOTICE

The union is organising two open freight forums to discuss, debate and inform ASLEF's freight strategies.

Join fellow members at

**Doncaster Trades and Labour Club
on Wednesday 31 March 2010 at 11 am**

**Bristol Temple Meads
on Wednesday 7 April 2010 at 11 am**



More than just a union



OUR ACHIEVEMENTS, STRENGTHENING OUR RESOLUTION

TWO YEARS AGO WE LAUNCHED OUR SQUASH CAMPAIGN WHICH CALLED FOR DRIVERS' CABS THAT WERE SAFE, QUIET, USER-FRIENDLY, AIR-CONDITIONED, SPECIALLY SEATED AND HEALTHY. IT HAS, QUIETLY, BEEN ONE OF OUR SUCCESSES ...

OUR achievements have necessarily been local because they have been negotiated over time with individual companies. But there has been progress - as this article will show. Many of our members now work in much improved surrounds, and every manager in the land knows our expectations and demands.

I am acutely aware that there is a marked difference between passenger train and freight operating companies. In the simplest terms, economic conditions means most freight companies will not pay for the sort of improvements we seek. But even here we have made some advances.

We aren't yet where we want to be with cab conditions, but even as we resolve to continue the fight, it is a good time to congratulate ourselves on the progress we have made together.

Keith Norman, Gen. Secretary, ASLEF

SOUTHEASTERN

- The class 375s; 465s; 466 EMUs all have air conditioning.
- The life expired ex-Midland Region 508s have been fitted with a cab fan which is tolerated as they will soon be withdrawn.
- The new Class 395 trains on the High Speed 1 line are fitted with air conditioning.



The 395 leads the way

GBRf

- Five Class 66s have been fitted with trial cooling fans.
- Noise reduction tests to benchmark noise level are completed and locos will shortly to be sent for trial modifications for further testing.
- The improved Gamma seat fitment is now 90% complete.

DRS

- Noise suppression test on class 66s are still going ahead with initial indications showing noise reduction. The cab cooling kit experienced some problems due to its size and another is being tested.
- The company has ordered two new seats for trial.

SOUTH WEST TRAINS

- The 'Peltier' cab cooling trial on 455 units were unsuccessful. The Southern solution requires the corridor connection to be taken out of use and SWT prefer to keep it in place. A more conventional air conditioning unit is being trialled on Unit 455 742.
- Modifications were made to Desiro 450s and 455s to reduce the sound of the AWS warning to more comfortable levels.

EAST MIDLANDS TRAINS

THE class 222 has climate control and fully adjustable seats, while the HSTs have air con/heating, and refurbishment will replace partially adjustable seats.

TUBELINES.

AFTER consulting members, reps agreed a long overdue major refurbishment for the battery locos.



Freightliner Class 66

FREIGHTLINER

FREIGHTLINER loco 66587 has been fitted with a Coolair air conditioning unit. Fitting cab cooling to 66s is a challenge as space is tight and the differing construction of Tier 1 and 2 locomotives needs accommodating. If the trial meets the heating requirements and receives the necessary approval it will be fitted across the fleet.

Trials of a replacement seat for 66s have been difficult with alternatives showing higher failure rates than the original. One 'improved' seat was removed following injuries due to a weakness in the adjusting handle. A redesigned plinth is now ready for installation. While ASLEF is being consulted, the company is examining another alternative used by Continental-based locomotives.

We are seeing slow progress with Heavy Haul's class 66s. One cab cooling mechanism is being evaluated and hopefully it will pass cab noise assessment. Another system has been trial-fitted under the watchful eye of ASLEF's ergonomics spokesman Keith Martin.

Project Genesis is a move away from the much derided class 66. The first of 30 GE diesel locomotives, designated class 70, are currently under test. These engines have air conditioning and acoustic insulation. Our reps have been involved throughout



CLASS 70 CAB



Gradual progress at Northern

NORTHERN RAIL

THE Company Council report the new class 142 seats are worse than those they replaced – which took some doing!

The 158 units with air conditioning are fed off the same unit as the forward saloon – not the best solution for the cramped cab.

A working group was established in response to our SQUASH campaign and modifications have included cab cooling fans and seat replacement. Issues under discussion include cab insulation, noise reduction and improvements to the driver's desk.

FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT

We've achieved

- the gradual replacement of the 319 fleet
- 313s and 317s have air conditioning
- the tired 1980s 319s have spot air cooling, extra leg room provided by a modification to the desk, improved draught proofing and a trial of the Cobra seat
- class 321s have air conditioning
- 365 air conditioning is being upgraded
- all stock will have air cooling or air conditioning by this spring 2010
- seat improvements to the new 377 units are piggy-backing the Southern seat trial due to contract complications.

DB SCHENKER

- New drivers' seat have been fitted to former EWS class 66s.
- To reduce cab temperatures, side windows have been tinted and additional cab roof fans fitted.
- Internal window blinds have proved troublesome in tests with problems with the mounting points.
- Cab re-painting is progressing.
- The Company Council will be looking at a refurbished class 66 at Toton Depot which incorporates cab noise reduction measures similar to those in recording studios.
- New Gamma seats are under examination with water suspension to mitigate the effects of vibration.

VIRGIN WEST COAST

CLASS 57 locomotives have had fans fitted, similar to Class 220 / 221 Voyager trains. They have two speeds and can be adjusted and will be fitted immediately.

We are seeing progress on drivers seats with modifications and renewals scheduled

EUROSTAR

- Noise levels in 373's are caused by seal deterioration in the escape hatch and porthole windows and the motors whine at high speed. Monitoring will give a graph of the db which can be cross checked against the data recorder for speed, taking of power etc.
- The air con faults seem to have been resolved and the Company Council is pursuing cab cleanliness.
- A new driver seat is being trialled in the simulator before operational trials.

