

RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

WALES LEADS THE WAY



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

➤ Cysylltu Cymru
Connecting Wales

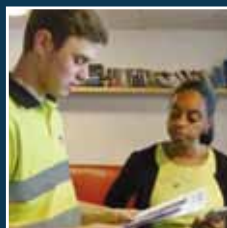
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www.rmt.org.uk

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, 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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CROSSWORD

EDITORIAL



STANDING TOGETHER

As you will probably be aware by now at last month's annual general meeting I announced that I will be retiring from my post as general secretary next year once the process has been concluded for the election of my successor.

I would like to start off by thanking all of you for the support and faith you have put in me over the past six years or so and to assure you that it will be business as usual until the election is completed and as we face up to the massive challenges the union continues to face from the COVID pandemic.

I had made it clear during the AGM while we were discussing internal matters that if the delegates found themselves unable to back me that they would put me in a position where I had no option but to announce I was moving on and clear the way for an election. The AGM made its decision in the full knowledge of my position and so the election process is now underway.

Nobody should underestimate the successes we have achieved together over the past six years. Our membership is higher than it has been since the early nineties,

our finances are in good health and we have won major victories on pay, jobs and safety. Of course, there is always much more to do but we are in good shape for the battles ahead.

We know very well that we face threats to jobs, pay and conditions in every industrial sector from the COVID-19 pandemic and much of the work and campaigning we are throwing at the developing picture is covered in this issue of the magazine.

My message to you is clear. We are at our best when we stand united and focussed as an industrial trade union and we should not allow anything to distract us from our workplace priorities.

I expect the election for my successor to be conducted in a comradely and supportive manner and I hope that all our members will feel able to participate and to vote. This union has a great future ahead of it if we all stand together and we all have an important role to play. Let's get on with it.

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

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

RAIL INDUSTRY SKILLS CRISIS LOOMS

Report finds rail sector set to lose huge numbers of skilled workers with over a quarter aged over 50, meaning over 15,000 workers could retire by 2025

New research by City & Guilds and the National Skills Academy for Rail (NSAR) paints a stark picture for the future of the rail workforce, with a skills shortages set to escalate significantly in the sector over the next five years, just at the moment that such talents are required the most.

With major rail infrastructure projects being rolled as part of the long anticipated National Infrastructure Strategy, the Back on Track report and data from NSAR on 242,000 workers in the rail industry – reveals that there remains potential for these to create a new lease of life for the UK economy through new jobs and economic growth.

However, serious systemic issues in the industry's talent and skills pipeline, have created a shortage of trained and talented employees, just when the industry needs them most.

The fundamental issues that have created this situation include a short-term approach to skills development, an ageing workforce and a reliance on overseas and 'third-tier' workers and the report emphasises that greater industry collaboration was needed to fix them in time to meet this additional demand.

The research finds that the rail sector is set to lose huge numbers of skilled workers over the next few years. With 28 per cent of workers in the

industry aged over 50, this means some 15,000 workers could be due to retire by 2025.

As a result of this talent and skills shortfall coinciding with new rail projects that will heighten the demand for skills, between 7,000 and 12,000 additional people will be required every year by the industry over the next five to ten years – up to 120,000 people in total. And with modelling showing peak demand around 2025, people must be recruited now to equip them with the relevant skills and experience to meet future demand.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the report revealed that we are now seeing the consequences of a policy which in recent decades has seen railway engineering such as track and signal construction and train building and train maintenance being fragmented and outsourced to a patchwork of competing interests who operate in their short-term interests rather than the long terms needs of the industry.

"To allow skills to be created, retained and also seamlessly transferred around the railway we need a return to a unified and integrated approach to railway itself and the stable, secure and attractive career path that would create.

"This report should also serve as another good reason

for the government to abandon its plans to abolish Trade Union learning which has done so much to help promote rail skills," he said.

National Skills Academy for Rail CEO Neil Robertson said that the rail industry's lack of diversity and perception by younger people, were well known, but less well understood.

"While many people in the industry are already working to recruit and upskill a more diverse workforce, it's by shedding a light on these issues that we can understand the solutions that will truly make an impact.

"Now, as we look to invest in new talent in to fill future skills gaps in the rail industry, it's also clear that we can use this opportunity improve social mobility across the UK. By hiring people from different backgrounds and regions and providing them with quality skills and career progression, we can ensure that these infrastructure projects not only create jobs, but also promote positive socioeconomic change," he said.

The report found that this disinterest in careers in rail could be largely fuelled by misperception and a lack of awareness and understanding about the wide range of career opportunities and roles in the sector – pointing to a basic need to educate a wider pool of people about the potential jobs available to

them. Of those who said that they wouldn't consider working in the rail industry, 42 per cent said they don't know enough or anything about careers in the sector, whilst 35 per cent said they don't have the skills needed to get in the sector.

City & Guilds and NSAR called on the rail sector and government to collaborate and take a joined-up approach to urgently gear up the industry's skills and talent pipelines, before it's too late.

The seven key recommendations outlined in the report are:

- Build lifelong learning commitments into project specifications for national rail projects - starting with apprenticeships
- Transform the rail industry into a career destination, especially for young people
- Develop strong career paths to attract and retain talent and maximise productivity
- Make mid-career entry to the industry and skills-transfer more frictionless
- Build greater participation at a local / regional level
- Government and relevant partners should consider a perception and awareness raising campaign
- Utilise the Green agenda to attract a new generation of people to the industry

MOTHBALLED? one of the platforms for the new Elizabeth Line at Woolwich station in east London as the latest developments in the Crossrail project continue to progress. The beleaguered Crossrail project reportedly risks being "mothballed" if further financial support is not provided soon by the Government.

CROSSRAIL CRISIS GROWS

Crossrail, London's long-delayed £19 billion east-to-west rail link, faces being "mothballed" without the release of urgent new government funding.

Andy Byford, the London transport commissioner, has written to the permanent secretary at the Department for Transport (DfT), seeking £80 million of immediate support to keep the project on track.

Mr Byford, who took on the role in May and has spent much of the last six months battling to secure funds to keep London's bus and Tube network running during the COVID-19 crisis said that without the additional funding being provided, he could relinquish responsibility for it.

RMT has demanded that the government stop using TfL and its workers as a political football.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that what was happening between the government and TfL was nothing short of a disgrace.

"As we approach next year's London Mayoral election it's clear the government is using TfL and our members as a political football and rather than stick to their pledge of "Building Back Better" they're starving TfL of vital funds and playing games with worker's

livelihoods.

"London transport and its workforce are vital to the economic recovery from Covid-19 and RMT will not be afraid to do whatever is necessary to protect our member's jobs and livelihoods," he said.

Crossrail - officially known as the Elizabeth Line - has been plagued by delays and cost overruns, and is already more than three years late. ■

RMT TO FIGHT TFL FUNDING CUTS

RMT has pledged an all-out fight to protect jobs, pensions and working conditions as the government line up savage cuts to Transport for London (TfL) funding next March.

After a long, drawn out battle between the London Mayor and the government, Transport for London secured a bailout from the government worth about £1.8 billion in November.

The funding has been

agreed until the end of March, but it fell short of London Mayor Sadiq Khan's demand for a £4.9 billion settlement for the next 18 months to keep tube and bus services going after revenues and passenger numbers collapsed because of the Covid pandemic.

The six-month deal will mean fresh negotiations next spring and another opportunity for the government to attack

pensions, pay and conditions of hardworking transport workers in London.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that it was appalling that the government had been targeting staff pensions amongst a range of other savage measures.

"RMT is putting them on notice that any attempt to hack away at our members' pension rights will be met by an all-out campaign of political and industrial

resistance.

"These are difficult times for the staff who have kept London moving since the COVID pandemic and it is a disgrace that they are now being set up for a battering in these cuts measures.

"TfL staff are essential workers who have performed heroically and RMT will fight off any attempt to hack back on jobs, pay, pensions and working conditions," he said. ■

WALES LEADS THE WAY



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Cysylltu Cymru
Connecting Wales

RMT welcomes decision to take Transport for Wales rail services into public ownership

RMT has welcomed the Welsh government's termination of its contract with private consortium KeolisAmey and take Transport for Wales (TfW) rail services into public ownership from February next year.

The financial risk of the Wales and Borders rail franchise, which is branded Transport for Wales, had already been taken over by taxpayers under a £65 million agreement signed in May.

But from February next year KeolisAmey staff working on rail services will be transferred over to a publicly owned company, currently called Transport for Wales Rail Ltd.

The Welsh government decided to terminate the contract with KeolisAmey, which had operated TfW rail services since October 2018, as the company was "not prepared to shoulder their share of the pain" following the Covid-19 crisis.

It was the first time that the Welsh government had awarded the franchise and KeolisAmey has already been fined £3.4 million over the poor performance of TfW services.

The Welsh government has used its powers to appoint a public 'operator of last resort' to run rail services as a result of KeolisAmey's failure to meet its contractual obligations due to the massive drop in passenger numbers.

KeolisAmey, a joint-venture between French railway SNCF and Spanish infrastructure giant Ferrovial, had been awarded the Wales and Borders franchise in 2018 in a £5 billion contract.

Keolis is France's largest private sector public transport operator but its major shareholder is state-owned SNCF and Amey is a former one-time UK company now owned by Ferrovial. KeolisAmey currently also runs

Docklands Light Railway services in London.

Despite the fact that the Welsh government as some powers over rail passenger services, UK law currently prevents it from permanently retaining the service in public ownership.

However, RMT is demanding that the UK government to bring forward legislation to give the Welsh government powers to permanently retain the service in the public sector.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash welcomed the decision by the Welsh government as the best way to protect rail services in Wales.

