

# RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

## NATIONALISE SCOTLAND'S RAILWAYS



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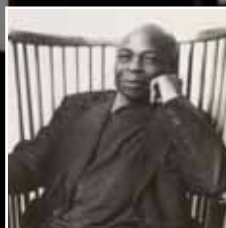
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[www.rmt.org.uk](http://www.rmt.org.uk)

# 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



# FACING CHALLENGES

The move into a third and prolonged period of lockdown presents RMT with a new phase of serious challenges in every sector where we organise.

Even before the announcement early in the New Year our negotiators were making it clear to employers that we want to see industry-wide approaches to manage the serious risks to both staff and passengers raised by the new COVID variant.

Existing risk assessments must be reviewed to reflect the virulence and transmission rates of the new strain. No corners can be cut in this particular dangerous and critical period of the pandemic.

In this issue of RMT News you will see that our reps, branches, regions and national organisation are showing extraordinary resilience and agility in delivering for our members in the most challenging of circumstances. I want to thank each and every

one of you for your efforts.

2020 was the most difficult year I have experienced in my forty years in this trade union and 2021 is shaping up to be just as tough. All of us have a role to play in the battles ahead and we will need to organise and build our way out of this crisis and that means recruiting the non-members in every workplace to strengthen the union at every level. I hope you will be able to help us in that campaign.

RMT's priority is to protect jobs, capacity and infrastructure so that the transport, shipping and offshore industries are fighting fit to help punch Britain back into economic recovery when the lockdown lifts. With the vaccine rolling out we have to navigate the next few months whilst looking ahead to the crucial role that transport will play in rebuilding our economic strength.

RMT News is compiled and originated by National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD. Tel: 020 7387 4771. Fax: 020 7529 8808. e-mail [bdenny@rmt.org.uk](mailto:bdenny@rmt.org.uk) The information contained in this publication is believed to be correct but cannot be guaranteed. All rights reserved. RMT News is designed by Bighand Creative and printed by Leycol Printers. General editor: Mick Cash. Managing editor: Brian Denny. No part of this document may be reproduced without prior written approval of RMT. No liability is accepted for any errors or omissions. Copyright RMT 2016

**When you have finished with this magazine give it to a workmate who is not in your union.**

# ACT ON MARGAM REPORT

RMT calls for establishment of rail industry group to oversee response to Port Talbot rail tragedy report

RMT is calling for the establishment of a new body to oversee the Rail Accident Investigation Branch's (RAIB) recommendations in the wake of publication of its report into the Margam Port Talbot rail tragedy in which two union members were killed.

On the morning of Wednesday July 3 2019, the two track workers were struck and fatally injured by a passenger train at Margam East Junction on the South Wales main line. A third track worker came very close to being struck. The three workers, who were part of a group of six staff, were carrying out a maintenance task on a set of points.

The union has written the Chief Executives of Network Rail, the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB), Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and to HM Chief Inspector of Railways at Office of Road and Rail (ORR) calling for a group to be formed to oversee the rail industry response to the tragedy.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that all of the recommendations made by RAIB in their report have implications for RMT members either in how they work or how their safety is managed.

"In particular the report recognises the role of trade unions in establishing and maintaining safe systems of work.

"Many of the concerns identified have been issues our representatives have raised over the years with the employers and the safety authorities. It is also clear to us that some of the implications of

the report's recommendations may also have an effect on our members' terms and conditions of employment.

"Network Rail has previously been unable to accept the need for oversight of its safety improvement programmes. This report demonstrates Network Rail's failures over recent years to provide our members with a safe working environment.

"RMT is calling for the establishment of a new body to oversee the RAIB's recommendations to ensure track worker safety so that our members will not be exposed to such risks in the future," he said.

RAIB made a number of recommendations in its latest report including:

- improving its safe work planning processes and the monitoring and supervision of maintenance staff (three recommendations)
- renewing the focus on developing the safety behaviours of all its front-line track maintenance staff, their supervisors and managers
- establishing an independent expert group to provide continuity of vision, guidance and challenge to its initiatives to improve track worker safety
- improving the safety reporting culture
- improving the assurance processes, the quality of information available to senior management, and processes for assessing the impact of changes to working practices of front-line staff (three recommendations). ■

# RMT CALLS FOR INVESTIGATION INTO BUS FIRES



DANGER: Bus fire near Denny in August 2018

A rising trend of bus and coach fires must be “thoroughly investigated”, RMT has demanded after figures obtained by *The Scotsman* newspaper showed they increased for three consecutive years.

There have been more than 200 incidents north of the Border since 2015, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service statistics reveal.

They included a coach catching fire while transporting school children in Livingston in 2019. An industry source has also said that it was likely that not all fires were reported to the UK government's Vehicle Safety Agency.

Figures obtained from a freedom of information request showed the total number of fires tackled by firefighters increased from 31 in 2015-16 to 32 the following year and it went up again to 43 in 2017-18.

It rose for a third year to 48 in 2018-19. Last year, the total fell by one, and it has reached 12 so far in 2020-21, although bus and coach mileage is likely to have been substantially cut by the Covid pandemic.

RMT has warned that the figures obtained in Scotland are mirrored by a spate of fires on buses across the South West. Stagecoach Bus is still investigating a bus fire last year which nearly destroyed a single decker bus in Tiverton. The driver and passengers all escaped unhurt.

RMT regional union organiser Barry West has been asking questions about the large number of bus fires across the country over the last two years.

He has been asking the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, Stagecoach and the Road Traffic Commissioner who is responsible for looking at the bigger picture nationally.

“You only have to do a quick Google search to see how frequently fires like this are happening across the country. My concern is that one of these fires could be catastrophic. I don't know that anybody is looking at the national picture and my belief is that we are one small step away from multiple fatalities,” he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the latest figures revealed a concerning increase in the number of bus fires in Scotland recorded in recent years.

“We believe it is important this trend is thoroughly investigated and action taken to tackle the causes of bus fires.

“RMT has longstanding concerns about the risks to bus workers and passengers of vehicle fires.

“There should be a consistent, industry-wide approach to bus safety which ensures all operators are complying with their health and safety duties, there is a comprehensive evacuation procedure that is communicated to bus workers and passengers, operators ensure bus drivers can directly and easily contact emergency services in the event of an incident, all vehicles are regularly maintained and inspected, and the potential for fires is thoroughly risk assessed,” he said.



# NATIONALISE SCOTLAND'S RAILWAYS NOW!

## Coalition of organisations and MSPs call for public ownership of rail from this month

A coalition of organisations and MSPs has called on the Scottish government to take Scotland's rail passenger services into public ownership from this January 2021 when the Scotrail and Caledonian Sleeper Covid Emergency Measures Agreements expire.

The letter is signed by 14 organisations representing Scotland's rail workers, passengers, disabled people, pensioners, environmentalists, civil society and 20 cross-party MSPs.

The signatories highlight that the Covid-19 pandemic has created 'substantial and

unprecedented challenges' for Scotland's railway, and that the Scottish Government has provided significant funding for the operators during this period. Yet, despite this support from the Scottish taxpayer, the private operators Abellio Scotrail and Serco Caledonian Sleeper 'still stand to profit from Scotland's railway through being paid a fee for operating services'.

The letter to Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon goes on to say that "Appointing a public operator in the New Year would provide greater stability

and resilience for Scotland's railways. It would also end profiteering and provide greater value for money for taxpayers and passengers by ensuring all funds are reinvested into creating an improved and more affordable railway that can play a greater role in connecting communities and reducing carbon emissions."

The letter is signed by the following organisations: RMT, Aslef, STUC, TSSA, Unite the Union, Association of British Commuters, Bring Back British Rail, Common Wealth, Disabled People Against Cuts,

Friends of the Earth Scotland, Get Glasgow Moving, Platform, Scottish Pensioners Forum, We Own It.

The letter is signed by the following MSPs: Jackie Baillie MSP, Claudia Beamish MSP, Neil Bibby MSP, Sarah Boyack MSP, Neil Findlay MSP, John Finnie MSP, Rhoda Grant MSP, Iain Gray MSP, Daniel Johnson MSP, James Kelly MSP, Johann Lamont MSP, Monica Lennon MSP, Richard Leonard MSP, Lewis Macdonald MSP, Pauline McNeill MSP, Alex Rowley MSP, Mark Ruskell MSP, Elaine Smith MSP, Colin Smyth MSP, David Stewart MSP.

# THE FUTURE OF SCOTLAND'S RAIL PASSENGER SERVICES

Dear First Minister,

We are writing to you regarding the future of Scotland's rail passenger services and to call on the Scottish Government to take these services into public ownership from January 2021.

Prior to the outbreak of Covid-19, the Abellio Scotrail franchise was providing neither value for money nor an acceptable level of service for passengers. You, of course, recognised this and last year stated that Scotrail was in 'the last chance saloon'.

