

RMT*news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

WHY RAIL WORKERS SHOULD VOTE **YES** FOR ACTION

- ✗ Your cost of living is soaring
- ✗ Your pay has been frozen
- ✗ Guarantee your job security
- ✗ Protect your hard-won conditions
- ✗ Help your union get a better deal

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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

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

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

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

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

INSURANCE

UIA Mutual offers great value, low cost Home, Motor, 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

Join RMT by visiting
www.rmt.org.uk

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EDITORIAL



VOTE YES

Working people don't need lectures about a cost of living crisis like it's something new. We've had years of austerity, cuts, underinvestment and a coordinated drive to hammer down on standards of living while the bosses and the political elite are living it up at our expense.

It's taken a while but it seems at last that the media and politicians are waking up to some harsh realities - sparked by soaring inflation, the massive hike in energy costs and the increase in national insurance contributions. All of these punishing blows hit those with the least the hardest.

It's against this backdrop that we've seen the savage and illegal assault on maritime jobs and wages by P&O - that company have displayed a level of contempt which has sent shockwaves through our workplaces but they are by no means alone.

Our members taking on transport cleaning companies in a battle for pay and workplace justice are having their experiences of poverty pay, shocking conditions and a bullying culture that forces them to work while sick laid out in all its detail by this trade union. We salute and support them in their fight right to the hilt.

But now we are faced with attacks that threaten to unleash a similar culture right across the rail industry in a drive for cuts and to

prop up private company profits. Hard-won agreements on job security, working conditions, pay and pensions are all being lined up for a kicking that would rip apart years of progress.

That's why we are launching the biggest wave of coordinate balloting for action in a generation and it's why we are appealing to you to VOTE YES for action to enable us to mobilise the kind of campaign that is our only defence against the barrage of attacks.

Our London Underground members have already delivered by over 90% a YES vote in a parallel ballot on the same raft of issues. In the past month they have come under political and media attack for securing a pay deal which outstrips the higher measure of inflation. I'm proud of that achievement which proves that only strong trade unionism can defend workers jobs and livelihoods.

So the fight is now on. And it's one we have to win. The alternative is fire and rehire, pay and pensions shredded and working conditions torched. In this magazine we set out the shape of the campaign of resistance. Whoever your employer and whatever your grade answer the call from your union and join this fight.

FOR A PEOPLE'S CALMAC

CalMac Ferries is a national asset but our members who work on these lifeline services know as well as passengers and communities that it needs public investment to change gear and deliver the reliable, affordable clean services we all need for the decades ahead.

Scotland's ferry services must maximise the recovery of communities from Covid-19 and this is best achieved through public ownership and the full

participation of communities, workers and passengers.

The current Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service operated by CalMac expires in September 2024. The union is opposed to privatisation and want all ferry services to be in the public sector. That's why RMT has launched the campaign for a People's CalMac.

- Publicly owned and operated services – communities and passengers before profit

- More investment - for more reliable, frequent and extra services
- More affordable - with fairer ferry fares, including for commercial drivers.
- More of a say - with a stronger voice for communities, passengers and workers
- More good jobs - Already employing 1,700 people, CalMac is at the heart of Clyde and Hebrides communities, as well as

Scotland's maritime industry.

Please sign and share the petition on RMT's website on the campaigns page.■



P&O FERRIES GUILTY OF SERIOUS SAFETY BREACHES

RMT has written to the Transport Secretary Grant Shapps to demand that sacked crews are re-instated following a catalogue of failures on the P&O operated Pride of Hull vessel.

Port authorities in the Netherlands listed failures around fire safety, deficient training for crew and below standard ship structural integrity, during an inspection between April 7/8.

P&O sacked 800 workers in Britain without warning last month, sparking angry protests at ports across the country.

Labelling P&O a "rogue ferry operator", RMT general secretary Mick Lynch wrote: "It is particularly alarming that P&O Ferries is taking such a dangerous and cavalier approach to safety on this particular vessel.

"You will recall that there was a serious fire on the Bahamas registered Pride of Hull in October 2020, the consequences of which could have been far more serious if



the vessel had been further out to sea when the fire started.

"To cut corners on fire safety and lifeboat training on a vessel with that recent record is unforgiveable.

"P&O Ferries clearly have a strategy of putting ships to sea regardless of the cost. I am therefore calling for you to detain the Pride of Hull now that it has arrived in the UK."

Mr Lynch said that the Maritime and Coastguard agency (MCA) should reflect on the fact P&O Ferries have

"broken our employment laws" and "they now pose an intolerable threat to life and maritime safety".

"It is now clearer than ever that P&O is a rogue ferry operator. We strongly urge the government to take over these essential ferry operations and reinstate the experienced crew who were so disgracefully sacked from their jobs on the Pride of Hull and other P&O ferries on March 17," he said.

The full list of the deficiencies uncovered on the

Pride of Hull are:

- Lifesaving equipment not properly maintained and a lack of crew training
- A lack of training in fire drills
- Firefighting equipment not properly stored or accessible
- Fire doors, structural integrity, and fire extinguishers below standard
- Expired seafarer certification

FAIR FERRIES!

Following the illegal sacking of 800 P&O workers the union has launched a campaign for fairness on ferries



Ever since this destructive action was taken by P&O last month, the government has claimed to be taking legal action against P&O. Ministers have also supported the unions' call on P&O to reinstate the dismissed seafarers on their original terms and conditions.

As part of that fight for justice the union has launched a political and industrial Fair Ferries campaign which re-establishes collectively bargained terms and conditions agreed with the union as the minimum employment standard for Ratings on international ferry routes from UK ports.

Permanent employment, pensions, safe roster patterns and Ratings apprenticeships will also be campaign demands with the aim of eradicating the low-cost crewing model from the ferry industry. This includes all ro-ro, ro-pax and lo-lo vessels and covers thousands of Ratings jobs on international routes from UK ports.

The union has been in detailed discussions with government and ferry employers over a framework agreement in the ferries sector that supports collectively bargained rates of pay, high safety standards, safe roster patterns, Ratings training and full pension rights.

The government has announced nine measures in response to the P&O scandal summarised below:

1. Engagement with governments on international ferry routes from the UK, particularly Republic of Ireland, France, Netherlands, Denmark,
2. Give UK Ports legal powers to refuse access to ferries crewed with seafarers paid below the NMW through the Harbours Act 1964.
3. In the interim, write to all ports instructing them to deny access to ferry operators that pay seafarers below the NMW.
4. Increased resources to HMRC for NMW enforcement in the ferry sector.
5. A review of Maritime and Coastguard Agency enforcement policies, including in relation to the P&O fleet.
6. A new statutory code on Fire and Rehire.
7. Insolvency Service asked to consider disqualification of Peter Hebblethwaite as a director of P&O or any other company.



Germany and Belgium to agree common pay and other standards through dialogue with seafarer trade unions.

8. An international minimum wage for seafarers and improvements to training.
9. Tonnage Tax to increase the number of ships on the UK Flag and protect seafarer welfare standards.

A lot of this was bluster and there are no existing powers to enforce the NMW on international ferry routes. Whilst these new measures are introduced, with your union's direct input, RMT will continue to hold the government to account for rates of pay, roster patterns and other conditions at the likes of P&O Ferries, Irish Ferries, Condor Ferries, Seatruck and Cobelfret.

However, establishing the NMW as a wage floor and agreeing collectively bargained pay and conditions for all seafarers is a central aim of the Fair Ferries campaign and aims to hit back at P&O's illegal assault on our members and their families.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that this rank injustice would not be brushed under the carpet and RMT is also demanding that the government close the loopholes in employment legislation that P&O exploited to ensure that this shameful act can never again be visited on seafarers or any other workers.■



SOUTHEASTERN BOSSES GET FREE TRAVEL WHILE DENYING IT TO CLEANERS

Bosses at the publicly owned Southeastern Trains have been accused of 'rank hypocrisy' after it was revealed that they get free rail travel while denying it to the cleaning staff who work to ensure that Southeastern trains are safe and hygienic to use.

The admission was made by Rail Minister Wendy Morton in response to questions from Labour MP Bell Ribeiro Addy who has campaigned in support of the Southeastern Trains cleaners, currently outsourced to Churchill and engaged in a prolonged dispute on services across London and the South East.

In her answer, Ms Morton admits that in addition to the Board getting free travel during working hours, the Managing Director of South Eastern trains Ltd, Steve White is also entitled to 'free rail travel and rail staff facilities at all times'.

In a separate development a group of MPs from affected constituencies in London and the Southeast has written to the directors of all the companies involved in what is believed to be the largest dispute ever involving rail cleaners. In



MARCHING: Cleaners marching to Go-Ahead headquarters while on strike last month

a letter sent to the bosses of Churchill, Go-Ahead Group, Soho Square Capital, HS1, Eurostar and Southeastern Trains Ltd, the MPs urge the directors to make a fair pay offer to meet the cost of living crisis and end the scandal of not paying sick pay to rail cleaners.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that RMT members had been driven to strike

action in pursuit of a fair pay rise to meet the cost-of-living crisis and free travel has been a key demand for these heroic, low paid cleaners who have risked their lives during the pandemic.

"Now we learn that their bosses at publicly-owned Southeastern have been travelling free on trains cleaned by people who have to pay. This is rank hypocrisy

and they need to put an end to it by granting free travel to their low-paid cleaning staff.

"It's time the bosses of all these companies listened to the growing number of voices calling on them to come back to the table with properly funded offers to end the scandal of low pay and exploitation of cleaning staff," he said.

