

# RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

## BREAKTHROUGH

### Guard guarantee on Northern and South Western Railways



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[www.rmt.org.uk](http://www.rmt.org.uk)

# WORKING FOR YOU

RMT membership helps you at work and saves you money

*RMT has developed a number of benefits to save members money. This includes negotiating access to savings and special offers from our approved partners.*

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The union has a dedicated team of elected officers and local reps to serve your interests negotiating with employers on issues from pay, hours of work, pensions and working conditions. They are supported by a team of researchers to formulate pay claims to obtain the best negotiated terms for you.

## CAMPAIGNING

The union has a political fund to run campaigns and provide a political voice to benefit members' interests in the workplace. RMT has a very active parliamentary group which raises issues of concern for members at Westminster, the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly.

## PERSONAL INJURIES

Personal injury claims cover if you suffer an accident in work or outside work. RMT underwrites settlements that would not be provided by no-win, no-fee companies. Call 08457 125 495.

## INDUSTRIAL DISEASES

Members who have suffered an industrial disease will receive free legal support to make a claim. Such claims are underwritten by the union and members will not have any deduction from their settlement unlike claims run by no-win, no-fee companies. Call 08457 125 495

## EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

Should a member find themselves unfairly dismissed, discriminated against or have any claim which has reasonable prospects of success at an Employment Tribunal, RMT will provide legal representation and pay

the fee. Even if the union is advised that the claim is unlikely to succeed, members who make a claim are eligible to receive free legal advice.

## ACCIDENT BENEFIT

Payable if you have an accident at work or on the way to or from work. Accident benefit is only payable if you have been off for three days or more.

Accident must be reported to branch secretary within 26 weeks in order to qualify for accident benefit.

## RETIREMENT BENEFIT

Payable to any member who retires over the age of 60 or aged 55 if retired through redundancy or resettlement. Ill health retirement is also payable; proof of this must be sent with application for retirement benefit.

## TAX AND WILL PREPARATION

The union can provide a personal taxation service and will preparation service.

## DEMOTION COMPENSATION

Payable to any member who is experiencing loss of wages through being permanently demoted or downgraded as a result of illness or injury.

Payment of £300 provided that member reports this to branch secretary within 12 weeks.

## ORPHAN FUND

The beneficiaries of this fund would be any child of a member or spouse if the member dies in service or if a members' spouse dies and the member has responsibility of the children.

Benefit is paid while a child is

in full-time education up until the age of 22. Payment is made quarterly and the rate is £12.00 per week for children up to the age of 16, then £12.75 per week from 16 to 22.

## RMT CREDIT UNION

Accessible savings and affordable loans from RMT's Credit union.  
[www.rmt.org.uk/about/credit-union](http://www.rmt.org.uk/about/credit-union)

## ONLINE SHOPPING DISCOUNTS

Shop online with RMTrewards.com and earn cashback savings from hundreds of retailers, like B&Q, Argos and Tesco. It's free to join, plus you'll get a FREE £10 Welcome Bonus in your online account! (Terms and conditions apply)  
[www.rmtrewards.com](http://www.rmtrewards.com)

## FINES POOL

if you drive a company vehicle as part of your job you can join the RMT fines pool for £7 per year. The Fines Pool will reimburse members for any speeding fines, related court costs and lost time to attend a court hearing.  
[www.rmt.org.uk/member-benefits/fines-pool](http://www.rmt.org.uk/member-benefits/fines-pool)

## BEREAVEMENT BENEFIT

A Death Grant of £600 is payable to the nearest relative or legal representative if a member dies through any cause prior to retirement.

## CASHBACK PREPAID CARD

Fancy cashback on your everyday shopping? Use your RMT Prepaid Plus Cashback card at over 50 partner retailers, including Sainsbury's, ASDA and Boots, and earn unlimited cashback! It's

different to a credit or debit card - you can only spend what you load so there's less chance of getting carried away.  
[www.rmtprepaid.com](http://www.rmtprepaid.com)

## FREE £5,000 ACCIDENTAL DEATH COVER

As a benefit of your RMT membership you can register for £5,000 Free Accidental Death Cover. Cover is for UK residents aged 18-69.

12 months free cover. Annually renewable and always FREE. The Cover is underwritten by Advent Insurance PCC Ltd - UIB Cell.  
[www.rmtprotect.com](http://www.rmtprotect.com)

## INSURANCE

UIA Mutual offers great value, low cost Home, Travel and Pet Insurance to RMT members and their families.

- Interest free direct debits (spread over 10 months)
- No fees to amend your policy
- Accidental damage to TVs, laptops and game consoles covered
- Cover for damage caused by subsidence
- Alternative accommodation for family and pets if needed

Call on 0800 030 4606 to talk to UK-based call centre agents from 8.30am to 8pm Monday to Friday.

## HEALTH CASH PLAN

For a small monthly premium you can claim cash-back on dental, optical and therapy treatments. Visit [www.bhsf.co.uk](http://www.bhsf.co.uk)

**Join RMT by visiting**  
**[www.rmt.org.uk](http://www.rmt.org.uk)**

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## EDITORIAL



# GUARD GUARANTEE

After two years of struggle I am pleased to say that your union has secured a guard guarantee on Arrive Rail Northern and South Western Railways.

As a result we have suspended strike action on both franchises following a guarantee of a conductor/guard on all trains, including the new fleet, with the support of the Department for Transport.

The government has also declared its readiness to play its part in funding this guarantee and ensuring that the necessary contractual changes to the franchise agreement to enable this to be done.

I would like to pay tribute to the RMT members involved in this titanic struggle whose resilience and determination though two years has been the foundation on which this major breakthrough has been based.

We should also thank the travelling public for their extraordinary support which has been so important in allowing us to break the deadlock.

RMT has also secured a major pay victory for members working on the DHL Virgin West Coast Mainline contract which means that some staff will see their wages rise by over 21 per cent.

The union believes that this increase is the biggest single rise in earnings secured by any trade union for any group of workers anywhere in the country in the current climate.

The case for a nationalised railway continues to grow following the news that train companies are pocketing 80 per cent of the compensation they suck up from the publicly-owned Network Rail for disrupted and delayed services, rather than passing it on to passengers.

In the past six years the train operators have hoovered up £1.3 billion from the public purse while only £260 million has been handed back to the passengers that the compensation is supposed to reach.

This should be yet another nail in the coffin of Britain's privatised rail racket.

Private bus companies in England have also pocketed a total of £3.3 billion in profits while presiding over savage cuts to vital routes.

Labour Party research has revealed how bus fares are set to rise while private companies are making record profits.

Labour also predicts that there will be 5,000 fewer routes by 2022 due to a 45 per cent reduction in funding for bus services across England and Wales from 2010-11 to 2017-18.

It is clear that this country needs an integrated transport network which means bus services are run in the public interest not private profit.

This month we also take a look at the pension's crisis that is developing following the collapse of Carillion last year. It is clear that in any capitalist crisis it is the workers that pay the price not the carpetbaggers that gamble with people's lives.

The union has been fighting social dumping on the Irish Sea with activists leafleting passengers as they board vessels in Holyhead Port in Anglesey.

We are demanding seafarer jobs, enforcement of employment law and trade union rights on the £126 million WB Yeats which Irish Ferries has just brought into service on this key commercial ferry route.

Social dumping and the exploitation of foreign workers is the EU model for labour relations but we need a different model based on dignity at work, decent pay and real trade union rights.

It is encouraging that London and Anglia regional council has held a forum for catering and cleaning workers, some of the most vulnerable workers there are.

This initiative is about encouraging workers to use our structures to improve their pay and conditions at work and it will be interesting to see how it develops and if it can be emulated around the country.

It is also the start of our annual round of organising grades conferences and I will be attending as many as possible to hear your views about what your union should be doing. Hopefully see you there.



# GUARD GUARANTEE

## RMT secures a guard guarantee on Arriva Rail Northern and South Western Railways after two years of struggle

RMT has suspended the on-going programme of strike action on Arriva Rail Northern and South Western Railway following significant progress over the retention and the role of the guard on trains.

Through the talks process the company has now offered a guarantee of a guard on the South Western Railway services that have been in dispute.

Substantial progress in talks through the offices of ACAS has also allowed the union's executive to suspend the on-going programme of strike action on Northern Rail over the retention and the role of the guard on their trains.

Through the talks process the company has now offered a guarantee of a conductor on all trains, including the new fleet, for the duration of the current franchise. The guarantee is supported by the Department for Transport.

Further talks, will now seek agreements on operational models moving forwards.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash paid tribute to RMT

members on Northern Rail whose resilience and determination through 47 days of action has been the foundation on which this major breakthrough has been based.

"They are an absolute credit to both this union and the wider movement.

"I also want to thank the travelling public for their extraordinary support and both Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham for their efforts that have been important in allowing us to break the deadlock today.

"The offer of a guarantee of a conductor on all services throughout the duration of the franchise, including the new fleet, is the substantial progress we have been pushing for and has allowed RMT to suspend the current action and allow for further talks to now take place around the operational details," he said.

South Western Railway also confirmed that on the introduction of any new or other modified rolling stock, each passenger train shall

operate with a guard with safety critical competencies. Specific safety critical competencies shall be agreed by SWR and RMT.

Under the deal all rolling stock train dispatch shall be subject to undertaking a safety risk assessment, on a station by station basis. This assessment will be completed with the involvement of company and trade union representatives utilising the agreed PTI assessment method already in place in the company, in



addition to the utilisation of new technology within new or modified rolling stock.

Mick Cash said that the breakthrough secured from South Western Railway had only been achieved through campaigning by RMT members on the principle of a safe and accessible railway for all.

"I want to pay tribute to the resilience, solidarity and determination of our guards and drivers on SWR that has sustained this long, hard campaign.

"I also want to thank the travelling public for their extraordinary support for the staff working at the sharp end of our rail services," he said.