"We will also be seeking urgent assurances that railway workers jobs and conditions will be fully protected and the railway will be properly funded.

"RMT is also seeking reassurance that rail infrastructure maintenance will

also continue to be provided by the public sector as it was under Network Rail.

"There is huge public support for public ownership because privatisation and profiteering has never been an efficient way to provide value for money, and this is even more the case when extra funding has been needed during the Coronavirus pandemic.

"So as well as supporting this decision we are calling on the UK government to give the Welsh Government the necessary powers and support to ensure the railways in Wales have a safe, secure and sustainable future in public ownership," he said.

Officials said that the time gap between now and the start of the new operator will allow the Welsh Government to prepare the new operator for service.

A part of the original agreement is staying - Amey

Keolis Infrastructure Ltd will continue to be responsible for infrastructure on the Core Valley Lines, where the South Wales Metro upgrade is taking place.

Keolis and Amey will also work with the Welsh Government quango Transport for Wales on improvements to the service - like rolling stock and ticketing.

Economy Minister Ken Skates said that the government had stepped in "to stabilise the network and keep it running".

"The last few months have been extremely challenging for

public transport in Wales and across the UK. Covid has significantly impacted passenger revenues," he said.

The deal will cover most of Wales' trains - including key commuter services such as the Valley Lines.

Mr Skates told a Senedd committee that if the existing arrangements had continued it would have "led to a collapse by the operator and a catastrophic transfer then to the operator of last resort.

"What we're able to do now is manage a careful transition, which will take us through to February, and then

beyond, with the establishment of TFW rail limited," he said.

Deputy Transport Minister Lee Waters said: "The whole business model collapsed in the face of Covid because the revenue was not coming in and Keolis in effect were not prepared to shoulder their share of the pain."

Ministers also pledged to honour commitments worth more than £1 billion to buy new trains and build the south Wales Metro.

James Price, chief executive of Welsh government quango Transport for Wales which

oversaw the franchise and shared branding with it, said that rolling stock was "on the way" and "in essence is paid for already".

"What this allows us to do is to reduce the profit we pay to the private sector massively over time, and make sure that when the revenue comes back, it comes back in to the taxpayer," he said.

The Welsh Tories questioned how much nationalisation would cost taxpayers, while Plaid Cymru called for the Senedd to be recalled. ■



PETITION AGAINST FATIGUE

RMT launches petition in support of staff safety on Serco

RMT has launched a petition on its website calling on Transport Scotland to take action to resolve the union's ongoing dispute with Caledonian Sleeper operator Serco over staff fatigue and safety.

The union has been seeking to reach a fair and reasonable resolution for months which addresses the main causes of staff fatigue, but Serco has continually refused to take action and

rejected the union's reasonable proposals.

Since March, Serco Caledonian Sleeper has been funded by public money under its Emergency Measures Agreement with the Scottish Government. Serco even stands to make a profit under these arrangements, yet it appears to have no desire to protect the safety and welfare of its dedicated key worker employees. RMT is now calling on Transport Scotland

to intervene as a matter of urgency to ensure that Serco takes action over staff fatigue.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that fatigue was a serious condition which threatened both staff and passenger safety on the Caledonian Sleeper.

"All RMT members are fighting for is a safe working environment for themselves and their colleagues.

"These keyworkers have kept vital rail services running

throughout the pandemic, so it is a kick in the teeth that Serco has failed to take action over the causes of their fatigue. Serco's operations are being funded by public money, and therefore, Transport Scotland should now be intervening to bring about a resolution.

"RMT is calling on the public to sign our petition in support of staff and passenger safety on the Caledonian Sleeper," he said. ■



BUS MEMBERS ARE KEY WORKERS

RMT regional organiser Craig Johnston looks at the challenges members face in the bus industry

Members employed in the bus industry are increasingly concerned about their health, safety and well-being as many areas of country see increasing prevalence of the coronavirus Covid 19.

Throughout this awful pandemic transport workers have been working through it - key workers who have kept Britain moving.

Now, conflicting rules and regulations, a lack of enforcement of virus control measures and a return to cash handling are causing great concern amongst our bus members.

Firstly, a return to cash handling and giving change to passengers - whilst the bus companies are encouraging cashless payments, the return of children to schools and young people to colleges and universities has clearly led to an increase in cash payments leading to our members having to deal with more cash handling.

I've seen opinion that says handling cash is perfectly safe and other opinion that says the virus can live on surfaces for some time - clarity is needed from scientific experts on the realities of risk and

representations need to be made to both the industry and government to obtain this clarity.

If cash handling increases risk at a time of increasing infections then the authorities and industry need to make alternative provision for school children that alleviates using cash payments - that may be complicated but it may also be essential.

Secondly, there is the enforcement of social distancing. Many will be aware that service buses are supposed to have social distancing on board although

there is some confusion about how it can possibly be managed - with few answers being forthcoming.

However, contract buses such as those used on school runs do not apparently have to have social distancing on board but where is the scientific and medical evidence for the safety of this practice in terms of the passengers but also the potential viral load on a bus?

I know Stagecoach is looking at ventilation systems as winter is upon us and many passengers will close windows on buses - but the

government and industry need to reassure staff about what is safe and what isn't.

Whilst we know that in terms of young people they tend not to have a severe reaction to Covid 19 (in most cases), they can certainly spread the virus and can show few symptoms of it.

Thirdly, it's clear that there's a requirement to wear facial coverings on public transport unless exempt - but how do we know if someone is exempt and who enforces such rules in

buses?

We now have a completely unworkable situation where people can simply board buses without a facial covering, others wear them to board the bus then remove them or certainly don't wear them properly and another section abide by the rules and wear them all the time. If you conclude there's a scientific and medical reason for the requirement to wear facial coverings in the first place then the haphazard way it is being

implemented and enforced is simply counter productive to combating the virus.

Who is supposed to enforce this and how - it can't be the bus drivers - it's not their role, it's not practicable and they don't have the powers anyway.

Finally, there has been insufficient publicity around the public's responsibilities whilst travelling on buses.

On trains and railway stations there are constant announcements around the requirements I'm afraid affixed

notices only have limited impact for so long - the issues on buses need to be highlighted much more.

I believe that bus workers are losing confidence in the control measures and, whilst the majority of the public abide by the rules, increasing numbers do not.

We want people to use public transport - all we ask is they do it responsibly and safely for their fellow passengers and those providing the services. ■

FELIXSTOWE PORT OWNERS FIRE AND REHIRE POLICY LEADS TO LABOUR SHORTAGES

RMT has called on the government to put an end to the disgraceful practice at Felixstowe docks of firing and rehiring workers on worse terms and conditions which is leading to labour shortages.

This follows reports, as recorded in The Register of Members' Financial Interests, that the port owners, Hutchison's Ports Ltd have hired former Transport Secretary Chris Grayling as a "strategic advisor" on a salary of £100,000 per year for seven hours work per week working out at an eye-watering £274 per hour, or 31 times the minimum hourly wage.

The port owner's policy of firing and rehiring of workers at Felixstowe has now reportedly led to a dire situation of labour shortages at one of the UK's most important ports meaning that freight trains cannot be loaded to capacity and are having to leave on schedule with significantly reduced loads.

The labour shortage situation has become so dire that some container ships are now diverting to other ports

such as London Gateway. Sources at Felixstowe have revealed that ship to shore they are lifting 15 container boxes an hour at Felixstowe currently but London Gateway lifts an average of 28 container boxes per hour, and Southampton is 33 container boxes.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that Hutchison's

disgraceful fire and rehire policy to put their workers on worse terms and conditions was now clearly backfiring on them as labour shortages are now severely impacting the port's ability to lift and move vital freight onto our railways.

"What's even more disgraceful is that these same port owners, whilst using the Covid-19 crisis as a cover to

fire and rehire workers, are paying failed Transport Secretary Chris Grayling an eye-watering amount of money for "strategic advice".

"It's time this government puts workers first and legislates against the despicable practice of companies firing and rehiring workers during a public health crisis," he said. ■

HIRE AND FIRE: OOCL Hong Kong, the world's largest container ship, which can carry 21,413 twenty foot containers and is 1,311 feet long, docks in Felixstowe.



SAVE UNION LEARNING

Government launches attack on key workers educational opportunities

The TUC has received notification from the Department for Education that it would cease to finance the Union Learning Fund from March 2021.

This fund allows the union and other TUC affiliates to support members and reps in accessing learning, education and training. This has been done successfully since 1998, widening access to workers. It's been financially supported by all governments during this time. Last year the ULF supported over 200,000 workers.

The TUC has been lobbying politicians and government ministers about the decision, calling for it to be overturned. Today, to support those efforts, the TUC and our unions have launched the #SaveUnionLearning campaign.

Both RMT and the TUC will be lobbying politicians nationally and regionally, sharing case studies and the experience of learners, and showing the wide levels of support. The campaign asks RMT members to help with in the ways set out below.