The Covid-19 pandemic

has, of course, created substantial and unprecedented challenges for Scotland's railways, and passenger numbers remain significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels. The Scottish Government has, through Emergency Measures Agreements, provided significant additional funding for Scotrail and the Caledonian Sleeper, who would otherwise have become unviable during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite this support from the Scottish taxpayer, it is business as usual for the

private operators who still stand to profit from Scotland's railway through being paid a fee for operating services.

We firmly believe that when the current Emergency Measures Agreements expire in January 2021, rather than extending them, the Scottish Government should use the powers that it has to take Scotland's rail passenger services into public ownership via the Operator of Last Resort (OLR). As you know these powers can be used when the rail operator is no longer able to run the service and is a course of

action the Welsh Government has recently taken to protect its rail services.

Appointing a public operator in the New Year would provide greater stability and resilience for Scotland's railways. It would also end profiteering and provide greater value for money for taxpayers and passengers by ensuring all funds are reinvested into creating an improved and more affordable railway that can play a greater role in connecting communities and reducing carbon emissions."



**REDUNDANCIES:** Apprentices at a Babcock training base in Blantyre, Scotland.



## SAFETY CONCERNS ON SCOTLAND'S RAILWAY

RMT has welcomed Members of the Scottish Parliament raising much needed awareness of safety concerns on Scotland's railway.

Concerns grew following reports that Network Rail in Scotland has over 200 infrastructure vacancies whilst at the same time some of the biggest private rail infrastructure contractors including Babcock Rail, SPL Powerlines, Story Plant and AMCO were ploughing ahead

with redundancies, posing safety concerns with Scotland's rail infrastructure.

MSPs have tabled Parliamentary Questions and a Motion calling on the Scottish government to ensure the safety on Scotland's railway by protecting and increasing vital infrastructure jobs on Scotland's railways to keep Scotland moving as the country moves into the next phase of the Covid-19 crisis.

In the motion the MSPs say

they are "alarmed that these reported rail infrastructure redundancies and unfilled vacancies will adversely impact on the quality of the rail network and passenger safety".

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the union was concerned about the double whammy of significant vacant posts in Network Rail Scotland while private contractors were making vital railway workers redundant is putting huge

pressure on an already stretched workforce.

"We'd like to thank those MSPs who have shone a light on this and we now need cast iron guarantees from the Scottish government that they will ensure those vacant posts are filled as quickly as possible and that there will be no more redundancies by private contractors and ensure there is a proper strategy to protect and increase vital rail jobs in Scotland," he said. ■

# SWR ATTACK CATERING SERVICES

## RMT ramps up campaign to protect catering services on South Western Railway

RMT is calling on the government to urgently intervene and reverse South Western Railway's reckless decision to axe its on-board catering provision.

SWR's decision puts over 130 jobs at risk of redundancy this month and shows no regard for passengers who now risk losing the catering provision across SWR services. Thousands of passengers have already signed an RMT online petition calling for catering services to be retained and protected on SWR.

At the same time as SWR is axing this vital service, its operations continue to be fully publicly funded under its Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement (ERMA). RMT analysis reveals that SWR could receive over £24 million in 'management fees' under the terms of its ERMA, money which can be used to fund profits and make dividend payments.

SWR's expenditure is calculated using the ORR's financial information from 2018-19 as the most recent year's data indicating the cost base of franchises before the Covid-19 crisis began. Franchise payments to government have been deducted from this cost base as it is assumed these will not be being paid.

SWR has said that it consulted the DfT over its decision to axe this vital service and the union is demanding that the government intervene as a matter of urgency to reverse this damaging decision, and to ensure all catering jobs and services on SWR are protected.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the union welcomed the growing support from the public and MPs who have recognised that catering services on the SWR network must be protected.

"It is downright scandalous that SWR has axed its catering contract; putting over 130 jobs



### EARLY DAY MOTION 1266 ON CATERING SERVICES AND JOBS ON SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

*That this House notes that South Western Railway (SWR) has terminated its on-board catering contract with Elinor and that this decision puts over 130 catering workers at risk of being made redundant in January 2021; believes that the Job Retention Scheme, which is in operation until March 2021, should have been used to protect these jobs in the short term; is concerned that this decision will lead to the removal of catering services across the SWR network; believes that this will be detrimental to passengers and that the provision of on-*

*board catering services must be protected across the network as part of rail's recovery from the covid-19 pandemic; notes that the cuts to catering are being made despite the SWR franchise being fully funded by the Government through an Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement (ERMA); further notes that the ERMA pays SWR a fee which can be used to fund profits and make dividend payments; and therefore calls on the Government to intervene to ensure this catering service and all at-risk jobs are protected.*

|                                                         |                   |                       |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Cost base minus franchise payments to Govt 2018-19      | 6 months 2% (EMA) | 12 months 1.5% (ERMA) | Total       |
| £978,000,000                                            | £9,780,000        | £14,670,000           | £24,450,000 |
| Source: ORR Rail industry financial information 2018-19 |                   |                       |             |

at risk come January whilst its operations are being fully funded by public money under its Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement.

"Had SWR retained the contract, these jobs could have been protected under the Job Retention Scheme until at least April 2021.

"The DfT cannot sit by and allow SWR to make these

damaging cuts, while at the same time agreeing to pay it a management fee that could be worth in the region of £24m overall.

"Passengers and taxpayers will be shocked to hear that SWR stands to make a profit from its publicly funded management fee whilst axing a key service that will worsen the passenger experience and

put more than 130 people out of work in a matter of days.

"The government must take action now to permanently protect all catering jobs and services on SWR. All future public funding for SWR must be dependent on retention of on-board catering," he said.

The SWR ERMA has been in place since September

2020, and is in place to the end of March 2021. It can be extended by a further half year at the DfT's discretion, bringing the total possible ERMA period to 12 months. The calculations for management fee, below, have been made on the basis that the ERMA will run for 12 months.

# HULL TRAINS AND SOME GRAND CENTRAL SERVICES RESUME

RMT welcomed the re-launch of Hull Trains and some Grand Central Services last month and called for the same level of support for open access providers that franchise companies have benefited from to provide stability and end the stop-start approach that has blighted both services.

Both companies have experienced job losses in recent times and RMT remains committed to alleviating any further cuts and to working hard to find alternative positions for those affected by the staffing reductions by putting in place structures to provide on-going support for anyone affected, including for any fixed term contract staff who have also lost jobs.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that Covid 19 had been an incredibly challenging time for the rail industry – but probably more so for the open access sectors like Hull Trains and Grand Central who to date have not received the same government support as franchised train operators.

"It is good to see these services both back on track,

providing an essential link between the North East, Yorkshire, Humberside and London.

"Our members will be incredibly pleased to see the start up of the services and look forward to their expansion to full timetable as soon as possible. It is a tribute to their efforts and those of our reps, officers, the union's campaigning and political support from local MPs that we have this positive news.

"Sadly, both companies have experienced unnecessary job losses in recent times and RMT remains committed to alleviating any job losses, working hard to fully support and to find alternative positions for those affected.

"Services operated by both Grand Central and Hull Trains are essential to the communities they serve and the provision of good communication links between London and the North: Sunderland and Bradford for Grand Central and Humberside for Hull Trains.

"Both services will be crucial for boosting the economy and tourism and helping in the fight against

climate change.

"It is clearly in the public interest that these rail links are sustained and developed and for that to happen there

should be no more stop start. Both operators should instead be given the support needed to guarantee future stability," he said. ■



THE UK MARITIME  
ANCHOR FUND

# SEAFARERS UK LAUNCH THE UK MARITIME ANCHOR FUND

TRAVEL BAN: MS Norbay and MV Delphine vessels seen docked at Dublin Port. With the growing number of COVID cases and a dangerously contagious new COVID variant raging in the UK, ferries crossing the Irish Sea will be limited to freight travel under the temporary travel ban.

## Fund launched to support working age UK national merchant seafarers impacted by COVID-19

The charity Seafarers UK has created the UK Maritime Anchor Fund with key delivery partner charities to provide an end-to-end package of support for seafarers experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19 related loss of work or disruption of employment opportunities. Up to £200K has been allocated from Seafarers UK's COVID-19 Emergency Fund, to support UK merchant seafarers, of working age, through the new UK focused fund, which can be accessed via Seafarers' Advice and Information Line (SAIL).

The UK Maritime Anchor

Fund addresses financial difficulties and their impact which can include strained personal relationships and impact mental health. Merchant seafarers can apply to the Fund if experiencing hardship caused by COVID-19.

This may arise from redundancy, difficulties renewing contracts, problems joining a ship due to travel restrictions, reduced earnings or COVID-19 related illness. Grants are available to cover a significant reduction in income, top-up of Universal Credit and payment of priority debts relating to mortgage or

rent, council tax and arrears, etc. The grant is just one part of a wide range of support which will enable a return to stability and financial resilience. It includes:

- Confidential personal advice on financial matters such as budgeting, income maximisation and access to eligible welfare benefits – provided by SAIL
- Advice and help to tackle other related problems such as debt, tax and housing issues – provided by SAIL
- Up to six sessions of free

relationship counselling (referrals will be made by SAIL to Relate)

- Mental health and wellbeing support and counselling – provided by TogetherAll and funded by Seafarers' Hospital Society

UK merchant seafarers needing help should contact SAIL. SAIL is a Citizens Advice service for seafarers and their families. SAIL supports seafarers by phone, email and face-to-face appointments via Skype and Zoom. SAIL can be contacted by phone on 0800 160 1842 or email

advice@sailine.org.uk.