GOVERNMENT HITS CLEANERS OVER SICK PAY

Heroic cleaners are being left behind again as Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from day one is to be scrapped in Covid rules shake up.

RMT criticised new measures which will mean those isolating with Covid will not get SSP from day one. New government guidelines mean that people taking sick leave will only be entitled to SSP from day four.

Several groups of cleaners

that are engaged in industrial disputes fighting for the right to paid sick leave by the company.

They will be severely impacted by this change and will have to make the bleak choice between working while ill or slipping further into poverty if they stay at home.

RMT has taken strike action at cleaning companies Churchill and Atalian Servest over wages and the refusal of

bosses to pay company sickness remuneration.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that the government's living with Covid strategy was a case of cross your fingers and hope for the best.

"Our cleaner members who are bravely taking strike action for company sick pay will be further pushed into poverty by this decision.

"No one should have to

make the appalling choice of whether to pass on their illness to people at work or to lose money when they live week by week.

"The government is effectively running these contracts now so it can sort this tomorrow by mandating these companies to pay our cleaning grades proper occupational sick pay," he said.



SCOTRAIL GOES PUBLIC

A quarter of Britain's privatised rail operations now back in the public sector

ScotRail entered into public ownership this month and the union held a day of action to call on the Scottish government to ensure that the new operator delivers for Scotland's rail passengers, communities and workers.

The move takes the proportion of train services in public hands to 25 per cent, the highest percentage since the railways were privatised in 1994.

Scotrail joins East Coast Main Line services taken back into public ownership from Stagecoach and Virgin in 2018, Northern, taken over from Arriva in March 2020, services in Wales, which were taken over by the Welsh government from a failed partnership involving Keolis and Amey and the

Southeastern franchise, which Govia lost last year after failing to declare £25 million that it owed the taxpayer.

On April 1, RMT members rallied at Glasgow Queen Street Station to call on the Scottish government to create a properly funded rail operator to ensure that Scotland's railway is sustainable, affordable, accessible, and reliable and prioritises passengers, not profit.

The union warned that the Scottish government must ensure that its new public sector operator breaks with past notions that rail jobs, services and ticket offices should be cut in pursuit of 'efficiencies' and is therefore calling for sustained public investment to ensure that at

ScotRail:

- Ticket offices are protected and expanded
- Rail services are protected and expanded
- Jobs are protected and expanded

RMT said that this investment was essential in order to deliver modal shift from cars to rail necessary to meet the Scottish government's climate change targets and will be asking passengers to write to their MSP and local councillor in support of these demands.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that RMT had long campaigned for public ownership.

"The Scottish government now has the opportunity to break with the past and

recognise the central role ScotRail has to play in meeting its climate change targets and invest in creating an affordable, accessible, reliable and improved rail network in Scotland.

"ScotRail workers were heroes throughout the Covid-19 pandemic yet as they transfer into the public sector, the Scottish government has continually refused to protect the existing no compulsory redundancy agreement.

"To deliver the modal shifts necessary to tackle climate change and air pollution, the Scottish Government must commit to protecting and expanding all jobs and skills, ticket offices and ScotRail services," he said.



DEFENDING RAIL JOBS, PAY AND CONDITIONS



A message from RMT general secretary Mick Lynch on why rail workers should vote yes to industrial action

As you can see by this edition of *RMT News* the union is asking the majority of our membership to vote in the upcoming ballot for industrial action.

Your union's national executive committee has not instructed me to take this course of action lightly, but it has become clear that the government is determined to cut costs in the rail sector and attacking wages, jobs and conditions is the way they are going to do it.

Moreover, the cost-of-living crisis has worsened with record inflation, energy prices and a looming National Insurance hike which has increased demands for the union to take action on pay. Conversely the rail industry is under pressure

to make savings of hundreds of millions in staff costs.

It appears that initial attempts to remove staff through voluntary severance has not had the desired impact and there are widespread reports of savings being made by not filling vacancies. On top of this, the workplace reform agenda has only recently begun to materialise, but only with Network Rail who are now presenting detailed proposals for savings and making clear pay increases and guarantees on job security will have to be linked to those savings.

At a recent meeting with the rail minister and the rail unions the Minister said that following government support during Covid there was now

no more money for the railways and the workforce had to make savings.

The Minister said that the unions were free to continue with collective bargaining but the train operating companies at the meeting contradicted this by saying that they had not finalised their annual business plans with Department of Transport. Tellingly, at least three of the civil servants present at the meeting were described as officers dealing with railway industrial relations.

Independent reports are already predicting that RPI inflation could be as high as 10 per cent this month. Higher inflation may also lead to higher interests' rates which would impact on Network

Rail's substantial debt and repayment costs. The government will also support the train operating companies in resisting any meaningful pay rises.

The union can either stand aside and suffer death by a thousand cuts or stand and fight. Now is the time to stand up to this government and the employers and tell them that workers are not prepared to bear the brunt of this growing economic crisis and the fallout from the Covid pandemic.

By voting Yes in any ballot you will be sending a strong message that this union will not tolerate the decimation of the industry and such blatant attacks on its workers.



FURTHER STRIKES AT TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS

FirstGroup to be given an eight-year contract to attack staff

Conductors on Transpennine Express services continue strike action as reports indicated that FirstGroup will be awarded an eight-year extension to their National Rail Contract by the government.

Last month the government published a Prior Information Notice indicating that it intends to make an eight year award to run Transpennine Express companies when FirstGroup's current contract expires in April 2023.

Under the terms of its new National Contract, the winning

company will be expected to push through 'workforce reform', thin coding for attacks on staff numbers and terms and conditions. The new National Contracts also require the companies to agree 'dispute handling plans' with the Secretary of State.

The new National Contracts also guarantee risk-free profits to the companies involved and if reports that FirstGroup have been awarded the eight-year contract are true it raises the prospect that the company will suck around £40 million in

dividends out of the franchise over the period of the award.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that if these reports were true, FirstGroup will be laughing all the way to the bank at passengers' expense, safe in the knowledge that the government has got its back, guaranteeing profits and provoking and bankrolling a series of totally unnecessary industrial disputes.

"This is not enterprise, it's state-sponsored looting at the expense of heroic keyworkers

and the region's passengers. We don't want 8 years of disputes, but RMT members won't sit back and let these corporate spivs and their government backers torch their terms and conditions to fund their greed," he said.

As RMT revealed recently, FirstGroup has already paid out dividends worth £30 million in the last year from its rail operations and is awaiting the Secretary of State's permission to pay out £33 million more.



Rail Workers



6 reasons YOU should VOTE YES to defend jobs, pay and conditions with your employer...



- 1 Your cost of living is soaring**
– inflation, national insurance and bills have all increased
- 2 Your pay has been frozen**
– while much of the rail industry is making big profits
- 3 Your employer won't guarantee your job security**
- 4 Your employer wants to attack your hard-won conditions of employment**
- 5 You have been a key worker during the pandemic – you deserve better**
- 6 Your Union is fighting for a better deal – a big YES vote will help your Union win for you...**

Vote YES for Strike Action and Industrial Action Short of Strike Action

Ballot papers will be sent soon to RMT members employed in the following companies who the union is in dispute with: Network Rail • Chiltern Railways • Cross Country Trains • Greater Anglia • Island Line • Gatwick Express • London North-Eastern Railway • East Midlands Railway • c2c • Great Western Railway • Northern Railway • South Eastern Railway • South Western Railway • Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern Railways • TransPennine Express • Avanti West Coast • West Midlands Railway.

Help us to stay in touch. If you have recently changed your place of work, job title, home address and contact details please update your details here.



More info:

info@rmt.org.uk www.rmt.org.uk **RMTunion** Freephone 0800 376 3706

BUS WORKERS GET ORGANISED



Bus workers meeting in Nottingham discussed low pay, assaults, education and recruitment

Bus workers at the annual organising conference hosted by Notts and Derbyshire bus branch discussed strategies for building membership density in the bus industry.

RMT assistant general secretary Eddie Dempsey said that conference needed to develop strategies for strengthening union representation within the bus industry in order to fight for better pay and conditions.

He said that attacks on pay were continuing by private companies that handed £280 million to shareholders rather than re-invest in the industry

or pay more to workers.

"On top of that we are seeing a rise in inflation including a 54 per cent increase in energy prices," he said.

He said that in order to prevent private companies cherry picking bus routes and cutting others, the 'wild west' profit-led privatised model had to be replaced with a municipal approach which guaranteed bus services in the interests of the travelling public.

He said that the organising conference had the right under rule 12 (4) to instruct the

union on how to increase membership of the grades they represent.

Lee Rundle, South Devon outlined ideas about organising bus drivers, engineers, office staff and cleaners and co-ordinating activity.

"We need to show them that united we can make a difference at work," he said.

Mark Thomas, South Devon said that in terms of organising it was important to target younger workers and encourage them to get involved.

"There are many young

people coming into the industry and we must educate them and get them involved in the campaign to improve their conditions," he said.

Andy Bradford, Exeter called on the union to increase coverage of bus issues in the union's publications. RMT News welcomed the idea and encouraged bus workers to invite reporters to branches and depots or email in stories to bdenny@rmt.org.uk in order to increase the profile of bus workers issues across the entire union.

Julie Tobin, South Devon Bus said that the union

needed to incentivise workers by educating them.

"We need to educate and empower workers to identify common goals and make them feel they can change things for the better," he said.

Trevor Whitehead, Leeds Goods and Cartage said that bus workers were dying due to bad ventilation on buses during the pandemic.

"The union's recent health and safety conference talked about ventilation on trains but more work needs to be done on bus ventilation," he said.

