



2012 Officers' Conference

Minutes of the meeting of Management Committee, Society and Branch Officers
held on 14th October 2012 at
The King Malcolm Hotel, Dunfermline

In attendance:-

Representing the Management Committee and Society Officers:-

Hugh Gould – President
Gordon Davies – Chairman
Bob Green – Secretary
Reg Wood – Treasurer
David Jackman – Webmaster
David Kelso – Publicity Officer
Mike Robinson – Managing Editor, Railway Observer
Alan Cooke – Branch Liaison Secretary
Bob Ellison – Assistant Treasurer (Branch Finances)
Richard Morris – Membership Secretary

Steve Ollive – Assistant Treasurer (Membership Renewals)
Eric Palmer – Chairman, Development Sub Committee
John Day – Members Weekend Co-ordinator

Representing the Branches:-

Bristol – Callum Macleod, Roger Newman, Paul Udey
Cambridge – Robert Bartlett
Cheltenham – Richard Morris
Chichester – *no representative*
Croydon and South London – Peter Wilson
South Wales / De Cymru – Noel Thompson
East Midlands – Rodney Allen, Mike Smith
Furness, Lakes and Lune – *no representative*
Hitchin – *no representative*
Humberside – Peter Louth, Carey Vessey
Ipswich – John Day, Eric Palmer
Lancashire and North West - *no representative*
Merseyside, Chester and North Wales – Alan Donaldson
Milton Keynes – Bob Ballard, Mark Richards
Northampton – *no representative*
North East – Malcom Hammond, Jim Sedgwick, David Tyreman
Peterborough – Robert Warburton
Scotland – Ken Falconer, Richard Thorburn
Sheffield – David Munday
South East – David Kelso, Mike Woodward
Solent – *no representative*
South Essex – John Stone
Surrey – Peter Bosomworth, Andy Davies, Bob Ellison, Irene Rabbitts
Sussex - *no representative*
Thames Valley – Nigel Farebrother, Andrew Jenkins, John Lewis
Watford – Terry Silcock
West Midlands – Derek Morris, David Walker
West of England - *no representative*
West Riding – Bob Green
Windsor and Maidenhead – Alan Cooke, David Goddard, Sally Goddard, Steve Ollive

1. Chairman's opening remarks – Gordon Davies

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, in opening this conference I would like to welcome you all to Dunfermline and thank you for attending today. A very warm welcome is extended to those of you who are attending their first conference and hope that you will find this experience worthwhile.

Attending for the first time is:-

Nigel Farebrother --- Thames Valley

I hope that you will find conference of benefit but more importantly return next year.

As you know I have taken on the role of Chairman from John Redgate who remains on the MC but at present is a 'Minister without Portfolio' as they say in political terms. I would like to introduce to Bob Green from the West Riding Branch who has taken on the job of Society secretary from Alan Cooke. Bob is also secretary of the West Riding and will continue in this role. Alan Cooke who needs no introduction is now the Branch Liaison Secretary a job previously held by me. I am pleased to announce that David Goddard from the Windsor and Maidenhead Branch has been invited to join the MC and David will be formally co-opted onto the MC at our next meeting on 1st December.

The job of organising these Members Weekends has become a mammoth task and Branches have been reluctant to come forward to volunteer to organise these events due to the huge amount of work involved. To their credit our colleagues in the West Midlands branch have organised numerous AGM and Members weekends in the last few years however we cannot rely on the same branch to come forward every year or so to run these events. Last year we did not have a Members Weekend and therefore we had a one day conference in Derby instead. So that we can continue to enjoy these weekends the MC set up a small organising committee led by John Day from Ipswich to organise and run the Members Weekend. On his team are Andy Davies, Irene Rabbits and Jacky Wood and all four have worked tirelessly to put this weekend's events together with assistance from members of the Scottish branch. I am sure that many of you are familiar with the planning and execution of these events and appreciated the colossal amount of work that goes in so that we can all relish a weekend away from home and this year we have enjoyed the delights of Scotland. Please show your appreciation to John, Andy, Irene, Jack and the Scottish Branch members for putting together a splendid weekend.