SAIL will assess entitlement for welfare benefits, and other needs. Where appropriate SAIL will make a grant application to Seafarers' Hospital Society for financial support. The process has been refined to be as straightforward as possible to reduce admin and stress to applicants.

The Fund is open to any working age, UK national seafarer experiencing hardship because of financial problems caused by COVID-19 regardless of rank or length of service. Anyone in this category facing challenges because of COVID-19 is encouraged to contact SAIL to discuss their situation confidentially, whether the challenge is relationship difficulties or problems paying priority debts, the Fund will address a wide range of problems.

Seafarers UK's Chief Executive Officer, Catherine Spencer said that Seafarers UK works in the UK and world-wide to support seafarers.

"We're pleased to offer help to UK seafarers through the UK Maritime Anchor Fund and encourage UK seafarers to call SAIL to discuss how the Fund can help.

"This new Fund is a great illustration of how our new strategy will get to the heart of issues to provide meaningful help for seafarers," she said.

Seafarers UK has collaborated widely to set up the Fund, working with

Maritime Welfare Charities – SAIL, Seafarers Hospital Society and Shipwrecked Mariners' Society as well as Relate and employed a wide range of methods to reach out to merchant seafarers, including, Nautilus International, RMT, Maritime UK and UK Chamber of Shipping and their members and Seafarers' Support (the maritime charities online welfare guide) to ensure that the Fund is well publicised.

Sandra Welch, CEO at Seafarers Hospital Society said: "We're delighted to be involved in this important initiative. We want merchant seafarers to know that support is out there for them and their families.

"It's not just about money, this is a holistic approach that addresses their wellbeing as well as their welfare needs," she said.

Seafarers UK announced the £2 million COVID-19 Emergency Fund earlier last year. The UK Maritime Anchor Fund has been developed from this Fund to specifically assist UK nationals employed as professional seafarers. Seafarers UK also fund the International Seafarers' Welfare Assistance Network (ISWAN) to provide an Emergency Fund for international seafarers as well Seafarer Help, a free 24-hour multilingual helpline.

Seafarers UK will launch a new strategy in early 2021, The UK Maritime Anchor Fund aligns with Seafarers UK's new



**Do you know there's a Citizens Advice for seafarers and their families?**

**SAIL**  
SEAFARERS' ADVICE & INFORMATION LINE

**Free and confidential advice on debt, benefits, housing & family issues**

**0800 160 1842**  
advice@sailine.org.uk  
www.sailine.org.uk

strategic outcome to enhance the financial resilience of seafarers, which forms part of the new strategy.

The union is also in dispute with Stena Line over the company's failure to address seafarers' and dockers' long standing concerns over sick pay which have been ongoing since the start of the pandemic.

Despite the fact that there was an outbreak of Covid-19

amongst crew on the Stena Estrid between Birkenhead and Belfast, the company continues to deny members' demands over sick pay.

At the start of the lockdown last April Stena Line cut the sick pay scheme agreed with unions and members are tired of Stena's excuses which continue to put crews and dockers in an unacceptable position.

## STENA LINE BATTLE OVER PANDEMIC SICK PAY

RMT is in dispute with Stena Line over the company's failure to address seafarers' and dockers' long standing concerns over sick pay which have been ongoing since the start of the pandemic.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that RMT members on Stena Line

ferries and ports were among the key workers who would once again be straining every sinew to keep the maritime supply lines running as the resurgent Coronavirus threatens the National Health Service, schools and jobs.

"At the start of March 2020 lockdown Stena Line cut the sick pay scheme agreed with

unions and our members are tired of Stena's excuses which continue to put crews, dockers and Customer Service staff in an unacceptable position.

"In December there was an outbreak of Covid-19 amongst crew on the Stena Edda between Birkenhead and Belfast, yet the company

continues to deny our members' demands over sick pay.

"RMT remains available for talks but we are clear that our members should no longer be forced to choose between poverty or going to work when they might have Coronavirus," he said.

# EAST MIDLANDS RAILWAY REFUSES TO ACT

## RMT slams company for playing fast and loose with lives for not taking new variant of COVID seriously

RMT is demanding that East Midlands Railway stop ignoring the science, start taking the threat to lives posed by the new variant of COVID-19 seriously and take immediate action to review and rewrite risk assessments to reflect the current, dire situation.

The union also issued fresh advice to all members to 'safe stop' should they be asked to

work in conditions they regard as being unsafe.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was scandalous that EMR appeared to be the only people in the country who didn't recognise the increased threat to life of the new COVID variant and are carrying on like nothing has changed.

"This union will not tolerate that cavalier approach to both staff and passengers alike.

"In a survey our members have made it clear that they are deeply concerned and we are collecting evidence of the failed and botched "deep clean" the company have promised on their trains.

"We have written to the company and we expect

immediate and decisive action to address our concerns," he said.

The union is also in the process of balloting all our EMR senior conductor members for industrial action following the massive rejection of the company's pay offer. The ballot will open on January 13 2021 and will close February 2 2021.

# CROSS COUNTRY DISPUTE OVER NEW COVID VARIANT

RMT is in dispute with Cross Country trains over the failure of the company to revise its procedures and risk assessments in light of the emergence of the new COVID variant.

Cross Country's approach is that little has changed and that revenue duties should continue in conjunction with previous risk assessments which the union says are wholly inadequate in the face of the new highly virulent COVID strain that has triggered the current lockdown.

RMT has requested a cessation of revenue duties pending a review and possible amendments to risk assessments, this has been flatly rejected by Cross Country and it is this cavalier and irresponsible attitude from the company that has

provoked the dispute.

RMT has informed the company that it is now in dispute with them and is writing to all our affected members - Train Managers,

Senior Conductors, and Revenue Support specialist grades - rebutting the company's irresponsible claims and advising members not to undertake revenue collection

duties as laid out in the current, wholly inadequate, risk assessment guidance and to invoke the company's work safe procedure.



# WIGHTLINK PENSION AND CONDITIONS FIGHT

RMT ferry workers at Wightlink have voted overwhelmingly for both strike action and action short of a strike after negotiations failed to produce an offer on pensions and terms and conditions that meets the very reasonable demands of the workforce.

The ballot of all grades – from seafarers to ticket office staff at Wightlink (Guernsey) and Wightlink Ltd – is over the company's refusal to:

- Withdraw their proposal to close the Defined Benefit Pension Scheme to existing members.
- Withdraw their proposal to reintroduce the flexible working practices which all employees were subject to in the first six months of the pandemic.

Wightlink's action had been particularly disgraceful due to the fact that at the height of the pandemic (April to September) employees loaned 20 per cent of their salary and



Wightlink ferry leaving Portsmouth

gave up terms and conditions for six months to allow the company to keep trading. The company have chosen to repay the generosity of their employees by slashing their pension rights and changing their working conditions.

Meanwhile, Wightlink continues to pay out millions of pounds in dividends to its various private equity owners, extracting funds from the company that should be used

to support a workforce that has shown loyalty to the firm in these unprecedented times.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that members at Wightlink were angry and frustrated that the company was slashing their pensions and terms and conditions on this lifeline service in what is real kick in the teeth for loyal and hard-working staff.

"It is a particularly bitter blow in light of the fact

Wightlink that employees loaned 20 per cent of their salary and gave up terms and conditions for 6 months to allow the company to keep trading at the height of the pandemic.

"Disgracefully, Wightlink has managed to find the funds to pay huge dividends to the various private equity owners that have been feeding off our members' work for the last five years," he said. ■

# ORGANISING INSHORE DIVERS

RMT has initiated a national recruitment and organising campaign targeting inshore divers, commonly referred to as 'civils', working nationwide.

They are a group of divers who are engaged in a variety of projects varying from fish farm diving through to canals, tunnelling, ship inspection, as well as working in the wind-turbine industry. The civil engineering projects that these workers undertake are known as inshore diving or civils as a result.

It is estimated that there are around 600 inshore divers

working all over the UK across 70 registered employers forming the Association of Diving Contractors (ADC) and approximately the same number outside this association.

Historically, this group of workers have suffered from low union representation due to the fragmented and unorganised nature of the sector and they are seeking the support and direction that a trade union offers.

The union has been using the median of zoom meetings to build a campaign and

strategy to improve understanding of various issues surrounding the sector. This includes issues around health and safety, welfare and pay which were found to be appalling and in desperate need of change.

Whilst there was originally some scepticism regarding the impact that the union could have, the meetings were well attended and created constructive discussions into the possibility of creating a collective bargaining agreement for these workers. As a result,

there has been a significant growth to over 100 members in a short period of time with positive indications that this will be increasing.