RMT regional organiser for Yorks and Lincs Gary Jackson said that a third of members in his region worked in the bus industry and the regional council was working to win recognition in some green field trade union depots and companies.

He said that it was important to use regional councils and branches to win ballots to combat low pay.

"The successful country-wide pay campaign on Stagecoach has revealed that we need a co-ordinated national approach in order to win," he said.

Conference called on the union to campaign for more support and backing for members who are assaulted or verbally abused.

Lee Rundle said that often there was very little legal support or duty of care from companies as this is seen as tarnishing their image.

"We need companies to take assaults seriously and not ignore what is a very serious matter," he said.

One delegate said that he was currently off work with stress due to the fact that a member of the public threatened his life and he had to go to the police himself.

Mark Thomas said that bus workers faced abuse and spitting from passengers and employers often used the excuse of not wanting to bring companies into disrepute.

"I find it appalling that we have had to raise this issue

once more at this conference because it is still going on," he said.

Steve Lothbridge, North Devon Bus said that a member was attacked by an armed passenger, but the driver disarmed him and defended a female passenger.

"You would think that the company would reward this heroic behaviour but no, he was handed a final written warning," he said.

Delegates also called on the union to demand that companies pay for Covid lateral flow tests and for all workers to receive proper sick pay not just statutory sick pay (SSP).

Mark Thomas warned that the present situation was forcing workers to avoid taking tests as companies were forcing members to isolate for five days on SSP.

"Bus workers just cannot afford to take that financial hit so there are forced go to work even if they are unfit to do so," he said.

Delegates also called on the union to examine the impact of rosters on the health of bus workers and demand that no driver should be driving more than 4.5 hours.

Richard Lawton, South Devon Bus said that the lack of toilet facilities for bus workers was also leading to kidney complaints and other ailments as workers were being forced to avoid taking on fluids.

"This is combined with increasing traffic levels which is impacting on our health and safety and mental well-being," he said.

Guest speaker Nadia Whittome Labour MP for Nottingham East said that she was proud be asked to open the bus workers conference and pledged her support for bus workers in Parliament and anywhere else required.

RMT union education officer Andy Gilchrist addressed conference about the history of the trade union movement and need to

educate members about the past and how to build the future.

"I am retiring from my position, but I am not leaving the trade union and labour movement. I also want to wish the union all the best as it

continues to develop its education programme," he said to a standing ovation.

Julie Tobin gave a moving and thoughtful vote of thanks for Andy's 12 years' service to the union on behalf of delegates.



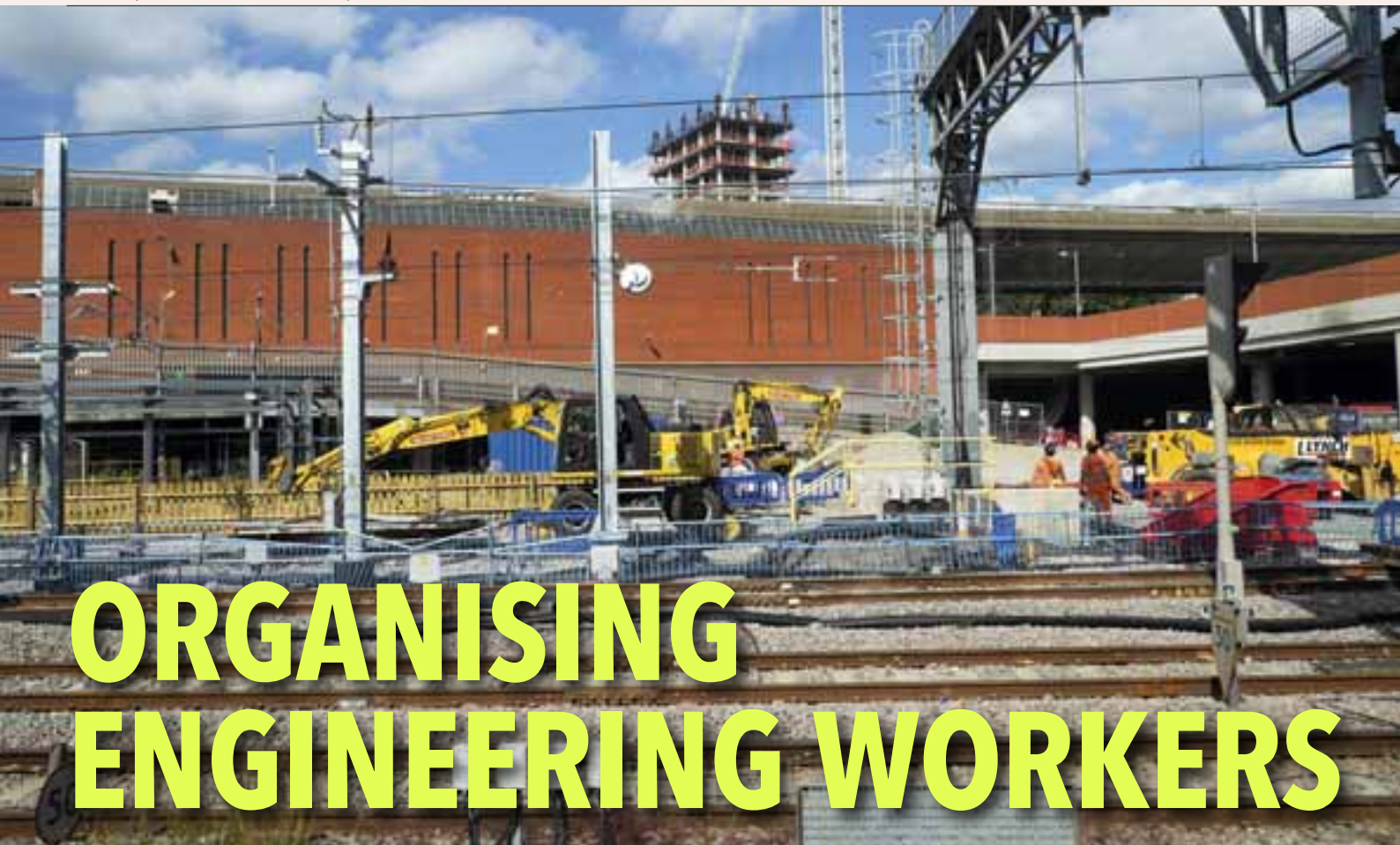
Andy Gilchrist



Lee Rundle



Gary Jackson



RMT's industrial organising conference of engineering grades discuss the fight for pay and jobs

Railway engineering workers meeting in Cardiff last month vowed an almighty battle with Network Rail over pay and opposing compulsory redundancies, at the maintenance grade conference in Cardiff in March.

Delegates from across the country debated the key issue which will put the union on a collision course with Network Rail and 14 train operating companies as early as May this year.

If strike action is agreed, it will be the biggest show of industrial strength by RMT in its history.

The union has four key demands which are:

- A pay increase for members
- No compulsory redundancies
- No detrimental changes to terms and conditions

- No detrimental changes to pensions

Tabling an emergency motion, the Wakefield and Healey Mills branch was "disgusted to learn" that "from the very beginning of the pandemic, Network Rail had set up a group of senior managers to begin drawing up plans to butcher terms and conditions and slash pay. Whilst this was done in secret, publicly, Network Rail praised us".

Singling out Network Rail in particular, the motion added: "This is a company that brazenly seeks to capitalise on the pandemic by using this as a pretext for imposing all the ideas that this trade union have been strong enough to resist over successive pay talks.

"It is the view of this conference that now is not the time to even contemplate

taking a single backward step and that we should mount the biggest fight of our generation to show that we will not tolerate this blatant opportunism".

Addressing conference assistant general secretary Eddie Dempsey told delegates that as the transport industry emerged from the pandemic, the government and railway employers were seeking to "take on this trade union".

"It's not about recovering from the pandemic but bringing in old schemes that have been knocking around in the railways for many decades.

"They have the wind in their sails because they have a government backing them.

"It is about attacking our terms and conditions but also to attack this union's ability to have an industrial strength which means we are able to deliver high wages, good

conditions and protections," he said.

Mr Dempsey explained how government ministers want to strip £2 billion out of railway industry by April 2023 and £1 billion had already been removed by stealth, he insisted.

"For the past 10 years the government has been gradually weaning the railway network off subsidy and towards ticket sales as the primary funder for the network.

"The private companies are still getting their money out of the public purse but what they are trying to do is make sure the operation budgets in the railways are delivered through ticket sales with falling passenger footfalls. So, they are already trying to cut in that way," he said.

He explained that the government allowed Network

Rail to issue bonds on the private market in order to fund badly needed railway maintenance work.

"If they have to build a piece of infrastructure or build a major hospital, a government will borrow money on the open market and issue bonds - that's how they fund infrastructure projects of that nature," he said.

"But in this case, they said Network Rail can do that because it keeps that debt off the public balance books."

After the disastrous privatisation of rail infrastructure where Railtrack failed, Network Rail was allowed to issue bonds on the open market worth more than £25bn to carry out all the maintenance work that wasn't done under the old company.

It costs £2 billion every year to service that debt. And 400 million pounds in proposed cuts to Network Rail budget is the same figure that Network Rail must pay next year on

Bonds that mature.

Mr Dempsey said that the government wants to keep the debt accrued off the books in order to be able to say privatisation isn't that expensive.

"Their plans have nothing to do with recovery.

"What they are proposing are lasting permanent detrimental changes and cuts to jobs and terms and conditions. It is a Huddle," he said.