Traincrew and shunting grades conference secretary Stephen Nott said that significant progress with both companies making offers that were deemed progressive enough for the union to call off planned industrial action.

"Both companies have offered the guarantee of a conductor, on ARN, and a guard on SWR on every train with safety critical competencies.

"This is a clear change in the stance of the government, especially as regards ARN with the government confirming they are prepared to amend the franchise specifications as necessary.

"This is a huge and timely development as our members on both ARN and SWR have taken 47 and 29 days of strike action respectively and while the disputes are far from resolved it is down to the members resolve and solidarity, we have made this progress," he said. ■



# THE FUTURE OF RAIL DEBATE

**April 11 at 2pm**

**Venue:** Train crew and shunters' conference, Chatham

**Speakers:** RMT assistant general secretary Steve Hedley

Ann Bates of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee

Emily Yates (ABC)

Chris Williamson MP

# 24 HOUR STRIKE AT VINCI

RMT members working at Vinci as cleaners on the Arriva Rail Contract took 24-hour strike action last month after voting overwhelmingly for strike action over pay and conditions.

The cleaners, who formerly worked for Carillion before its collapse and were transferred to outsourcing company Vince, organised visible picket lines at Willesden Junction, Gospel Oak, Hoxton, New Cross Gate and Hackney Downs before making their way to Arriva Rail London's head office in Swiss Cottage where a mass demonstration was mounted.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash congratulated members for returning a phenomenal result in the ballot for industrial action.

"This result provides the union with a clear mandate to fight against below inflation pay offers.

You have y demonstrated a clear sense of solidarity and unity and backed it up with a

solid display of industrial action.

"Your union believes that you should be adequately rewarded for all your hard work but the company thinks that it can pay their workers a pittance and get away with it and it is time to prove them wrong," he said.

A meeting will take place at Unity House later this month to discuss tactics in the next phase of the fair pay campaign. ■



# GREAT RAIL RIP-OFF ROLLS ON

## Private operators hand themselves £300 million in dividends

New Office of Road and Rail figures reveal that train operators paid themselves another £300 million in dividends last year, money that could have instead been used to fund the retention and expansion of staffing levels on trains and platforms at a time when violent and anti-social behaviour on the railway is soaring out of control. At the

same the train operators returned to the government £300 million less than in previous years.

The key points of the ORR report are:

- In 2017-18, the government received £400 million from train operators. This is £300 million less than the previous year. Coincidentally, the declared

dividends paid by train operators into the pockets of their shareholders was also £300 million.

- Dividends have increased by 6.5 per cent compared to five years ago.
- ORR reveal that "over the last five years, dividends have remained equivalent to around 2.5 per cent of passenger fares" which is substantially higher than the two per cent claimed by the Rail Delivery Group.

RMT general secretary Mick

Cash said that the hard truth was that another £300 million that could have been invested in guaranteeing safe staffing levels and improving services has been siphoned out of the railway in dividends by the greedy private train operators while they have slashed their returns to the public purse by the same amount.

"This racket needs to end and our railways returned to public ownership with all of the cash generated re-invested in services and bringing fares back to an affordable level," he said. ■



**R**MT has secured a major pay victory for members working on the DHL Virgin West Coast Mainline contract which will see the entire workforce lifted on to a living wage.

The new pay deal means that some staff will see their wages rise by over 21 per cent and a new base line level ensures that the DHL workers will be guaranteed a minimum rate of £10.55 in London and £9.20 outside of London.

RMT said that the pay breakthrough proved that outsourced workers, when organised into a militant, industrial trade union, can win major victories. The union believes that the 21 per cent increase in pay for the potwasher grade is the biggest

single rise in earnings secured by any trade union for any group of workers anywhere in the country in the current climate.

Other groups of workers on the team will see their pay rise by nearly 19 per cent as they are lifted onto the new minimum rates agreed with the union.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that this was a massive pay victory for our members employed by DHL on the Virgin West Coast Trains contract engaged in catering stores and supplies logistics for Virgin Trains.

“RMT has achieved a significant breakthrough here, our members showed a steadfast resolve in trying to achieve a better deal voting

overwhelmingly for strike action in an attempt to get a better pay offer.

“RMT is pleased it didn’t come to that but with a solid ballot result behind us for action RMT organisation, determination and serious negotiation has delivered results for this important group of workers.

“It’s a huge win for our members – some of the lowest paid in London now move up to the real living wage from April – outside London we move beyond the real living wage. RMT had also been involved in an important grade restructuring that simplifies negotiations on pay going forward and recognises additional responsibilities and roles.

“RMT Euston branch secretary Kathy Mazur and RMT lead Staff rep Mustapha Kassim – working with regional organiser Craig Johnson – played a key role in securing the deal that the union believes is ground breaking and sets a new standard for rates of pay for staff whose roles have been contracted out.

“The solid strike mandate we had behind us was the foundation of our campaign for better wages for these low paid staff and gave us the leverage to secure huge improvements through serious negotiations with the company.

“This stunning deal sets a benchmark now for the whole outsourcing industry,” he said.

# SAVE THE CALEY!



## RMT protests against the planned closure of the St Rollox Railway Works in Scotland

Members of the Scottish Parliament endorsed RMT's calls for public ownership and an integrated rolling-stock strategy last month as RMT members turned out in force at Holyrood to protest against the planned closure of the St Rollox Railway Works, known as the 'Caley'.

The site, in the Glasgow East End district of Springburn, was established by the Caledonian Railway in the 1850s and became British Rail's main locomotive and carriage works north of the border. It now maintains and overhauls much of ScotRail's fleet. But the latest private owner, the German-owned Gemini Rail Group, claims that it has become unprofitable, and that the withdrawal of pre-privatisation units means work will dry up.

However, at the well-attended rally outside the Scottish Parliament, RMT regional organiser Mick Hogg said that Gemini's profit margins showed it was an

"absolute fallacy" based on "the economics of the madhouse".

"What we are saying to the Scottish government and Transport Secretary Michael Matheson is to intervene now as the clock's ticking.

"If the Transport Secretary doesn't intervene now we're going to lose 200 jobs and we're going to lose 160 years of railway history," he said.

In the debating chamber, Labour MSP Elaine Smith, convener of RMT's parliamentary group at Holyrood, called on MSPs and ministers to make a stand against the closure which was "unjustified, costly and short-sighted".

Scottish Green party MSP John Finnie praised the intervention of RMT general secretary Mick Cash who wrote a letter to Mr Matheson warning of the impact of "design, build and maintain" contracts.

Mr Cash's letter said that such contracts would have a

"disruptive impact not only on the manner and location of works, but also on the skills base". The general secretary went on to say that the Scottish Government should "immediately examine all options for the maintenance of employment" at Springburn, "within the context of a wider rolling stock strategy".

Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard said that he was "delighted that so many workers who are at the centre of the campaign and in the fight of their lives are here tonight in the gallery".

He said that this was in the spirit of the late miners' leader Mick McGahey's call for the Scottish Parliament "to involve the people of a country in the operation of power at every possible level".

Mr Leonard said that the loss of St Rollox, popularly known as the Caley, "would mean that we would no longer be able to repair and maintain our railway

rolling stock, which we have been able to do since the dawn of the steam age".

Blasting the succession of the site's five owners since privatisation, the Scottish Labour leader said: "There is something fundamentally wrong with how our economy works when a site can change hands so many times in such a short space of time with little or no say for the workers—the very people whose livelihoods depend on it.

"In 23 years, the site has been in British ownership, German ownership, French ownership and is now in German ownership again - but it should be in public ownership.

Mr Leonard said that there was "nothing pre-ordained about what is happening", and "no invisible hand of the market locking the padlock on the factory gates".

He urged the Transport Secretary to seize the moral,

social and economic imperative that demands action.

SNP MSP Alex Neil said that the Scottish government should explore “setting up a dedicated company instead of trying to sell the facility to another company as a branch operation”, with both public and private sector funding.

Labour’s James Kelly, who secured the debate, backed RMT’s calls for full public ownership of the site and the electrification of the line from Glasgow.

“Along with the other MSPs in the chamber, I am asking for government intervention now,” he said.

Springburn MSP Bob Doris of the SNP accused Gemini of a “dereliction of duty” in not seeking alternative work to be done at St Rollox.

Responding to the debate, Transport Secretary Michael Matheson said that it was “disappointing” that Gemini had refused to postpone or delay its consultation period.

He spoke in support of “repurposing” St Rollox to become a “hub” for “heavy rail and heavy engineering work in the future”. He said that the Scottish government had “directly commissioned” Network Rail to “evaluate whether electrification of the line into the site would support its continued use for heavy rail purposes”. But he said that “the proposed electrification cannot happen at the drop of a hat”.

In a debate the following day, Mr Matheson said that “neither ScotRail—which has existing capacity in its own engineering workshops—nor Network Rail requires the site at present”.

Pressed by James Kelly on whether the contract for maintaining Class 170 Turbostars could be awarded to St Rollox, Mr Matheson said that “the decision on where the work should go is for Porterbrook, not ScotRail, as it owns the rolling stock”.

## Parliamentary Column

# DEMAND OFFSHORE HELICOPTER INQUIRY



Offshore oil and gas companies are so often in the news talking about decommissioning plans and the move to green energy sources that it is sometimes easy to forget that there is currently an efficiency drive underway in the North Sea to recover up to 20 billion barrels at the lowest possible cost.

RMT members in the offshore sector will be all too familiar with the actions taken by employers since the oil price crashed in 2014 to make them work longer for less, particularly the imposition of the 3-on 3-off shift pattern on contractor staff which makes up 76 per cent of the workforce in the North Sea.

In this increasingly commercialised climate, workers and their unions rightly defend safety standards, including those areas where there is long standing disagreement. Top of this list remains helicopter transport. RMT and Unite support an independent public inquiry into offshore helicopter transport safety. The Transport Select Committee recommended this in 2014 but the Coalition government rejected it.