TEACHING KEY WORKERS

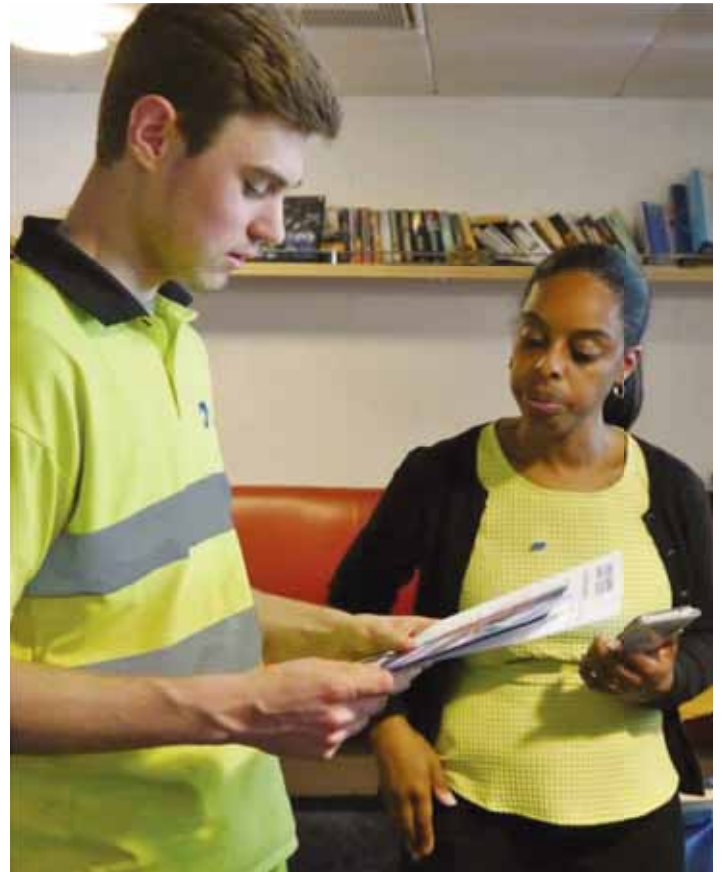
In 1999 a damning government report concluded that an incredible 25 per cent of British workers are functionally illiterate.

This prompted the setting up of the Union Learning Fund for trade unions to set up learning projects, to address the issue through the workplace itself and the official recognition of Union Learning Reps were delivered under the 2002 Employment Act.

In the intervening 20 years RMT ULRs provided learning opportunities for thousands of members in a huge variety of ways despite an ever more hostile attitude from government. ULRs bore the brunt of this cut back, losing widespread support, communications and resources. The number of active ULRs dropped by around 40 per cent within two years.

In 2019 there was a change in the way outcomes were counted and the RMT Learning project put in a more ambitious bid of £1.6 million which received approval for a team of six project workers over a three year contract to revive the ULR network and build a more resilient model.

Then Covid-19 hit and, true to form, the project adapted and overcame putting together learning packages for all members, online supporting staff with learning opportunities whilst they struggled with furlough and isolation. Then we were asked



to develop further by the Government through the TUC to provide support wrapped around Covid-19 issues, mental health, change and even redundancies working alongside RMT regional organisers.

Now, after having received widespread praise from the government with RMT particularly being mentioned, the same government has unilaterally and arbitrarily

decided that it no longer wishes to support the trade unions and lifelong learning's most effective source of adult learning and development.

RMT national education officer Andy Gilchrist said that this arbitrary and predictable attack on the trade union movement by a callous and indifferent government proved that it wanted to crush any hope of raising individual aspirations or providing

meaningful training/education for employees.

"The price of union learning is a mere £12.5 million from a set aside budget for reskilling and retraining of £2.5 Billion as part of the National Skills Fund, and Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

"There are still opportunities to change the situation however which require every trade unionist to play their part.

"So whether you are an RMT ULR, someone who has benefited from the support of the Lifelong Learning agenda or someone who believes passionately that education and learning are vital to make us a stronger and more effective RMT Learning needs you to support them.

"I have seen first hand the difference learning can make to peoples lives and the lives of those around them such as family and friends.

"This attack on our members is as ludicrous as it is spiteful and at this time of all times makes no sense.

"RMT members are largely key workers and this government repays their efforts in keeping the country



moving but stripping them of superb training and learning opportunities.

"RMT Learning in particular, along with the ULRs provide support across a range of sectors and empower our members to make real life choices, based on knowledge and understanding," he said.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that what RMT Learning and the Union Learning Fund had achieved on a relatively small budget was nothing short of amazing.

"Our ULRs are some of the most dedicated and hard working reps in the Trade Union movement and this decision is a kick in the teeth



at a time when they are flat out, trying to support members through Covid, job losses and massive pressures in mental health," he said.

Many employers also agree with RMT that Union Learning has helped workers in many ways. Great Western Railway managing director Matthew Golton said that for some workers, a lack of confidence,

an inherent reluctance to engage in learning, or poor standards of English, maths and digital skills were real barriers to learning.

"We have found the Union Learning Fund (ULF) and unionlearn schemes break down these barriers and make training more accessible for all," he said.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

SIGN AND SHARE THE PETITION

The TUC have launched an online petition to show how many people support the campaign. This petition needs as many signatures as possible, and this is one of many ways members and activists can show their support and then will receive updates with calls to action.

Sign the petition here –

<https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/uk-gov-don-t-cut-union-learning> and please share it on social media.

TELL US YOUR UNION LEARNING STORY

RMT knows union learning is important and independent statistics support this. This campaign needs your stories to help tell the government why it must be protected. Please tell the campaign your story

Share your story here -

<https://tuccampaigns.typeform.com/to/WEbywm5J>

and encourage others to do the same, or send it via your Learning Organiser or local ULR.

More information on this campaign can be found on the TUC website, following the link below.
<https://www.tuc.org.uk/campaigns/dont-let-government-cut-union-learning>

GADGET COVER:

THE INS AND OUTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Plus, want to get your hands on a new iPad mini? Read on to find out how could win a £400 Apple gift card.

A QUICK GUIDE TO GADGET COVER

Glued to your screens? Let's face it, most of us are these days.

Yet despite our close relationship with all things tech, rarely do we give a second thought to what would happen if our gadgets got lost, broken or stolen. Could you afford a replacement? How quickly would it come? And what if something happens to it while you're abroad?

The fact is, our digital devices are at risk every day from being dropped on the floor or lost on the commute, and not all of us have the spare cash to simply order another one online. But the worst-case scenario doesn't have to leave you at a loss, because plenty of insurance providers now offer protection for everything from stolen iPads to coffee-soaked laptops. We've got

the low-down on what these policies look like, and whether you're well-placed to benefit from them.

What is gadget insurance?

In a nutshell, it's an affordable way to protect your essential devices. The policy usually covers the whole range of everyday gadgets, including smartphones, desktop computers and cameras, as well as Sat-Navs, tablets and even the kids' games console. You'll generally be insured for accidental and malicious damage (including liquid damage), breakdowns, theft, losing it, cracked screens and unauthorised calls. Insurers will usually pay the cost of repairs or, where that's not possible or applicable, provide you with a replacement.

Sound sensible? Then you may be surprised to learn that almost two-thirds of us still don't have dedicated cover for our gadgets¹.

MoneySuperMarket survey stats from 2017 also found we have a glass-half-full mentality when it comes to our gadgets - either underestimating how much it costs to repair them, or hoping they'll be covered on our home contents insurance or the product's warranty¹.

Why might I need it?

We live in an increasingly connected world which hinges on ever-more-sophisticated technology. Unfortunately, these devices come at a price, especially the most recent models, and many providers also insist you're locked into a fairly long-term contract. If you can't find your phone, or accidentally drop it in the bath, you'll still have to keep up payments while also worrying about whether you can afford to buy a replacement.

Even if you're careful with your devices, you can't keep them wrapped in cotton wool. According to Mintel, 24% of smartphone owners in the UK have broken their screen in the past two years. The stats are even higher if you're in the 16-24-year age bracket, where it doubles to 48%².

Accidentally dropping or stepping on your gadget isn't cheap. The cost of replacing a cracked screen varies depending on the make and model but can easily exceed £100. Repairs through the

manufacturer are often much higher, for example Samsung Galaxy S8 screen repair will cost £209³ (price correct as at 19th October 2020).

But even if you pride yourself on the fact you're not accident prone, no one's immune from pickpockets – according to police.uk, mobile phones are still the most commonly stolen item in a robbery.

Aren't I covered by my home contents insurance?

Good question. According to a survey by Which?⁴, 69% of respondents have no idea whether their gadgets are protected by home insurance. In reality, you'll probably have some cover, for example if your laptop is stolen during a house break-in, but this might not extend to accidents or theft away from your residence (unless you specifically ticked that option when you signed up for the policy), or unauthorised calls. In short, read the documents thoroughly to find out what is and isn't included.

Other things worth considering are whether the pay-outs will be adequate – and if the excess you'll have to pay is as low as a dedicated gadget policy. It's also worth bearing in mind that if you do make a claim you'll probably see a subsequent hike in your home contents premiums when you



renew. Keeping your home and gadget policies separate gets around this.

Finally, give a thought to how keen you'll be for a replacement phone or computer. If waiting would cause problems, it's best to opt for a gadget cover policy that can offer immediate replacement. Home insurance claims usually take longer to be processed.

What about warranties?

A warranty is certainly useful in the case of mechanical breakdowns, but it won't help when it comes to accidental breakage, liquid damage or

if your phone is stolen - you'll need gadget insurance to protect you. Check the policy terms and conditions first for absolute peace of mind you're covered for every scenario.

Can I insure secondhand or refurbished gadgets?

Yes, although it depends on the insurer. In addition, most providers specify that your gadgets must be less than one year old at the start date of the policy. With CoverCloud for example, they must be purchased as new if from Republic of Ireland and USA. But they can insure refurbished gadgets if they are purchased in the UK with

a full 12 month warranty.

Remember to hold on to your receipts for proof of purchase, not just for the date you bought it, but as evidence it comes from an approved country - usually the UK, Republic of Ireland or USA.

Who is most likely to benefit from gadget cover?