He went on to point out that RMT had demanded that Network Rail refinance their debt rather than taking it out on the workforce.

Instead, "they want to take money out of the industry to protect their creditors," he said.

Looking ahead to the changes Network Rail want to make to working conditions and job roles, Mr Dempsey said that they want to replace 3,000 operative grades with 1,000 technician roles.

This increased "flexibility"



Addressing conference assistant general secretary Eddie Dempsey

was unsafe and would destroy pay and conditions, he said.

"They are also bringing in a range of new technology to intelligent assets that self-report faults, to drones.

"Our position as a union is, we are not opposed to new technology but if you bring something new in, you teach the workers how to use it and you upskill them".

He concluded that there was a strong likelihood of strike action in May this year.

"We are going to have the

government against us, the press against us, the employers against us. "But we have something more powerful than all of that - solidarity and industrial strength," he added in a defiant tone.

"Power comes from organisation. And like Bob Crow used to say, if we are better organised than them, we'll keep our jobs, get the higher pay and that will be at the expense of their profits," he said. ■

CAMPAIGNING AGAINST CUTS ACROSS THE RAILWAY

Rather than investing in creating a sustainable and affordable rail network that values rail workers, the government and train operating companies are intent on inflicting damaging cuts, including to maintenance work and jobs, rail services and ticket offices, across the railway.

Network Rail is proposing significant cuts to safety critical maintenance jobs and tasks. RMT believes that these cuts would create a serious health and safety risk to both passengers and workers. Network Rail's proposing include a cut of around a third to the total hours of Maintenance Scheduled Tasks

and equate to a headcount reduction of around 2,300.

RMT believes that rather than attacking safety critical jobs and work, Network Rail could make savings of more than £200 million a year by insourcing renewals and facilities management work and we have put these demands to the company.

The government and train operating companies have made no secret of the fact that the future of ticket offices are under threat and their wish to force passengers to use ticket machines and online ticketing.

RMT is opposed to cuts to ticket office hours and closures as this makes it easier for train companies to reduce staffing

levels and will make the railway less safe, secure and accessible for passengers. There have already been recent attempts by train companies, for instance LNER and Great Western Railways, to reduce ticket office opening hours at their stations. The GWR proposals were paused after RMT highlighted that the company had based its proposals on ticket sales data from the pandemic period, in clear contradiction to the government's guidance.

Other train companies such as South Western Railways have proposed service cuts compared to the pre-pandemic timetable. Again, these short-sighted cuts give

little thought to the impact on passengers and instead are all about protecting the revenue and profits of the train companies.

RMT is fighting these damaging cuts agenda which we know will only deter passengers from the sustainable rail network at a time when the government and train companies should be looking to enable modal shift from cars to rail in the fight against climate change. RMT is fighting to defend rail jobs and skills and to protect rail services and ticket offices. ■

More information on RMT campaigns are available here - <https://www.rmt.org.uk/campaigns>



COMING UP FOR AIR

The union's health and safety advisory conference focussed on the importance of good ventilation

Trade unions have set up the Trade Union Clean Air Network (TUCAN) to support the call for workplace action on air quality and recognition of air pollution as an occupational health emergency.

A survey by Wales TUC last year found that around 75 per cent of reps say that members are concerned about air pollution. The reality is that air pollution is blighting communities and affecting the health of workers on their journeys to and from work.

It also harms workers while they are at work and there is a growing awareness of the harm caused by air pollution. Both the impact on health but also the damage it is causing to the environment.

There is mounting evidence showing the devastating impact of air pollution. It harms our lungs, heart, brain and reproductive health. It

also has lifelong impacts for children.

Worldwide it is estimated that nearly nine million people die from air pollution related diseases each year. In Wales, Public Health Wales estimate it contributes to up to 1,400 deaths per year.

Graham Petersen of TUCAN and Greener Jobs Alliance addressed the conference with the message 'clean air is good for you'.

"The government only recognise air pollution as a public health issue – but it is also an occupational health crisis and should be recognised as such, and that those workers at particular risk from outdoor pollution include those in public and commercial transport.

"If the government is serious about stopping climate change, they have to be getting people out of cars and onto public transport and the



Ann Joss

government need to improve the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health risk assessment regulations (COSHH) and ensure that government standards are enforced," he said.

He said that trade unions need to involve the workforce and raise awareness amongst the membership and explained that in relation to clean air station standards: the employers need to be monitoring for both nitrogen dioxide and the small respirable PM2.5 particles. The UK needs to stay in line with WHO guidelines. For more help and advice go to the TUCAN website see their checklist.

Andy MacDonald MP joined conference by zoom and received a number of questions in relation to clean air/air quality issues.

A Hull trains station rep said that pollution and clearly visible and "we need measures in place to reduce pollution and health consequences" feeding into RMT's campaign for greater electrification. Birmingham safety rep Mick Bassey said that it very polluted at Birmingham New Street and this was supposed to be in a clean air zone.

RMT safety rep and maintenance fitter Dan Leon, from North Pole depot said that suggestion had been made regarding run times such as for Diesel engines were over the design parameters which could be contributing to excessive emissions. Further investigation required.

Other speakers agreed and said that the train filters were not adequate and the exhaust was not sited correctly.

Andy McDonald said that a political debate was clearly required and he would be raising these issues Transport Secretary Grant Schapps. He specifically asked delegates if they could send him information about air quality issues particularly around the IEP Azuma class 800 units as it had become evident during

the questions that several safety representatives had concerns for the health and safety of members when working with these units.

Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) sustainable development director George Davies talked to conference about air quality in rail.

He said that transport was a major contributor to poor air quality – rail contributes approximately two percent of total nitric oxide and one percent of total UK particulate matters. However he stressed that rail was a much bigger part of the solution rather than the problem compared to road use.

He explained that air quality network was being established around the rail network using tubes and sensors network to monitor Nitrogen monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and other measures. In connection to the question from a delegate, he said that Birmingham New Street maybe the first station to roll this RSSB testing out.

Another RSSB speaker Mark Oakley, head of rolling stock, said that the Covid-19 working group was working to restore public confidence in rail.

He said that the RSSB was trailing use of fine filters which was showing positive impacts. However he warned that companies contacted him daily trying to sell unproven technology re ventilation at horrendous cost.

Hilda Palmer of National Hazards Campaign said that if there had been better ventilation the impact of Covid would not have been as bad.

She said that the government had chosen instead to concentrate on individual behaviour as the main transmission route.

The newly elected RMT health and safety advisory committee for 2022-2024 agreed to take forward work around air quality and encouraged women and young members to volunteer as RMT safety reps.

■



Sarah Friday



Hilda Palmer



Dan Leon

ATALIAN SERVEST STRIKERS ON THE PICKET LINES



STRIKE: Point TPE and cleaners picket in Preston

New RMT report exposes massive exploitation and MPs write to company directors urging a settlement

Atalian Servest cleaners returned to the picket lines earlier this month for 48-hour strike action following a new report which exposed the brutal reality of life for cleaners working to clean Avanti West Coast trains.

In a report published by the union 91 per cent of Atalian Servest cleaners said that they were struggling to make ends meet, with 68 per cent saying they were regularly struggling and a shocking 94 per cent of said they had had to come into work while sick because they couldn't afford not to.

The long running dispute is over fair pay for twice-outsourced cleaners employed by French multinational Atalian Servest working in French multinational Alstom's depots, cleaning Avanti West Coast's trains.

The cleaners, who earn just £9.68 an hour want a fair pay rise to meet the cost of living and a proper sick pay scheme so that they don't have to work when sick. So far, bosses

of the three companies have failed to engage properly with this claim in spite of the escalating cost-of-living crisis.

A group of West Coast MPs have now also weighed into the dispute, writing to the directors of the three companies urging them to make funds available for a fair pay settlement.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch welcome this intervention from West Coast MPs because the companies involved are effectively trying to starve our members back to work rather than pay them a fair wage.

"These companies are all paying multi-million pound dividends while our members struggle to pay their bills and come into work with Covid.

"The government is effectively running these contracts now and the plight of our rail cleaners is on them as much as the fat cat parasites. The industry needs to sort this out now," he said.

LETTER TO EMPLOYERS FROM LABOUR MPS

Daniel Dickson, CEO, Atalian Servest,
Nicholas Crossfield, Managing Director, Alstom Transport
Phil Whittingham, Managing Director, Avanti West Coast,

5th April 2022

Fair pay for Atalian Servest rail cleaners

We are writing to you to urge you to agree on funding a fair pay offer to cleaners working to keep our trains safe and hygienic on the West Coast franchise.

We believe that cleaners are essential workers and we agree with the Prime Minister when he said that they do an 'extraordinary job'.

We are deeply concerned at the impact of rising inflation on pay rates as low as £9.68 per hour and we are disturbed to learn that these people, who have put their lives on the line during the pandemic, are not given occupational sick pay or travel facilities. It is not right that people who have worked so hard to keep our essential services running should be struggling to make ends meet and living month to month. We urge you to agree on funds that can support decent pay offers that resolve the disputes on our region's railways and we would be glad to meet you to discuss this further.