NATIONAL EXPRESS EAST ANGLIA

The NXEA Cab ergonomics working group have overseen refurbishments to class 90 locomotives and DVTs, 315 EMUs, some 317 EMUs and 170 DMUs.

However, one outstanding issue is that NXEA has not met its committed deadline for Class 15x retro-fitment of air con / cooling by summer 2009.



Southern seats test

FIRST GREAT WESTERN

THE old HSTs have a redesigned desk, updated air conditioning and new cab doors without the droplight which improves draught proofing and wind noise. A modification to the aircon grills should prevent neck draughts.

Improved seats, waste bins and quieter wiper motors have improved the cab environment and new engines have reduced cab noise.

All Sprinter and Pacers (142, 143, 150, 153 and 158) will undergo refurbishment and all cabs will have improved seats and cab cooling or air conditioning.

TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS

TPE have introduced the class 185 units on most services. These are airy cab with air conditioning but there have been problems with wiper motors.

The cab seats have problems with adjustment but Company Council attempts to secure a modification failed because of a lack of driver feedback. There are also some complaints about wind noise at speed and from the air conditioning.

TPE also have some 170 units with refurbished cabs which are an improvement on the 158s they replaced.



Mock up of the new 380 cab

FIRST SCOTRAIL

- Three adjustments were made to improve the new Cobra seat - a curved back, longer arm rests and more padding on the trial 158 Sprinters.
- The FSR Company Council, with assistance of Martin Dye of SWT, recommended 14 changes to the the Desiro 450s cab.
- ASLEF reps have been involved in the new class 380s.

HULL TRAINS

- A body mapping exercise was completed with a 96% response and the Company Council plan to do this annually.
- Class 180s from First Great Western replaced the class 222 fleet and a refurbishment programme – including upgrading air conditioning – is being devised.

ARRIVA TRAINS WALES

SOUTH WEST TRAINS

- There has been some success with seat replacement on Class 175 units.
- Although the class 142/143s are near life expired, a trial was agreed for new seats.
- Class 150/153/158s have had new seats fitted, and worn seat cushions will be replaced.
- Two air conditioning systems are being examined for 158s which will hopefully be fitted at the end of 2010.

SOUTHERN

The 70's era sliding door 455 EMUs have been fitted with an effective cab cooling system as part of their recent refurbishment.

Modified seat units have been trialled on 377 units which only moved the problem of wear related slop to another part of the seat mechanism. A trial squab is now being fitted.



Air con for 455s

- Many thanks to National Organiser Simon Weller and Safety Advisor Dave Bennett in the preparation of this report

MICHAEL WALLER 47 YEAR OLD COLLEAGUE AND BRANCH CHAIRMAN

I WRITE with great sadness about the death of our colleague and Branch Chairman Michael Waller. He died on the 31 July at the age of 47, after a struggle with stomach cancer that lasted several months. Mike was a very popular bloke, a successful chairman, rarely lost his composure, and had the air about him that suggested he'd found happiness.

Our branch and depot already miss him greatly. I found this obituary very difficult to write as I was also diagnosed with cancer at about the time of Michael's funeral, but I wished very much to display the dignity and humour, and good grace about his plight, that we all saw.

I only wish he'd had the good fortune that it now looks as though I've been granted. He sadly leaves a much loved wife and daughter.

Nevil Arthur – Secretary, St Pancras International Branch

LEN HALL A WAKEFIELD MAN

IT IS with great sadness that I report the death of my father Len Hall, who passed away on 4 September 2009 after a short battle with cancer.

He wished to be remembered by all his friends and colleagues for his full and active life. My dad started his career in September 1944 at Belle Vue yard in Wakefield where he carried out various roles including firing and driving steam engines to latter day locomotive passenger trains. He finished his career shunting at Healey Mills yard in Wakefield in 1990.

He lived life to the full in his 20 years retirement pursuing many hobbies and interests and enjoying a good family life. He leaves behind his widow Barbara, son David and daughters Janice and Lindsay as well as grand- and great-grand children.

He will be missed by all for his friendship, support and help he freely gave, not to mention his story telling. May he rest in peace.

Dave Hall, Son

DAVID GLYN ROBERTS A MAN OF MANY INTERESTS

DAVID GLYN ROBERTS was born in Liverpool on 20 September 1946 and died aged 62 in London's University College Hospital on 7 May last year after a long illness.

David was the only son of Edna and Arthur Roberts and the much-loved husband of Carole. He worked for the London Underground for many years, spending 25 years at White City where he served as ASLEF's health and safety rep.

Dave was a real character with many interests outside work, including horses, opera and modern art. He will be missed by everyone who knew him and especially those who loved him. To all these, and all his friends and comrades, the union and the Retired

Members Section send our sincere condolences. May he RIP.

**Peter Smith, Reporter, Retired
Members Section**

GORDON DRAPER A RICH LIFE

GORDON DRAPER has died at the age of 86 after a life full of incident. Born in Plymouth, he trained as an engine driver for Great Western in 1939 when he joined the RAF volunteer reserve. In 1943 he was posted to 50 Squadron, V Group, in Lincolnshire as a rear gunner.

Remarkably he was shot down four times during the war, each time on Lancaster bombers – once with 14,000lb of bombs on board!

When he was demobbed in 1946 he returned to the railway and became a train driver, handling engines such as the Castle class in steam and H3125 diesels. By 1960, however, ill health had forced him into shunting work. He retired in 1986 and two years later served as Lord Mayor of Plymouth City Council.

He was a staunch ASLEF member and Labour Party activist who finally gave up his 46-year party membership in protest at the Iraq war.

He married Margery Penrose in 1947, and had a son, Michael. To both we offer our sincere condolences.