If you've any kind of track record of mishaps with your tech, then it's worth thinking seriously about this type of insurance. Whether you've been a bit accident-prone with your gadgets in the past - be it breaking or losing your gadgets - these policies

are designed to help when disaster strikes. Do be aware though that most policies will expect you take reasonable care and won't cover theft while unattended i.e. if you leave your phone on a table in a café.

How much your gadgets cost and whether you're locked into a long-term contract is also a crucial factor in the decision-making process. Could you afford to replace them with savings? Would you be prepared to settle for a cheaper model if not? Unless the answers are yes, gadget cover could be a no-brainer.

Protect your tech with NEW RMT Gadget Cover

RMTProtect have teamed up with CoverCloud to bring you RMT Gadget Cover - an affordable and flexible way to protect your mobiles, laptops and other gadgets.

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- 📄 Choose Elite cover for protection against loss and theft
- 📄 No limit on claims
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Get covered now at
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£400 Apple
gift card



To celebrate the launch of the new Gadget Cover, RMTProtect are giving away a £400 Apple gift card!

To be in with a chance of winning, simply take out Gadget Cover before 31st January 2020 and you will be automatically entered into the prize draw.

Get a quote and get covered now at
www.rmtgadgetcover.co.uk

**FOR PRIZE DRAW RULES, PLEASE VISIT
WWW.RMTPROTECT.COM/WINAGADGET**

RMT WELCOMES SEAFARERS SUPPORT SCHEME

RMT has welcomed a successful joint initiative with the maritime charities to create a training bursary for seafarers made or at risk of redundancy due to the economic fall out from Covid-19.

Since the start of the pandemic RMT has argued for schemes that will protect Ratings' jobs and skills for the long term, including re-training for jobs in other maritime sectors such as offshore renewables. Approaching 2,000 UK seafarers have lost their job due to Covid-19's economic impact, with ferries, offshore supply and cruise hit particularly hard.

In response, the union has worked with the Maritime Charities Group (MCG), which includes the Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB) and the Marine Society to set up this scheme. The bursary is worth £500 and there is an initial pot of £20,000 and can be used for refreshing generic skills such as interview preparation or writing a maritime CV, as well as for meeting the cost of obtaining specific MCA-approved qualifications such as STCW refresher courses.

RMT assistant national secretary Mark Carden welcomed the move.

"Redundancies in the ferry sector alone have already hit the 1,000 mark so anything the maritime charities can do to fund retraining for merchant seafarers is incredibly welcome," he said.

UK Merchant Navy



seafarers, particularly ratings with a plan to re-enter the maritime industry, whether seagoing or shore-side are encouraged to apply for this support. The faster it goes to those that need it, the stronger our argument is for further funding. To apply and obtain more information please go to

<https://www.marine-society.org/redundancy-fund>

MNWB and Trinity House have contributed £10,000 each and the MCG is meeting the Marine Society's costs from administering the scheme. RMT continues to work hard to build on this fund and to persuade the government to contribute to this and other schemes needed to protect UK Ratings' jobs, livelihoods

and skills during and beyond the pandemic.

MCG chair Commander Graham Hockley said that the cruise and ferry sectors have been hit particularly hard by the economic downturn caused by Covid-19.

"We know from our trade union contacts that around 2,000 merchant seafarers are already facing redundancy and more are likely to follow.

"Jobs are in short supply but the market will pick up so now's the time to invest in training and skills development.

"Whether it's a CV writing course, interview skills or a new training certificate, the maritime charities want to help and we are making money available for training that will

help merchant seafarers who've been made redundant due to Covid to stay in the industry.

"It's not meant to replace support from employers or to let them off the hook, but it will help plug the gap for those who aren't getting that support - and its available now," he said.

Each of the charity partners has an important role to play: MNWB brings its welfare expertise; Trinity House promotes maritime careers; and the Marine Society brings extensive experience of running similar funding schemes together with providing information, advice and guidance on maritime education and training.



TOWARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ground-breaking new collective bargaining structure for North Sea workers a step closer

The potential to establish a ground breaking new collective agreement for thousands of engineering and maintenance workers in the North Sea moved a step closer after a total of 15 major contractors from the energy sector supply chain confirmed their support for a deal with the three unions involved, RMT, Unite and GMB.

The companies involved are Aker, Altrad, Altera, Brand, Kaefer, Muehlhan, Navitas, ODE, Oleochem, Petrofac, Ponticelli, Semco, Stork, Wood

and Worley and all have committed to the further development of the new agreement to replace the OCA.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that the news that 15 major employers had committed to work with the unions in the establishment of a framework for collective bargaining in the offshore energy sector was extremely encouraging.

"The collaborative working of the trade unions and industry is an illustration of

what is required to deliver a just and green recovery for workers and the UK energy supply chain and what we want to see now is government support for this exemplar in collaboration.

"If successful this new 'Energy Services Agreement' is to succeed, the first of its kind for the UK energy sector, it would be an historic event for a sector which has seen boom and bust cycles causing extreme difficulties for workers and employers alike over the last decade.

"Stability, sustainability and security of employment for the sector are critical and this deal could deliver.

"It is our firm belief that it is vital for members to be covered by a collective bargaining agreement to protect hard-fought for terms and conditions.

"Our work will continue to complete the ESA, with affected members being consulted on the matter and to ensure that a signed agreement is in place by the end of the year," he said. ■

HOLYROOD SCUPPERS CALMAC PAY TALKS

RMT is preparing for an industrial action ballot after crucial pay talks collapsed with the union pointing the finger at direct interference from the Scottish government which scuppered potential progress towards a settlement.

Following two previous rounds of pay negotiations with Calmac, Scotland's biggest ferry union RMT was disappointed at an Avoidance of Disputes meeting with the Calmac Managing Director and sister trade unions has once again ended with a failure from the company to accept that the pay offer in effect amounts to a pay cut for ferry crews and other

workers crucial to providing a life-line to Scotland's west coast islands.

RMT members have worked throughout the COVID -19 pandemic risking their own health and the health and well-being of their loved ones and to now be offered a derisory pay award is a serious kick in the teeth.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said that negotiators had tried over a series of meetings to get a cost of living award for essential lifeline ferry workers and despite their best efforts the CalMac managing director had given the same response as his management colleagues have issued from the first



LIFELINE: Caledonian MacBrayne ferry docking at Tobermory on the Isle of Mull, Scottish Islands

meeting .

"It's become increasingly apparent that Transport Scotland and the Scottish government are putting pressure on CalMac to hold a line which will see our members financially

disadvantaged.

"This is not acceptable to RMT and we will be balloting our members to secure financial fairness for members and their families in these uncertain times," he said. ■

CURTAINED AGM MEETS

Union holds remote annual general meeting held in camera due to Covid

Working under very difficult conditions, RMT staff organised an on-line annual general meeting just days before a new Covid lockdown was announced at the beginning of November.

Delegates had agreed to truncate the meeting due to the looming lockdown following a renewed spike in Covid cases across the country. Although some motions were dealt with by conference, delegates agreed to re-convene to finish most AGM business before February 28 2021.

COVID CUTS

Conference recognised that the Tory government would attempt to cut spending on rail, and use the reduced passenger count from the Covid outbreak to do it.

Delegates were concerned at the threat of closure of stations or even whole lines, ticket offices and cuts to jobs.

"Ticket offices are especially at risk because of the changes to the way customers are buying tickets.

"Our union should campaign to keep stations open, to keep ticket offices open and to defend station

staff jobs, pay and conditions. This can include working with community groups around campaigning to keep stations and branch lines open. And it can also include organising industrial action.

"With climate change a reality, we should argue for the railway to keep on growing," a successful motion said.

Delegates also noted that with falling passenger numbers and advice not to travel, it was only a matter of time before train operating companies would attack all catering grades, as has happened in the hospitality industry since the start of this pandemic.

"This conference believes that restructuring of catering crews, streamlining or a reduction in service will follow to some degree or worse still become extinct," it said.

Delegates backed a high profile campaign to highlight to the general public the importance of the grade and how railway catering staff have helped to keep essential workers fed and watered whilst travelling round the country despite the risks involved.

VIOLENCE AT WORK

Delegates backed a motion

passed by the RMT London Transport Regional Council calling for a combine wide ballot of station grades members over London Underground's failure to properly address the issue of workplace violence.

Conference referred to RMT's 2018 survey of Night Tube workers, which found that 88.2 per cent of workers had been verbally abused in the workplace, with approximately 1/3 women workers and 1/5 male workers having experienced physical assault.

Delegates also noted RMT's successful efforts to improve cab security for London Underground drivers, in response to workplace violence experienced by our members in that grade.

They also believed these issues are not limited to London Underground, and are endemic wherever companies have de-staffed our workplaces, increasing lone working.

Conference also said that external security measures, such as requests for increased police presences, more CCTV coverage, and body-worn video cameras, could not be

relied upon. They opposed attempts by employers to address staff concerns around workplace violence by deploying externally-employed staff, including agency security staff, to workplaces.

"We maintain that all workers employed to work on our stations should be directly employed, fully trained and licensed, and on equal terms and conditions to other workers," a motion said.

Delegates called on the union to reinvigorate campaigning for increased staffing levels, an end to lone working, for an adequate and accessible place of safety in all areas of the workplace, and for additional safety measures, including increased staffing levels, to be put in place for workers working night shifts and other unsociable hours where risks may be greater.

Role of the guard

Delegates placed on record the massive and historical show of solidarity by ASLEF members on Merseyrail by not crossing RMT picket lines at Birkenhead, Kirkdale and Southport depots in our fight to retain a safety critical guard on every train.

Conference saluted their



COVID: ticket offices and services under threat

courage and sacrifice in the struggle for rail safety and placed on record a big thank you to each and every driver on Merseyrail.