That’s why I secured a Commons debate on the issues and worked closely with RMT to spell out the facts (see full report on page 18).

The record makes for distressing reading – 33 workers have lost their lives, and 65 rescued in three fatal and three non-fatal incidents since February 2009. The most recent fatalities occurred on 29 April 2016 when the rotor blades detached from a Super Puma H225 traveling off the Norwegian coast, with 11 offshore workers and two crew losing their lives.

The Super Puma models involved in every one of these incidents have been grounded in the UK and Norwegian sectors since May 2016, yet the Civil

Aviation Authority (CAA) rode roughshod over trade unions to re-issue the Super Pumas airworthiness certificate in July 2017, a full year before the investigation into the Norwegian tragedy produced its final report.

The Accident Investigation Board of Norway’s (AIBN) final report last summer could not say what had caused the cracks in the main rotor gear box which led to the catastrophe. The same component had failed and caused the death of 16 workers and crew off Peterhead on April 1 2009 and the AIBN drew that direct comparison.

What did we hear from the government and the CAA in response to this? It was very limited and it appears to me that the CAA continue to fail to take proactive control of the Offshore Helicopter Safety Leadership Group to address offshore workers’ loss of confidence in helicopter safety.

In the debate in February I demanded a full independent public inquiry and reform of the regulatory framework to ensure, that the helicopters offshore workers are trained to travel in, are as safe as possible. Unsurprisingly, the Conservative government does not support an independent inquiry but we extracted commitments around the role of the CAA which I am pursuing with the union.

We will also work to build a cross-party consensus in support of a public inquiry to make the changes that offshore workers and their trade unions have been demanding for years. With commercial pressure on contractors across the offshore oil and gas industry again rising, the UK government can no longer ignore the safety of offshore helicopter transport.

**Alex Cunningham**  
Labour MP  
for Stockton North



# SIGNALLING MATTERS

Delegates for the signalling and operations grades conference gathered in Crewe last month

Could you find a more fitting location for RMT signallers' organising conference than Crewe?

Delegates were welcomed by the railway town's Labour mayor Brian Wilson, who delivered a message from Crewe and Nantwich MP and RMT parliamentary group member Laura Smith, who was unable to attend due to illness.

Ms Smith urged RMT members to remain vigilant over the EU's drive to privatise railways across Europe after Brexit.

"As we all know, the changes only technically apply in the UK until the end of 2020. But the future of the rail directives will very much depend on the type of relationship we have with the EU.

"It is within these uncertain

and divisive times that we've got to work together. There is no doubt in my mind that RMT is up to the challenge that lay ahead. Its members are in safe hands," she said in her message.

Delegates unanimously backed an emergency motion regarding Network Rail's pay offer which called for a discussion on the content of the offer, which was intended not to reach a binding decision but to form part of the wider consultation with members on the offer.

A report on the discussion was to be placed before the NEC this month, along with the rest of the feedback from the month long consultation process involving all Network Rail elected representatives.

Throughout the discussion, delegates echoed the sentiments

previously expressed by officers and the NEC that the achievement of RPI was significant in the context of the lower CPI base which the Secretary of State for Transport had argued for rail pay deals but that other aspects of the offer were of real concern.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash told delegates that RMT membership continued to grow by almost 5,000 against a tough industrial and economic backdrop.

"Our finances are strong and we have been able to support members engaged in important disputes to the tune of over £2 million over the last two years alone.

"We have had no hesitation in balloting workers in defence of pay, conditions, safety, pensions and victimised

members. Despite all the barriers erected in our path we have continued to be that fighting, member led, democratic union we are all so rightly proud of," he said.

He also warned that bosses were rolling out digital control mechanisms in an attempt to "destroy militant, industrial trade unionism".

He said that the union had made important progress in disputes such as the guards' strikes over driver-only operation, but also had to "think about what we're going to do" in the coming years and decades.

"The first message we're going to be giving to the government is that we're not changing, we're still going to be a campaigning, member-led and fighting union," he added.

RMT president Michelle Rodgers said that the signallers' conference was ripe for expansion, and encouraged reps to champion diversity in their areas.

"We've got to have more women, more LGBT people and we all have a responsibility to be open, honest and inclusive. If we're giving lessons outside, we have to educate ourselves," she said.

Delegates also called for an extension of the signalling grades system to include two new grades, 10 and 11.

Bob Cross, Stockport and District said that this would ensure a "line of promotion" for signallers at the higher end of the grade structure.

Ian Allen, South West Midlands said that signallers at Birmingham New Street about to face another increase in workload should be rewarded accordingly.

Phil Boorman, Ashford No. 1 argued that the fundamental cause of the problem was excessive workload. "I understand what the branch is saying and support it, but I think the real issue here is create more jobs rather than going for a higher grade," he said.

Delegates also called on the union to press for a pay rise for grade 4 signallers, "to ensure that a promotion from a grade 3 to a grade 4 is worthwhile for the members".

Another major issue was line blockages, with a motion calling for reps to escalate to a dispute if Network Rail did not provide adequate additional safety protections.

Tim Breed, North Staffs said: "I feel that the company aren't abiding by their agreed standards.

"Within that standard there's a hierarchy of protection. We cannot have two different standards of safety for staff doing the same job.

"It's putting everybody at risk, we seriously need to challenge it. It's only a matter of time before we're killing somebody," he said.

Paul Kemp, Surrey and Hants

concluded: "There should be additional protection for every track worker who is out there."

Alan Rogerson, Newcastle Rail and Catering said that the motion did not go far enough and called on the union to demand that Network Rail "cut all your line blockages to short signal sections".

This was one of several issues raised by NEC member Paul Burton in his report to conference. "I would say to any member, if you feel inundated with line blockages, make sure you use the work safe procedure. We have to remain vigilant," he said.

Mr Burton also raised the issue of spare turns - and what was a reasonable expectation of workers rostered onto them. Negotiations were still ongoing, but Mr Burton said it was a "very difficult job as we have to get agreement across the country", and "different areas are treating spare turns differently".

This was picked up by Network Rail RMT national operations council reps Phil Boorman and Mark Bellenie. "Nailing spare down in the national rostering principles will not reduce workloads, said Mr Bellenie. "All it would do is force people to come into work".

But significant progress had been made in establishing new national rostering principles for all other areas, and there had finally been movement towards an agreement on stood-off arrangements. This would allow escalation to the level of management and RMT leadership where an agreement cannot be reached.

The NOC reps also reported back the resolution of a number of smaller scale issues, and how the NOC had won pay rises and pushed back against anti-union initiatives.

Signallers' entitlement to rest breaks was still in the air pending a Court of Appeal judgment, after Network Rail challenged the Employment Appeals Tribunal decision that workers were entitled to 20 minute breaks.

"Even if we lose in court, the



company has already developed a blueprint for a possible breaks agreement for single man locations.

"They know they've got to employ more staff, it's as simple as that," Mr Bellenie said.

AJ Yates, the lead signallers' health and safety rep for the south, reported that he had been working with head office on mental health and age-related conditions such as dementia. "At the moment we only seem to deal with safety, rather than with welfare," he said.

A motion was also passed calling on the NEC to push for Network Rail to source its uniforms from an ethical supplier, "to ensure that staff making the uniforms are fairly treated and remunerated".

Delegates passed an emergency resolution over resident signalling staff being rostered for general purpose relief turns. The motion stressed that only signallers in receipt of a flexibility premium should be subject to changes in their roster. ■



RETIRED: Newly retired members John McDougall and Terry SimBoth were presented with awards in recognition for services to the union.

Mick Lynch quoting Karl Marx



# FIGHTING FOR CATERERS AND CLEANERS

## London and Anglia regional council president Ray Knight reports on a forum which met last month

The idea for a cleaners' and caterers' forum arose from some intense discussions at meetings of the London and Anglia regional council, where it was shown that despite the best efforts of activists, many members in these grades were dropping out of membership after a year or two due to what they perceived to be a distinct lack of any concrete achievement.

These are the very people in most need of an effective trade union.

We took a long and serious look at the message in our recruitment drives and the feedback suggested that these vulnerable members were expecting some kind of AA

service, where somebody turns up and fixes the problems. This is obviously oversimplifying things but it contains a hard kernel of truth.

In his opening remarks at the forum, assistant general secretary Mick Lynch drove home this very point when, in adapting the words of Karl Marx, he stated that the emancipation of the sub-contracted workers must be the act of the workers themselves, using the structures and resources of the whole union.

This forum was not an exercise in bypassing those structures but encouraging members to make the best use of them. The best part of the day was listening to what the

workers themselves had to say and what were their key issues.

They then spent time working on possible solutions with assistance and guidance from the more experienced activists as to which avenues they could follow such as via the branch, regional council and the various conferences.

Members from Leadeq, Rail Gourmet, Churchills and Interserve took part as well as others from Virgin West Coast and Greater Anglia, and the end result was an informal committee of activists, whose aim is to work together on common issues and work through the official union structures.

All agreed that this is the

first of what hopefully will be many future forums, and members from all over London and the South East are invited to become involved. These members have identified the key issues and they are working towards finding their own issues. That's how trade unionism should be.

Thanks go to all who attended, with special praise to Kathy Mazur, Eddie Dempsey, Dave Marshall, Tony Donaghey, Steve Smart and Mick Lynch for their invaluable contributions on the day, and to Steve Silver for designing and producing the campaign material.





# LU SAFETY FIRST!

**A London Underground health and safety rep warns that LUL is proposing to decimate the way train maintainers have been preparing Tube trains for many years**

At the moment London Underground trains are prepared every 24 hours for passenger service and this prep includes many safety critical test/checks including doors, brakes and passenger safety items.

This is the same for all train stocks across the London Underground combine. Yet under LU proposals these checks will no longer be carried out at a 24-hour interval and some stocks go to 96 hours while others go to monthly exam and some to even three monthly exams.