SANDY BEGG A PROUD LOCO ENGINEER

MY dad, Sandy Begg, who died in October aged 80, worked on the footplate for 48 years. He joined the railway just before nationalisation in 1948 and retired just before privatisation in 2005. He was proud to be a railwayman and an ASLEF activist.

He started work at 15 as an engine cleaner at Kittybrewster depot in Aberdeen before moving south to St Margaret's depot in

Edinburgh to the promoted post of fireman. Here he met our Mum who worked with her mother in the staff canteen.

He transferred to Glasgow 20 years later to become a driver on the then iconic Helensburgh 'blue trains' before moving back to Edinburgh's Leith freight depot.

For the last 15 years of his railway career he was a Haymarket driver on the Edinburgh to Glasgow route before shuttling up and down the east coast main line to Newcastle.

He was proud to be a locomotive engineer who understood mechanical engineering and could carry out running repairs on his engine.

When I was a BR management trainee in 1980 part of my training involved spending the best two weeks of my life with him on the footplate. I vividly recall when the brakes failed at Polmont he restored the pressure by placing a coin in the brake pipe.

He always defended the railways and lamented the demise of public transport epitomized by the 1960's Beeching cuts. He was a supporter of sustainable transport decades before the term had been invented.

Away from the track he had a passion for bowling and worked for 40 years helping the poor through the St Vincent De Paul Society. His Christian beliefs shaped and propelled his political views. While cancer spread through his body, his spirit, faith and character blossomed.

**David Begg, son, professor and
former government transport advisor**

DAVE STREETER DIED IN SERVICE

IT IS with great sadness that I announce the untimely death of Dave Streeter of Lillie Bridge branch. Dave was aged 60 and died while still in the service of the company as an Engineers Train Operator.

Dave was working on 7th/8th November - and then failed to turn up to work. Concerned staff and management contacted the police who found him at home having suffered a heart attack.

Dave started work on London Underground in 1977 and joined ASLEF in August 1981. He worked his way through the train grades working as a Guard briefly on the Central Line and then on to the Northern Line at Morden depot. Dave then passed out as a Guard/Train Driver in May 1980 and moved to Parsons Green depot in February 1981. In July the same year he went to Baker Street where he eventually gained his rostered position as a Driver.

Dave later transferred to the engineers train unit at Lillie Bridge depot in 1991 working both from Lillie Bridge and Ruislip depots.

Dave was an active and loyal member of ASLEF and was our former branch secretary, assistant branch secretary and vice chairman until recently. He was well liked as

a friend as well as being a reliable hardworking colleague to us all.

Not much is known of Dave's family but he is survived by an elder brother.

We all will sadly miss Dave at Lillie Bridge and Ruislip.

Colin Bright, local depot representative

HARRY REDFERN 91 YEARS OLD

I HAVE been informed today via a telephone call from Don Magson active retired member of ASLEF of the sad loss of Driver Harry Redfern aged 91 years old was ex Tyseley and Saltley has died.

Our thoughts from branch are with his family at this sad time.

Adrian Harnett, Secretary, Saltley branch

EDINBURGH MOURNS FIVE 'AULD MEN'

IT IS with sadness and regret that I inform you of the passing of five retired drivers from the Edinburgh No 2 branch.

Peter Henderson, Angus Wyllie, Pat Macinally, Jock Malcolm, and Alec Begg were all former drivers who attended the branch's 'Auld Man's Do' every year of their retirement - and that amounts to a great number of years.

From a personal point of view, I have to mention that each of these drivers played a part in my early years as a traction trainee. When I first started at Haymarket Depot in 1980, I worked with Alec 'the gentleman

FRED HOUSE AN ENDURING LEGACY

IT IS with sadness that I have to advise readers of the death of Fred ('The Honey Monster') House. Fred passed away in hospital at the age of 55 following a tragic accident at home.

Fred was a true railwayman and a longstanding branch auditor who was always willing to assist anyone - especially when scrutinising the mistakes in our depot rosters.

After leaving the GPO in 1974 Fred joined the industry because of his love of trains, and he forged an enduring legacy on the railway. Once you had met this imposing genial character you would never forget him. He will be fondly missed by the railway fraternity throughout the Anglia area.

Andrew Dawson, Secretary, Cambridge branch

from Portobello'. Pat was from Bingham where I lived and knew all his family. Peter was from Pilton and kept in touch with drivers with regular visits to the Waverley. Straight talking Angus was an LLC rep for a time and Big Jock Malcolm was always a kind and sincere man.

We'll miss them all at the yearly function, especially for the endless stories they told.

Rab Wicksted, Secretary, Edinburgh No 2 branch

NORMAN BOND 48 YEARS ON THE FOOTPLATE

SADLY Brother Norman Bond of Stratford Branch passed away in December. Norman started his railway career in 1958 at Newmarket then transferred to Cambridge where he became a fireman.

In 1961 he moved to Stratford where he spent the rest of his working career as a driver. He initially lived at the railway hostel at Ilford where he made some good and lasting friendships. Norman took early retirement in 2006 after 48 years service. We sent our condolences to Norman's wife and family

P. J. Dodgson, Secretary, Stratford branch

JOE DUFFY A 'THREE DEPOT' MAN

JOE passed away on 13 November last year at the age of 79. He started on the loco at his local shed at Agecroft on Christmas Eve 1948 and followed the well-worn 'Beeching Built Path' across Salford to Patricroft in 1966. Two years later he moved to Newton Heath where he retired in 1995.

Joe was a real man of the times on the footplate, not only in stature but because he was a real character. You could guarantee he would have strong opinions about most subjects, always expressed with humour and wit. Well liked and respected by old and young alike in the loco grade, Joe will be sadly missed by his wife and family and colleagues. The Tap Room will be a quieter place now.