To ensure the campaign's success members have temporarily allocated to four branches Aberdeen Shipping, North East Shipping, Liverpool Shipping and Dover Shipping to welcome new inshore diver members. These branches will be participating in localised mapping exercises to identify potentials of expanding RMT membership further. ■



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## LEGAL

# FOR MANDATORY ASBESTOS AWARENESS TRAINING



Tony Hood, national head of asbestos strategy at Thompsons solicitors, supports Mesothelioma UK's call for asbestos awareness training

A report by Mesothelioma UK and University of Sheffield recommends healthcare workers have mandatory asbestos awareness training. But is that enough?

Since 1972, when Thompsons brought about the first-ever successful case for asbestos-related disease compensation in the UK to the House of Lords, it has been essential that control of asbestos in the workplace was a priority for the future.

Sadly, not enough has been done to implement and enforce the regulations that are supposed to control asbestos in the workplace. Even in 2020, more needs to be done by those in charge of public buildings to ensure that asbestos is properly managed, and the first step in this process has to be equipping workers to recognise asbestos and understand the risks associated with it.

It is therefore extremely encouraging to see a new report entitled 'MAGS – The Healthcare Staff Mesothelioma Asbestos Guidance Study' recommending mandatory training in asbestos awareness for the UK healthcare workforce.

Funded by Mesothelioma UK and prepared by the University of Sheffield,

the 74-page document sets out a series of recommendations, including adding awareness of asbestos risk to the mandatory training for new members of NHS staff. It also recommends that NHS staff leaving the service should be reminded that asbestos still exists in most NHS premises and that asbestos-related illnesses, such as mesothelioma, are a possibility even when someone is no longer exposed to it.

We welcome the MAGS report and its call for adding asbestos awareness to induction training of healthcare workers – it's certainly a step in the right direction. However, such recommendations should not be limited to those working in healthcare. If this training was mandatory for all public sector workers, it could have a real impact across all sectors.

Worryingly, nearly 700 schools have been recently referred to the national health and safety body over concerns they are failing to safely manage asbestos in their buildings. This means there are potentially thousands of staff and pupils who have been, and still are, at risk of developing an asbestos-related disease. Terrifyingly, it is also thought that



Tony Hood

approximately 85 per cent of school buildings in England contain asbestos, particularly schools that were built between 1945 and 1975.

Even though asbestos was banned more than 20 years ago, the truth is that it is still very much present in workplaces across the UK. This means it remains very much a part of our lives and will continue to devastate our future. To minimise the number of people dying in the long-term, we must train more people now on how to understand its risks so that future exposure to this dangerous substance can be avoided.

Thompsons is one of the leading asbestos solicitors firms in the UK. As a point of principle, it only represents workers and their families who have developed asbestos diseases and never acts for employers, defendants or insurance companies. ■

# FATIGUE RULES FAILING SEAFARERS

## World Maritime University (WMU) uncovers abuse of seafarers' hours and crewing levels in shipping industry

RMT has welcomed new hard-hitting research from a team at the World Maritime University (WMU) which exposes systemic failures in the implementation of the regulatory regime for seafarers' hours of work and rest, undermining the credibility of international regulations relating to working hours.

The union has regularly raised the issue of crewing levels with the UK regulator the Maritime and Coastguard Agency for over a decade.

The report, 'A Culture of Adjustment' confirms previous research that suggested recording malpractices were widespread, which seriously

questions the capacity of the current regulatory framework to prevent fatigue and mitigate its effects.

This is particularly concerning with the number of seafarers serving well beyond their contractual terms and having to take on additional tasks as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

WMU president Dr Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry said that seafarers had a right to the protections set out in international maritime conventions and in particular in the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 as amended as well as in the IMO STCW Conventions as amended.

"It is well known that fatigue leads to adverse impacts on health and wellbeing as well as increasing the risks of maritime accidents. This report is a wake-up call to regulators, industry and seafarers themselves. The system is flawed with respect to implementation and needs serious attention," she said.

### LACK OF CREW

The analysis indicates that insufficient crewing is the root cause of violations especially during peak workload conditions. Imbalance between workload and manning levels indicate that flag States do not always fulfil

responsibilities, nor do they ensure that shipowners carry out theirs with due regard to efficient and sufficient manning levels on board ships.

The fear of the negative consequences of failing inspections and creating problems for shipping companies outweighs the obligation to genuinely comply with international regulations. Employment insecurity accompanied by financial incentives contributes to an environment where adjustment instead of accuracy is the logical outcome. For seafarers, the sole objective of recording hours is to confirm compliance and avoid



### A CULTURE OF ADJUSTMENT

Research report evaluating the implementation of the current maritime regulatory framework on rest and work hours



disruptions to the schedule.

In such an environment, requirements for reporting work/rest hours are seen, by seafarers, as merely a paper exercise. Additionally, software intended to support recordkeeping seems 'gamed' for compliance. Instead of improving accuracy, they effectively incentivise crew to adjust their records.

According to the report, "they are trapped in cognitive dissonance, where deviance is normalised". Many companies appear disinterested in seafarers' feedback on this issue and flag State surveys are limited to reviewing paperwork with no verification of the reality of work on board. Inevitably the effectiveness of the International Safety Management (ISM) Code must

be questioned.

The authors of the report propose three significant areas for urgent attention. The first is the need for collaboration on a research-based model for determining safe manning for all operational conditions. The second is a review of the effectiveness of the ISM code and the third is to consider the 'chronic mistrust between shore and ship personnel combined with the job insecurity characteristic of numerous seafarers' working contracts'.

The conclusions of the research are shocking in their revelation of a system that looks good on paper but in fact masks an insidious unspoken collusion, which ultimately negatively impact the effectiveness of

international Conventions.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash welcomed the groundbreaking report.

"We have long raised our concerns over the tick box exercise on hours of work and manning levels which is especially common on Flag of Convenience registered ships in the UK shipping industry.

"Importing crew from the other side of the world to work 12 hour days, seven days a week for months on end remains an issue for RMT.

"The report correctly finds the current culture and practice on crewing levels in the merchant shipping industry to be dangerous and at odds with efforts to improve seafarer rights and maritime safety. This report must be a wake up call to government,

industry, trade unions and seafarers on the need for safe hours of work and crewing levels which take into consideration the commercial operation of a vessel and not just a minimum safe manning model.

"This would prevent shipowners from stretching safety regulations to cut labour costs. The culture of routinely undermining seafarer rights and maritime safety to protect profits per voyage must end and RMT call on the UK government to engage with trade unions in order to enact reforms that tackle seafarer fatigue around the UK coast at the earliest opportunity.

Such reform would be consistent with the actions of a quality flag state," he said. ■

# END MODERN SLAVERY IN THE OFFSHORE SUPPLY SECTOR

The detaining of the Maltese-registered offshore supply vessel Ben Nevis in the port of Rotterdam last month for failure to pay crew wages for the last two months is the latest example of modern slavery in the industry.

The vessel, owned by Global Offshore Services (GOS), was released from the port of Aberdeen in October having been detained by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency for breaches of the Maritime Labour Convention, including non-payment of crew wages. The Dutch authorities have now detained the Ben Nevis for MLC infringements having discovered that 15 crew members have not been paid for their work in October and November.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was further evidence of the appalling crewing practices that continue to plague the European Continental Shelf offshore



Supply vessels docked at Aberdeen

energy sector.

"These workers are virtual hostages, they cannot afford to leave the vessel for fear they may never get paid and so are forced to remain on board. This is tantamount to modern-day slavery.

"RMT is calling for due diligence practices to be significantly improved at every

level of the supply chain in the offshore energy sector and greater dialogue between government, trade unions and industry to red-flag rogue operators.

"These practices have no place in the 21st Century offshore energy sector; they must be outlawed and the crewing agents and others

profiting from these abusive, 'low cost' practices must be exposed and prevented from tendering for supply chain contracts on any part of the European Continental Shelf.

"This is a key test of the UK government's commitment to increase domestic employment from the transition to net zero," he said. ■



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To streamline our application form processes and to minimise personal contact during the COVID19 pandemic RMT have reproduced all our application forms in a digital PDF format.

RMT application forms can now be downloaded from the RMT web site and completed completely on screen and emailed back to us. These forms can also be partially completed, saved and forwarded to others for full completion, e.g. your branch secretary. This process avoids postage, unnecessary contact and speeds up the whole process. These are industry standard enabled PDF

documents that have auto formatting and validation to help completion. These documents are completely consistent across all computers and platforms, very small in file size (for emailing) and only require Adobe Acrobat Reader software which is a standard software on the vast majority of computer operating systems. If you do not have Adobe Acrobat Reader it is a free download from

Adobe.com and is totally safe and secure. We would encourage members to use these forms digitally but if members still prefer to complete by hand these documents can be printed out, completed and posted in the traditional way.