The 1992TS stock on the Central line is a very

problematic train which had a headline-grabbing passenger incident last year when an elderly lady got trapped in the doors and was dragged along the platform and into the tunnel. LU's answer to this seems to be to stop checking the door chimes every 24 hours and do it monthly!

In the report given to the union LU use a very woolly sentence, "possible transfer of responsibility" and despite questioning they cannot specify what this means.

The company has also stated that all risk assessments have been reviewed but again despite

informal and formal requests for them to produce these they have failed. There has been no valid consultation with RMT on this matter just instruction on what LU intend to do and when they intend to do it.

They deny the changes will involve head count reduction but the union doubts this and see it as the thin end of the wedge and the union has not been given assurances that they will not impose the changes.

Fleet branch reps have visited train ops branches to inform them of the detail to the proposed changes and the threat to their safety. Station grades

reps have also been informed of this as it is clearly an attack on all-grades safety whilst at work. A meeting has taken place with the ORR and it is now looking into LULs ridiculous proposals.

In short the majority of the London Underground fleet is ageing stock, some 45 years old, and now LU decide to cut safety back checks massively. RMT cannot and will not stand back and let LU do this with little or no respect for staff or travelling public's safety, for this reason we are in dispute with the company and a ballot matrix is being prepared.



# FIGHTING THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM

## UK and Norwegian offshore unions fight social dumping in the North Sea

Trade unions across the divide of UK and Norway are uniting to fight social dumping in the offshore energy sector. Prosafe Offshore is company which operates floating accommodation barges for oil companies to house construction and project workers is committing an act of social dumping at the expense of British and Norwegian workers. The company asked their long serving British and Norwegian workers to accept an offer of voluntary redundancy with an enhanced payment during a period of low activity. Prosafe suggested that workers would be invited to apply for their 'redundant' jobs if and when the market improved. However, within days of securing the

agreement of the workers, Prosafe had engaged an agency in Poland to recruit workers to replace all those accepting voluntary redundancy, and at significantly reduced rates of pay and conditions.

Representatives from RMT's sister union in Norway, Industri Energi, travelled to Aberdeen to meet RMT representatives and discuss a strategy to stop this race to the bottom as Industri Energi national secretary Asle Reime, described the actions.

RMT and Industri Energi secured the support of UK unions Unite and Nautilus International who also have members caught up in this disgraceful situation and collectively the unions have called for the support of the



UNITY: Left to right; RMT national secretary Darren Procter, Asle Reime, RMT offshore energy branch secretary Robbie Wyness, Per Martin Labrathen of Industri Energi RMT regional organiser Jake Molloy and Fraser Know of Industri Energi.

International Transport Federation. The trade union movement will be looking to apply pressure on Prosafe by all

means available to outlaw these practices and to have our displaced members reinstated.



## DIVERS QUESTION MEDICAL STANDARDS

RMT has given divers advice and support around a new guidance document which the subsea industry has produced regarding medical standards for divers.

RMT national secretary Darren Procter and regional organiser Jake Molloy met with a group of RMT member divers before a meeting with the Health and Safety Executive.

A significant number of members had raised concerns about several aspects of the guidance from the frequency of fitness testing, the type of testing being applied, the procedure for conducting the test, data protection issues and the fact that not one diver was



consulted in the process.

RMT set the meeting up with the HSE with regional organiser Jake Molloy leading the delegation. The meeting was constructive and HSE officials took on board a number of the points raised. There was some disagreement on a number of points but these will be followed

up through further discussions. Jake Molloy said that the meeting was an ice-breaker.

"We now have to develop our position further through research and evidence based inputs to develop a quality argument," he said.

RMT submitted an extensive report to the HSE setting out the

basis of members concerns. A copy of this report is available by contacting RMT's Aberdeen office. The union anticipates further consultative sessions with the HSE and greater involvement of members in the health and safety debate generally.



# BUS COMPANIES EARN BILLIONS AMID ROUTE CUTS

## Labour predicts 5,000 fewer routes by 2022 due to nearly 50 per cent spending cuts

RMT has slammed private bus companies in England which have pocketed a total of £3.3 billion in profits while presiding over savage cuts to vital routes.

Labour Party research has revealed how bus fares are set to rise while private companies are making record profits.

Labour also predicts there will be 5,000 fewer routes by 2022 due to a 45 per cent reduction in funding for bus services across England and Wales from 2010-11 to 2017-18.

It also said that elderly and disabled passenger numbers are set to fall by nearly 20 per cent and there are expected to be 5,000 fewer bus routes across the country in 2022.

Last year the number of bus journeys in England dropped by 63 million outside the capital. In London they dropped by 29 million. The axe fell on 301 routes, 125 of them in the north.

Labour has urged the government to remove its ban on local authorities forming their own bus companies and vowed to extend local government powers to re-regulate local bus services when in government.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said that passengers now faced a toxic mix of rising fares, cuts to services and reduced access.

“Labour will act in the interests of the many by

protecting pensioners’ bus passes and introducing a new free pass for under-25s.

“For too long the bus industry has put profit for a few before millions of passengers. A future Labour government will change that,” he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash backed Mr Corbyn’s comments that private bus companies were running bus services into the ground while raking in billions of pounds in profit.

“With services in decline and vulnerable and isolated communities taking the brunt of the cuts it is now clear that decades of bus privatisation have failed and we need a new national strategy for our buses underpinned by public

ownership.

“This would not only radically improve services but by ending profiteering would result in a total gain of half a billion pounds each year,” he said.

Government data also shows private firms together made hundreds of millions operating buses outside London each year since the coalition government came to power in 2010.

Yet a report by the Transport Commissioner found almost 17,000 bus routes have disappeared over the past five years.

The latest figures follow an RMT survey contained in RMT evidence published by the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee Inquiry into the bus

industry which took evidence from the unions and bus employers.

The RMT survey of bus workers found that 72 per cent of bus workers believed their company prioritised making a profit over providing a service.

The survey provided to MPs also found that:

- 76 per cent of bus workers did not think that there was enough funding for bus services
- Only two per cent of bus workers thought that the government had good policies for the bus industry.
- 84 per cent of bus workers said they believed bus services should be publicly owned and operated.■



**BUS POLICY:** Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn (centre) and Transport Secretary Andy McDonald (left) talk with pupils from Littleover Community School in Derby, where they launched a new policy on bus travel for young people.



# PENSIONS AND THE COLLAPSE OF CARILLION

## RMT News looks at the impact of the collapse of Carillion last year and the pension fund

Following the collapse of the Carillion in January 2018 the two Carillion Rail sections of the Railways Pension Scheme (RPS), GTRM and Centrac, were placed in the assessment period of the Pension Protection Fund (PPF).

The PPF was set up in April 2005 as a “lifeboat” or “insurance scheme” to protect members’ occupational pension scheme benefits in the event of their employer going into administration and the employers’ pension scheme being in deficit at the time of the business collapsing.

Defined benefit (final salary)

pension schemes, such as the RPS and the TfL Pension Fund, pay towards the PPF in the shape of a levy. The levy is compulsory and the level of the levy is dependent on the financial strength of the sponsoring employer. The bigger the risk that the employer could go bust the more they will pay towards the levy.

While far from perfect, the benefits paid by the PPF are usually lower than those originally promised by their occupational scheme but higher than they might have otherwise received before the PPF existed.

RMT has been involved

through the TUC with the wider pension issues resulting from the collapse of Carillion. It has been recently brought to the attention of our representatives that following a letter sent to members of the Carillion sections of the RPS from Quattro Pensions regarding the PPF assessment period it has left these members asking a number of questions, in particular who are Quattro Pensions?

These beneficiaries of the GTRM and Centrac section, and members of this union, feel that they have been forgotten by the RPS due to, as they see it, the lack of information which has

been sent to them by the RPS since their employer went bankrupt.

On behalf of all members affected by the collapse of Carillion, RMT has raised members concerns with the administrators of the RPS (RPMI) whose response is as follows:

*“During the assessment period, the PPF has various tasks and member data checks to carry out before it decides whether the sections should formally enter the PPF – it is a complex process that takes on average two years to complete. To support this process, the PPF*

partners with other organisations and pension administration firms.

As part of the assessment period, some of the on-going administration of the two Carillion Sections is now being carried out by Quattro Pensions. Quattro Pensions is an independent firm of consulting actuaries and administrators based in Redditch. The firm is carrying out some of the actuarial and administration tasks for the PPF during the assessment period.

The Trustee was keen to send an early communication to members after the insolvency event and provide as much reassurance as it could to these members. As such, the Trustee wrote to members of the GTRM and Centrac Sections on 19 January, within four days of Carillion Construction Limited entering liquidation, to provide as much reassurance and information as it could.

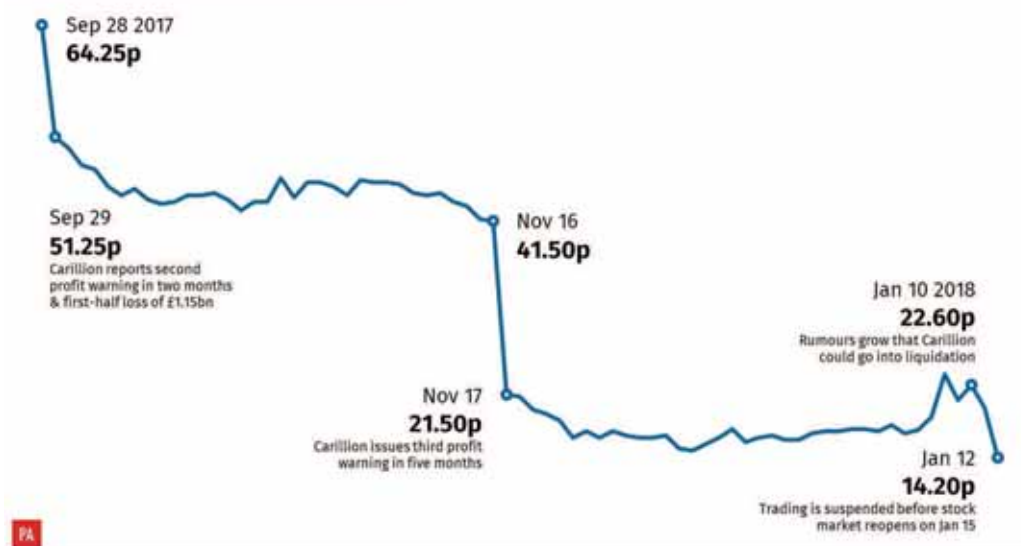
A further letter followed from the Trustee once the PPF had confirmed that the GTRM and Centrac sections had formally started an assessment period. This letter gave an introduction to Quattro and the work they would be doing. Each letter contained a summary of the key aspects of PPF compensation.