S. Black, REMS, Newton Heath

WILLIAM JAMES CHAPMAN

ON 24 November last year the congregation at Bill's adopted 'Made Forever' Methodist Church in Bristol said their farewells.

Bill saw service at Taunton, Newbury and Southall before retiring from Bristol Bath Road in November 1988. Bill joined ASLEF in October 1942 and married Doris, a clerk at Barnstaple Victoria station, on 11 March 1950.

This fine engineman, friend and colleague passed away on 12 November.

Graham Bellamy, Retired Members Section



The January 1910 Journal had an account of the terrible winter in Glasgow, and 50 years ago we were urged to see the brighter side of life

100 YEARS AGO

John Drummond drew a vivid picture of weather conditions north of the border in the winter of 1909/10 in the January 1909 edition of ASLEF's Locomotive Journal ...

'I must begin my notes to the Journal by alluding to the weather we have had in Scotland. Yesterday we had 20 degrees of frost. It is not the frost, though, that has caused all the anxiety and trouble and suffering, it has been the fog fiend. We have had a reign of darkness and terror in and around Glasgow off and on for the last fortnight. All transport work has been greatly disorganized, and some of the companies have resorted to Sunday labour to help to clear up the congestion. The death rate of the City of Glasgow rose to the alarming state of 33 per 1,000, which tells its own tale. Today every place has been using artificial light all day. Some people say that locomotive-men have a fine situation, and that they are the same as other people, but I make bold to say that locomotive-men have the worst position of any.'

50 YEARS AGO

In the January 1960 edition, Toram Beg's 'Scottish Opinion' told ASLEF members to brighten up - a positive message to us all today!

'Too many of my colleagues are too engrossed about present-day difficulties for my liking. In my travels I find a sort of creeping, cumulative miasma of gloom. Dismality has a habit of growing if you concentrate on the dismal, but there's a cure for it if you take your mind of the present, and make a plan for the future.

I'm getting tired of hearing moans about "Labour's defeat", "redundancy", and the pathetic bleat of "..... things have never looked so bad for enginemen, Toram". To this last my reply has been tintured more by brevity than elegance - "Boloney". As to the rest of the gloom, let's see. Let's state a case for the future.

🔴 **Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott**

MICK McATEER

UNDERGROUND DRIVER

CHARITY WALKER

GARDEN DESIGNER

ARTIST ...



WHEN HE'S NOT DRIVING UNDERGROUND, MICK McATEER IS A MAN FOR THE GREAT OUTDOORS – IN HIS GARDEN, ON A WALK OR AT THE UPMINSTER MEMORIAL GARDEN HE DESIGNED ...

LAST year Mick did a charity walk along the West Highland Way and it took him back to his roots. Mick was born in Kilsyth, a town between Glasgow and Edinburgh. 'The hills were the backdrop to my life all the time I was growing up,' he says. 'Ten minutes from home I was in the middle of nowhere. I spend hours up there walking with one of the dogs.

'Those hills are part of me. If you respect them, they'll look after you. If you don't, you're in trouble.' His voice still has a rich Scottish accent even though it's thirty years since he left to find work in London after a period as a baker's apprentice and a twelve month stint working with the mentally handicapped. 'That was a rewarding year in many ways. But a year was enough. I couldn't do it more than that. It gets to you.'

A CHARITY WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

So why did he do the Highland walk, which wends past the Munros, a Scottish term for mountains that reach up over 3,000 feet, last summer?

'It really came about when a friend of mine, Derek, died suddenly. He'd gone into hospital with shingles and suddenly had a heart attack and died. We'd often spoken of things we'd done and like to do again, and suddenly he

didn't have the chance.

'I'd talked about places I'd been – like Kenya and Australia – but most of all I thought about the West Highland Way, and decided I was going to do it.'

The first time he did this walk he was seventeen. 'I carried my own equipment then, – tent and everything. Now there's a company that picks your stuff up and takes it on for you.'

But that wasn't the only difference. This time he did it to raise money for charity - and he had company.

'Word of what I was planning got around and Helena Santos, a driver from Earls Court asked if she could come along. I'm used to walking on my own. I love it. No sound. No noise. Ideas pop in and out about work or the garden or just life. Or it just goes blank. So Helena and me didn't march along side by side, we'd go on or drop behind most of the time. It was funny - she was ready to set out in a pair of trainers! And she put on make-up every morning!' Mick shakes his head in disbelief.



'That's the bridge they used in Harry Potter,' Mick says. 'The passengers don't spend all their time leaning out of the window.'

'But she did well. It's a hard walk – 94 miles over mountains in a week from Milngavie near Glasgow to Fort William.'

The good news was that the pair of them raised £1,700 for a children's hospice in Southend. 'Drivers are a good lot,' he says. 'I love their banter. Even when they were giving me money they have to say something like, 'I'll only give you something if you promise not to come back!''

SCOT GOES UNDERGROUND

Mick joined the Underground in 1990 as a station guard at Elephant and Castle on the



Mick takes a break in the Upmminster memorial garden he designed and championed.



'I'm proud of the garden, but it's not just me – it's all of us here at Upmminster,' Mick insists.

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject?

If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB or journal@aslef.org.uk

Bakerloo line. 'I loved it. I could always meet interesting people and – as you've probably guessed already! - I talk to anyone. I'd chat with the regulars.

'If you're pleasant to someone, they'll be nice back. We all really want to have a good time.'

With one-man operations, he moved to the Northern at East Finchley before going to the Piccadilly as a driver, twenty years ago.

'In those days the local manager recommended you, and then I ended up at the White City training school which is gone now. Training now is based at the depot.'

Mick had been suffering pain in his left hand for years which was diagnosed as arthritis, but turned out to be Carpal tunnel syndrome. Because of this, he transferred to the Jubilee as their trains had right hand drive.