You all know how much effort you need to run your Branch events, indoor and outdoor fixtures. At times it is very difficult to get members to come forward and join the local committee and sometimes it takes a little bit of arm twisting to get new members to assist and get them to join the branch committees. Equally I am concerned that in running the many other aspects of this Society it appears that it is the same familiar faces who sit on the MC also sit on sub committee's and even some on their own branch committees. We have over 2,500 members in the RCTS and I am positive there is an untapped wealth of talent out there which we could use to assist with the many projects that are ongoing. The biggest problem is in identifying this vast hidden pool of talent so that we could utilise them in promoting and enhancing the Society and its services to its members. There are members out there who do not want to sit on any committee, however I am sure they would be more than willing to take on some tasks and work at them quietly at home. One example of an area that needs more manpower is our photographic archive. We have literally thousand upon thousands of photographs, negative and slides in store that need sorting, scanning and preserving and getting them on the website, so that images can be sold on the website not only to members but to the public as well. With slides the time is running out as they deteriorate and unless we do something soon all we will end up with will a piece of totally transparent film with no image sitting nicely in a little frame. Another example is that we need to develop the Website – maybe have a photographic portfolio plus lots of other feature. However our Webmaster David Jackman is still working and cannot do all the work in developing and maintaining the website on his own. Enhancing the profile of the Society by having good quality 'products', and I use the word product in inverted commas, we can hopefully make the Society more attractive and thus recruit new members. Therefore if you have any talent or skill that you could offer or, even more importantly, do you know anyone that could assist in any way with some of the Society's activities then please get in contact with anyone on the MC or the Development Committee. The Development Committee is considering setting up a voluntary 'Skill Register' of our members where we could then tap onto their skills when required. We will be putting more information in the RO 'notice board' and in next year's round of regional meetings this subject of identifying 'The Hidden Talent' will be on the agenda for discussion. Let us hope we can recruit more members to assist with the various task in running the Society.

On the subject of regional meetings if your branch has any worthy topic for discussion at the regional meetings please send your items for inclusion onto the agenda to Alan Cooke, the Branch Liaison Secretary as soon as possible please.

On membership subscription the MC has decided to increase the rate for next year by £1 to £25. This is to reflect the recent heavy increase in postage rates however £25 gives excellent value for money to be members of 'Britain's Leading Railway Society'.

You will all be aware that 60001 which carries the name the Railway Observer has recently been moved into a pool that will hopefully see the locomotive overhauled and back in action. At the last Development sub-committee meeting on 26th September we were reliably informed by Andy Lickfold that the nameplates, which by the way do not belong to the Society, will be removed and most probably sold. Other Train Operating Companies are not particularly interested in name as the thought these days with any large corporation is "what is in it for us". However just before I left home to come to Dunfermline I received an e-mail with a letter attached from Jerry Swift who is the Head of Community Rail at Network Rail. The opening paragraph reads; "I am pleased to confirm that NR is willing to place nameplates *The Railway Observer* on one of our New Measurement Train Class 43 power cars". Hopefully soon a Class 43 will be wandering all over the network doing what it does best and that is being a 'Railway Observer'. More details will of course be given in the RO and on the Website. The NR New Measurement Train travels far and wide so the nameplates will be seen in many part of the country giving the Society some excellent publicity.

To conclude I do hope your contributions this morning are productive and that we focus on maintaining Society activities and enhance the services we give to our members and new members in the many years ahead.

2. Apologies for Absence

David Pick – MC Member & Chairman, Library Sub Committee

Bristol Branch – Brian Arman, Arthur Turner

Cambridge Branch – Jim Crane, Andy Dean, Mike Page

Chichester Branch – Geoff Adams

Croydon and South London Branch – Jeremy Harrison, Geoff Lipscombe

East Midlands Branch – Chris Bush, Paul Clark

Hitchin Branch – David Elsdon

Humberside Branch – Les Brackstone, John Foreman

Ipswich Branch – Colin Prime, Bev Steele

Lancashire and North West Branch – Ian Derrick, Noel Machell

Merseyside, Chester and North Wales Branch – Norman Jackson, Alan Lewis, Richard Neale, Alan Turton