Members are now receiving some communications from Quattro regarding items such as data cleansing, securing BRASS funds and relaying the results of the valuation. All this is part of assessing whether the Carillion sections will enter the PPF.

Quattro are also administering the retirements of members during the assessment period. This is because PPF rules mean that member benefits must not be any higher than those that would apply if the sections were in the PPF during the assessment process. If the outcome of the assessment period is that a section will not transfer to the PPF, a higher level of benefit may apply.

The Trustee and RPMI continue to be actively engaged with Quattro on these processes and we understand that the PPF are targeting a completion date

## How Carillion's share price fell



for the PPF assessment period towards the end of 2019.

RPMI are conscious that the Carillion members we had previously supported directly are no longer within our remit. We would assure these members that there is no wish to distance ourselves from them. Quattro's involvement is a necessary stage of the PPF process that was established to give protection in the event of employer insolvency – and, as Quattro have now assumed some of the services we previously supported members with, we are limited in the level of support we can give these members. Sadly, it's a necessary part of the process."

As you will note from the above correspondence members were informed by RPMI of the compensation benefits they could expect to receive from the PPF. While the level of compensation will vary depending on a number of factors, to give readers a general idea of the PPF benefit rules please see below:

### HOW MUCH WILL YOU RECEIVE FROM THE PPF IF YOUR EMPLOYER BECOMES INSOLVENT?

The level of benefits a member will receive from the PPF is dependent on whether they have passed the Normal Retirement Age (NRA) on the date their employer became insolvent. As an example, the NRA for the

RPS GTRM and Centrac sections is age 60 which means members can take 100 per cent of their benefits unreduced at this age.

Therefore if you have already passed the NRA when your employer becomes insolvent, or if you had retired through ill-health, you will receive a pension equal to 100 per cent of your scheme pension on the insolvency date.

What if I am under the NRA?

If you are under the NRA of your occupational pension scheme when your employer became insolvent you will see a reduction in your payments to 90 per cent of your scheme pension on the insolvency date.

### IS THE COMPENSATION CAPPED?

Yes. Compensation is currently capped at age 60 at £33,000 per annum and at age 65 at £39,000. The cap is annually increased in line with inflation.

### WILL MY PENSION ONCE IN PAYMENT INCREASE?

Yes. Increases to pensions in payment are increased in line with inflation each year, subject to a maximum of 2.5 per cent a year. However, the only element of your pension which is increased is for pensionable service built up after April 6 1997. Any of your pension which relates to pensionable service before this date doesn't increase.

As already mentioned above

the PPF compensation levels are far from perfect but the reality is that had the PPF not been set up workers across the UK may have lost their entire pension in the event of their employer going bust and their pension scheme being in deficit. However RMT recognises that workers like those employed by Carillion and before this at Jarvis deserve more than 90 per cent of their hard earned retirement benefits.

RMT believes that the only way members, as an example, across the rail industry are going to be fully protected when it comes to having a secure occupational pension scheme is by nationalising the railways. Had the railways not been privatised in the first place members at Carillion and Jarvis would not have lost some of their pension as a result of poor management and government policy.

RMT also believes that better protection needs to be offered to workers when it comes to such pension arrangements. This can only be done by greater monitoring of employers like Carillion who were allowed to run their business so poorly seemingly under the noses of financial institutions and pension administrators. Of course the PPF compensation levels need to be improved specially for those low to medium paid workers. ■



# ORGANISE, EDUCATE AND AGITATE

## RMT general secretary Mick Cash explains how trade union education can be a motivator for change

The place of trade union education within our movement has for almost 200 years been seen as a vital ingredient to progress and success in the struggles we engage in.

Trade union education has been a constant feature throughout the history of workers struggles. Today it remains a core activity from Frant Place to now the Bob Crow Education Centre and of course burgeoning regional programmes. Alongside 'organise' and 'agitate', the work to educate our reps and activists sits no less or more important, but all three are part of a powerful strategy honed decades ago to build an effective and fighting trade union and labour movement.

Since 2014 I have closely paid attention to these intertwined strands of the unions work, expanding our capacity to organise and continuing our ability and determination to fight for our members and injustice generally. So in our trade union education the delivery of courses across our union is well above 120 last year and likely to be at least that number this

year, a step on from the 80 plus in 2014.

However it's not just the number of courses organised and delivered that is the determining factor of 'success' but more how the union and critically the members benefit from this considerable investment by the Union. So, as the scope of subjects has widened to encompass course subjects that have been called for from within our union the importance of ensuring that what is being taught is both relevant and useful has been addressed by our association with East Riding College trade union education department. Through a process of comradely support and advice they offer their professional expertise on the courses delivered, and those attending those courses receive not only the benefit of the course itself but reward of academic accreditation for their efforts.

The NEC will shortly be considering the appointment of additional lay tutors to augment the existing group. It was a welcome surprise that the request for applicants has seen the number received reach 40,

and it's particularly pleasing to see a wide cross section of our membership applying for this role.

The sometimes vexed issue of 'Well what do we get out of this education work' has also been addressed, and the union now has a mentoring pilot project that sees regional mentors following up with students post their course to assist and support them into activity to utilise the skills and knowledge they have received.

It's been particularly pleasing to see the regional provision of trade union education in our union expand, with many courses being offered to those Reps and activists that are unable to attend the national education centre.

Across the country reps and activists are meeting to develop their ability to support, represent and 'lead' their members, often recognising the age old truth that the problems workers face in the workplace are the same or very similar wherever they work, and so the collective solutions to those problems are discussed and built in this way with members from across our union working

as we do best – collectively and by participating.

Going forward learning projects will have of course the challenge of meeting the required 'outcomes' to realise the funding that has been won, but they will continue to be demanded to utilise all their opportunities to organise non-members into the union.

RMT young members in particular are the future of our union and movement, so RMT is organising political trade union education events alongside Topuddle, Durham Miners Gala, and Burston. These amazing events offer a fantastic insight into the struggles of the past and the relevance of them today. Against overwhelming odds, the collective action of our class stood and fought, and they obviously understood that they might win, to do nothing was certain defeat.

So, I hope members will continue to take up the opportunities on offer on into this year, next year and beyond because education is one of the three equal parts of our core activity, to organise, educate and agitate.





# FOR JOBS, PAY AND TRADE UNION RIGHTS ON IRISH FERRIES

## Social dumping on the Irish Sea sees the exploitation of foreign ratings

The protest will be targeting the 0815 sailing of the Cyprus-registered WB Yeats with activists leafleting vehicle and freight passengers as they board the vessel in Holyhead Port in Anglesey.

The action will demand seafarer jobs, enforcement of employment law and trade union rights on the £126 million WB Yeats which Irish Ferries has just brought into service on this key commercial ferry route.

The union has obtained evidence that a Latvian Ordinary Seaman is paid a basic €5.51 per hour by Irish Ferries. RMT members targeted the sailing to loudly raise the need for pay justice and trade union recognition at this company which is a major threat to the long-term job prospects of Irish and UK ratings.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said Irish Ferries, along with other Irish Sea operators such as Seatruck and P&O

consistently flout employment law to cut ratings' pay below the legal minimum for land-based workers in Eire and the UK.

"Scandalously low pay in the shipping industry has driven a fall in UK Ratings of over 60 per cent since the 1980s. Yet there are 87,000 ratings jobs in the UK shipping industry, with demand forecast to grow in the coming years.

"RMT is fighting to enable domestic seafarers to compete

for these jobs by enforcing Minimum Wage legislation and ending nationality based pay discrimination.

"Our fight for pay justice and trade union recognition from these ferry operators is stepping up and we are sending out the clearest possible message to those behind exploitation and union busting in the maritime sector that we are coming for them," he said.



**SOLIDARITY:** Newly elected Liverpool shipping branch secretary Sean Miskimmon pictured on-board the Stena Lagan with newly elected on-board representative Jason Dean and national secretary Darren Procter following a meeting with members to discuss pay, shipboard organising and recent campaigns within the Irish Sea.

## OFFSHORE UNDERSTANDING



Norwegian offshore energy union Industri Energi (IE) and RMT have renewed a Memorandum of Understanding to continue a mutual commitment to work closely together in the North Sea. Industri Energi general secretary Frode Alfheim and national secretary Asle Reime and RMT general secretary Mick Cash and RMT assistant national secretary Mark Carden attended the signing in Liverpool ■

# UNITY IN DIVERSITY

## A celebration of black and ethnic minority union members

RMT published a pamphlet last year to mark the 25th anniversary of the union's black and ethnic minority members' advisory committee and its annual conference.

*Unity in diversity, a celebration of black and ethnic minority union members* was written by Steve Martin a specialist in Black British history and literature. He works with museums, archives and the education sector to bring diverse histories to wider audiences and has published five books.

The pamphlet offers a brief overview of the role played by race in unionised labour in Great Britain with a special look at the part played by rail maritime and transport unions in that story.

It looks back to the 19th century when black seamen and their families settled in Britain's port cities. Many of them would have been among the first significant body of non-white unionised labour. Occasionally, as in the case of the 1911 Seamen's Strike, black and white workers in Cardiff took joint industrial action to seek better pay and conditions.

