



MINUTES OF THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 72nd Annual General Meeting was held at the Park Inn Hotel, Silver Street, Northampton on Saturday 26th April 2008. The Meeting commenced at 16.00 hours.

Present: Hugh Gould (President), John Redgate (Chairman), John Day (Secretary), Callum MacLeod (Managing Editor – *The Railway Observer*), Tony Skinner (Treasurer), Gordon Davies (Branch Liaison Secretary), David Kelso (Publicity Officer), Terry Silcock (Librarian), David Jackman (Joint Webmaster), Richard Morris, Alan Cooke and David Pick (Committee Member's) and 59 other members giving a total of 71 members present.

1] Apologies for Absence: Apologies were received from 24 members.

2] Confirmation of the Previous Year's Minutes: There were no amendments to the minutes of the 71st Annual General Meeting held at Coventry on 21st April 2007 (published in the July 2007 RO). The Chairman John Redgate (13470) proposed adoption of the minutes; this was seconded by Tom Reardon (4441) and those members present voted in favour of their adoption. There were no matters arising.

3] Chairman's Address: Chairman John Redgate opened his report by welcoming those present to the Society's 72nd Annual General Meeting at the same time thanking the Northampton Branch who volunteered to host the AGM weekend as it coincided with the 60th Anniversary of the Branch's formation. Thanks in particular were passed to the organising team led by David Pick who had worked so hard on our behalf to arrange the weekend's events. Also recorded was the pleasure in seeing Ron Gammage and John Harrison, two of the founder members of the Northampton branch, present at the AGM.

John Redgate then mentioned that he was personally pleased that during the past twelve months no changes had taken place within the composition of the Management Committee (MC). The Chairman then introduced members of the MC and the President who travel far and wide to attend MC Meetings and coming from within the boundaries of 10 different branches. The Chairman stated that the MC is a very conscientious and hard working team who serve the membership with considerable commitment, time and much effort so that the members can enjoy the continuing range of activities offered by the Society.

John Redgate mentioned this was the first occasion we had met since the sad passing of Geoff Baylis, who was well known to most of you. At last year's AGM dinner he was delighted to have been able to pay tribute to Geoff's service to the Society with a presentation to him of a model of the steam locomotive "Warwick Castle". It was doubted that anyone present at the AGM who did not own a Society publication that at one point was not carried or despatched by Geoff. The Society owes Geoff a great deal of thanks for all he did over the years, serving not only the Publications sub-committee but also in his role as Secretary, and latterly Chairman of the West Midlands Branch. A fun loving character who will be greatly missed by all who knew him. The West Midlands Branch is exploring opportunities to recognise his contribution in the form of a permanent memorial

and details will be announced in due course. Other notable members who we said farewell to are our former President Arthur Barnett, David Dalton, Courtney Haydon, John Ward and John Young.

Our 30th Branch at Chichester was recently formalised resulting in the appointment of our first lady branch secretary, Rosie Jacob, and a great debt of gratitude was extended to David Pick and those members of Northampton branch who gave up their time to assist setting the branch up, arranging speakers and then driving there to attend and support their first few meetings. Whilst it is always good news to expand our geographic coverage the MC is very conscious that there are a number of branches struggling for support, especially through the level of meeting attendance's and lack of new Branch Committee members. On the latter comment it was recorded that a number of letters have appeared in the *RO* during the past 12 months extolling the virtues of the pleasure to be gained from taking on a role in the Society and it is sincerely hoped that some of you in this room today, or reading these words in the *RO*, will be encouraged to come forward and become actively involved in running your local Branch Society in some way.

The launch of afternoon meetings by a number of branches is proving very popular due to the trend of individuals not wishing to use public transport late at night or driving in the dark. There is a need for Branch Committee's to be vigilant to spot these trends and attempt to respond to members' needs.

Unfortunately there is no further news regarding reinstatement of "our locomotive" 60001. A recent letter to EWS enquiring about the latest news brought the response that the locomotive continued to be part of their operational fleet and that they would not consider our suggestion to place the name on another locomotive due to the demands for namings. The MC has discussed this issue and our preference is to seek an alternative operator who would be prepared to name a locomotive after the Society's in-house magazine.

In November 2006 the Society was invited to attend a meeting with the SLS, LCGB and The Railway Club with a view to establishing a working party to look at future mutual area's of co-operation. The working party report was published in December 2007 and since then, on March 18th a meeting took place involving the various President's and Chairmen to discuss the recommendations. (*See Item 4 – President's Address*).

The Website made steady progress during the twelve month reporting period under the guiding hands of David Jackman and Alistair Field. During this time the volume of hits on our website continued to grow, averaging a 5% increase over the previous year. Frequent readers of our website will have seen, since March, the revised new look to Branch home pages that feature appropriate local topical reports and pictures. The busiest branch sites, in alphabetical order, were Bristol, Merseyside, Chester and North Wales and Northampton which is a direct consequence of the effort these branches have made to develop the content of their branch pages.