His final move was to Upminster – a full eight years after he'd applied. 'I didn't think I was going to get here, but it was worth waiting. It's easier to get to from my home in Essex, and most of the route to Wimbledon, Richmond or Ealing Broadway is outside. It's brilliant.'

Rather strangely, Mick passed for train driving the same week he passed his car driving test, but he gave up cars for a good number of years after a very close shave that led to a lack of confidence. 'Happily I've only



Mick in the cab of the 'Jacobite' tourist train. 'How does an underground driver manage to get invited into the cab of a steam loco? I showed the driver my ASLEF card!'

had one incident on the tube,' he says. 'It was a guy at Kings Cross who decided to kick the train because he'd missed it! He got knocked off balance and fell on the track. He was all right so it wasn't too bad. I got a commendation for my part in it.'

MEMORIAL GARDEN AT UPMINSTER

Last year one of Mick's other passions besides walking came to the fore. 'They'd just built Calvary House for staff accommodation and I came up with the idea of having a memorial garden. Everyone thought it was a good idea, so I drew up plans on my computer, management moved in spare sleepers – and we were up and off.'

So up and off, in fact after only six months work, the Upminster Memorial garden won the Transport for London 'Best Cultivated Garden' prize!

'Everyone's involved. It's not just me. The guys bring in plants, one does the mowing, some weed. And they all enjoy sitting out there on their break or when they're spare. We got a phone put in so that if a train's being reformed or something, the manager can ring down. 'As the plaque on the monument says, it's so we can make true the phrase 'gone but not forgotten' for Upminster people who have died.'

Mick's other main interest is painting. 'Mainly oil paintings and watercolours that I paint from photographs,' he says. 'You have to do something outside the job or you'd go round the twist,' he says.

As we part on the platform he says he enjoys his life. 'I've been lucky,' he says. 'I've had a varied time, with ups and downs like most folk. But I'll tell you – there's a lot of people worse off than me.'

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Bristol branch celebrates 125 years

The October meeting of the Bristol Branch was a very special celebration to mark 125 years. The Branch was formed in 1884.

OVER 20 retired activists and officers attended including former District Secretary Ross Goff and Miss Margaret King, daughter of Tom King who was the oldest living driver before he passed away in 2001. The active membership was also well represented on the night with over 70 members and guests present. The National Organiser, District Secretary, President and a number of E.C. Members were also in attendance. The General Secretary passed on his apologies, being unable to attend, as he was feeling unwell

at the time.

The Branch Secretary welcomed everyone and made some introductions before calling for a moment's silence for absent colleagues.

A concise history of the 125 years of the Bristol Branch was given by the Branch Secretary covering past, present and future - along with a few anecdotes! This was followed by contributions from the National Organiser and the EC President.

Each of the retired members was then presented with a special tie and badge commemorating

the anniversary. Miss Margaret King was given a special presentation including a bouquet of flowers in memory of her late father, who as well as being a former activist at Barrow Road Midland Depot, is a strong link with our proud history.

Bro Grahame Nash had earlier given notice that he was standing

down as Local Staff Rep for FGW H.S.S. The District Secretary presented him with a Branch Appreciation badge and certificate in recognition of 25 years of loyal service to the members of Bristol Branch.

The Branch Secretary brought the proceedings to a close thanking everyone for attending - and looked forward to the next 125 years.

Bernard Kennedy, Secretary, ASLEF Bristol Branch



A special gathering at a unique event in Bristol

District 8 marks retirement

AT the District 8 Council meeting held at Head Office on 26 October a presentation was made to John Robson following his retirement, in recognition of his long and loyal service to ASLEF.

John joined the railway in 1977 as a guard at Wood Green on the Piccadilly line and on becoming a driver he quickly became involved with ASLEF at branch level. He almost immediately became the Chair, a position he held for the next 32 years. He attended numerous AADs and also served a term as a Society Trustee.

As well as a local and line rep, he also served on the Trains Council for nine years, eight of these as Staff Side Secretary. During this time he was instrumental in achieving many improvements in conditions, not least the improved facilities brought about by the Remote Booking on dispute and the non disciplinary 4 SPAD policy.

He was also active in protecting and improving our pensions, taking a keen interest at a time when many took them for granted. He went on to become a pensions trustee and such was his expertise he became the only Staff Side chair of the Pensions Consultative Committee.

Even now he continues to use his knowledge on the pensions working group.

I'm sure all who know him wish him a long and happy retirement. Our loss is the Retired Members Section's gain.

Graham Dean, Arnos Grove branch



District 8's council thank John in a head office meeting room

Old colleague honoured and chairman elected at New Street meeting

WE were pleased to have our District Secretary Mick Whelan at Birmingham New Street's October branch meeting where after the normal branch business we congratulated our chairman Bill Goode on being re-elected to the DFC for his second term.

Mick updated us on various issues within District 6 before making a presentation to recently-retired driver Bro Len Sidebotham. Len joined the railway as a guard at Newton Heath before moving to New Street in 1985 and realising his dream of becoming a driver in the 1990's. He was always at the heart of union matters and held all the local positions including a stint as chairman of our branch. He then progressed to the DFC - and at one point he ran against Mick for the District Secretary position! Despite this, they remained good friends and Len was pleased that Mick made the presentation.

Len expressed his appreciation



Mick Whelan (left) presents Len with a well-earned ASLEF certificate

for the event and said it had been a great pleasure to serve the best union ever. 'Keep fighting the good fight!' he urged before the meeting concluded in its usual manner - in the bar with stories of old!

Martin Bromage-Griffiths - Reporter - Birmingham New Street



The turn-out at Longsight was a tribute in itself to 'legendary' Fred Clarke

Farewell to 'full service' Fred

ON 6 November Longsight Branch celebrated the retirement of the legend that is Brother Fred Clarke. The day will be remembered by one and all - to say it was 'one hell of a bash' would be somewhat of an understatement.