Forms are downloadable from [rmt.org.uk/member-benefits/benefit-forms/](http://rmt.org.uk/member-benefits/benefit-forms/)

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Please note: If you are having problems please make sure you have the latest Acrobat Reader installed (available free at [adobe.com](http://adobe.com)). Remember, these forms can also be printed out and completed by hand if preferred.

# RAILWAYS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM

A new book *Britain's Railways in the Second World War* tells the fascinating story of Britain's railways during the fight against Nazism

This important book is not only a fascinating insight into a crucial period of this country's railway network but also helps us to understand its history in the first half of the Twentieth century through the prism of the Second World War.

Just as during the First World War, the rail network came under the control of the government's Railway Executive Committee in 1939 but it faced very different challenges. During the Great War troops fought abroad for the entire conflict whereas in World War Two Britain's railways were expected to deal with the mass evacuation of children and the movement of resources and troops from

across the globe from Dunkirk in 1940 up to D-Day in 1944.

It was long-recognised that the railways were essential to the military during times of war and even as far back as the Crimean war the British state built a railway from Balaclava to Sebastopol in 1854.

By the outbreak of the First World War it was clear that the chaotic railway system, made up of the hundreds of private companies, was not fit for purpose and it came under government control. At the time the government rewarded shareholders handsomely while doing nothing for rail workers in a deal that NUR general

secretary and MP for Derby Jimmy Thomas famously called 'a one-sided arrangement'.

Government control continued after the war until the 1921 Railways Act which, despite vague electoral promises of full nationalisation, created the Big Four private companies Southern Railway (SR), Great Western Railway (GWR), London, Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS) and the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER).

Incredibly, when the railways once more came under government control in 1939, author Michael Foley reveals that the fixed payments of over £40 million



per year to the nearly bankrupt Big Four were so huge that railway shares rocketed and became very sought after as a result.

As a result of this rampant wartime profiteering it was a boom time for shareholders as previously only one rail company had even paid dividends in 1938 and that was just 0.5 per cent.

The government also commandeered the light railways, steam ships and docks that did not fall under the control of the Big Four in 1921 and the term British Railways was first used on the many posters that started to appear to appeal to the public not to travel and about how the railways were carrying the 'war load'.

Many of the over 100 black and white illustrations in this book include these posters designed to educate and inform the public and boost morale.

By 1942 nearly 600,000 workers were running the network including 40,000 women in an industry which effectively served as another branch of the military during the conflict.

The NUR annual general meeting in Carlisle in July 1943 welcomed this influx of



Volunteers serve drinks to Dunkirk survivors



Women took over a number of jobs on the Railways during the war, including signal duties

women into the industry and delegate Mr T Gibson, a Glasgow ticket collector, said that women often showed more interest in their trade union than men did. NUJ assistant general secretary W J Watson also demanded equal pay for women and accused the railway companies of deliberately exploiting the war situation and paying women less.

During the war rail workers were seen as a fundamental part of the war effort and were held in high esteem judging by the posters being produced calling on the public to respect them.

The health of workers was certainly taken more seriously. For instance staff at the GWR railway works at Swindon, thought to be the largest in the world, enjoyed medical care which was supposedly the inspiration for the National Health Service after the war.

It was also increasingly clear to many that national control of the rail network was far more efficient and the groundswell of support for nationalisation would grow among the armed forces and the public in general.

London Underground was also heavily utilised during the Blitz as a form of transport for food and as bomb shelters during the many Nazi raids.

The authorities initially tried to prevent Londoners using the tube as a place of safety but many simply took matters into their own hands. The Communist Party led a campaign to open the stations in the East End and eventually the government relented. There are memorials to those who died during this period including over 70 people who were killed at Balham station after suffering a direct hit.

In fact railway staff had to cope with the new and constant threat of aerial bombing throughout the war as trains had to continue to run the gauntlet every day and workers attempted to blackout lights from signal boxes and locos with varying degrees of success.

From July 1940 to September 1943 there were 58 attacks from Nazi warplanes on the Southern Railway area alone and 626 men who served the company died on active service in the armed forces. Therefore *Britain's Railways in the Second World War* includes a particularly helpful and moving list of war memorials in railway stations and another appendix contains a list of commemorative Second World War vehicles and where to find them. More often than not many are to be found on the many heritage



TOTAL WAR: Men working on the boiler of a steam locomotive, one of many new trains being made to keep up with the demands of the Armed Forces.



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railways across the country that keeps their memory alive and are well worth a visit.

Ultimately this book brings to light the often forgotten

stories of the brave and hard-working men and women who went to work on the railways and put their lives on the line in the fight against fascism. ■

# 'MY SONG IS FOR ALL MEN'

NUR member and radical black poet Peter Blackman was the only member of his union branch who could speak Latin and Greek

Peter Blackman was a highly educated, multi-lingual classically trained priest turned communist poet who after the Second World War became a railway fitter first at the Roundhouse in Camden then at Willesden Junction depot.

As an active member of the National Union Railwaymen, he was a highly respected work colleague who always took time in his quiet way to use his education in the service of his workmates that struggled with literacy and letter writing.

In his life he had joined the Communist Party during the heady days of the anti-fascist Popular Front, built Wellington bombers in the war effort and, fluent in French, travelled regularly to Paris to write for *Le Monde* and other influential publications.

In 1949 he organised a tour of the Soviet Union for his friend Paul Robeson and travelled with him to Moscow and Warsaw. He was a highly literate man but found it hard to get his work published, in fact the poet never had a collection published in his lifetime.

In 1952, Lawrence and Wishart did publish his long narrative poem *My Song is for all Men* and extracts from the

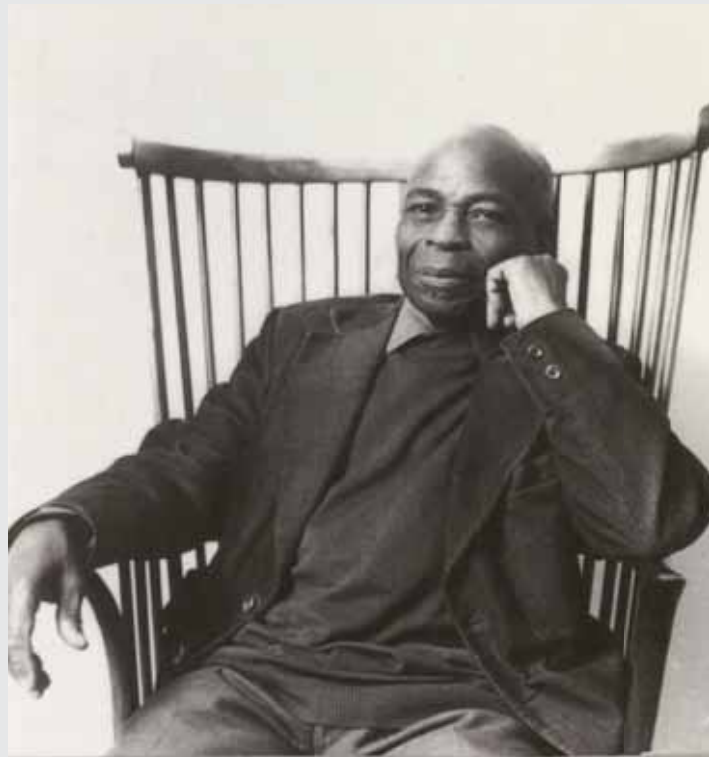
poem, whose many references include Belsen, the US war on Korea and South African apartheid, were incorporated in the Alan Bush cantata, *Voices of the Prophets* alongside the words of William Blake and John Milton.

Yet, as the Cold War closed in, it crushed much cultural output and, as a result, he was largely forgotten in Britain as well as in his native Caribbean.

And so the extraordinary story of this highly cultured and unassuming polymath may well have been lost to the world but for the curiosity of a young teacher Chris Searle who came across Blackman's poetry and visited him in his flat in Belsize Park in the 1970s.

Searle, who still writes on cultural matters in the *Morning Star* newspaper to this day, invited him to recite his poetry to his students in the East End of London and elsewhere which eventually brought him to the attention of ex-Soft Machine drummer and communist Robert Wyatt.

Wyatt offered Blackman to recite his majestic anti-fascist poem *Stalingrad* as the closing track on his seminal political album *'Nothing Can Stop Us'* released in 1982. Today, of course, Blackman can be



Peter Blackman (1909-1993)

heard reciting his opus on YouTube within just a few clicks and it is well worth taking the time to do so.

Beautifully delivered in cut glass classical English tones, *Stalingrad* was his devastating tribute to the courage of those who defeated the Nazi war machine and gave hope to the world after the long night of fascism had descended on the world.

Blackman also showed Searle some of his unpublished work, including *Joseph*, which was written in the late 1950s against the backdrop of the US civil rights movement. It is included in the collection with three other long poems and a short elegy to his friend the black communist activist and Notting Hill carnival founder Claudia Jones.