E-commerce was further expanded to allow members to renew their membership on-line and over 200 members took advantage of this facility for the 2008 renewal period. The website was also modified to accept the PayPal method of payment for publications with orders already processed using this scheme. The Chairman expressed thanks to David and Alistair for all they do keeping our website refreshed and up to date.

The new process for membership renewals, now in its third year of operation, has been a great success. In the first year non-renewals totalled 76, last year 83, and the figure for 2008 currently stands at 118. Thanks were extended to Richard Morris and Steve Ollive for their hard work. So far in 2008 we have recruited 43 new members compared to 44

at the same time last year. The importance of the Internet to the Society is reflected in the fact that over half of our new members are now recruited via the Society's website.

From 24th May until 1st June the Society will be represented at the National Railway Museum's "1968 and all that" extravaganza with a sales stand and David Tyreman asks for members to volunteer to help at the event.

The Chairman reported with much sadness that in January he received a resignation letter from Rodney Lissenden as Chairman of the Publications sub-committee. Rodney was a member of the original group that formed the first sub-committee in the early 1960's and has served the Society on this sub-committee with great distinction for over 40 years. John Redgate was delighted to report that we would fortunately not lose Rodney's services altogether as he has agreed to continue to help with the photographic content of future society publications. In the meantime Gordon Davies has agreed to become acting Chairman whilst we seek a permanent successor. Peter Davies, who had recently stood down from his role looking after sales, was thanked for all his hard work over the years and pleasingly it was announced that John Wood had agreed to take on this role from 1st May 2008.

Earlier in his address the Chairman mentioned the word "fun" and he returned to this point in closing. Stating that we all joined the RCTS because we were interested in railways and the *RO* was, for many, the best way of finding out what was going on. It is one of our hobbies. For a minority of the membership it has led to an active participation in the day to day running of the Society, but let us be reminded and remember all these individuals are volunteers who give freely of their time. It is not work, but rather is meant to be a relaxation from the day to day stresses in life. Please remember not to take things too seriously otherwise when the fun starts to wear off the Society could be in danger of losing the assistance of very hard working members of the Society.

The Chairman continued by mentioning it is easy for individuals to say what is wrong with the Society, but there is a certain arrogance when in the next breath they say they are neither interested or prepared to assist in righting those perceived shortcomings, remember it is a hobby for relaxation and he stressed again, "not work", for which the benefit is interest and fun. So let's get the fun back into the RCTS.

With interest and fun in mind delegates were informed that David Kelso would be announcing in AOB details of a photographic competition to be launched in the May *RO* with judging to take place by those attending this year's Member's Weekend in Scarborough.

The Chairman's final words were to pay tribute to his colleagues on the Management Committee for all their hard work during the previous 12 months. In addition he extended personal thanks to all Branch and Society Officers and *RO* Editors stating that it is the team effort that makes us so successful. Thanks to all your efforts we have a Society we can all be proud of in our 80th year.

John then introduced our President Hugh Gould reminding us that it is now over 15 years since Hugh took on the role and during which time he has been a prolific speaker within the Society with only the newly formed Chichester Branch awaiting Hugh's visit. Also Hugh is not just content with visiting branches but can be found most days travelling near and far on our railways without knowing just where he might turn up or just drop in on an RCTS observation gathering as recently happened at Doncaster. You have been warned – be on your best behaviour!

4] President's Address: Hugh Gould opened his address by confirming that his membership number was 7190 and not as recently published in the *RO*. That mild rebuke over with our President then informed everyone present that he had a highly enjoyable year with visits to 10 branches around the country. Some visits have now become more regular so much so that he feels very much at home with some branches. Whilst his travels, especially overseas with only four in the last year, were becoming fewer each year audiences still enjoy the annual illustrated record. The important matter is, that Hugh continues to take his camera with him on his excursions. One highlight is the regular autumn visit to Scottish branch where there are meetings on two consecutive evenings, believed to be the only branch so to do, the Thursday meeting is followed on the Friday evening with a dinner. Meetings now take place at Dunbar following the car crash two years ago that managed to demolish the Ledburn building but not the Mk 1 coach at the previous venue. Hugh mentioned that one branch he attended had a disappointingly low attendance but assured us that his lowest attendance of 4 was on a visit involving another society. Notwithstanding this it is disheartening when with the travel afterwards you don't get home until after midnight. Other attendance's do not cause concern for comment and our President was pleased to include Windsor and Maidenhead and Cardiff amongst his visits during the last year.

Moving on to the Four Societies Working Party Hugh mentioned this was instigated by Andrew Dow, Chairman of the SLS, and as our representative he was joined by Eric Palmer during the second half of 2007. Once the meetings started some very good comradeship existed and the planned December deadline for the report to be made available was met. It was established that there were several joint members and a few who were members of all four societies. Since the report was made available to the President and Chairman of each society we have met and discussions reveal that most, if not all, of the recommendations will be actioned and there remains considerable scope for the co-operation to continue.