In the afternoon his ASLEF colleagues at Manchester Piccadilly's West Coast and District Organiser Colin Smith made presentations to Fred. Then over 70 of our industry colleagues met us at the Brunswick public house to celebrate Fred's well-deserved retirement. They included friends from Virgin Trains, Thompsons Solicitors, members of the Executive Committee and many more.

Fred's illustrious career began as an engine cleaner in 1962 at Heaton Mersey. He was promoted to a fireman in December of that year. When Heaton Mersey closed in February 1972, Fred moved under redundancy to Guide Bridge Depot for a short stay before going to Peterborough. In February 1979 Fred moved to

Buxton for his Driving Promotion before a final move in December 1999 to Manchester to tread the rails of the West Coast Main.

Fred retired on 10 October 2009. I first met him when I was a second man at Buxton in the 1980s. He took me under his wing, made me feel one of the team and 'showed me the ropes' both on and off the job. I learned many of the true values of the working class railwayman from Fred.

Fred was both LLC Chair and Branch Secretary at Longsight, carrying out both roles with diligence and professionalism. He has now recovered from the ill-health that dogged him before his retirement and he will be sorely missed. Always a true character, all members of the branch wish him the very best in his retirement. There's always 'one in the pump' for you, Fred!

Alan Moss,
Longsight Branch

History stressed at Darlington

DARLINGTON branch, which is normally well enough attended, witnessed its best turnout for two decades at its October meeting, when Lead Officer, Northern Rail and District Organiser District 3, Colin Smith, paid the latest of his visits to branches throughout the company.



The Kings of Darlington!

Colin gave members a passionate insight to his railway and trade union history, and explained where the industry and ASLEF members could expect to be heading. Also making the latest of his regular visits was Company Council rep Rob Porter, who gave an update on the position with regard to ongoing productivity negotiations.

Everyone present was heartened to learn that Bro King, who was also present, has been exonerated from any responsibility for what became the first collision between passenger trains in Britain since Ladbrooke Grove and the introduction of TPWS. This followed an analysis and detection of severely contaminated railhead in the Darlington station area. Thanks to his quick action in using the public address systems, he passing a warning to passengers to brace themselves for a collision, thus preventing any severe injuries. Well done, Bob!
J Clark, Secretary - ASLEF Darlington branch

Upcoming events

EDGE HILL REUNION

The next reunion at Edge Hill will be held on 12 February at Our Lady's Chesnut Grove Wavertree beginning at 19.30. All ex-staff from Edge Hill Shed and Lime Street North Western and West coast are invited - young and old! For further information contact Bro Osborne on 0151 289 8964.

EDINBURGH BIDS FAREWELL TO KENNY

FRIDAY 13 November saw Edinburgh No. 1 Branch once again descend on The Polton Inn - this time to say farewell to Bro Kenny Davies. He received a great turnout from the drivers, ex-drivers and groundstaff who came to have a goodbye drink or six with Kenny. It was especially nice to see a couple of the 'Auld Hands' from years gone by turn up. Watty Bell and Jimmy 'Specky' Leckie, now both in their 80s, looked as though they could do a shift tomorrow!

Kenny took medical retirement after over 35 years on the footplate. He was always an active member, attending branch meetings when possible and having a spell as an LDC rep.

He was warmly recognised as being a bit of a moaner in his day. You knew something wasn't right when Kenny wasn't having a wee gripe about something!

As usual the branch held a collection for Kenny and the amount collected showed the high esteem he was held in by his workmates. We bought holiday vouchers which I'm sure Kenny and his family will put to good use.

On behalf of the branch, I'd like to wish Kenny and his wife Diana all the very best for the future.

Gary Hart, Secretary - LLC Secretary Millerhill



Gary Hart, Kenny Davies and Branch Secretary Farooq Rashid



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Back in the cab, thanks to ASLEF!

I WAS demoted to Conductor following an incident at work in June 2009. I am writing to express my most sincere thanks to District No 6 District Organiser Mick Whelan for his support and for the quality of his representation at my recent Disciplinary Appeal Hearing which resulted in my reinstatement to the Driving Grade.

The intervening period has obviously been a difficult time for myself and my family and I am grateful for the support and encouragement I have received from ASLEF colleagues throughout the ordeal.

Mick Byrne, driver, ASLEF Bletchley branch

Gormless TV reports

I GOT so angry at reports on the 'Look East' news programme that I rang them up to have a real go at them. Their 'Chief Reporter' stated that last month's Sunday problems go back to the time of BR. That is rubbish.

I explained the method of rostering that was in place during the time of BR and pointed out the agreements that were in place with both ASLEF and NUR/RMT.

In all my 40 years working with Train Crews I only encountered one case where a Driver refused to work his rostered Sunday and left it uncovered. He was disciplined with backing of the union.

So it aggravates me when these gormless reporters come on the box and put out a load of lies either for political motives or because they can't be bothered to check their information.

Finally, all the best to my old mates Matthew, Mark, Luke and John the Hartlepool LDC!

David McKeever, retired Driver

Neasden members show the way

THANKS to all the members of Neasden ASLEF branch for the support they showed in securing a 'yes' vote in the industrial action ballot over the transfer of nights and inside turns to Harrow.

Although we have had to concede the

NO CROSSING THE FRENCH

ERIC STUART (Letters last month) said, among other things, that in France a closed line can't be reopened until all level crossings are eliminated. This is wrong. Réseau Ferré de France (their Network Rail) has no hesitation in opening old lines. But they do want to limit open level crossings similar to the ones we have in the UK in advance of opening up new lines. They aim to get all crossings to acceptable, safe and modern standards.