However British unions often fell short in their obligations to defend them so black workers often formed their own organisations.

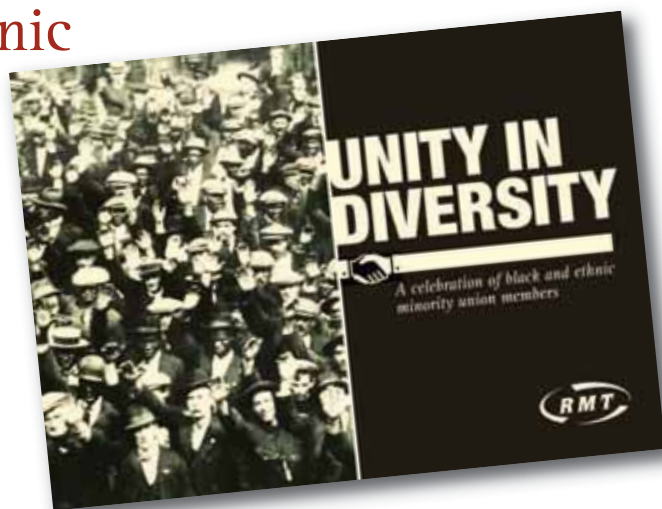
After the war the Windrush generation came to Britain and many worked in the transport sector. *Unity in diversity* looks at the struggles for equality that followed including breaking the

colour bar at Euston station and ending discrimination against Asian workers at Paddington station.

Calls were made at the 1992 RMT annual general meeting for the establishment of a black and minority members' advisory committee. The advisory has held an annual conference since

1994 and continues to work for equality and against racism. This pamphlet is an important publication and every member should take time to read it.

*Unity in diversity, a celebration of black and ethnic minority union members* is available from head office by emailing: [j.webb@rmt.org.uk](mailto:j.webb@rmt.org.uk) ■



# CLAIM EVERYDAY HEALTHCARE COSTS

## Claim cash back on a range of everyday healthcare costs from dental to optical bills with your union

As a member of RMT, you have the opportunity to join the BHSF health cash plan. By joining, you and your family can claim cash towards your everyday healthcare costs, including dental, optical and therapy treatments, plus much more.

The health cash plan available to you has changed; your brand new Health4All health cash plan has enhanced benefits to help you better manage your healthcare costs. One of the key changes is that you can now claim every year for optical, hearing aids and health screening.

Cover starts from as little as £5.78 per month and premiums are payable through convenient payroll deduction.

\*For example, a policyholder with personal Gold cover could claim:

- Up to £150 towards dental bills
- Up to £150 towards optical costs
- Up to £250 towards diagnostic consultations
- Up to £500 towards therapy treatments such as physiotherapy, osteopathy and chiropractic treatment

Policies also include access to

a GP consultation service, connecting you 24/7 to a fully-qualified GP, via a helpline for advice and diagnosis on health matters. Also included is a telephone helpline available 24/7, providing a telephone counselling service on stress, family relationships, substance abuse and debt, along with legal advice and information on financial and health matters.

Any RMT member aged 16 or over, who normally resides in the UK can apply; no medical is required and 90 per cent of eligible claims are paid within two working days of receipt.

You can claim from the start

date of your policy with the exception of maternity benefit which is subject to a 10 month qualifying period; and if you have an existing medical condition, you will have to wait two years before you are covered for hospital claims for the same or a related condition. Telephone helplines can be accessed from the start date of your policy.

For more information about the BHSF Health4All health cash plan, or to apply, call 0121 629 1089. ■

\*based on the personal Gold cover at £18.50 per month.



# LEARNING THE ROPES

## New RMT reps working in the London Transport reps receive training

RMT reps in Transport for London companies attended a week-long course at Unity House to equip them with knowledge and skills to carry out their roles. They will get together again in September for a second week of training.

Philip Hong, who works for Emirates Cable Car, said that since the course he had managed to recruit three new members.

“Some key points that helped were: more visibility from people seeing me going away on training; offering RMT training to my members, and learning how to better conduct and assert

our rights.

“We are currently going in a good direction with our wage claim. It’s a bit early to celebrate but potentially we are looking at a 12 per cent pay rise and extra annual leave,” he said.

Viktorija Aleksandrova, a cleaner, said that she had found out better ways of dealing with members and non-members.

“Practice plus theory is big power and the course was very informative and helpful in a warm, friendly atmosphere thanks to Janine Booth,” she said.

Another cleaner Shengyul

Sali said that the course provided for union reps to develop skills and to achieve future success with members in the workplace.

“This included: dealing with cases, recruiting new members, advising and representing members and keeping them informed.

“By attending, I realised the awareness and power to gain knowledge of union structures and I strongly recommend these courses to gain knowledge and experience.

“It was great to meet all our comrades who fight on the same matters and cases with our

employers and a special thank you to Janine for her professional teaching,” she said .

Lee Desai-Dunphy , revenue inspector found the course really informative and he felt that it had given him a solid foundation to grow from.

“I learned the various aspects of the union and my role within it and I am finding my feet and providing members with all the information they need regarding on-going issues and all the various meetings that take place amongst the different groups and grades,” he said.



*COURSE: NEC members and president Michelle Rodgers joined course members Shengyul Sali, Cleaner, ABM, East Ham  
Viktorija Aleksandrova, Cleaner, ABM, East Ham  
Lee Desai-Dunphy, Revenue Control Inspector, London Underground Ltd, Baker Street  
Safwaan Patel, Customer Service Assistant, London Underground Ltd, District City group  
Lee Kanzaria, Customer Service Assistant, London Underground Ltd, Wanstead  
Callum Foley, Support Technician, London Underground Ltd, Stratford Market depot  
John Devey, Support Technician, London Underground Ltd, Stratford Market depot  
Sue Emmings, Skipper, London Waterbus, Regents Canal  
Sham, Train Operator, London Underground Ltd, Northfields depot  
Philip Hong, Emirates Cable Car*

# DRIVING CHANGE IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

The union has been working with Labour MP for Leamington and Warwick Matt Western on his Bus Drivers (Working Hours on Local Routes) Bill as RMT bus drivers in England continue to work longer hours than other land transport workers on rates of pay that do not reflect the skill required to do the job.

As well as downgrading those skills and undermining the health of bus drivers, the lax regulation of hours can be fatal.

Matt introduced his Private Members Bill last month following an horrific incident in Coventry city centre in October 2015, when a Stagecoach Midland Red veered off the road and crashed into a supermarket, causing the deaths of seven year-old Rowan Fitzgerald and 76-year-old Dora Hancox and seriously injuring many others.

At the time of the incident, the bus driver, 77-year-old Kailash Chander was working an 11-hour shift at the end of a 75-hour week. His colleagues had remarked to Mr Chander earlier in the day that he looked 'knackered.' The fatal incident was caused when the driver mistook the accelerator for the brake.

As Matt Western said in his



SUPPORT: Labour MPs who support the Bus Drivers (Working Hours on Local Routes) bill including Group convenor Ian Mearns and Shadow Secretary of State for Transport Andy McDonald. Matt Western is front row, first left.

speech to the Commons, this tragedy was all the worse for the fact that it could have been prevented. Stagecoach were fined £2.3 million for failing to prevent this tragedy but the dangers from bus drivers' working excessive hours have not been addressed.

At the moment it is legal for bus drivers on local routes (less than 50 km) to work 10-hour days, with no weekly or fortnightly limit apart from one day off in two weeks. Incredibly, it is entirely legal for a local bus driver to work 130 hours over two weeks, with only a half an hour break after 5.5 hours driving. And even bus drivers' entitlement to 10 hours rest between two working days (or

spread overs) can be reduced to 8.5 hours up to 3 times over a working week.

By contrast, long-distance bus or lorry drivers are legally restricted to 56 hours driving a week or 90 hours over two consecutive weeks. These restrictions must be adopted for local bus drivers, alongside a mandatory break of no less than 45 minutes after no more than 4.5 hours behind the wheel. The present regulations only allow bus drivers a 30-minute break after 5.5 hours behind the wheel. In reality, bus drivers are taking shorter breaks or no break at all if routes are congested or other factors cause delays.

As Matt Western stated to

MPs: "The culture of long hours among bus drivers is accompanied by low wage rates which places a dubious incentive on overtime.

"Over the past two decades, wages have fallen relative to average incomes. This is causing bus drivers to work nearly six hours a week more than average workers to sustain their incomes at a reasonable level.

"Regulations must prevent that, but must also ensure that bus drivers are paid properly for the essential public service they provide. This is important at a time when operators are cutting unprofitable routes and local councils are cutting funding to bus services.

The policies of the Coalition

## PAUL FLYNN-A TRIBUTE

Newport branch secretary Steve Richards pays tribute to Paul Flynn Labour MP for Newport West who passed away last month

It was a very special privilege to have been a lifelong friend of Paul Flynn. As an MP he battled eloquently to support the struggles of the working class and the issues they face on a daily basis. For example, in his work as an MP he gave particular support and muster to transport workers, including as a member of the RMT Parliamentary group. In the maritime sector he questioned the practices associated with Flags of Convenience. This in turn led him to look closer at

the appalling condition of service for maritime workers and fought to improve those conditions through new legislation.

It seems ironic that the first time I met Paul Flynn was at a conference sponsored by the then NUR themed as Campaigning for Change. Paul, then a local Gwent County Councillor, addressed the conference as how he intended to win back Newport West from the clutches of a Tory MP Mark Robinson who had bagged the

newly-formed constituency. History dictates the result of that 1987 election and indeed how well Paul Flynn had applied what he preached re-campaigning for change. It later formed the basis for his, somewhat tongue-in-cheek-book, *How to Be An MP*. The revenues generated by the book were all donated to the charities that Paul supported.