Searle continued to champion Blackman and in 2013, 20 years after the poet's death, published a collection of his work *Footprints* – which is now sadly out of print but still available to buy on line – with a fascinating introduction which offers a glimpse of the man behind the poetry.

Searle reveals a warm, friendly and rather shy man who remained very much the priest in his approach to life. "He did not seem at all bitter about his work being overlooked.

"In fact he was very modest and did not want to be exposed to public acclaim or to be part of the intelligentsia or literati. Instead he had gone to work everyday with ordinary men and women, which is how he saw himself. It is this that made him unique," he says.

Born in Barbados to working class parents in 1909, Blackman received an elite colonial education at one of the island's top schools, thanks to a church scholarship, and later studied theology at Durham University.

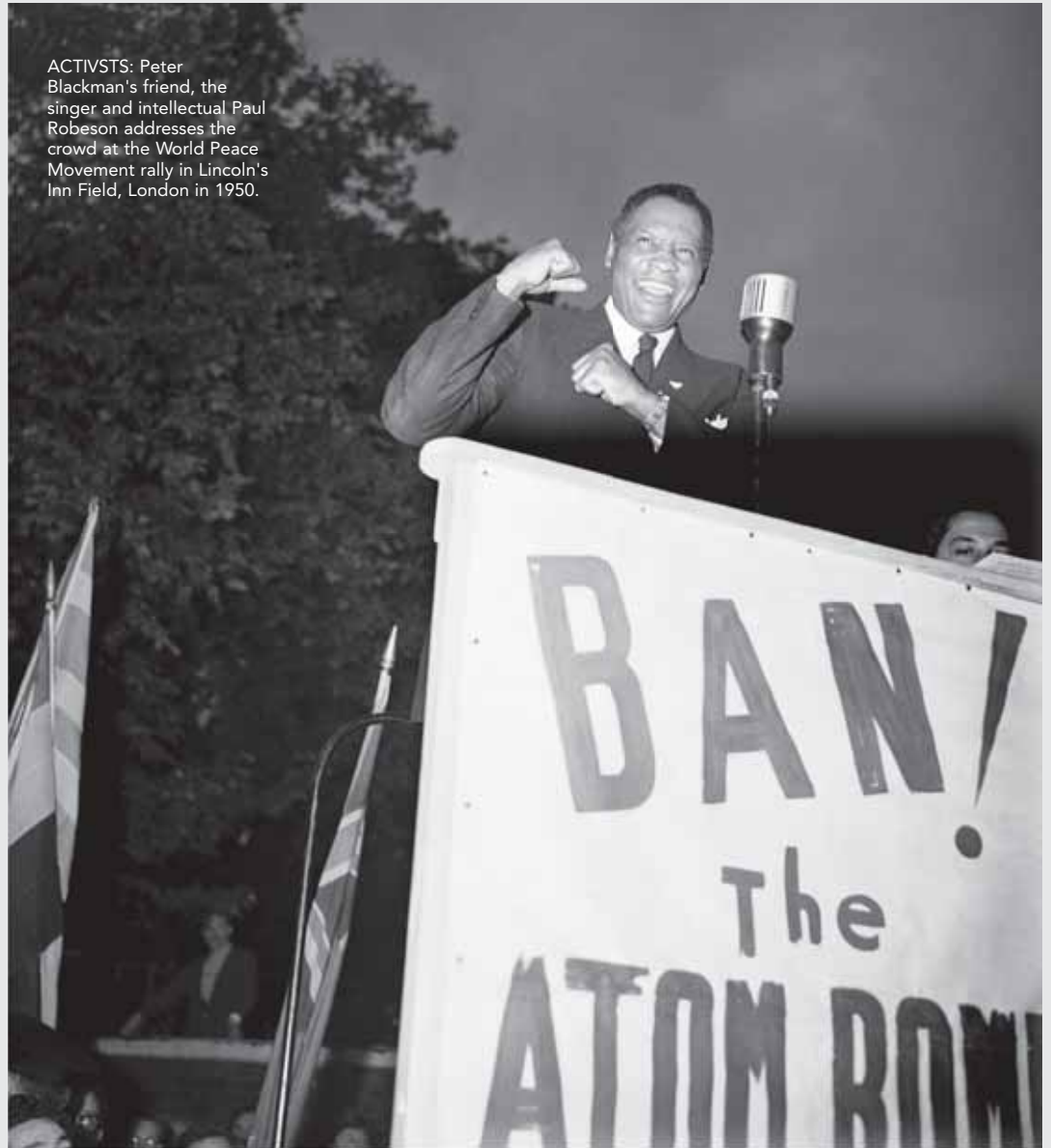
After becoming an Anglican priest he travelled to Gambia in 1935 as a missionary but returned to England, appalled at the endemic racism that saw Africans made to sit at the back of the church.

He settled in London in 1937 throwing himself into campaign groups like the Negro Welfare Association and the League of Coloured Peoples, becoming the editor of the LCP journal *The Keys* before the war halted its publication.

In that last editorial in 1939 he wrote that the fortunes of the British people were "bound up with the millions in the colonies controlled in their name by Downing Street", a line only espoused at the time by the Communist Party that he had just joined.

It was around this time that he would have met with other communist writers such as

ACTIVISTS: Peter Blackman's friend, the singer and intellectual Paul Robeson addresses the crowd at the World Peace Movement rally in Lincoln's Inn Field, London in 1950.



Edgell Rickword, Randall Swingler and Jack Lindsay who would all later suffer from blacklisting and shunned by the cultural sector with the coming of the Cold War.

"He was a black communist writing from the heart of empire and his poems are deeply about the world in which he lived," wrote Searle, a sure fire way to be regarded like many others as politically suspect, blacklisted and placed on a MI5 file.

Searle also said that there were other reasons why Blackman never received his due recognition either in Britain or the Caribbean.

Here was a highly literary communist writing at the height of the Cold War who wrote in a classical style influenced by the King James

Bible and writers like Blake, Milton and Walt Whitman.

"Whereas in the post-Windrush era Creole languages were seen as the main vehicle of Caribbean expression and standard English was repudiated," Searle explained.

Nevertheless he will always be best known for his poem *Stalingrad*, written during the war to celebrate a great anti-fascist victory. While today it may not carry the same meaning to many it does capture a moment in the ongoing fight against injustice and imperialism.

When the poem appeared on Wyatt's album Blackman himself noted that while talk of *Stalingrad* now may seem 'old hat' he saw it "only as a continuity of the same

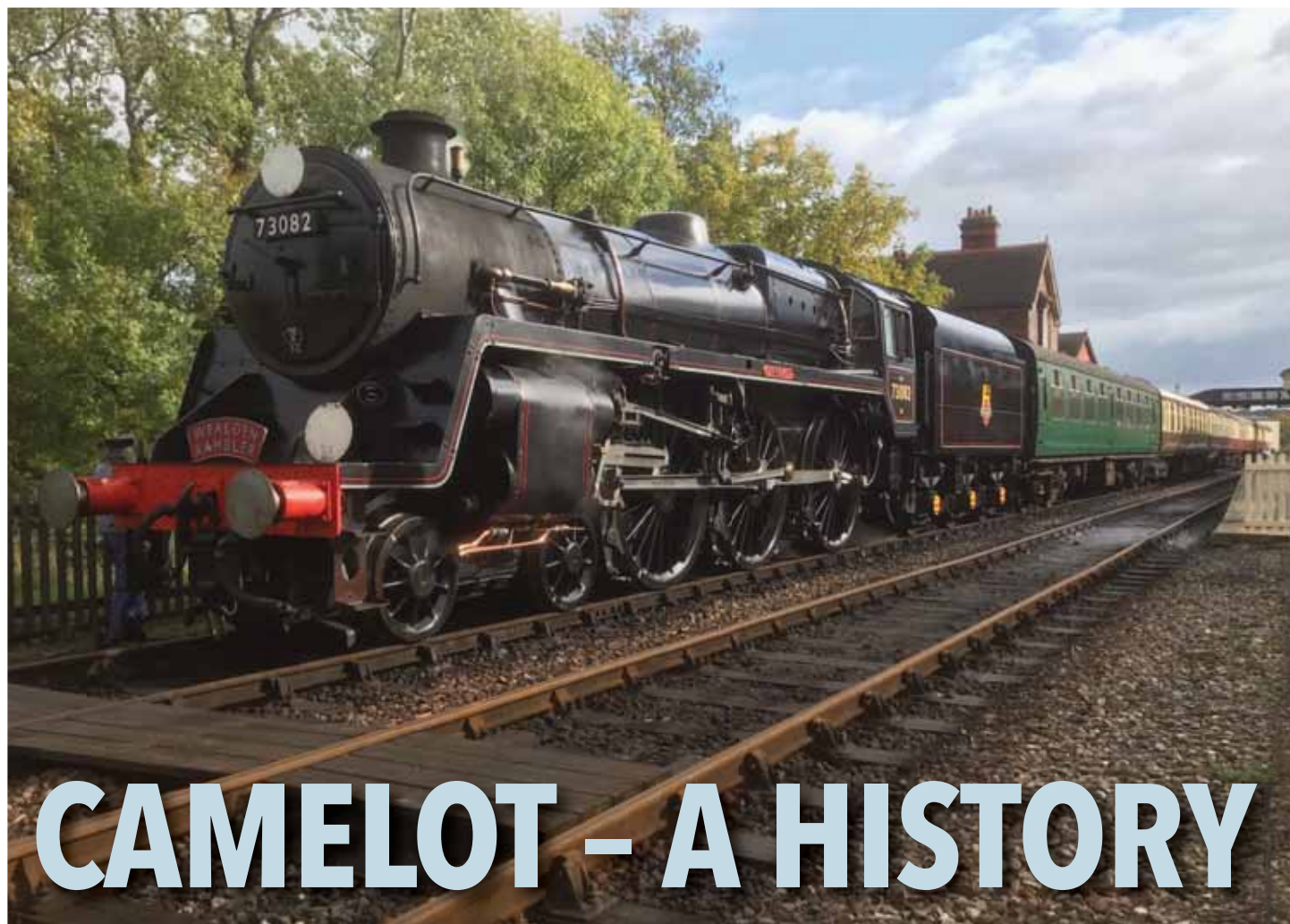
struggle of people everywhere, in Vietnam, in Africa, in the face of Reagan's threatened holocaust".