Réseau Ferré de France is currently dedicating no less than six programs to reduce level crossing accidents:

- Removing level crossings that are a cause for concern (1.8% of level crossings are responsible for 15% of accidents) and building grade-separated crossings instead. Every year, 5-10 crossings are replaced by major structures, railway bridges or road bridges
- Improving the safety at level crossings that see repeated incidents, mainly by trying to modify user behaviour
- Conducting studies and tests as part of the level crossings research groups in order to identify new solutions
- Conducting public prevention campaigns in order to remind people of the rules (holding public level-crossing

accident prevention days, involving the police and highway and local authorities)

- Introducing penalties by using automatic penalty controls (level crossing 'radars') and, of course,
- Avoiding building new crossings.

It was regrettable to see Brother Stuart, a fellow driver, criticising the laudable actions of ASLEF in limiting the speed over open crossings with fatuous arguments such as 'the public will be more likely to jump a crossing if the speed is reduced' or even suggesting 'drivers be less traumatized by hitting a car at 20mph'.

Come on, Stuart. Let's be grown-up about this. ASLEF's role is to ensure the safety of their drivers, their passengers and the general public. There was a real reason for the union to advise its drivers to limit the speed drastically over crossings – and without this pressure I doubt that Network Rail would address the problem.

It's a shame - and I'm sure a coincidence - that Bro Stuart's views mirror exactly Network Rail's comments about the speed reduction over crossings. I say let's support our union in all its safety campaigns!

Dave Johnson, Committee Member, Waterloo & Nine Elms branch

transfer of night shift from Neasden, we have been able to secure guarantees over the retention of mixed shifts at Neasden, as well as a rota that significantly increases the amount of weekends off at the depot.

This has only been achieved through the rank and file members backing their representatives after our attempts to secure a negotiated settlement failed.

This support is all the more impressive given the concerted campaign by management and the decision of our sister trade union to withdraw its backing. We extend special thanks to those members who highlighted the implications of the transfer of

work to Harrow from the outset and who were invaluable to our campaign.

We wish those at Harrow all the best at the new depot and we remain confident that the ASLEF representatives will improve their position throughout the coming year.

Jim McManus and Tom Miles, local level representatives, Neasden

Time for new blood at Millerhill

IT WAS with a heavy heart that – after 15 years - I decided to resign as LLC rep at Millerhill TCD. I'd like to take this

opportunity to express the pride and privilege I've felt representing the traincrew at 'The Hill' over this time. They've always stood together and looked after each other and never forgotten the value of unity.

People criticise ASLEF at times, but the union's values has always helped to shape the Millerhill community.

I'd also like to thank the guys I've worked with on the LLC - Willie Johnston, Davy Beddoe, Steve Souter and Hussain Ezzedine as well as Company Council rep John Gahagan and District Organiser Kevin Lindsay. I will always remain an activist but the time has come for new blood in our LLC. I'm sure Ezzy and Farooq can be sure of the support of every single ASLEF member at the depot.

Gary Hart, Millerhill Depot

There was innovation under BR

THE idea that British Rail innovated nothing and that rail stagnated prior to privatisation is a misconception. For example

- IC 125 Diesel powered passenger trains, when introduced, were the fastest of their type in the world.

- Tilting trains were experimentally introduced in the U.K and were the first in the world.

- Magnetic trains was an idea evolved by British Rail and is now in operation in Shanghai.

- The British Rail Research Centre at Derby was the World leader in new railway technology.

Bill Ronksley, Retired Members Section

LETTER FOR THE POSTIE

PAY in this country is not determined by supply and demand. It is regulated by competition. Unfortunately competition drives down wages!

Because the Post Office has lost its monopoly, it needs to cut expenditure in order to compete with smaller privatised carrier firms. It also needs to cut costs to maintain its high profits - and of course to pay Adam Crozier his £1 million a year salary. The ordinary postal worker has had to pick up the bill.

I have fully supported the postie who delivers my mail six days a week. Why should this principled and dignified worker stand idle and witness his standard of living attacked? Why should he have to endure the watering down of his terms and conditions? Why should he (after 43 years of public service) have to suffer the degradation of poverty in retirement simply because the last Tory government plundered the Post Office pension fund? It is shameful that after 12 years in government, Labour has done nothing to remedy the situation.

It is blatantly obvious that Royal Mail's main aim is to casualise its workforce. They would like to deprive their workers of sick and holiday pay entitlements, reduce their pension entitlements, water down their

employment rights and destroy their union.

There is a vast army of reserve labour ready to relieve our brothers and sisters who have recently been fighting on the front line. By supporting postal workers we can play our part in ensuring that all workers are paid the right rate for the job, and that no worker is ever exploited.

As the CWU ballot is still valid and the industrial action has only been suspended until January, the Waterloo Nine Elms branch has made a generous donation to the CWU strike fund. Hopefully other ASLEF branches will follow suit.

Steve Richardson, Waterloo Nine Elms



The executive committee invited postal workers union leader Billy Hayes to their December meeting to give an update on the difficulties facing the CWU

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Further information or orders to Colin Dawson 01689 849 543 or 22 Hutchison Road, New Addington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 0BD.



LONGSIGHT BRANCH has produced a Commemorative Badge Limited to 500 Numbered Copies. They are available for £5.00 plus £1 p&p from the Branch Secretary Fred Clarke at 80 Brookfield Avenue, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 1JE. Please make cheques payable to F. Clarke.

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4 things to do before the inevitable

– a personal piece of sound advice from **Rob McMillan** of the union's **Wolverhampton Branch**, guaranteed to sober you up after the festive season – but well worth considering ...

THERE are some things in life which are inevitable: for example, train drivers will always be blamed for everything that goes wrong on the railways, politicians will always find ways to extract our hard earned money and.....well, one day we will die.