During his tenure of Newport West as an MP, Paul was a supporter of railways and railway workers. After all, his own father-in-law had been a steam engine driver since the end of World War Two. Paul also became an avid supporter

of the newly merged Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers union (RMT), supporting their cause through campaigning and Early Day Motions thereby stating his support for the rights of railway workers to maintain their hard-won terms and conditions.

Paul Flynn had struggled all his life with a debilitating Rheumatoid Arthritis which had given him a slightly diminutive physical stature, but it gave him the determination to be a giant of a figure and personality in fighting for the rights of working people,

Paul Philip Flynn (February 9 1935 – February 17 2019) was

and Conservative governments have led to 8,000 bus drivers losing their jobs, bus fares in England (outside of London) increasing at over twice the rate of average earnings and over 3,300 bus services in England and Wales reduced, altered or withdrawn since 2010. In 2017-18, the private bus companies in England profited from £3.34 billion in passenger fares and £2.18 billion in subsidy (local authority and DfT), yet the total number of bus passenger journey's fell again for the fourth year running.

RMT is demanding a return to municipally owned bus services but this Bill also allows the chance to hammer home the need for reform to bus drivers' hours. It needs government support to pass but it would limit the working hours of bus drivers and harmonise UK legislation and bring consistency to this issue, to the benefit of bus drivers.

As Matt Western said at the end of his speech: "It cannot be right that we have different regulations for freight vehicles and passenger vehicles. We must harmonise and we must legislate".

The fight goes on for a publicly owned and operated bus industry, recruiting more bus workers on improved terms and conditions to serve a growing number of routes and passengers.



Member of Parliament for Newport West from the 1987 general election until his death. In 2016, he briefly served as Shadow Secretary of State for Wales and Shadow Leader of the House of Commons. Aged 81, he became the oldest MP in over a century to hold a shadow cabinet position. He was a republican and in 1996 tabled a bill to abolish the monarchy via a referendum. He was also a harsh critic of the Iraq War and the War in Afghanistan. ■

## President's column



# CONFERENCE SEASON

Conference season has begun for RMT members and I had the pleasure of attending the young member's conference in London. They had invited Suzi and Vladimir from CGT rail union in France as they build International solidarity for the future. Worker solidarity across the globe is important in today's precarious world and similar fights face each of us.

I also attended a very well-organised signallers conference in Crewe where debates were reassuring showing that our representatives are switched on to the challenge that faces us in an ever-changing industry and that we are ready to change with the modern world with great RMT reps leading the way.

The women's conference hosted by Dover branch was another great success and well-attended, with over sixty-five delegates registered. Jacqui Smith from ITF seafarers office had a great debate which was informative and knowledgeable.

It's International women day on March 8 and I hope that we are all able to join in an event somewhere to celebrate and show how women have enriched the world to which we all belong and how together we are stronger in struggle. I would like to quote Millie Lansbury, a great woman even in today's modern world, and one I think we all

try to do in our day to day life, which Janine Booth kindly allowed me to open her latest book launch.

"How shall we help the poor, the weak, the fallen, weary and heavy-laden, help themselves".

All your resolutions will be dealt with by your NEC members in line with your wishes making our union stronger.

There have been big steps forward also at Northern and South Western Railways but we have to be patient to achieve our goals, also good news for DHL and great work by the rank and file organisers to achieve such results.

I am disgusted by the far right peddling there vile views on our streets and hatred against those of religion, race and organised workers. I am proud in our union we step up and defend fascism and racism and educate our members to see that such behaviour allows the capitalist state to benefit, and leaves the working classes worse off as we fight each other and that leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. It's a responsibility of all of us to be vigilant especially in our workplaces to speak out, to educate and stamp out this behaviour and not ignore! We must not allow going unchallenged.

I was also fortunate enough to be invited to the premiere of Witch Hunt, a film about

expelled Labour member Jackie Walker. Her hearing starts soon and I want to wish Jackie well and I hope the Labour Party stops ripping itself apart and start building on its success of a high increase of members and turn together to rid us of the shocking government who is dividing us and bring our country to its knees as a laughing stock to the world.

I'm also concerned about the election process within our own union as it is seen as wrong to challenge incumbents. There is already language which is undermining our union's democracy and we should embrace the opportunity to challenges as open and transparent and a fair culture of democracy and trust that our members will always choose the right person and this should be done with respect and dignity.

We are one union fighting the bosses and that's where our strength lies. Never forget we are leaders in the trade union movement and respected by many as being a fighting democratic union, member-led creating the structure we are all so proud of.

I also managed to visit Chester branch and Manchester South, both well attended with rank and file members.

In Solidarity,  
Michelle Rodgers



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## DISABLED MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

## LIVING AND WORKING WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

My name is Neil Owen and I have Multiple Sclerosis (MS). I'm a signaller in the West Midlands Signalling Centre (WMSC), Birmingham, and I represent the Midlands region on RMT's Disabled Members' Advisory Committee.

In 2005, I noticed my right eye vision seemed strange. The optician referred me for investigation. Eighteen months of eye tests, blood tests and MRI scans later, the consultant told me that I had a very minor case of MS.

Fast forward to 2012/2013: My vision was playing up again and I was suffering from anxiety, panic attacks and depression and falling over for no apparent reason.

I was a Mobile Operations Manager (MOM), dealing with every railway incident imaginable (fatalities,

dewirements, trespass etc) that needed me to go trackside. It got to the point that I hated going to work as I couldn't work out what was wrong with me. The thought of going trackside, especially at night on my own, was making me physically sick. I kept it hidden from work as best I could.

My marriage had broken down and I can't believe how close I came to suicide. I still have my self-harm scars.

After several 999 calls due to panic attacks, I went to my GP who sent me to hospital. After more tests and scans I was finally diagnosed in March 2014 with Relapsing Remitting Multiple Sclerosis (RRMS) and told that I did have full-blown MS back in 2007.

From then on, I kept my employer, Network Rail, appraised of my situation. The



trackside working environment presented barriers to me, so I chose to get away from it and went back to being a signaller. Quite rightly, occupational health barred me from working trackside.

In January 2019, my consultant diagnosed me with moving onto the next stage: Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis (PPMS).

Railway Pensions say I can retire now on ill-health grounds as MS is classed as an incurable debilitating disease. But I feel I have a few more years left in me as long as my MS doesn't deteriorate. On my current medications life is bearable albeit a daily taxation on all my senses. ■

More information on multiple sclerosis at [www.mstrust.org](http://www.mstrust.org)

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# JOURNEY OF A RAILWAYMAN

Angela Cobbinah meets Tony Donaghey, the Irish country lad who made St Pancras his first and last stop when he landed a job as on the railways

When Tony Donaghey crossed the Irish Sea in search of work he ended up at St Pancras Station in a job that would last him a lifetime, earning him official recognition more than four decades later as its longest serving railway worker.

So when he was barred from entering the station to take part in a BBC interview during St Pancras International Station's grand opening in 2007 he was more than a little annoyed.

"It was a ridiculous situation," he recalls chuckling. "I had been stepping in and out of there for 47 years and now some job's worth was telling me I needed a pass to get in. I didn't know anything about a pass but I knew I had an appointment to attend and stood my ground. In the end I was allowed through." Getting the better part of an argument is nothing new for Tony. After starting work as a guard on Midland line trains in 1960, he became a union member, rising through the ranks over the years to become president of the RMT in 2004.

"When I got the job at St Pancras I was only 17 and not long over from a small hill farm in Donegal. Everything was so alien to me and I felt lost," he begins explaining in his soft Irish brogue. "I decided the best way to get support was to join the union. I met some good people in it who showed me the ropes and I never looked back."

By 1966 he was a shop steward, helping to negotiate better conditions for fellow workers.

"In those days you had goods trains running through the night and working on the railways could be very arduous. You often had to start your shift in the early hours and there was nothing like unsocial hours allowances. Until the 1970s certain grades of workers did not even receive sick pay. We successfully negotiated for things like this as well as a railway pension scheme. At the end of the day you had to fight for better conditions – they weren't going to be offered to you on a plate." When it came to helping out individual staff, one case in particular brings out his easy smile. It concerned fellow St Pancras train guard Jerry Williams, who was elected the first black mayor of Camden in 1988. "Not long after his election, he was disciplined for having too much time off. I represented Jerry at the hearing and took great pleasure in pointing out that as he was now Mayor Williams he was entitled to this. They were extremely embarrassed and threw the case out."

When Tony joined St Pancras, like many Irish migrants he lived in Camden Town, then Archway before eventually moving to Borehamwood, conveniently just a few stops up the line from St

Pancras. He takes me on a tour around the station that was practically a second home to him, showing me what was once there and what still is and revelling in the memories of the fellowship that develops when people spend a lot of time



together, not just railway men and women, but those whose work took them to St Pancras to pick up freighted post and newspapers. He loved his job as a guard, where passenger protection was paramount. "I spent three months learning about health and safety and if I didn't pass that stage of the training I would have been told to leave," he tells me.

"There's a lot of talk about new technology these days. Technology is not always reliable and at the end of the day people need people."

Like a cabbie, Tony has stories of those he once had on his train, including John Betjeman, a frequent traveller and the man credited with saving the station from

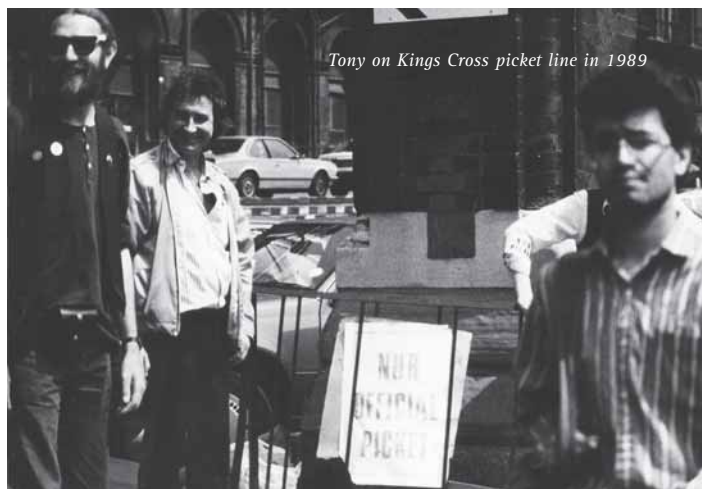
demolition in the 1960s. "He was very eccentric," he says, leaving it at that. Privatisation in 1994 came as a huge blow.