Dan Carden MP, Liverpool Walton
Margaret Greenwood MP, Wirral West
Kim Johnson MP, Liverpool Riverside
Charlotte Nichols MP, Warrington North
Cat Smith MP, Lancaster and Fleetwood
Alison Thewliss MP, Glasgow Central
Mick Whitley MP, Birkenhead
Ian Mearns MP (Chair RMT Parliamentary Group)



Carlisle

ATALIAN SERVEST CLEANERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Cleaners employed by Atalian Servest, a subsidiary of a French multinational, to clean trains in depots run by another French multinational, Alstom, on behalf of First-Trenitalia's Avanti West Coast. In 2020, these three companies paid out dividends worth in excess of £32 million. Atalian has already paid out a further £5.8 million in the last year. (Table 1 here)

The cleaners employed by Atalian Servest worked through the pandemic when others could stay at home. They are paid £9.68 per hour and they don't get occupational sick pay. They are fighting for a fair pay rise and for sick pay that means they don't have to come into work when ill.

THE CRUSHING EFFECTS OF LOW PAY

- "Going to food banks when needed is embarrassing when you work full time"

- "At the end of every month I have nothing left to spend with my kids"
- "I had to claim Universal Credit for a support from the government."
- "I have to borrow money to buy food and a ticket to come to work and pay bills".
- "I buy the cheapest nappies for my child and sometimes those nappies give her rashes".
- "I am constantly having to juggle between paying with my pay and using my credit card"

COVID HEROES REDUCED TO WORKING WHILE SICK

- "I went in with really bad back problems and was in constant agony because there is no way I could be without that wage"
- "Countless times I have worked while feeling bad I can't afford losing a day"

- "I have worked while sick lots of time because I can't afford to stay off"
- "I never took a lateral flow test as 80 per cent off my pay would have financially have finished me"
- "I had to come in after having a broken shoulder"

CLEANERS HAVE NO OTHER OPTION BUT STRIKE

- "It makes me laugh as it's the wrong ones who get praised and who get bonuses".
- "I feel sick, betrayed, to call us key workers and heroes during the whole pandemic was just lies"
- "They are not rewarding the correct people the work regularly gets done with no involvement of management"
- "I think it's disgusting that bosses get rewards and bonuses and people who work hard at the bottom

got nothing"

- "During the pandemic we were frontline, we were asked to clean coaches where Covid passengers travelled and taken off the train, we cleaned vomit, blood etc"
- "Our management are unknown entities to us. You may see an area manager once a year but upper management have nothing to do with us at all"
- "Directors was able to work from home over the pandemic while the cleaners risked the live and the lives of their loved ones"
- "They need to come and give our job a go and see for themselves"

The full report, titled 'Striking Atalian Servest cleaners in their own words', can be downloaded here <https://bit.ly/3uITQh> or the RMT website. ■

BLACK AND ETHNIC CONFERENCE MEETS

RMT's black and ethnic minority members' annual conference delegate march with P&O workers

Black and ethnic minority RMT members pledged to fight for equality at work following some high-profile industrial disputes on the transport sector.

Meeting in Liverpool, guest speakers included general secretary Mick Lynch and local Labour MP Kim Johnson, the first black MP ever elected in the area.

Delegates even joined a local demonstration against the outrageous sacking of 800 P&O workers last month.

Addressing the packed conference, Mr Lynch said that Covid had exposed the inequalities in society in relation to class and racial background.

"The poor have done worse during this period and the rich have enriched themselves even further.

"Dodgy friends of the government got all these dodgy contracts and millions of pounds of money while our NHS was being underfunded.

"We saw that many black and ethnic minority workers more vulnerable and more exposed to the virus and the pandemic - many of whom paid the price more than other people in our society.

"It is the workers that make all of the wealth in society and the characteristic of the rich is they can consume more rapid rate than we can get access to.

"The richer you are, the more privileged you are, the more likely you are to do well and survive Covid and be unaffected," he said.

Mr Lynch went on to emphasise the importance of RMT as an industrial and combative trade union, organising in all sectors and grades in the transport industry.

Referring to organising



outside traditional areas, such as contracted-out cleaners on the railway: "We've got to reach into every corner of every organisation we deal with.

"The danger if we don't do this properly, we become a club of people on PAYE terms that happens to be working for...one of the traditional railway companies and we don't reach the superexploited and vulnerable.

"We have people on traditional contracts and those on zero hours or contracted out to a private company.

"And we must reach across that divide. Part of the strategy we are putting forward is how we can do that together.

"The outsourcers the third-party providers the agencies target or use black and ethnic minority people more than white counterparts.

"You don't have to be a social scientist to realise that.

"The industrial organisation strategy for me is part of our diversity and is part of our struggle for equality because if we organise everyone in our sectors, and bring them into union organisation, we will become a more diverse."

The general secretary admitted that RMT had further to travel on the road to being truly representative but pointed out that progress had been made with the first black

woman elected to the NEC.

"We must have unity," he added.

"We have differences - of course we do - we have a democracy and different ideas. But on these issues, our differences are minuscule compared to what the bosses are going to throw at us."

Local Liverpool Labour MP Kim Johnson expressed her admiration of the city but insisted she did not shy away from its past as a slave trade capital.

"The wealth and architecture of the slave trade is still very visible in our streets today.

"And as a black working-class woman growing up in the 1970s, I was exposed to lots of politics, challenging sexual and racial injustice. Thatcher at the time, had abandoned my city with a policy of managed decline, sending unemployment skyrocketing to double the national average".

Ms Johnson went on to describe extremely difficult sometimes violent racial tensions in the city during that

period, recalling no go areas and black youths fighting with "skin heads" on the streets.

Explaining her mixed heritage to conference, she said: "My mum was from the white working-class community of north Liverpool, and I faced racial abuse as the only black pupil at my school.

"There were colour bars on nights out, usually preventing black men from attending, these facilities".

She went on to slam the Thatcher government's use of "paramilitary tactics" to quell the 1981 riots across England, including in Toxteth in inner-city Liverpool.

The MP added: "The so-called race riots were a response to the collapse of economic opportunities."

Delegates also passed several motions at the conference including to campaign against the deportations resulting from racist immigration legislation which led to the Windrush scandal.





CLERICAL AND SUPERVISORY GRADES MEET

Delegate Willie Strang gives his take on the organising conference of clerical, supervisory and salaried grades meeting in Scarborough

What a pleasure it was to meet up again with old friends and new in the hospitable setting of the Scarborough Railwaymen's social club. Our previous conference had been via Zoom, so it was great to join in live debates and enjoy the guest speakers in person.

Conference was addressed by Scarborough mayor Eric Broadbent who spoke passionately about his 68 years as a union member, and how much harder it is to organise since the demise of the 'closed shop'. Unusually, a good Q&A session followed before conference was officially opened by me before standing down from conference president to stand for the position of conference secretary.

We were once again pleased to welcome for his 10th year our SAGS Steve Hedley, who as usual delivered a barnstorming and unifying

speech remembering Bob Crow and spoke about how his importance to the union should be remembered to this day and this was warmly greeted by the delegates.

A passionate address to conference followed with Steve reminding delegates about the fights we faced, with the future looking worse now than ever, with the continuing attacks on the working classes from the billionaire business bosses to the government funding of industries, but with no money being available for pay rises. With a billion pounds being paid out to shareholders, it's the working classes being made to pay for their lavish lifestyles. We need to fight for our terms and conditions and for our pay to be increased in line with inflation and our final pensions guaranteed.

Two main items came under discussion, the general

secretary's proposal for union restructuring and our resolve to continue working with our sister conference on the Staff our stations campaign. After several years of supporting the Stations grades conference and the initiative to align our conferences in 2023 to further the campaign, conference felt that the criticism implied in the general secretary's proposal was unjust. Conference resolved to ask the AGM to confirm its support for this body and also that we should be able to submit a response to be included in the NEC deliberations on this matter.

Evenings were spent in the Railwaymen's club for great social events and the usual banter! Thanks to the generosity of the delegates £520 was raised from raffles and donations with Wally Levey raising £170 for Widows & Orphans fund with his usual

raffle and £350 being split between Dnipro Kids, a charity for Ukrainian orphans and a selection of local charities selected by Joe Solo who had entertained us on the Friday evening

Sunday continued with a long discussion about our union with contributions from regional organisers Micky Thompson and Gary Jackson who were exemplary. We attended the TPE picket line at Scarborough before returning to finish conference and make our weary ways home as the trains were mostly cancelled due to industrial action and suffered the indignities of bus travel to get home!

We are a members' led union, and the grades conferences are a crucial part of growing member involvement – long may they continue. ■

TRAIN BRICK ATTACK

Reward offered after Northern driver injured by brick thrown at train

'Stop taking risks on the railway'. That's the message from Northern after a driver was injured last month by a brick thrown at one of the rail operator's trains.

The incident happened as the train travelled towards Clifton on Friday February 4 at around 10pm, smashing the windscreen and causing shards of glass to hit the driver in the face.

The driver was taken to hospital but is now recovering at home.

Chris Jackson, regional director at Northern, said: "It's hard to believe that anyone would put the safety of others at risk by such reckless behaviour.

"The consequences of a brick hitting a fast-moving train are potentially devastating. This was a shocking incident that could have had fatal consequences," he said.

Northern is now offering a £1,000 reward to anyone who provides information which leads to a conviction following the incident.

A British Transport Police (BTP) investigation is already underway, and the train operator has now stepped in to help appeal for further information.

Chris Jackson added: "Officers are investigating, and I am appealing to anyone with information about either



incident to come forward. Someone will know who did this and we need to find them before they do something similar which may have far worse consequences".

Anyone with information

can contact BTP by texting 61016 or by calling 0800 40 50 40. Alternatively, people can call Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111.



ACTIVISTS: A helping hand with recruitment



RMT is committed to protecting and promoting members' interests – so as well as representing our members in the workplace, we've also negotiated some great member benefits.

One such benefit is the £5,000 Free Accidental Death Cover that we have negotiated with RMTProtect on your behalf.