It is only fitting that such an eloquent and cultured man that fought so hard to unite humanity regardless of colour, creed or sex should himself explain what he had set out to do.

"My poetry is not the sort of stuff for the bourgeois to publish. My concern is with an appeal to a wider meaning of humanity. My concern is with working people who have had very little independent attention in literature, just as black people have had little or none".

In that sense, in his poetry, this modest and unassuming trade unionist is still with us.





# CAMELOT – A HISTORY

RMT member and secretary of the 73082 Camelot Locomotive Society Stephen Loeber tells the story of a steam engine



Steve Loeber in the cab

The history of Camelot is interesting and in some ways surprising in regards to design and construction.

It all started in 1902 when George Jackson Churchward, Chief Mechanical Engineer (CME) of the Great Western Railway Works at Swindon, developed and introduced the Saint class, the first modern 4-6-0 passenger express locomotive with two outside cylinders and connecting rods and inside Stephenson link motion with a taper boiler and a Belpaire firebox.

Churchward was a very forward thinking as he introduced several refinements from US and French locomotive design. The taper boiler and the outside cylinders were not standard practice at this time. Plus, he was an early advocate of

superheating in boilers.

Churchward retired in 1922 and Charles Benjamin Collett was appointed new CME at Swindon. He carried on Churchward's work and developed the Hall class in 1928, a 4-6-0 mixed traffic engine that could work passenger and freight traffic over the GWR network.

William Stanier, who was assistant to Collett, was headhunted by the London Midland & Scottish (LMS) Railway in 1931 to become their CME and took a number of Swindon ideas with him. His early experience with the 4-6-0 Jubilee class, a three cylinder passenger locomotive for the LMS, found that high superheat was more appropriate than the low superheat utilised by the GWR. Stanier's next development



HEYDAY: One summer Camelot visited the famous Somerset & Dorset line that ran from Bath to Bournemouth to work holiday specials and was photographed outside the shed at Bath Green Park.

was the 4-6-0 Black Five mixed traffic locomotive for the LMS, like the Hall but with some modifications such as outside Walschaerts valve gear and high superheat in the boiler. These engines became the mainstay of the LMS network.

In 1948 the Labour Government nationalised the railways and they came under the authority of the British Transport Commission with a section set up called the Railway Executive: of course, to all concerned the brand name was British Railways. As a result the Railway Executive broke the network into regions: Western, London Midland, Eastern, North Eastern and Southern.

The British Transport Commission wanted to modernise the railway network utilising new motive power with dieselisation and electrification of some routes. However the Railway Executive was more cautious and considered that maintaining steam as a stopgap measure would be more cost effective, because the infrastructure was already in place. With this decision, Robert Riddles was appointed to the Executive to oversee Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, along with Ernest Stewart Cox and Roland Curling Bond to assist him, so the Standard locomotive project was set up.

In 1948 locomotive exchange trials took place to determine which were the best features of the Big Four

companies' locomotives that could be incorporated into the new designs of Standard engines. However, the Standard locomotive had more LMS practices incorporated because the company had done more in introducing locomotive that could cope with post-War conditions.

The Standard Five mixed traffic 4-6-0s were developed around the LMS Stanier Black Five with the 3B type boiler with different fittings and details to bring it into line with the other Standard classes, also the driving wheels were bigger - where the Black Five was 6 foot the Standard Five was 6 foot 2 inches. The Standard Five boiler pressure was set at 225lb/sq in giving a tractive effort of 26120 lb.

Doncaster Works was responsible for the design of

the class and built 42 examples (73100 – 73124 and 73155 – 73171). But the other 130 (73000 -73099 and 73125 -73154) were built at Derby Works. Building started in 1951 and was completed in 1957. 73125 - 73154 differed from the rest of the class in that they were not fitted with the Walschaerts (piston) valve gear but British Caprotti (poppet) valve gear.

73082 was constructed in 1955 at Derby Works within the group 73080 – 73089 and were destined for the Southern Region. Because there were no water troughs on the Southern Region they were paired with BR1B tenders that had capacity for seven tons of coal and 4,725 gallons of water.

The engine was first allocated to Stewarts Lane shed in July 1955, here the engine worked the expresses from Victoria down to Margate and Ramsgate on the north Kent coast. However, in 1959 electrification using the third rail system was extended to Margate and Ramsgate from Faversham, in so doing removing the locomotives rostered work. On June 14 1959, 73082 was transferred to Nine Elms shed and worked trains on the south western route from Waterloo to Bournemouth, Weymouth and Exeter: at this time she was allocated the name Camelot.

With the British Transport Commission's Modernisation Plan of 1955 steam was under threat with all new diesel traction being developed. Camelot was transferred to Guildford shed in June 1965 and this was her swansong as a year later 73082 was withdrawn from British Railways service and sold to Woodham Brothers at Barry in south Wales for scrapping.

However, in 1974 two steam enthusiasts visited the famous scrapyard and, because 73082 was the only named Standard Five to have survived, the 73082 Camelot Locomotive Society was set up. The locomotive was purchased in 1979 and moved to the Bluebell Railway in East Sussex. Here restoration took place and the locomotive was put back into traffic in 1995. In 2005 Camelot was withdrawn for a major 10-year overhaul, returned to traffic in 2015 and is still going strong!

May I also thank Peter Gibbs and Francis Dowley (of 73082 Camelot Locomotive Society) with their help and assistance with this article and some of the photographs. ■

If you want any further information of the locomotive or the Society, or to become a member please contacted:  
Stephen Loeber,  
Secretary,  
Saddle Lodge,  
White Horse,  
Witham,  
Essex CM8 2BU



MUSEUM: A man walks at an outdoor site of the Central Museum of Russian Railway Transport at Lebyazhye Station, 50 miles west from St Petersburg. The site features unique railway equipment of the 20th century, including steam, diesel, and electric locomotives.

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|                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>DARTFORD AND DISTRICT<br/>BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>     | <p>GREAT NORTHERN RAIL BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                  | <p>HUMBER SHIPPING BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>MARK CARDEN</b><br/>FOR ASSISTANT NATIONAL<br/>SECRETARY</p>              | <p>STOCKPORT BRANCH<br/>SUPPORTS<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                            |
| <p>CARDIFF N07 BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                   | <p>SWINDON RAIL BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                         | <p>OBAN SHIPPING BRANCH<br/>SUPPORT<br/><b>MARK CARDEN</b><br/>FOR ASSISTANT NATIONAL<br/>SECRETARY</p>                  | <p>LUL ENGINEERING BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>JOHN LEACH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                     |
| <p>SOUTH WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>           | <p>WORCESTER BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                           | <p>MANCHESTER SHIPPING BRANCH<br/>SUPPORT<br/><b>MARK CARDEN</b><br/>FOR ASSISTANT NATIONAL<br/>SECRETARY</p>            | <p>NORTH CLYDE BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>GORDON MARTIN</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                       |
| <p>DOUGLAS SHIPPING BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>              | <p>WORCESTER BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>CRAIG JOHNSTON</b><br/>FOR REGIONAL ORGANISER<br/>RELIEF NORTH</p>     | <p>RMT OFFSHORE ENERGY<br/>BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>CRAIG JOHNSTON</b><br/>FOR RELIEF REGIONAL<br/>ORGANISER NORTH</p> | <p>NORTH CLYDE BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>CRAIG JOHNSTON</b><br/>FOR RELIEF REGIONAL<br/>ORGANISER (NORTH)</p> |
| <p>RUGBY N01 BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                     | <p>RMT PADDINGTON NO.1 BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>MICHAEL LYNCH</b><br/>FOR RMT GENERAL SECRETARY</p>          | <p>BRIDGEND LLANTRISANT AND<br/>DISTRICT BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR RMT GENERAL SECRETARY</p>     | <p>NEWPORT RAIL BRANCH<br/>SUPPORTS<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                         |
| <p>EUSTON NO 1 BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                   | <p>WOLVERHAMPTON BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                       | <p>MARCH &amp; DISTRICT BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                         | <p>EURO PASSENGER SERVICES<br/>BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>         |
| <p>COLCHESTER &amp; DISTRICT<br/>BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p> | <p>WOLVERHAMPTON BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>CRAIG JOHNSTON</b><br/>FOR REGIONAL ORGANISER<br/>RELIEF NORTH</p> | <p>CARDIFF RAIL BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                                 | <p>OFFSHORE ENERGY BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>KARLSON LINGWOOD</b><br/>FOR ASSISTANT NATIONAL<br/>SECRETARY</p> |
| <p>WATFORD BRANCH<br/>NOMINATE<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                       | <p>DOUGLAS SHIPPING BRANCH<br/>NOMINATES<br/><b>MARK CARDEN</b><br/>FOR ASSISTANT NATIONAL<br/>SECRETARY</p>    | <p>MID CORNWALL RAIL BRANCH<br/>SUPPORTS<br/><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br/>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY</p>                             | <p>LIVERPOOL SHIPPING<br/>SUPPORTS<br/><b>KARLSON LINGWOOD</b><br/>FOR ASSISTANT NATIONAL<br/>SECRETARY</p>     |