Delegates also noted that Arriva Rail North had introduced Automatic selective door opening and selective door opening (ASDO/SDO) on new class 195/331 trains.

This technology has been brought in to comply with Network Rail standards for new trains and also to allow trains that are longer than platforms to be deployed without the need for manual locking and opening of doors.

Management at ARN refused an RMT request to allow any extra time in the training package for new trains to be dedicated to ASDO/SDO.

"This was concerning as this technology was brand new to the ARN network and it's staff and also because the deployment of the system relies on the Conductor having to be aware of exactly how many sets of doors will open on each platform as if the Driver stops in the wrong place on a short platform, the Conductor can still in theory open doors that are "off" the platform, which obviously is a

risk to passengers," a motion said.

Delegates agreed that the union must engage with all relevant safety organisations over the different methods of ASDO/SDO and the subsequent training that was required by operational staff.

"This issue cannot be left to TOC's whose primary interest is reducing costs at the expense of safety and also placing extra pressure on our members roles and responsibility in the workplace," it said.

CATERING AND HEALTH

Delegates called on the union to explore the detrimental affects on member's health when working with standard catering trolleys on trains.

To use the trolley involved tasks such as twisting, bending, stooping, stretching, pulling and pushing all of which have a detrimental affect where musculoskeletal injuries are more than likely to occur.

"Other causes of pain include postural strain, repetitive movements, overuse, and prolonged immobilisation and changes in posture or poor body mechanics may bring about

spinal alignment problems and muscle shortening, therefore causing other muscles to be misused and become painful," a motion said.

HOUSING FOR YOUNG MEMBERS

Delegates noted that workers under the age of 30 were hit disproportionately by free market housing economics which had led to skyrocketing prices in the rental market, coupled with a shortage of social housing and high house prices.

Delegates called on the union to support campaigns for fair housing and encourage branches to create links with local tenant unions to enable them to continue their "superb work".

GENDER RECOGNITION

Delegates backed a call to challenge transphobia wherever it occurred and produce positive materials on trans rights and the Gender Recognition Act and proposals to simplify legal recognition for trans people, without the requirement of a medical diagnosis, based on self-declaration.

A motion called for the union to ensure that all the

companies it negotiates with to ensure they fulfil their obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and continue to support trans members in their choices after self-identification.

GAY FREE ZONES IN POLAND

Delegates raised concerns regarding the LGBT+ free zones that are being declared in cities and provinces in Poland. Around 80 LGBT+ free zones declared themselves unwelcoming of the LGBT+ Community.

Delegates made a call for everybody to be treated with respect and dignity, and threatening, aggressive or physical abuse was unacceptable along discrimination against gender and sexual orientations.

Delegates agreed to contact Polish transport unions to reaffirm RMT's solidarity with Polish LGBT+ workers in their struggle against the current onslaught of state and religious sponsored homophobia.

Conference also agreed to forge links with the Polish Campaign Against Homophobia (Kampania Przeciw Homofobii) and to support their fight.



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^ Except clothing and household linen. ‡ Trustpilot rating correct as at 8th October 2020. * Lines are open 8.30am-8pm Mon-Fri (subject to change due to COVID-19 restrictions).
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- 24 hour claims helpline, operated by experienced advisors
- Full policy wording including key facts, schedule and car certificate

<https://www.uia.co.uk/rmt/car-insurance/>

TRAVEL

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Whether you're planning a relaxing weekend getaway or a busy city break, as a member of the RMT, you, your family and your friends will get a 10% online discount when buying any single or multi trip policy from us.

If you're purchasing annual multi-trip cover and have already made travel arrangements and do not currently have travel insurance, you should start your cover immediately, that way you will be covered should you need to cancel your trip before you go.

- 10% Discount when you buy online
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<https://www.uia.co.uk/rmt/travel-insurance/>

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- Pet legal: lawyers offer advice on any legal issue relating to your pet
- Pet minders: a registered pet minder while you are away from home

<https://www.uia.co.uk/rmt/pet-insurance/>

"It is good to know you can rely on a company like UIA, orientated towards the trade union movement" – RMT general secretary Mick Cash,.

† Except clothing and household linen

* Family cover – up to two adults and any number of their children, step children or foster children aged under 18, accompanying the parents or legal guardian insured on the same policy travelling on any trip to the same destination. The children are only insured when travelling with one or both of the insured adults, (or accompanied by another responsible adult) and must be living at the same address as the policyholder.

^ Based on claims received by Thornside Pet Healthcare Insurance during 2010.

‡ Trustpilot rating correct as at 23/12/19.

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MEDWAY CULTURE CLUB

Relatives of NUR anti-racist fighter Asquith Xavier launch new campaign to promote cultural understanding in Kent



Just weeks after the unveiling of a plaque remembering NUR member Asquith Xavier in his adopted hometown of Chatham, a new memorial to him has been launched in the form of a club to share cultural knowledge and experience within the Medway towns.

In 1966 Asquith was a guard with British Rail and played a key role in challenging the racist colour bars on BR and was part of a wider campaign that saw a massive change in the 1968 Race Relations Act.

His grandchildren Jerome Xavier and his sister Camealia

Xavier-Chihota are volunteers at the Medway Culture Club which was launched in early November.

RMT Medway and District General Grades branch secretary Paul Dennis met up with them to hand over a cheque from the union for a kick start funding donation of

£250.

“Once I heard about the project, it seemed obvious that our branch and our union would help them get started because if we want to see real change in society, we first have to talk to each other, then listen to each other and accept each other equally,” Paul said.



UNVEILING: Mick Cash and Camealia's daughter at the unveiling

Jerome, a local school teacher, said that the Medway Culture Club's aim was to share cultural knowledge and experience within the Medway Towns, promote cultural understanding and break down barriers and perceptions.

"We cannot thank RMT enough for their support.

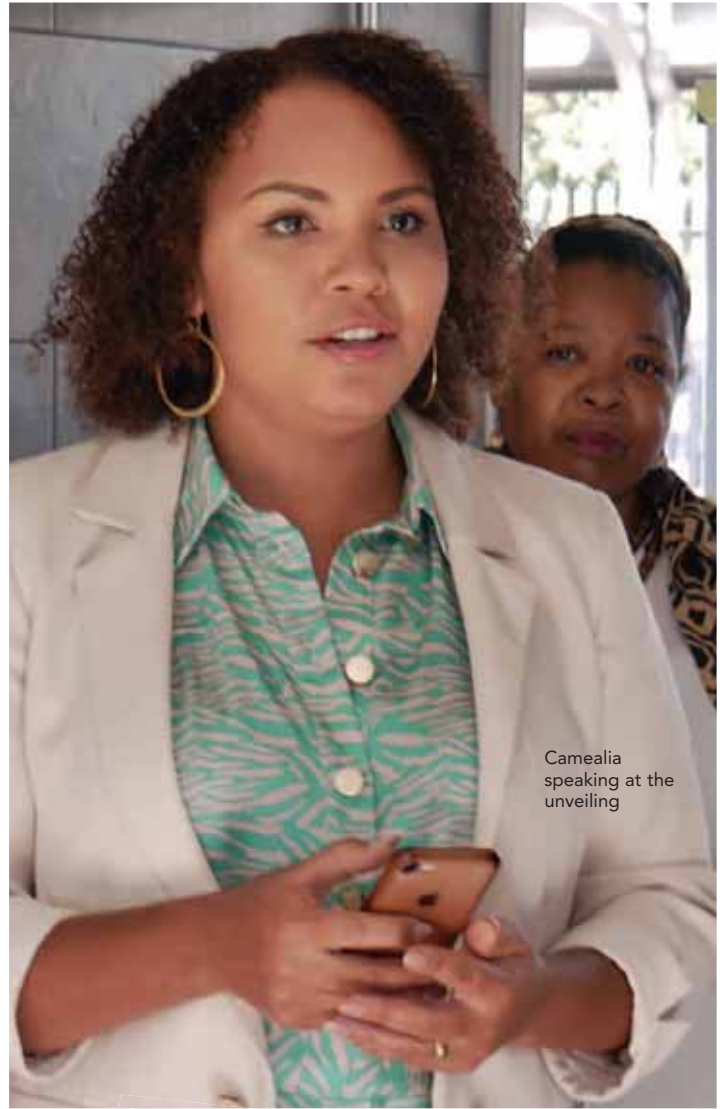
"This donation is a great help in ensuring our launch in Rochester will be a great success.

"What we are doing could be life-changing for future generations of Medway and it

all starts with people like RMT members and others, who just want to make a better world for everyone," he said.

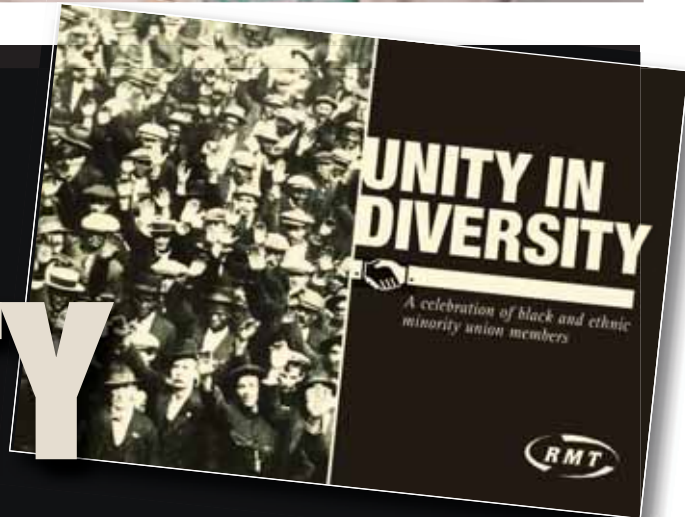
Camaelia said that her grandfather's fight to overcome adversity and prejudice in the campaign for racial equality in Britain in the 1960s was inspirational and has passed into modern-day history.