The RMTProtect team can provide leaflets, email templates, web/social/newsletter banners or they can come out to your branch to present to your members.

Call John Eccles on 07833450067 or email jeccles@uibuk.com for more information about this and other benefits to help support recruitment and retention!

Visit www.RMTProtect.com/JE to register

About the Cover:

- The policy pays out £5,000 if the policyholder dies as the result of an accident.
- The cover is available to RMT members and their families
- Cover is for UK residents aged 18-69.
- Cover last for 12 months, then it needs be renewed each year, but it's always FREE. For full details, please visit www.RMTProtect.com/FreeCoverInfo
- It takes less than 2 mins to register.
- Following registration an RMTProtect representative will telephone to set up the free cover and explain the other benefits available.

RMT is an authorised Representative of RMTProtect, a trading name of Union Income Benefit Holdings Ltd (UIBH) who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority to distribute financial services products, register number 307575. This can be checked on the FCA website www.fca.org.uk. Free Accidental Death Cover is underwritten by Stonebridge International Insurance Ltd.

DISABLED MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

FIGHTING FOR RIGHTS

Janine Booth, RMT disabled members' advisory committee secretary speaks out

I first got involved in the disabled people's movement after losing my eye to a stray firework in 2005. With the support of RMT reps, I kept my job as a station supervisor on London Underground, fighting off attempts by the company to restrict me more than I needed to be.

My commitment to disabled workers' campaigning was reaffirmed when I found out I am autistic, and then when I had cancer (from which, thanks to the NHS, I have fully recovered).

Our union did not have a disabled members' committee or conference back then, but I started going to TUC disabled workers' events, where I met

activists from other unions. I found out that we faced many similar issues, and I learned about the social model of disability. This is a way of understanding disability that looks at how society puts obstacles in the way of people who have impairments or differences. It sees that society disables us, rather than that we as individuals are broken or need fixing.

By applying this model, we can identify discriminatory barriers, including at work, and demand that employers remove them. Sometimes these are physical barriers, such as steps, sometimes they are demand barriers, such as workload or long hours.

Barriers might include unsuitable communication formats (such as dyslexia-unfriendly print layout), or they might be punitive policies (such as attendance procedures that penalise people for taking time off sick).

Five years ago, we held our first ever RMT disabled members' conference and elected our first committee. It has been really encouraging to see disabled members from many different jobs, sectors and parts of the country come together to assert our rights and make the union more effective in fighting for disabled workers' rights.

I now work hours that suit me, and have some



adjustments that enable me to still be working as a station supervisor twenty-five years after first joining London Underground. I strongly believe that this has only been possible because we are strongly-unionised workplace, and because rank-and-file members have insisted that our union fights for disabled workers' rights. ■

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DEBATING DISABILITY

RMT member Gwen McNeil reports on the TUC disabled workers' conference

This year's TUC disabled workers' conference was a two-day online event which offered a packed agenda debating relevant issues such as reasonable adjustments, menopause, long covid, access to work reform and accessibility under attack from public transport cuts.

There were also fringe events one of which was hosted jointly by this union and Free Our Unions, where reps and rank and file union members were asked to circulate an article concerning the effect on disabled workers anti-union laws.

Delegates signed a statement opposing these laws and the repeal of relevant legislation and to provide a short video or statement why disabled people support both the right to strike and the repeal of anti-union laws.

Fellow RMT delegates were guided through conference by

our lead delegate Janine Booth and the fact that she also holds a seat on the TUC Disabled Workers' Committee was hugely beneficial to us.

Most motions on the agenda were straightforward and the committee's attitude to recommend supporting was made clear throughout. Day one presented composite motion two which offered the opportunity to join Unison in using the disability employment charter to make a national disability strategy for disabled workers.

The charter calls for numbers of disabled people working for organisations yet similar schemes have historically proved ineffective and tokenistic. As a result, Janine spoke against and the vote came back a dead heat, so not carried. However, a second vote was taken next day and, despite the chair being challenged for some



questionable decisions, it was finally carried. Quite surprisingly, this contentious composite motion was the motion with the most votes to be taken forward to TUC congress. Most of our delegates felt this was a lesson in democracy to take away with us. Emergency motions are now being drawn up to take to branches ready for our own conference next month.

A statement from TUC disabled workers' committee concerning P&O ferries' abhorrent treatment of their British staff had already been agreed calling for the government to bring back the

ferry company into public ownership. Yet this point was omitted from the final draft but luckily sister Booth was able to deliver the statement in full.

We were very well represented by speakers on various motions - moving, seconding, and speaking in support by Janine Booth, Nick Brown, and Colin Stewart.

Being fully online was not best practice for everyone so perhaps in-person or hybrid should be looked at for next year. If eventful conferences are your thing, I'd look no further and I am already looking forward to next year. ■

STEVE HEDLEY RETIREMENT

As Steve Hedley approaches the end of his second term as RMT senior assistant general secretary, he has taken the decision to retire from the union having given 13 years' service, first as regional organiser for London Transport and subsequently as a national officer.

Many members will have first-hand experience of Steve's dedication and service to our union and our members for more than 33 years.

Steve's rail career was based in the engineering grades with British Rail Signal & Telecoms and later with

Metronet on London Underground before his election as a full-time officer.

During his time on the tools Steve was a true rank-and-file activist and leader and as well as representing members he led disputes and action from the front. His high-profile union activism even caused him to be blacklisted by the employers which was exposed in the High Court a few years ago.

Despite the attacks of the right-wing press and media, he remained a high-profile voice for our members throughout his time of dedicated service to the

union. His articulation of member's causes both for individuals and at the negotiation table brought many advances and victories for our members.

And of course Steve was renowned for his dedication in attending picket lines, actions and demonstrations up and down the country – wherever our members or workers needed support, Steve was there giving energy and encouragement.

In recent years Steve has experienced some periods of ill-health due to a number of conditions and now at the end of another five-year term

has reflected that it will be best to take a break from the stresses and strains of national office and dedicate himself to his family and other opportunities.

He retires from full-time service with RMT with the best wishes of his colleagues and that of the entire membership who are grateful for his years of dedicated service.

I personally wish Steve a long and happy retirement from RMT and wish him well in the next chapters of his life.

RMT general secretary
Michael Lynch ■

ORGANISING FREIGHT MEMBERS

After a year which saw a massive shortage of road haulage drivers making headlines across Britain, RMT's National Freight and Logistics Organising Conference resolved to create a new organising strategy to accelerate recruitment and maximise leverage.

Opening the meeting in Motherwell, conference president Steve Watters hailed the union's success in achieving 100 per cent membership at his own workplace, Freightliner Coatbridge.

But he expressed disappointment that the union "missed a great opportunity" in not taking sufficient advantage of the driver shortage to drive up membership and wages.

He also reported on the progress of the TUPE transfer at Coatbridge. Last autumn Freightliner announced that it would be leasing out the terminal for a 10-year period, effectively becoming the landlords instead of the employer. Members at the terminal will now become employees of Russell Railroad Ltd. Mr Watters said that "a lot of hard work was done" to protect members' terms and conditions in the course of the transfer.

Reporting back to the conference on behalf of RMT's national executive committee (NEC), Paul McDonnell drew attention to the need to recruit younger members of the sector's workforce - not just to membership, but to union activity too. "We can't operate as a union unless we start getting the youngsters involved," he said.

Appealing for members to

come forward as a workplace reps, Mr McDonnell also encouraged freight sector members to stand for NEC positions in their regions, to ensure the sector had a strong voice.

He also emphasised that the union needed strength in the workplace to exercise serious leverage in negotiations with employers. "The officers will fight for everything we want, but unless the army's there behind the they're not going to get it," he said.

Addressing calls for an organising strategy across the sector, RMT senior assistant general secretary Steve Hedley said: "If we're going to get this organised properly, the first thing we need is bodies and resources from head office".

He went on to suggest the conference could send reps who had successfully organised in terminals like Coatbridge down to depots struggling with recruitment and organisation: to "have conversations" and develop reps as well as simply recruiting.

Tom Wilson, South Hants said: "In the other industries where we organise we have clear campaigns - like Save our Seafarers and Keep the Guard on the Train. They unite members across companies behind those slogans. It shows members where the fight is."

RMT Scotland regional organiser Mick Hogg responded to delegates comments: "I've listened to some of the comments as to what you guys are experiencing on the freight side, and the lack of representation of the freight sector on the NEC, on the



officer front and even the national officer front.

"I came from the freight side, the EWS side, and I was persuaded to put my hat in the ring. I certainly believe that freight within the union is not given enough attention particularly with the climate change agenda, which is big news as far as society is concerned.

He also emphasised the importance of defending freight terminals against any future threats of closure. "We need to remain vigilant in ensuring that freight is a priority, and the terminals don't just remain in place but go from strength to strength."

A motion from South Hants and Eastleigh Workshops branch called for a recruitment campaign at Pentalver Transport, "with an aim to achieve recognition". Tom Wilson emphasised that a key challenge would be gaining access to the sites, and went

on to say: "It's alright joining people - it's getting them to be a rep. We need to show people we're there to support them and explain a bit more about the union."

Robert Green, Birmingham emphasised the importance of building the union at Pentalver's Cannock site in the West Midlands.

"We need to get in there as they're trying to divide and conquer," he said.

Discussing an organising strategy for the sector, delegates emphasised the need to map where members are, adopt a slogan to unite the workforce and show potential new members the benefits of joining the union. Delegates agreed that the conference should take place in the greater Birmingham area next year, as part of efforts to recruit and mobilise freight and logistics members in the Midlands.



