

# Unions back rail service protesters

By **Gordon Rayner** CHIEF REPORTER

A RAILWAY pressure group that organised protests yesterday against high fares and terrible service is backed by the unions that have caused months of chaos on Southern Rail.

Action For Rail, which encouraged commuters to protest outside 120 stations around the country, was set up by the TUC and is backed by Aslef and the RMT, the rail unions whose ongoing industrial action has left Southern Rail passengers in despair.

The RMT and Aslef have planned another six-day walkout from January 9

to 14, heaping more misery on commuters using the London to south coast lines. Southern has advised passengers not to travel at all between those dates.

Separately, BA cabin crew last night announced that they are to stage a 48-hour strike from January after Unite members rejected an offer aimed at resolving a pay dispute by a margin of seven to one.

The rail protests were timed to coincide with commuters' return to work after the Christmas break along with average fare increases of 2.3 per cent.

Passengers were confronted by placards with slogans such as "Rail Fares

Are Up 27 per cent" and "Rail Fail". One of those taking part in the protest was Steve Hedley, assistant general secretary of the RMT, who joined a small gathering at King's Cross.

He posed for pictures with Andy McDonald, the shadow transport secretary, and Emily Thornberry, the shadow foreign secretary.

Mr Hedley celebrated the New Year by wishing all his "comrades" a "revolutionary 2017" and highlighted the fact that it was the 100th anniversary of the "great Bolshevik revolution".

Action For Rail was unable to provide figures for how many people took

part in the protests, but its biggest gathering at King's Cross only attracted around 30 people.

Jeremy Corbyn, who had been expected to join the protest at King's Cross, instead recorded a video in which he claimed that "you only have to look at Southern trains to see how privatisation doesn't work".

The Labour leader made no mention of the fact that the problems were being caused by union leaders, including the Aslef president Tosh McDonald for whom he led a standing ovation at a Labour Christmas party last month.

Another rail union, the Transport

Salaried Staffs' Association, was criticised for releasing a video in which French, German and Dutch people smugly thank the British people for privatising the railways so that publicly-run railways on the continent can invest in them.

Twitter users accused the TSSA of xenophobia, and one described the film as "something the EDL would be pleased with".

Alex Foulds, Southern's deputy chief operating officer, said of next week's strike: "We are sorry that yet again passengers will have their plans disrupted by what is pointless industrial action."

## Soldier shot 'by accident' in Iraq had just become father

By **Ben Farmer**  
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

A YOUNG British soldier shot dead in a suspected accident in Iraq was killed only months after becoming a father.

L/Cpl Scott Hetherington was serving with 2nd Battalion the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment when he was killed at a military base in Taji, north of Baghdad. The 22-year-old became the first member of the British forces to be killed in the country since 2009.

The Ministry of Defence said L/Cpl Hetherington was not killed by enemy activity and his death was under investigation. He is believed to have been



L/Cpl Scott Hetherington: 'a superb soldier and a first-class leader,' said his commander

shot by a comrade in a suspected accident.

L/Cpl Hetherington, from Middleton in Greater Manchester, was known as "Snowball" to friends and was taking part in Britain's campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isil) by training Iraqi and Kurdish forces.

He was a vehicle commander in a platoon providing security for other troops and had recently had a baby daughter with his girlfriend.

Lt Col Rob Singleton, commander of the battalion based at Weeton Barracks, near Blackpool, described L/Cpl Hetherington as "a superb soldier and a first-class leader".

He added: "He will be missed dearly and we will never forget him."



OLLIE FAYOR/REINPS

**Light entertainment** Mars, the Moon and Venus in alignment over the Portland Bill Lighthouse, on the Isle of Portland, Dorset. Neptune could also be making an appearance in the night skies later this month, ahead of a solar eclipse in August.

## Mosley rebuffed after public says newspapers should regulate themselves

By **Anita Singh**

THE press should regulate itself, says the public, with only one in 25 people supporting a state-sanctioned alternative such as the one funded by former motorsport boss Max Mosley.

Mr Mosley's family trusts have given £4 million to Impress, a controversial

body set up in the wake of the Leveson inquiry as a rival to the Independent Press Standards Organisation (Ipsos).

Impress counts only a handful of specialist publications as members, with the majority of publishers refusing to join amid fears it poses a threat to freedom of speech.

The organisation supports the im-

plementation of section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013, under which publishers not signed up to a government-backed regulator would be forced to pay the costs of both sides in a libel action even if they won.

Local newspaper editors have warned that they face going out of business if such a law is implemented. In a

newly published YouGov poll, only four per cent of the public said they supported a regulator funded by donations from wealthy individuals and trusts, with 49 per cent backing an industry-funded regulator such as Ipsos.

Mr Mosley has campaigned for tighter press controls following a "sting" by the now defunct *News of the World*,

which accused him of taking part in an "orgy". He successfully sued the newspaper for invasion of privacy.

The former head of Formula One's ruling body said yesterday he would continue to bankroll Impress until his money was no longer required.

*Dominic Raab: Page 16*

## Marine's defence team under fire

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conduct of his defence prior to trial was deficient to the extent that it led to identifiable errors which rendered the trial process unfair." During the 2013 trial, Blackman denied murder, claiming that he believed the insurgent was dead when he fired his pistol into his chest at close range.

The review body found that his lawyers, led by Anthony Berry QC, failed to carry out basic procedures such as taking a detailed "proof of evidence" statement from him, setting out the events leading to the death of the insurgent, and were guilty of a "failure... to take detailed instructions and give persuasive legal advice".