"We need to continue that fight by promoting cultural understanding and breaking down barriers and perceptions that still exist today," she said.



Camealia speaking at the unveiling

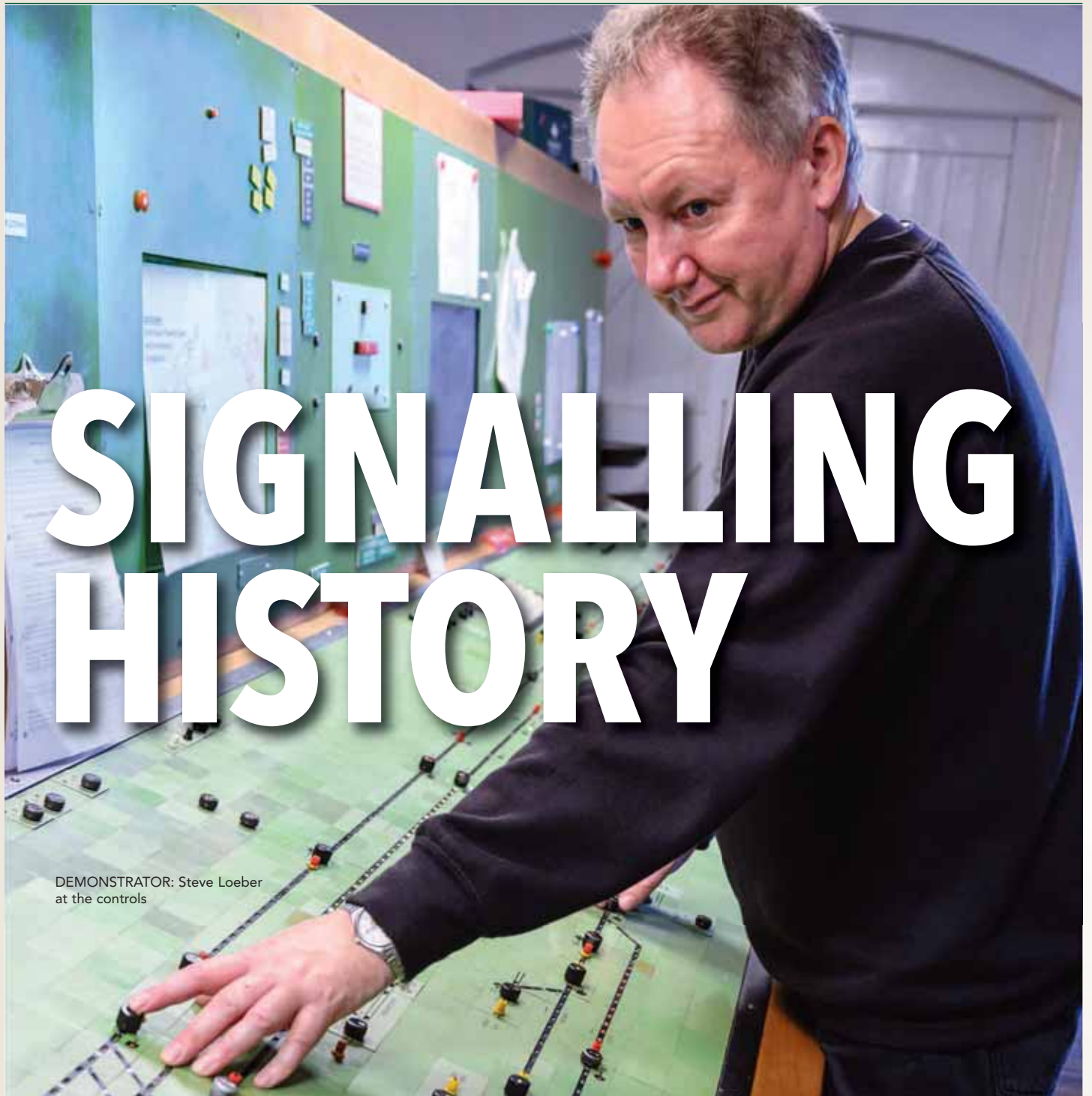
UNITY IN DIVERSITY



A celebration of black and ethnic minority union members

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

Available from jwebb@rmt.org.uk



SIGNALLING HISTORY

DEMONSTRATOR: Steve Loeber at the controls



SAVED: Loco 14XX 1466 at night

RMT member Steve Loeber explains the work of the Swindon Panel Society based at Didcot Railway Centre

I became involved with the Swindon Panel Society while visiting the Didcot Railway Centre last year and went along to have a look at the panel. I got talking to the chaps on duty that day and, on showing me the operations and how it works and letting me have a go, I become a member of the society and also trained as a demonstrator.

The Western Region installed a lot of these "turn push" type panels when doing the re-signalling in the 1970s and 80s but Swindon panel itself was opened in March 1968.

With the proposed modernisation of the Great Western Route with electrification and re-signalling between Paddington and Bristol, it was soon realised that this type of panel would soon disappear into history unless one was persevered for future generations, this is when the Swindon Panel Society was set up.

Swindon panel was closed in February 2016 and the society began the task of moving the panel from Swindon to its new home at Didcot. This involved craning the panel from the old building and placing it on a lorry and then conveying it by rail into the Didcot Railway Centre.

Once installed, the membership got to work on reconstructing the panel and the software of the simulation to work in conjunction with the panel.

When the work was

completed the panel was re-opened for business on June 23 2018. Now members of the public can come in and see the panel in operation and are encouraged to have a go. The way the panel is setup in the building and along with the train service used in the simulation you are stepping back into the 1980s.

Didcot Railway Centre itself is an old Great Western Railway (GWR) steam depot. The first lines through Didcot was built in 1839, the first station. 1844. Didcot was on the Paddington to Bristol line, plus was a junction for the Oxford line, because of this locomotive maintenance was required. The first wooden shed was built in the 1800s. In June 1932 the GWR built a new steel – framed half brick four road through shed with maintenance facilities and coal stage on the site.

In June 1965 the shed was closed and by 1967 the Great Western Society had moved in after purchasing three locomotives including 14XX 0-4-2 1466 (see photograph) that had worked on the branch lines of the Great Western network.


So if you are in the area do pay a visit. However, do check the Didcot Railway Centre and Swindon Panel Society website for opening days and times and for further information.

Finally many thanks to Danny Scroggins and Frank Dumbleton for their assistance with this article and photographs.



EDUCATIONAL:
A demonstrator shows different generations the Swindon panel

DECARBONISING THE TRANSPORT SECTOR



RETURN: Traffic jams re-appeared last month as car usage across Britain had returned to around 85 per cent of pre-Covid levels, whereas national rail and tube usage was between 30-35 per cent.

RMT makes the case for a sustainable, affordable and accessible network in public ownership

Transport is the country's highest emitting sector of greenhouse gases and the Department for Transport recently launched a 'call for ideas' around the development of its Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

The majority of transport emissions come from road vehicles with 55 per cent of all domestic transport emissions coming from cars. In contrast, public transport is much more energy efficient and sustainable - less than five per cent of the UK's transport emissions come from rail and buses. Rail freight is also significantly more sustainable and produces around 76 per cent less Carbon Dioxide than the equivalent road journey.

RMT is clear that there needs to be a massive shift from private vehicles to public

transport if the UK is to meet its carbon reduction targets. Yet, after decades of privatisation, our public transport networks are fragmented, expensive and prioritise shareholder profits rather than passengers. Recent RMT research found that the UK's private rail operators and rolling stock companies could stand to make a massive £500 million in profit from Covid-19 Government bailouts.

Instead, we need an affordable, accessible, integrated, comprehensive and sustainable public transport network. In the union's response to the DfT's 'Call for ideas', RMT made the case for why public ownership is the only way this can be achieved.

Taking our public transport networks into public ownership, would allow them

to be run as an essential public service, ending the profiteering of the private sector once and for all.

A recent report from the Climate Assembly, made up of members of the public, found very high levels of support for public ownership, with 75 per cent of members believing that public transport should be brought back under Government control. A key recommendation of the same report was that 'improving public transport' is essential for decarbonisation.

We know that Covid-19 has created additional challenges for the sector. By October, car usage across Britain had returned to around 85 per cent of pre-Covid levels, whereas national rail and tube usage was between 30-35 per cent of pre-Covid levels and bus

usage around 55-60 per cent. HGV road vehicle levels have been regularly exceeding 100 per cent of pre-Covid levels.

It is vital that the crisis does not permanently lead to more people using cars instead of sustainable public transport. This would increase carbon emissions and worsen air quality. So, to prevent Covid-19 contributing to another public health crisis, RMT believes we need a 'New Deal' for public transport.

Under a New Deal, the government must massively expand transport operating subsidy, capital investment and capacity to make rail, bus, passenger ferry and metro services more frequent, affordable, attractive and safer to use. This can be paid for by borrowing at record low interest rates and making all

public transport publicly owned and accountable and properly planned and integrated - saving billions through ending the inefficiency and profiteering of privatisation.

We also need maximum modal shift from the freight carried on roads by HGVs, which creates major safety, social and environmental impacts, to rail freight which has proven environmental and economic benefits.

RMT also believes that a fully staffed public transport network is essential to enable the massive shifts away from private vehicles which are required to decarbonise, and this is even more vital in light of Covid-19 as staff have a key role to play in restoring passenger confidence in public transport.