"It has been a disaster for both passengers and workers," he insists. Aside from destroying solidarity among staff who once worked for a single entity, it removed whole tiers of services to the public, like the porters – known in St Pancras as 'weasellers'. His three-year stint as RMT president came in the twilight of his career and these days he is busy with the union's retired section as well as the National Pensioners Convention, work that frequently brings him into St Pancras.

"They've done a really decent job on the station," he says

gazing up at the grand expanse of the Barlow roof. "We were afraid that it might end up being a biscuit tin like Euston. It's a lovely building but it is the people inside it who really make it what it is". ■

*"This article first appeared in St Pancras: A journey through 150 years of history. Copies available to members by emailing [bdenny@rmt.org.uk](mailto:bdenny@rmt.org.uk)*



Tony on Kings Cross picket line in 1989



# STEVE LANCEY RETIRES

Steve Lancey has retired from this job as the RMT North East regional office administrator after working over 43 years for the union.

He commenced his employment with the NUR on August 5 1974 as a junior clerk aged 16 and joined the Industrial Relations Department two years later. In January 1984 he transferred to the

organisation and offices Services department and attended the AGMs in Llandudno and Ayr.

He became the assistant private secretary to the general secretary in 1986 before joining the North East regional office in 1992.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that whenever Steve's name was mentioned the

response was that he was dedicated, efficient, knowledgeable and professional in his role

"Steve has always come across as a calm, mild mannered and amiable character, however this is nothing new. Indeed the union sought a reference from his school before he commenced his employment and his Headmaster's response was:

"Stephen has always been very well-behaved and his teachers are pleased with the way in which he has worked throughout his course".

As a retirement gift the union assisted with a contribution towards the purchase of a motor home to enable him and his family the freedom to take holidays in his retirement. ■



# DEALING WITH SUICIDE

## RMT member Fiona Flavien reports on the first union course on dealing with suicides

I work at Watford Junction Train Station as a Platform Assistant. My job, day to day, is dealing with customers and it has given me an insight to dealing with people. However, I always felt I could do more to help me in my role.

I noticed a two-day pilot course in RMT News to be held at the Bob Crow National Education Centre in Doncaster. It was called Managing Suicidal Contacts and Trauma Support Training by Samaritans.

I really wanted to go as I knew this course would be important and beneficial to me, the company I work for, my colleagues and the customers. My aim was to get a better understanding and initiative for my role and to give more support through training for helping people who find themselves in situations that can be preventable.

The first day was Trauma

Support Training which looked at how railway staff can be supported after a fatality or other traumatic incidents.

This course teaches you and provides advice on how you can be supported. It breaks down step by step learning tools for self help strategies and support.

The second day was Managing Suicidal Contacts which promotes skills and confidence and also to recognise and engage with potentially suicidal people. This course gave an insight to suicidal awareness and signs of intent.

Both these courses were informative, engaging and it really helped me become more aware and also the confidence to approach someone in need of help. Confidence is a key ingredient.

These courses are tailored for all employees across the railway industry. I'm really glad I attended and I would like to

thank RMT for providing facilities for the course, both of the Samaritan trainers Jason and Chris and also the amazing

RMT group of people I did the course with. They were all very supportive, positively sharing experiences and ideas. ■



RMT regional organiser John Leach presented a 40-year award to BR Patel, a stalwart of the union. BR reminded branch in his acceptance speech of the need

for unity and how the union has represented him and others over the years and been the backbone of the workplace for years. ■

# RMT DONATES TO 'NICLAS Y GLAIS' MEMORIAL

Following a resolution from the Bridgend and Llantrisant branch, the RMT South Wales and West of England regional council has made a significant donation towards the erection of a monument to commemorate the great Welsh socialist TE Nicholas - better known as 'Niclas y Glais'.

Niclas dedicated his life to campaigning for socialism and peace and was imprisoned during the Second World War for his stand against the imperialist nature of the confrontation. A nonconformist preacher, then a dentist by profession, Niclas was also a prolific poet and translated the words of the 'The Red Flag' into Welsh.

He was a close ally to the founder of the Independent Labour Party, Keir Hardie, acting as his election agent and then standing as candidate for the Merthyr/Aberdare constituency following Hardie's death. Niclas

then transferred his allegiance from Labour to the Communist Party.

Born to a family of tenant farmers on the Preseli hills in Pembrokeshire in 1879, the hardship of his rural upbringing moulded Niclas into a lifelong campaigner for socialism and trade unionism, ideals which intertwined with his Christian beliefs. The militarism and royalism of the British State were always a focus for his attacks, often from the pulpits of the chapels where he preached.

Niclas y Glais was a man of principle who showed courage in his beliefs in the face of vilification and persecution. He was an internationalist who valued the culture of his native land, a campaigner for a more just society, a socialist and a patriot. He dedicated his life to these ideals before his passing in 1971.

The call for a monument to



commemorate Niclas came following the recent publication of his biography written by former BBC journalist Hefin Wyn, another son of the Preseli.

"He is one of the heroes of the area" said Hefin Wyn. "There is a strong tradition of erected stones in Pembrokeshire.

Niclas deserves to be remembered in this way.

"The memorial will be on the mountain slopes close to his old home where he was brought up. This is the area that made him what he was a man of principle," he said. ■

# RON'S 70 YEARS' SERVICE

RMT South East and Anglia Region held an event at the March Railway Club recently to mark Ron Douglas's seventy years' service to the union.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash presented Ron with a mounted badge collection as a small token of the union's appreciation for the work he has carried out in the service of members.

"I have known Ron for many years and he has always selflessly served the membership to the best of his ability.

"He represents the very best of what this union does for its members day-in day-out and I am proud to know him," he said.

Ron joined the railways as a 'box boy' at Colchester signal

box in May 1949 aged 15 before being called up for National Service. He re-joined the railways at Bluntshall signal box before becoming a relief signalman for Anglia region.

He returned to Colchester signal box and became a route manager until retirement in 1998. Throughout his working life Ron was active in the union as a branch secretary, on sectional councils and as AGM delegate. He has represented people at tribunals, disciplinarys and hearings on behalf of the union.

On retirement he became the regional retired members' secretary for Anglia and continues to work with the regional council. He has also served three terms as president



of the National Pensioners Convention and is standing for a fourth and final term this year.

Ron said that he had enjoyed his time working on the railway and with retired members and

the pensioners' movement.

"I have always tried to look after people that maybe cannot help themselves, it is what trade unionism is all about," he said.

As such Ron remains an inspiration to us all. ■



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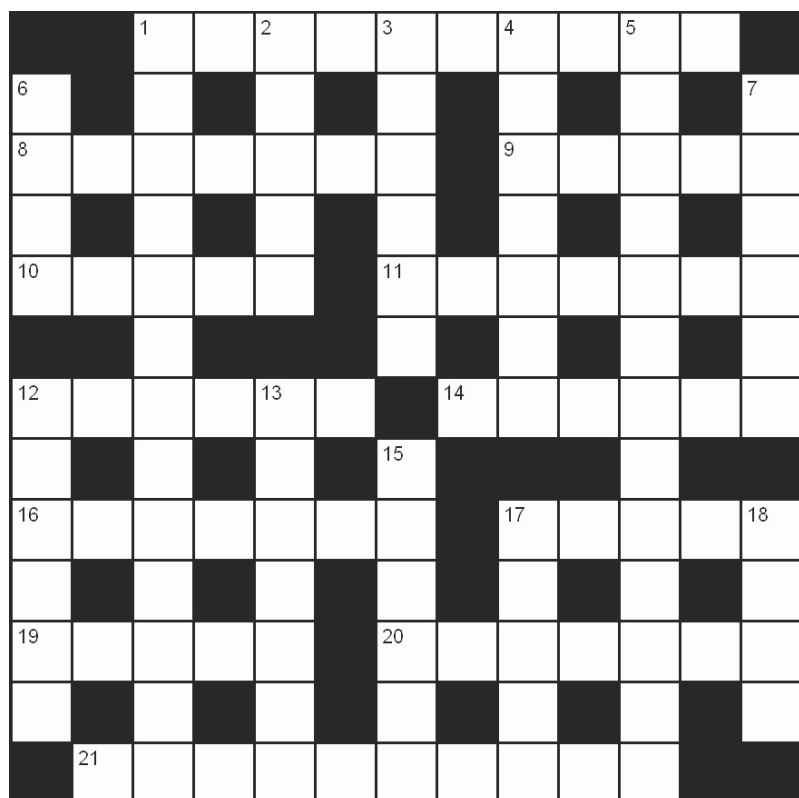
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## Last month's solution...



The winner of last month's prize crossword is John Marshall, Blackburn.

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Winner and solution in next issue.



**Crossword sponsored by UIA**

### ACROSS

- 1 Aquatic arthropod (10)
- 8 Military landing site (3,4)
- 9 Young eel (5)
- 10 Ooze (5)
- 11 Died out (7)
- 12 Securely (6)
- 14 Group of performers (6)
- 16 Cost of flight (7)
- 17 Feudal lord (5)
- 19 Type of eel (5)
- 20 Ear part (7)
- 21 Container (10)

### DOWN

- 1 Line around an object (13)
- 2 Tsarist edict (5)
- 3 In levels (6)
- 4 Inventor (7)
- 5 Willing to take risks (13)
- 6 Stare (4)
- 7 Squirm (6)
- 12 Sample (6)
- 13 Oozing (7)
- 15 Return to normal (6)
- 17 Expressive (5)
- 18 Open vessel (4)



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