The CCRC suggested that had Mr Berry, who lists the court martial as one of his "notable recent cases" on his website, carried out "fuller preparation" before the trial, his team may have realised that "a psychiatric report should have been obtained to assess Mr Blackman's state of mind at the time of the incident", which would have opened up the possibility of the former marine pleading guilty to manslaughter by way of diminished responsibility.

The report said that had psychiatric evidence been obtained, it "should have caused both Mr Blackman and his legal representatives to re-assess the incident, his level of culpability and the nature of his defence. In the absence of such evidence Mr Blackman was able to explain only partially, and in an unsatisfactory way, his actions".

The failure to obtain psychiatric evidence appears surprising, given that months before the court martial, Blackman's solicitor, Issy Hogg, and junior defence barrister, Peter Glenser, co-authored an article in a legal journal, which stated that they "have a particular interest in post-traumatic stress disorder" and would be "particularly alert" to soldiers' psychiatric problems.

The CCRC report also states that the former sergeant's legal team should



Alexander Blackman, top, and his lawyers Anthony Berry QC, left, and Issy Hogg

have recognised that "little challenge could be made" to the suggestion that the Taliban fighter was alive at the time of the shooting. The body suggests that had the defence team prepared more thoroughly, they would have been alerted to the possibility of Blackman being found guilty of an unlawful act of manslaughter, on the grounds that he thought he was desecrating a corpse.

Blackman was denied bail last month, after prosecutors said they believed the new evidence did not back up claims that his conviction should be reduced to manslaughter, and that they wished to cross-examine two eminent psychiatrists involved in the case.

John Bennett, a solicitor acting on behalf of Mr Berry and Mr Glenser, said the pair had not been notified of the CCRC findings, adding that they had conducted the case "on the basis of the clear, unambiguous and emphatic instructions received from Mr Blackman". Ms Hogg did not return requests for comment.

### NEWS BULLETIN

#### Policeman turned firm boss jailed for £1m fraud

A former police officer has been jailed after he conned clients and the taxman out of more than £1 million.

Ben Staff, 35, left Norfolk Police in 2008 and set up a building business. He directed payments intended for his companies into his personal accounts, gave creditors cheques that bounced and fraudulently claimed VAT refunds, Norwich Crown Court heard yesterday.

He was convicted of eight fraud-related charges at two previous trials.

David Wilson, prosecuting, said Staff's accounts showed £5,000 was spent on a holiday shortly after a VAT repayment was made. Judge Mark Dennis QC jailed Staff, from Norwich, for four and a half years.

#### Husband 'tried to kill wife with hammer'

A husband deliberately chose the moment when his Cambridge academic wife was in her "most vulnerable state" in bed to attempt to kill her with a hammer, a court heard.

Paul Bond, 62, fractured Dr Marian Bond's skull and jaw multiple times while she slept at their home last July, leaving her in a critical condition, Cambridge Crown Court was told.

He then placed the blood-stained lump hammer under a pillow on the bed and called the emergency services, it is alleged.

Bond, who ran a computing business from their home in Over, denies attempted murder.

The trial continues.

#### Motorist killed as train hits car on level crossing

A man died after his car was struck by a train at a level crossing near Lidlington station, near Woburn, Beds, yesterday morning.

British Transport Police said the incident was not being treated as suspicious and there were no other injuries. Officers were examining how the car came to be on the tracks.

The man, believed to be the car's driver, was pronounced dead at the scene after the 9.34am London Midland train from Bedford to Bletchley struck the vehicle on the Marston level crossing, which has automatic barriers covering half the road. It is used by some 36 trains and 1,200 vehicles daily.

#### Lotto gran's friend found guilty of 'revenge porn'

A former friend of "Lotto gran" Susanne Hinte has been found guilty of a revenge porn offence after sending pictures of her topless and wearing lingerie to a national newspaper to get her back for hiding her hair curlers in a tumble dryer. Worcester magistrates court was told Julie Howard received £750 for the images amid media coverage of the grandmother's failed claim for a £33 million Lotto jackpot.

Howard, who was given a suspended six-week jail term, told the trial she did not intend to cause distress to Ms Hinte, who she believed "liked" being in the media. Howard denied the charge but was found guilty of disclosing sexual pictures.

#### Police hunt driver after two killed in hit-and-run

Police are hunting a driver who fled after a hit-and-run crash killed two male pedestrians. The victims, thought to be in their late teens to early twenties, were killed when a BMW hit them on the B1091 in Yaxley, Cambs.

Police said they are investigating whether the suspect - who left on foot - is also responsible for a break-in at a nearby address and a dumped briefcase full of cash. A helicopter and dog unit joined the search but the man, said to be in his forties, remains at large.

The collision took place shortly before 11.15am yesterday and an air ambulance attended but both men died at the scene. They have yet to be identified.

#### University's storytelling professor paid £63,000

A hard-up university is under fire for employing a professor of storytelling at more than £1,000 a week.

The £63,000-a-year position at the University of South Wales in Cardiff is described as an "academic role".

But Conservative MP David Davies said it showed academics were living in "cloud cuckoo land". He called on the university to scrap the post and leave storytelling to world-renowned authors such as Charles Dickens and JK Rowling.

He said: "The University of South Wales is forever bleating about the fact they've got no money. How can they afford to fund a £60k-plus job to sit around reading Janet and John books?"

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