In terms of the rail network, a recent report by the passenger watchdog Transport Focus found that "staff play a central role in helping passengers feel safe and secure when travelling by train" and there was a "strong sense than the ideal response to the pandemic would be to see more staff on trains and at the station, rather than less".

RMT will fight any attempts by government and train companies to use Covid-19 as an excuse for cutting staffing across our public transport networks.

RMT believes that Covid-19 has proven, without any doubt, that privatisation is fundamentally at odds with a sustainable public transport network. The Welsh government has already recognised this and has recently announced that it is renationalising Wales' rail passenger services.

The DfT must now follow suit, and use its Transport Decarbonisation Plan to create a sustainable, affordable and accessible public transport network in public ownership. ■

President's column



BE KIND AND UNIFIED

Like many I was saddened by the general secretary's wish to retire at the 2020 AGM. However, the supreme government of our union dealt with appeals against the NEC in a fair and matter of fact way. Despite some out there accusing the NEC of not having the conviction to defend the decisions along with the general secretary, he had made it clear from the off that he would be the one to defend it and I applaud that because after all he is part of the NEC too.

I have nothing but gratitude and respect for every delegate that attended the conference, which was testing and trying for all who was there and made it a success with all the difficulties that faced us.

However the actions after overshadowed what is our supreme governing body and that is unacceptable. It's been a very tough year and the accusations that are thrown around do not help in such situations. The amount of individual complaints have risen far quicker than the union has been able to deal with, but that is not a fault of the GS or the NEC, it's that in a year where a pandemic has taken hold of all our lives making what should be simple much more difficult.

The independent inquiry will hopefully point to the behaviour that has developed over many years without the need for a witch hunt and rid us of these attitudes. Hopefully we will be able to report soon and how the process will be implemented. As there are many asking where we are at!

Something that currently plays out in our union is factionalism of groups and individuals who make unsubstantiated claims of not just myself but other elected officials which is a sad state of affairs for our union that the whole trade union movement are watching the greatest members-led union rip each other apart for what.

All this energy should be put into fighting for those members whose jobs are being robbed

from them with the cloak of the Coronavirus pandemic! With activists and officers having to fight on many fronts to protect our members,

I ask every member to consider is the negative and nastiness really necessary and if they feel it is then use the structure that was agreed by the general secretary to address your concerns and stop the false unsubstantiated claims that are being portrayed as factual to non-active members who must be questioning why they are subscribing to RMT.

As we enter the election for general secretary we must all remain respectful and responsible for our actions and I welcome the fact we have four candidates and hopefully each one will respect our democracy and want to work as part of the NEC moving forward. We do not have to agree, that's why we run campaigns and ballots so dignity can prevail.

With honest, robust and respectful debates as all those standing show respect to us the membership let's keep them free from the social media shit storm that has been the norm over the last couple of years!

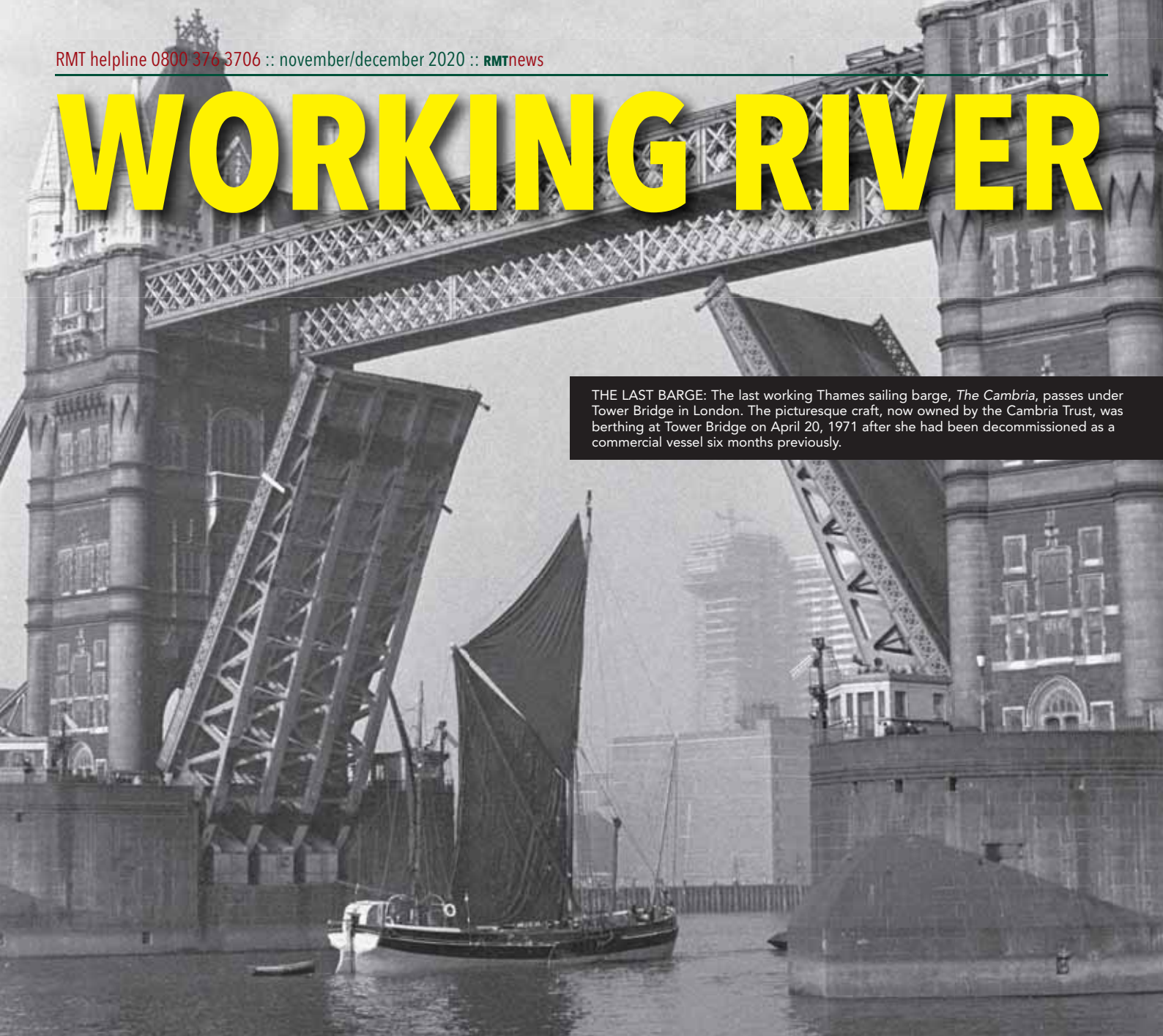
We must be able to unite and move forward together if our democratic structures are going to remain and you the members with a single vote will decide do not feel pressured by factions.

It's your vote you choose who you want to bring us together and then we move on! So kindness is what I want you all to show and feel it's going to be a long process.

I want to wish every candidate good luck and hope that branches utilise zoom to make sure that the candidates get to address branches rather than just filling in the nomination because that's an affront to our democracy.

Merry Christmas all
Solidarity Michelle

WORKING RIVER



THE LAST BARGE: The last working Thames sailing barge, *The Cambria*, passes under Tower Bridge in London. The picturesque craft, now owned by the Cambria Trust, was berthing at Tower Bridge on April 20, 1971 after she had been decommissioned as a commercial vessel six months previously.

The General Federation of Trade Unions release a collection of songs and music celebrating the lives of working people on the River Thames

Working River - Songs and music of the Thames was released last month exactly fifty years after *The Cambria*, the last working Thames barge trading under sail alone, loaded her cargo at Tilbury for the last time before being laid up.

This was a good enough anniversary as any to release 21 songs and music about the life of working people along the Thames over the centuries. In fact three of the songs celebrate the barge trade, *A Bargeman's Year*, *The Last Barge* and *Stormy Weather*, a version of which was once sung by the singing bargeman Bob Roberts himself on his battered old melodeon.

This celebration of working life on what was once called "the hardest working river in the world" is a collaboration between the General Federation of Trade Unions Educational Trust and Folktree Recordings.

They felt that while the deeds of the rich and powerful are often celebrated on this so-called Royal River, the stories of the lives of the millions of workers that toiled, played and died around the river are too often being lost with the turning of each tide.

The river's position as a major maritime route has put it at the centre of many events of national significance, leading the early trade unionist and historian John Burns to describe it as 'liquid history'. As a result, the Thames runs deep in the national psyche and forms a fundamental part of our identity.

It would explain why monarchs and rulers have always sought to be associated with the Thames as a symbol of power and authority.

In his book *Sacred River* Peter Ackroyd describes when Handel's *Water Music*, perhaps the most famous piece of music associated with the Thames, was first performed on the river in 1717 to celebrate the first British monarch of the House of Hanover George 1 coming to the throne.

Ackroyd muses that this loud musical display was also performed in order to drown out the "vulgar abuse of the Thames watermen and their egalitarian sentiments hallowed by tradition on the river".

Working River rejoices in these 'vulgar' voices and their 'egalitarian sentiments' because it is clear that the Thames has another history, one of toil, migration, rebellion, mutiny, smuggling, mud-larking and even snatches of simple pleasure on this eternally changing river.

It is not widely known that one of the most successful naval mutinies in British history took place at the mouth of the Thames on the Nore sandbank in 1797.

This significant event, which saw the flying of the red flag for the first time, terrified the Admiralty and led to vast improvements in conditions. Nevertheless the 'president' of the mutiny Richard Parker was hanged from the yardarm of *HMS Sandwich*.