I'm sorry to put a dampener out if you are recovering from Christmas or New Year parties - but please read on ...

There are always lists of things to do before you die; they usually consist of things such as swimming with whales, riding the Grand National roller coaster at Blackpool, visiting the Grand Canyon or sampling every whiskey in the Horseshoe Bar in Glasgow. However, I want to list four things that you can consider in the quiet of your own home and, if you haven't already done them, I would urge you to action them next week!

GET MARRIED

Although new legislation is being considered there is something that must be stated first: there is no such thing as a 'Common Law Wife'. When a woman lives with a man, unmarried, she is technically his 'Mistress'. If the couple jointly own a property and the man dies the mistress will not automatically inherit the whole property.

Marriage is the contractual answer to this problem. This article is not written to address the spiritual and moral aspects of marriage. It is to state that it provides security of assets. Homosexual couples have the same rights conferred under 'Civil Partnerships' This is the real reason why they were set up, not to waft around in glam clothing but to provide security of assets between committed couples; the heterosexual equivalent of civil partnership is marriage.

MAKE A WILL

It only takes a short time to write up a will and they may be completed free. ASLEF has a will-making service and they can be put away after

completion and almost forgotten. Making a Will will not hasten your death - but it will provide security and efficient dealings for your assets after you die and that can be a great relief to those left behind. If you are unmarried but living with someone and you die without making a will you will die 'intestate' and your partner will not inherit your assets.

The 'Barbarian Hordes' (a term representing behavioural change in formerly loving relatives) may descend and they may not have taken much of a shine to your Other Half which could leave her destitute without a roof over her head. You would not want that, would you? While we're on the subject, your mistress will not be entitled to a widow's pension from your fund and nor will your children. If you are unmarried your pension will die with you.

MAKE A POWER OF ATTORNEY

We are living longer which gives us all more chance of suffering dementia and Alzheimer's Disease; we could be brain damaged in an

“ ASLEF has a will-making service and they can be put away after completion and almost forgotten ”

accident. A Power of Attorney allows us to nominate other people to look after our affairs. It now comes in two parts, for welfare and money, you can select either or both parts. It costs a few quid to set up – and again, it will not hasten dementia any more than making a Will bring on an early death. However, the government has recently shown itself very willing to help themselves to the assets of



people with the disease to fund their care. Now think: you have driven your train for years, caring for all those passengers: don't you owe it to yourself to nominate some trusted people to care for your interests should you become incapable? You could file your Power of Attorney in the same place as your will.

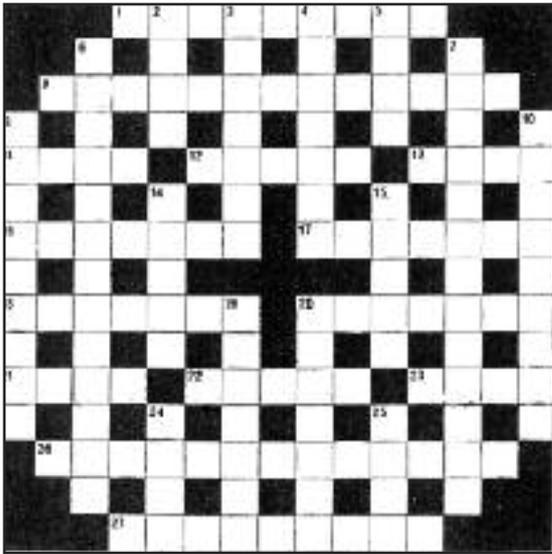
GUARD YOUR MINORS

If you and your partner were both killed or incapacitated leaving young children - have you considered their plight? You can nominate trusted people to become their guardians and make provision in your wills for their welfare. You can select the guardians now and, most likely, they will be people who will give genuine love and affection to your children as well as attending to the practicalities of their futures. Often, they will ask you to reciprocate arrangements. Now, wouldn't that give you peace of mind?

So, the message from this article is to put these most serious matters in order. Decide your priorities, discuss them with the experts, make the modest payments required and then put it all safely away, content in the knowledge that proper provision has been made. Action this next week; then get on with the fun things on the other list!

I'll see you in Blackpool's Pleasure Beach – or on the pavement outside the Horseshoe ...

Prize Crossword No. 45 set by TLC



CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Cost of travelling by rail (5,4)
- 8 Where you can reserve your seat on the train (7,6)
- 11 Small circular item of jewellery (4)
- 12 Ease off, die down (5)
- 13 Mongolian desert (4)
- 16 Butt in, arrive uninvited (7)
- 17 Sir ----- Fiennes, explorer (7)
- 18 Extra train laid on for unscheduled events (7)
- 20 Type of lifeboat operating near the coast (2-5)
- 21 Slippery fish (4)
- 22 Waste metal (5)
- 23 Circular knob found on dashboards and radios (4)

- 26 Where the lollipop lady escorts children safely (6,3,4)
- 27 Type of sledge used for racing (9)

DOWN

- 2 Garden tool (4)
- 3 Inglorious, dishonourable (7)
- 4 Loose spot in the field of vision (7)
- 5 Widespread, rampant (7)
- 6 All day and all night (5,3,5)
- 7 Vacation for the pupils (6,7)
- 9 Shelter for railway platforms and tracks (5,4)
- 10 Some ladies find these shoes difficult to walk in

- (4,5)
- 14 Sound recording (5)
- 15 Grind the teeth (5)
- 19 Tropical grasshoppers which can become a plague (7)
- 20 Novel by Sir Walter Scott (7)
- 24 By oneself, flying unaccompanied (4)
- 25 Boast (4)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Solution to Crossword No 44 which appeared in the December edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Mrs J. Darwin** from Chesterfield in Derbyshire

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Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 44th ASLEF crossword in the December edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

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