HELP HAITI

Following the massive earthquake that struck Haiti last year the British Red Cross has launched the Haiti Earthquake Appeal

On August 14, 2021 a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti and more than 2,200 people were reported to have died with many more injured.

Almost 53,000 homes have been destroyed along with 25 health facilities and 127 schools.

The Haitian Red Cross has been responding since the earthquake hit. Six Red Cross ambulances have been transferring patients that were evacuated and 25,000 people and 5,000 families have been reached with essentials including blankets, kitchen kits and hygiene kits.

The British Red Cross has launched the Haiti Earthquake Appeal in support of the work the Haiti Red Cross is doing.

The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) has set up a field hospital. A woman who lives locally has spoken about the impact the earthquake has had on her: "I am a mother of five. Since the earthquake struck I have been trying to rebuild our life but it is very difficult.

"The hospital the Red Cross is setting up is so important for me and for the whole community in this area. We need it," she said.

The country was still recovering from 2010's earthquake that killed 220,000 and left 1.5 million people homeless. Haiti's history of earthquakes stems from the fact the country sits on a fault line between huge tectonic plates - the movement of which causes earthquakes.

This latest earthquake has caused severe damage in the south of the country. Four



hospitals are reported to have been damaged in Les Cayes and Jérémie, where a cathedral and other buildings have collapsed. Hotels, ports, bridges and roads have also been damaged, with an unknown number of bodies still trapped in rubble.

Early assessments by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) indicate that more than 800,000 people have been directly affected by the earthquake's impact.

What is happening in Haiti now?

The scale of destruction in Haiti is enormous - 2.2 million people are believed to have felt the earthquake and its aftershocks. Life-saving efforts are the priority at a time when hospitals are severely over-stretched due to Covid-19.

The Haitian Red Cross, which has 200 staff and 10,000 volunteers, remains on the



HOSPITAL: Patients of OFATMA Hospital in Les Cayes, Haiti are cared for in tents August 16, 2021. Though it did not collapse, the hospital's walls and floor cracked during the earthquake and no one wants to go back inside.



ground, providing search and rescue, first aid, emergency healthcare and shelter. Donations to the British Red Cross's Haiti Earthquake Appeal will support this response.

Red Cross emergency specialists have been deployed to Haiti to support the Haitian Red Cross's response to those affected, particularly the most vulnerable people.

How can I help those affected by the earthquake?

Donations to the British Red Cross's Haiti Earthquake Appeal will help scale up the Haitian Red Cross's response on the ground.

"The area affected is vast – bigger than initial reports suggested," said Richard Blewitt, the British Red Cross's director of international.

"Our number one priority is supporting the Haitian Red Cross as it continues search and rescue efforts and gets first aid and supplies to the injured and people who can't go back to damaged homes.

"With hundreds dead, people still trapped, and a major storm on the way, the situation is extremely serious. With this in mind, we've launched the Haiti Earthquake Appeal to help extend the response in Haiti, a country which was already facing multiple challenges including the ongoing impact of the earthquake in 2010, recent major storms and Covid-19".

HAITI EARTHQUAKE FACTS

- 2.2 million people are estimated to have felt the earthquake
- Over 800,000 are estimated to be affected
- Over 2,100 people have died
- 12,200 people are reported to be injured
- Over 115,000 houses have been damaged or destroyed

For more information go to:
<https://donate.redcross.org.uk/appeal/haiti-earthquake-appeal>

President's column

VOTE YES TO BUST THE PAY FREEZE



Trade unions exist for three interlinked reasons: wages, prices and profits.

Media pundits and politicians often claim that price rises are caused by wage increases. Nothing could be further from the truth – as your pay slip will confirm.

On February 4 this year, Andrew Bailey, Governor of the Bank of England (who was paid £575,538 in 2021) called for 'wage restraint' to keep down inflation. What on earth was he talking about? Wage restraint? Most workers have not had a pay rise for three years.

Retail Price Inflation in the twelve months to March 2022 was a whopping nine per cent. From April 6 2022, your National Insurance contributions went up from 12 to 13.25 per cent (a rise of over 10 per cent). Home energy bills rocketed by 50 per cent in April 2022 and will increase again in October. Diesel fuel at the pumps today costs 177p/litre, up from 112p/litre two years ago, a rise of almost 60 per cent.

None of these price increases were caused by pay rises. All are direct attacks on working class living standards. Unless something changes, next year more families will face the choice between heating or eating.

Financial journalist, Martin Lewis warned this month of possible 'civil unrest' as taxes, food and fuel prices rise. "When breadwinners cannot provide, anger brews and civil unrest brews – and I do not think we are very far off. I would like to see more. But this is a Conservative government", he said.

However, sky-rocketing price rises in the shops and at petrol pumps are a bonanza for banks and energy companies.

The Bank of England hiked interest rates to 0.75 per cent in March 2022 to tackle rising inflation. Higher interest rates mean higher bank profits. BP made a profit of \$12.85 billion in 2021, their highest for eight years.

Next year will be even better for BP's shareholders.

While there have been wage increases in some shortage sectors (such as road haulage), for most rail, maritime and transport workers wages are stagnant or are falling in real terms. Real wages will only rise if workers assert their collective bargaining power through their trade unions.

So, if wage rises don't cause inflation, what links our wages with the price of essential goods and services and the eye-watering profits of energy companies, banks and financial institutions in the City of London?

Wages, prices and profits are linked through their relationship to class struggle. When your wages fall, while prices and profits rise, the capitalist class are winning.

When we force employers to pay more of the surplus value we create to us in wages and take less in profits for themselves, we are winning back a small proportion of that surplus.

This is the story of trade unionism. When six farm labourers met under a Sycamore tree in the Dorset village of Tolpuddle in 1833, they paid a shilling to join the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers and swore an oath not to accept a wage cut.

Those farm labourers lived in poverty on 7 shillings a week and demanded an increase to 10 shillings. Instead, the farmer cut their wages to 6 shillings and in revenge for demanding a wage rise, they were put on trial accused of administering a 'secret oath'.

Dorchester magistrates sentenced them to seven years penal labour in Australia, but the mass public protest that followed led to the birth of a trade union movement that campaigned and won a pardon and freedom for the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

Alex Gordon



CHARITY WORK: Mick Cash with RMT general secretary Mick Lynch and Kevin Carey who retired from the union as head of the industrial relations department last year. Kevin served the union for over 50 years at various levels.

MICK CASH JOINS RAILWAY BENEFIT FUND

Former general secretary Mick Cash has been appointed to the Railway Benefit Fund's (RBF) Board of Trustees. As a member of the Board, Mick will play a key role in developing the RBF's work to ensure that it can best meet its charitable purpose of supporting railway staff and their families in need.

RBF is a UK-based charity which solely supports railway people and their dependents through difficult times. Founded in 1858, the charity has been supporting the industry for over 160 years. RBF offer a range of services to current, former and retired railway workers, including financial grants, legal advice and signposting.

The grants that RBF provide are there to support railway

people and their families through tough times and can alleviate immediate financial hardship or fund support that will assist wider well-being.

RBF is non-membership charity and all grants are non-repayable, meaning that railway employees do not have to give to the charity to use its services. The financial grants are designed to help with unexpected life events or change in circumstances, including:

- Illness and health issues
- Death and bereavement
- Relationship breakdown
- Domestic violence
- Family issues
- Unexpected expenditure
- Debt and money worries
- Changes to work patterns

• Redundancy

RBF also have a legal app in partnership with law express, which offers an hour free legal advice with a solicitor, and a partnership with Citizens Advice Manchester. In 2022, the charity launched an online Financial Health Assistant- this is a free service that offers users a report on their financial health and advice for improvement.

In 2021, the charity supported over 800 people with their financial support, and over 3,000 used their online tools. RBF is solely funded by fundraising and donations and host regular events throughout the year such as auctions, golf days and steam experiences.

Mick said: "I have known about the good work the

Railway Benefit Fund has done and have myself referred people for help and assistance in the past. I welcome the opportunity to bring my knowledge and experience to ensuring that this charity can continue to support railway workers, both employed and retired, when they face difficult times."

Claire Houghton, CEO of RBF, said: "We are delighted to welcome Mick to our Board of Trustees. He joins RBF at a crucial time, as we are seeing a real increase in demand for our services. His expertise will be a great help to the charity."

Find out more about RBF:
www.railwaybenefitfund.org.uk
Or contact:
info@railwaybenefitfund.org.uk

FREE LEGAL SUPPORT FOR RMT MEMBERS



**DEFENDING YOUR RIGHTS.
DRIVING UP STANDARDS.**

For legal advice that helps you read between the lines, contact Thompsons Solicitors

As a member of RMT, you and your family have access to specialist legal advice and representation from the UK's leading law firm for trade union members.

Thompsons Solicitors has been securing life-changing compensation for injured trade union members since 1921. Our trusted lawyers are committed to making sure you have the protection you need if you or a member of your family is injured.

Last year, we secured over £4.5 million in compensation for more than 250 members and their families.

To learn more about how we can help, call **0800 587 7516** or start a claim online at **www.thompsonstradeunion.law**.

Your free legal service covers:

- Personal injury – at or away from work, on holiday or on the roads
- Serious injury – including brain injuries and spinal cord injuries
- Industrial disease or illness, such as asbestos-related diseases
- Special funding terms for medical negligence claims
- Online basic wills services
- Special terms for conveyancing, probate and powers of attorney
- Employment law (accessed via your RMT representative).