There is a wonderful song here celebrating him sung by Annie Dearman, *The Death of Parker*. Another *Goldspring*, written and performed by the talented MG Boulter, tells the tale of the press-ganged *Goldspring Thompson* who witnessed the mutiny before escaping.

There are songs like *Strike for Better Wages*, celebrating the Great London Dock Strike of 1889 which resulted in a victory and established strong trade unions amongst London's hitherto unorganised workers.

What is less widely known is that the dock strike was heavily influenced by a successful Match Girls strike the previous year by over

1,400 young women between 12 and 20 years old. This is celebrated in a tune first collected by renowned folklorist Roy Palmer.

The subject of love is a recurring theme including local folk singer Kiti Theobald's personal love letter to the Thames, *My River*, recorded live here at a local singaround.

Essex singer Jolene's astonishing version of *Sweet Thames Flows Softly*, following the fortunes of two lovers as they journey down the river, is also a stand out track.

The group Potiphar's Apprentices also deliver *The Fisherman*, a song collected by Ralph Vaughan Williams back in 1904.

Class is also a recurring theme as we may expect, no more so than on the haunting *The Wreck of the Princess Alice*, a poem put to music by Crafting for Foes about the sinking of the pleasure ship with the loss of 700 men, women and children, the largest loss of life ever on the Thames. It is widely believed that this disaster is largely forgotten for the simple reason that all the victims were workers not worthy of remembrance.

The Hoy Shanty Crew sing of happier times with *Day Trip to Southend* which describes the experiences of Londoners coming down for the day only to discover the tide was out.

Other songs to discover also deal with female smugglers, mudlarkers scavenging on the shore, desperate fishermen that row to London to sell their wares and a joyful Calypso song from the deck of the *SS Empire Windrush* after it docked at Tilbury in 1948 written by the king of Calypso Lord Kitchener.

This collection suitably ends with Essex singer and writer Jack Forbes and friends belting out a live version of his classic *Rolling Down the River* about working the container ships along the Thames which is now sung around the world.

The added bonus of buying this CD is that proceeds will go to the GFTU Educational Trust to support its provision of trade union and adult education.

*21 songs and an extensive and illustrated information booklet including p&p all for £12.99. For more information or to buy a copy, go to gftu.org.uk or bandcamp.com.



WORKING RIVER

Songs and music of the Thames

GFTU and Folktree Recordings have come together to produce a CD of the untold story of working people of the Thames through music and song. Lightermen, bargemen, the match girls and dockers strikes, fishermen, smugglers, mudlarks and mutineers... It's all here in a wonderful 21 track musical journey. Also included is an illustrated 16 page booklet charting the history behind the music, all for just £12.99 (including p&p).



Available at folktreerecordings.bandcamp.com and gftu.org.uk



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RMT member, work accident claimant

*Within the union scheme. Terms and conditions apply. Claims must be brought within three years of the date of an accident or diagnosis. Exceptions do apply, please contact us for advice on whether or not you have a claim. **Where claims can be pursued in UK courts.

RETIRED MEMBERS REPORT

Retired members advisory committee chair Tony Donaghey reports on a recent zoom conference

2020 will not be remembered particularly well by pensioners and retired workers in Britain. We are still nearly at the bottom of the European league on pensions and nearly three million of us are living below the official poverty line.

Our new government has reneged on TV License for the over 75s and women pensioners have been discriminated due to changes in retirement age. During this pandemic pensioners have also been shamefully treated by being released from hospitals to care homes without testing, leading to many deaths and we also need a Care Act that has been kicked into the long grass year after year.

Despite this treatment RMT

retired members have been campaigning on a Manifesto for Pensioners as we are only too aware that struggle is always required and advancement doesn't come on a plate. Therefore we are active within the National Pensioners Convention and our local trade union movement bodies.

Guest speakers included RMT general secretary Mick Cash and Rhys Harmer from RMT's young members committee. Motions discussed and agreed on Isolation and Loneliness, support for Women Against State Pension Inequality, staffing of stations and trains and against the removal of printed timetables on all modes of transport.



RMT union app

Packed with exciting features the new app allows you to update your personal details, follow all the latest news, campaigns and events and keeps you in contact with the union and your branch.



NEWPORT RAIL BRANCH
SUPPORTS
MICK LYNCH
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

EURO PASSENGER SERVICES BRANCH
NOMINATES
MICK LYNCH
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

OFFSHORE ENERGY BRANCH
NOMINATE
KARLSON LINGWOOD
FOR ASSISTANT NATIONAL SECRETARY

LIVERPOOL SHIPPING
SUPPORTS
KARLSON LONGWOOD
FOR ASSISTANT NATIONAL SECRETARY

WISHAW & MOTHERWELL BRANCH
NOMINATES
GORDON MARTIN
FOR GENERAL SECRETARY

NOTIFICATION OF RMT CONTRIBUTION RATES FOR 2021

Like most things, the cost of providing you with the benefits of RMT membership increases every year and contribution rates increase to help us maintain and improve those benefits and our services to members.

From 1st January 2021, new members whose basic salary or equivalent earnings are above £23,200 per annum will pay £5.30 per week.

New members whose basic salary or equivalent earnings are below £23,200 per annum will be £2.28 per week.

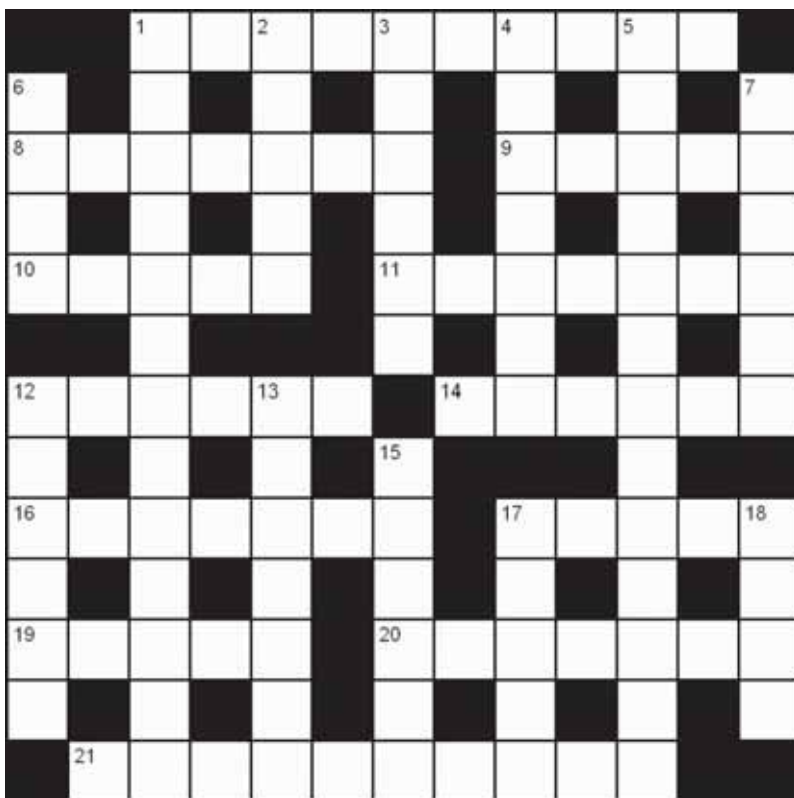
Direct debits will be amended accordingly as well as contributions collected by employers under paybill deduction arrangements. Members who pay contributions to cash collectors may obtain up to date information by contacting the Membership Department at this Office or by emailing membership@rmt.org.uk.

Members who pay their contributions by cheque or postal order directly will need to adjust the amounts they send accordingly:

Period	Full Rate	Low Rate
Weekly	£ 5.30	£ 2.28
4 Weekly	£ 21.20	£ 9.12
Monthly	£ 22.97	£ 9.88

We maintain a tight control of our costs and continually re-examine them to ensure that we make best use of our resources to deliver improved services to you. I am sure you will agree that RMT membership continues to provide excellent value for money.

£50 PRIZE CROSSWORD



Last month's solution...



Send entries to Prize Crossword, RMT, Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD by January 2 with your name and address.

Winner and solution in next issue.



Crossword sponsored by UIA

ACROSS

- 1 Study of insects (10)
- 8 Very old (7)
- 9 Respond (5)
- 10 Entice (5)
- 11 Foot pedal (7)
- 12 Insensibility (6)
- 14 Oblique angle (6)
- 16 Innocence (7)
- 17 Bird of prey(5)
- 19 Headdress (5)
- 20 Thrower (7)
- 21 Helper (10)

DOWN

- 1 Exclude from church (13)
- 2 Stealing (5)
- 3 Undergo change (6)
- 4 Gift (7)
- 5 Female relative (13)
- 6 Delighted (4)
- 7 Authenticate (6)
- 12 Music piece (6)
- 13 Too old (7)
- 15 Old Spanish money (6)
- 17 Make an effort (5)



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1 PERSONAL DETAILS.

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Forename(s)

Home phone

Mobile phone

Email address

Date of Birth / /

Postcode

National Insurance Number

2 **Marrital Status** married partner single divorced Drivers Licence No.

3 **Your Employment.**

Employer RMT Branch

Job Description

4 Mr Mrs Ms Miss

5 **Membership Status**

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Address

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To: The Manager Bank/Building Society

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Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

Originator's Identification Number

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Reference Number

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Signature(s)

Date

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“

The announcement by the Welsh Labour Government that it is to take passenger rail services into public ownership is welcome.

There should now be **no more excuses** for the Scottish Government, who have greater powers than the Welsh government over rail services, not to take similar action.

And, with rail services in England now wholly underwritten by the taxpayer, it's plainly daft not to just cut out the middleman and take them fully public as well.

Mick Cash, RMT
General Secretary ”



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