## President's column



# WELCOME BACK

Well I hope you enjoyed your break as much as I did although I know that a lot of you wouldn't have had Christmas with your families. I will be back to the coal face myself soon as this is my last year to serve you as RMT President.

I reflected over the past two years and although there are a couple of things I have done which will shape my free time at the end of my term, I realised my tenure has been taken up with elections, Covid Pandemic and a troubled organisation! However there is a lot to be said for all the work those we don't see in our offices have done on our behalf and this year they will be working even harder as the election for a new general secretary is under way followed by an election for president and new NEC members. Combined with another lockdown thrown upon us, it will make their work load more difficult. However, because their passion is our union, they just get on with it!

So I will wish all of you a happy new year and let's prepare ourselves for the workload our rank and file will face with the onslaught of cuts and redundancy with increased pressure of workloads. Let's start to convince our members that their don't have to accept second best and that we can have pay increases, better terms and conditions because like our hard working staff you the rank and file have worked bloody hard too! You were essential to keeping our country moving and deserve recognition for your part for the company bonuses the

shareholders dividends you genuinely generated. So fight and stand proud to get your small, well deserved share.

I also want to thank the support of the six NEC members that left last year. Your work and experience helped tremendously to deal with the workload. You provided moral support and our union has been enriched with your commitment to deliver for the members and now we have six new NEC members hitting the ground running. But they know there is support amongst their fellow colleagues so we grow and become more diverse.

It would be right to mention another two women join me on the executive and that makes me proud. I am also looking forward to learning from all the members and the diversity they all bring.

I have asked the equality groups to share my column only two have taken me up so please get in touch and enrich our members with your knowledge experience or struggle, we need to share.

Finally we need to be building a fighting strike fund. One that's so big our members would not be starved back to work. This could be achieved in a year if all 80,000 plus members made an effort over the next 12 months to put a little extra in. Remember part of being in a union is to protect each other. The government will be playing hard ball with our terms and conditions we need to be ready to fight back!

In Solidarity,  
Michelle Rodgers

WALSALL BRANCH  
NOMINATE  
**MICK LYNCH**  
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

BIRMINGHAM ENGINEERING  
BRANCH  
NOMINATE  
**MICK LYNCH**  
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

HULL RAIL BRANCH  
NOMINATE  
**MICK LYNCH**  
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

CARLISLE CITY BRANCH  
NOMINATE  
**MICK LYNCH**  
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

BURTON-ON-TRENT NO.1  
BRANCH  
NOMINATE  
**MICK LYNCH**  
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

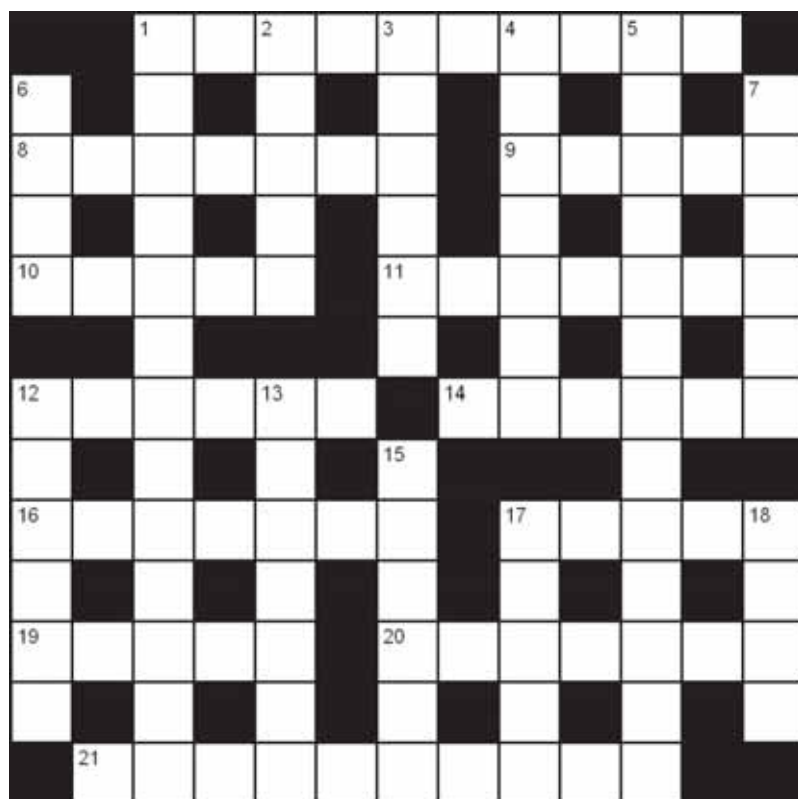
DERBY RAIL & ENGINEERING  
BRANCH  
NOMINATE  
**MICK LYNCH**  
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

POOLE & DISTRICT BUS BRANCH  
NOMINATE  
**MICK LYNCH**  
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

NORTH STAFFS BRANCH  
NOMINATE  
**MICK LYNCH**  
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

|                                                                                             |                                                                                                   |                                                                                  |                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EAST SUSSEX COASTWAY<br>BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY    | SOUTH LONDON RAIL BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY                | WIGAN BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY           | ORPINGTON BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY                    |
| NEWCASTLE AND GATESHEAD<br>BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY | LONDON AND ORIENT<br>ENGINEERING BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY | YORK & DISTRICT BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY | WISHAW & MOTHERWELL<br>BRANCH<br>NOMINATES<br><b>GORDON MARTIN</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY   |
| LEEDS GOODS AND CARTAGE<br>BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY | PENZANCE NO1 BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY                     | BIRMINGHAM RAIL BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY | SOUTHALL, EALING & SLOUGH<br>BRANCH<br>NOMINATE<br><b>MICK LYNCH</b><br>FOR GENERAL SECRETARY |

# £50 PRIZE CROSSWORD



## Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by February 5 with your name and address.

All winners will be announced at a later date as the Unity House offices are currently closed due to the pandemic.



### ACROSS

- 1 Mapper (10).
- 8 Conscript (7)
- 9 Mischievous (5)
- 10 Mix up (5)
- 11 Bring to light (7)
- 12 Greet (6)
- 14 Be present (6)
- 16 Title for boy (7)
- 17 Race course (5)
- 19 At that place (5)
- 20 Erase (7)
- 21 Presence (10)

### DOWN

- 1 Lofty in style (13)
- 2 Offbeat (5)
- 3 Regretful (6)
- 4 Excuse (7)
- 5 Fizziness (13)
- 6 Notion (4)
- 7 Barefoot (6)
- 12 Nap (6)
- 13 Vessel with three tiers of oars (7)
- 15 Decapitate (6)
- 17 US ski resort (5)
- 18 At that time (4)



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|---------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| Surname       |  | Address                   |  |
| Forename(s)   |  |                           |  |
| Home phone    |  |                           |  |
| Mobile phone  |  | Postcode                  |  |
| Email address |  |                           |  |
| Date of Birth |  | National Insurance Number |  |

2 **Marital Status** married ☐ partner ☐ single ☐ divorced ☐ **Drivers Licence No.**

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|                 |  |            |  |
|-----------------|--|------------|--|
| Employer        |  | RMT Branch |  |
| Job Description |  |            |  |

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**Address** .....

.....  
.....

9 **I undertake to abide by the rules now in force or those that are adopted.**

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Date

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|                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| To: The Manager | Bank/Building Society |
| Address         |                       |
|                 | Postcode              |

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

Originator's Identification Number

Reference Number

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**3**

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