Family members are also covered for:

- Personal injury – away from work, on holiday or on the roads
- Special funding terms for medical negligence claims
- Special terms for wills, conveyancing, probate and powers of attorney.

Keep 100% of your compensation

If you make your legal claim through RMT, you're guaranteed access to experts who, on principle, will only act for those who have been injured, and never for those who cause injury.

You are also guaranteed to keep 100% of your compensation (with special terms available for medical negligence claims) because, unlike with other law firms, you won't pay a penny in legal fees.

0800 587 7516
www.thompsonstradeunion.law

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STANDING UP FOR YOU

**100
YEARS**
1921-2021

REMEMBERING WILMCOTE

Wilmcote station on 24 March 2022.

Mike Esbester reports on a special ceremony on the centenary of the death of four track workers

Until it was featured in the January 2022 RMT News, you were unlikely to have heard of the March 1922 Wilmcote accident. It wasn't a big passenger train crash, yet it was significant – as every accident was and is.

It was unusual in that it killed four track workers in a single moment: Edward Sherwood (43), George Booker (43), Lewis Washburn (40) and William Bonehill (27). Three of the four were members of the National Union of Railwaymen, RMT's predecessor union.

On the centenary of incident, March 24 2022, the men and their families were remembered at Wilmcote station. This included relatives of three of the men: two of George Booker's grandchildren, two of Lewis Washburn's cousins and a cousin of William Bonehill.

Sadly Lynda, another of George Booker's grandchildren, couldn't attend due to Covid, but talking to her in the lead-up to the centenary made it clear how the accident had affected her family. George's wife, Annie,

rarely spoke of him in Lynda's presence; George's picture was missing from the house.

Raising four sons by herself took a toll. Lynda's father went on to become station master at Wilmcote; Lynda recalled that he and two of his brothers were offered jobs by the Great Western Railway by way of

support after their father's death.

It took a lot of work – and a fair bit of luck – on the part of the Railway Work, Life & Death project to track down the family members, but it was really important to do. All of them were delighted that their ancestors were being

remembered: these were men who were otherwise forgotten, ordinary men who didn't leave a vast historical record, but men who were loved by their families and their communities.

On the day of the centenary, the remembrance was led by Andrew Hall, Railway Chaplain for the area.



The memorial event, including Ian Taylor (Wilmcote station master; in hi vis), Lis and Judy (Lewis Washburn's cousins; front left), Barbara and Roland (George Booker's grandchildren; centre front and back), Denise (William Bonehill's cousin; red jacket) and Andrew Hall (right, next to Denise).

He outlined the details of the accident and the men's lives, noting the impact of their deaths on their families: between them they left four widows and 12 children, with Winifred Bonehill, William Bonehill's wife, pregnant with their daughter who was born about a month after the accident.

We then stood silent for a minute in respect. The families also visited the churchyard at Wilmcote, where the four men were buried together, to leave flowers.

The men were remembered in other ways, too: Andrew Hall released a short recorded tribute on social media, the Railway Work, Life & Death project website featured detailed blogs about the accident and its aftermath, and the local newspaper, the Stratford Herald included a feature on the centenary.

Thanks to support of all involved – including RMT, Network Rail, West Midlands Railway, the Heart of England Community Railway Partnership and the Wilmcote station adopters – many more people know about the men involved, the accident and the risks of railway work in the past and the present.

For the Railway Work, Life & Death project this is important – these railwaymen were otherwise lost to history, and actively working with the current rail industry to help

remember past staff is one way we can contribute. It's also significant that the RMT helped to remember past members, as well as thinking about how we can make a difference in the current industry.

The local community at Wilmcote, led by the John Philps and the station adopters, has also been galvanised by the centenary, and there are now plans for more permanent memorial. Details will be included in a display planned for the station and hopefully plaques will be installed on benches at the station. This kind of remembrance and memorialisation is something we'd like to see replicated across the rail network. It would help highlight the sacrifices made by staff over the years to keep the system running, and remind us of the toll imposed upon railwaymen and women in the past – and sometimes still in the present.

Dr Mike Esbester is senior lecturer in History at the University of Portsmouth. He is co-leader of the 'Railway Work, Life & Death' project, a collaboration between the University of Portsmouth, the National Railway Museum and the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick (www.railwayaccidents.port.ac.uk. Twitter: @RWLDproject). The website featured six in-depth blog posts about the Wilmcote incident, the men involved and their families. ■



George Booker and his family, c.1915, including wife Annie. Courtesy Lynda Ashby, George's granddaughter.



The Wilmcote men's graves, St Andrew's churchyard.

FISHERS ARMS SAVED

Trade unionists and locals in the Northumberland village of Horncliffe have raised enough funds to save a pub from closure and is set to re-open as a community hub.

Fundraisers in the border village supported by BFAWU and RMT members have offered the asking price of

£180,000 to buy the Fishers Arms, which served its last pint in October 2021.

The campaign aims to turn the pub into a community benefit society which will serve locally brewed drinks and become a safe haven for residents.

Union members joined

local trade councils and celebrities, including the actor Robson Green, to back fundraising efforts, which are ongoing as another £100,000 is still needed to repair and refurbish the building.

Any pledges made will be converted into shares so donors can have a long-term

stake in the project.

A campaign spokesperson appealed for more support, saying: "The quicker we can raise the funds the sooner our darling pub will become the hub of the community once again".

Details on how to contribute are available at: fishersarmshorncliffe.org.

DERBY AWARDS



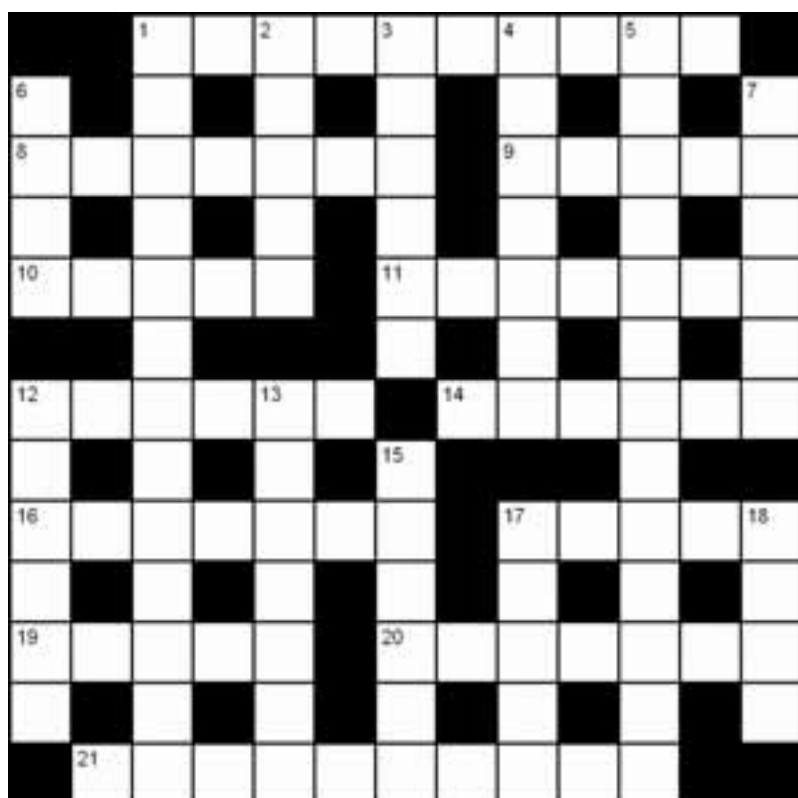
Derby Rail and Engineering branch held a long service awards event last month. RMT assistant general secretary Eddie Dempsey presented 10-year awards to Krzysztof Gorecki, Rebecca Woodhouse and Chris Thorn while John Gallagher received his well-earned 40-year award.

Eddie said that it was always a pleasure to present awards to loyal members of the union.

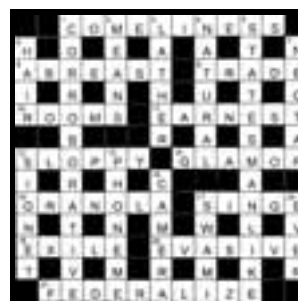
"It may be only a little badge, but it represents the solidarity between transport workers regardless of their grade.

"Over history goes back over 150 years now but the same message still holds true that unity is strength and together we can defend each other and improve conditions at work," he said. ■

£50 PRIZE CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by May 12 with your name and address.

Last month's winner is P Paplinska, London.



Crossword sponsored by UIA

ACROSS

- 1 Bringing salvation (10)
- 8 Illustrious (7)
- 9 Host (5)
- 10 Utensil (5)
- 11 Blot out (11)
- 12 March (6)
- 14 Characteristic (6)
- 16 Picture (7)
- 17 Tiny shrimp (5)
- 19 Praise (5)
- 20 Part payment (5,2)
- 21 Unionist (10)

DOWN

- 1 Include again (13)
- 2 Gloomy (5)
- 3 Tangled (6)
- 4 Latticework (7)
- 5 Executive officer (4,9)
- 6 12 months (4)
- 7 Bind (6)
- 12 Unexpected (6)
- 13 Conscript (7)
- 15 Religious text (6)
- 17 Military cloth (5)
- 18 Respiratory organ (4)

BRITAIN NEEDS A PAY RISE!

TUC National Demonstration Saturday 18 June 2022

Families across the country are bearing the brunt of the cost-of-living storm. Every worker – public and private sector – needs a real pay rise now.

Sat, 18 June 2022, 12:00 to 15:00
Parliament Square, London, SW1P 3BD
Join the RMT contingent – bring your banners