In closing Hugh mentioned that his diary is already filling up for the next year and it is likely that the magical figure of 10 will again be achieved.

Finally Hugh wished everyone, whatever they do, whether an officer or a member "*lang may your lum reek*" [*translated "Long may your chimney smoke"*]

5] Adoption of Management Committee Reports and Accounts: These were published in the Special Supplement for the AGM that accompanied the April 2008 *RO*.

5a] Questions Relating to the Report on Activities and Administration - None

5b] Questions Relating to the Financial Report

David Tyreman (7972) stated that he was pleased to hear that the West Midlands Branch had made a donation to the Severn Valley Railway recognising the valued work of Geoff Baylis. Ken Wilson (18966) asked about the Annual Subscription and the relative Subscription and Magazine Fee. Tony Skinner (13596) informed that this was split to take the VAT rules into consideration where the allowance was apportioned as 90% to magazine fees and 10% to subscriptions.

5c] Questions & Comments Relating to *The Railway Observer*

David Kelso (4789) expressed that there was a misunderstanding in the title Photographic/Picture Editor. He stated that he doesn't edit the photographs but merely collects these from correspondents and hands the images to the *RO* Editor for consideration for publication and the decision to so publish rests with Callum MacLeod. Once Callum has made this decision David then submits the chosen images to Stoute and Bishop the *RO* printers. Malcolm Hammond (17454) expressed his satisfaction of

the improved format and better photographic content and reproduction. Bob Ballard (10372) questioned why a particular member had not been approached by the Editor regarding a Freight News column. The Editor responded that it is up to individuals to respond to vacant editorial positions expressing their willingness to take on the role. Other questions related to articles, especially a 16-page article which the Editor said would be difficult to reproduce in those ROs where space was available without going over the postal band. It was stressed that once an article started it had to finish so the emphasis was to publish shorter contributions. Ken Wilson (18966) commented that other societies produced "journals" that were full of articles with less territorial news. It was pointed out that the RO was designed to be a publication based on news and the territorial method of reporting this was accepted and preferred. David Kelso (4789) considered that articles should not be rejected but absorbed into the system. Eric Palmer (3919) commented that as an avid reader of the RO for over 60 years it was noticeable that the improvements during the past two years allowed for a first class product to be produced.

Closing the discussion about the RO Chairman John Redgate (13470) suggested that the subject be referred to the Regional Meetings groups for discussion and comparing what could and could not be produced in the RO and what could be possibly reproduced in a member's only section on the website.

Adoption of the Reports was proposed by Bob Barby (5843), seconded by George Palin (16977) and carried unanimously.

Adoption of the Financial Report was proposed by Malcolm Hammond (17454), seconded by Mike Green (9297) and carried unanimously.

6] Election of Management Committee Officers: The Chairman announced that he had received nominations for the following Officers to serve on the Management Committee.

For one year;

John Redgate Proposed by John Harrison (3833) and seconded by David Pick (7342)

For three years;

Alan Cooke Proposed by John Harrison (3833) and seconded by Ron Hart (13328)

Richard Morris Proposed by John Harrison (3833) and seconded by Ron Gammage (2798)

There being no other nominations the nominations were carried unanimously.

7] Appointment of Auditors: John Redgate (13470) proposed and David Cole (4799) seconded that Richardson, Watson and Co. be appointed as Auditors for the Financial Year 1st November 2007 to 31st October 2008.

8] Date and Venue for the 2009 AGM: It was announced that the next Annual General Meeting of the Society will be on Saturday 25th April 2009 at the Midland Hotel, Derby. The East Midlands Branch will host the weekend.

Following the announcement Gerald Wildish (9967) expressed his concern that other societies were holding their AGM's on the same date as our own AGM and asked if we could liaise with other railway societies to avoid such clashes in the future and thus the need for members of more than one society to have to decide where their loyalties lay on any given date. In response it was agreed to review this but as our date for 2009 was already fixed any such clash could not be avoided.

9] Any Other Business: David Kelso (4789) advised that an announcement would appear in the May *RO* and on the website for a Photographic Competition, to be judged by those attending the Members' Weekend in Scarborough. The subject being to replicate, as near as is possible in a genuine photograph, the modern image portrayed by the Society. This need not be a Class 60 and a Pendolino but should be of a modern image passenger and a modern image freight train. Prizes will also be announced in due course

Gordon Davies announced that the Annual Members' Weekend would be held during the weekend 24 – 26th October 2008 at the Ambassador Leisure Hotel, Scarborough. The booking form would appear in the July *RO*.

John Champion (5669) asked whether the MC was concerned about the age groups of new members joining the Society to which the reply was, the Assistant Treasurer, New Members recorded such statistics which were reported to the MC at each of their meetings and it was noted that the majority of new members were over 45 and returning to the hobby.

The Meeting Closed at 17.10

John Day
Society Secretary