Milton Keynes – Steve Dexter

Northampton Branch – John Harrison, Ron Hart, David Pick

Peterborough Branch – Roger Baily, Alan Burgess

Sheffield Branch – Peter Hall, Alan Lovecy

South East Branch – Geoff Dunster

Solent Branch – John Godfrey, Mike Green, Ted Vaughan

South Essex – John Bennett, Jim Waite

Sussex Branch – Paul Baston, Paul Snelling

Thames Valley Branch – Dennis Brown, David Evans-Roberts, Stuart Hicks, John Hubbard

Watford Branch – Richard Dyett, Bernie Holland

West Midlands Branch – Bob Barby, Ian Reid, Peter Smith

West Riding Branch – David Beeken, John Holroyd, Bill Jagger

Windsor and Maidenhead Branch - Jim Tucker

3. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 2011 Officers Conference

Confirmation of the minutes of the 2011 Officers Conference were proposed by Derek Morris [WMD] and seconded by Bob Ballard [MKY]

4. Matters Arising

Terry Silcock [WFD] – paragraph 7.2 of the 2011 officer Conference minutes. Terry wished to point out that, at the time he set up the Library in Uxbridge, the minimum internal corridor width limits in force at the time were observed and maintained. The rules governing these limits have changed since.

5. President's Message – Hugh Gould

Good morning everybody. I have to report a fairly standard year, a good year, and a very good year for the Society. We are holding our own in the railway enthusiast world which is very encouraging. I have had my usual range of visits to a wide variety of Branches, visits which I always enjoy. The Society, as a whole is firing well which is a real pleasure to watch. We have a new Chairman and I wish you very well in your new post, Gordon. The Development Sub Committee is very busy with a lot on its plate as is the Publications Sub Committee which is also busy with new books and the Society's reputation remains very high in the field of publications. I wish you all very well with your continued work on behalf of the Society.

6. Library Sub Committee – David Kelso on behalf of David Pick

The Society Library has been based in Uxbridge for nearly thirty years in premises which have now become inadequate in both size and user friendliness and the committee have been attempting to address this position by seeking to relocate. Over the last three years a number of avenues have been explored but as yet without success.

Following a professional risk assessment inspection of the premises on 29th April last year a number of issues were identified which needed to be addressed and resolved, the most critical being the fact that the rear fire exit route had been blocked by the owner of the premises next door. Other remedial works were identified which has resulted in the closure of the Library in June until more suitable premises are found for relocating the entire library and Society archives all under one roof. It was also realised that the library contained a number of books that were surplus to requirements and these have been documented, boxed and prepared for resale.

In July last year a preliminary visit was made to the former Stationmasters House at Ingatestone, which resulted that in October several members of the Library Sub Committee were able to visit and inspect the property at the invitation of Network Rail. We were shown round the property by the Property Operations Manager accompanied by the Network Rail property repairs agent. Ingatestone, a Grade II listed building is in a state of good repair and Network Rail together with the Heritage Railway Trust have spent a six figure sum to preserve the fabric. It could be said that the parties "gelled" so well that if terms could be agreed we would be offered the use of the former crossing keeper's cottage as an extra storage facility, as part of the deal at no extra cost. Although the latter would require some work before it would be serviceable as storage. As a whole Ingatestone would be ideal for the Society as we could bring together not only the Library, but the library archive material and photographic archive under one roof. The two archives are currently stored at Stockport and Stevenage respectively. Ingatestone is a thirty minute journey from London Liverpool Street with a minimum of two trains per hour off peak. All Ingatestone trains stop at Stratford Regional station, providing access from a wide area. The visit closed with the understanding that Network Rail would be in touch by 31st October with figures of a potential lease agreement, however this did not transpire. Enquiries made through the Anglia Route Director and the Heritage Railway Trust indicated that the DfT had changed the franchise terms with respect to station property on stations not operated by Network Rail and that negotiation had been held up due to this. Contact with Network Rail was eventually established and it was confirmed that future negotiations on the property could now only take place with the agent for the new train operating company Abellio. Messrs Lambert Smith Harrison (LSH) the property agent for Abellio have been contacted and confirmed they are aware of our interest in the property but as yet are not able to discuss the matter until the property has been surveyed.

Since the report to the AGM an offer was made through the agents LSH to Abellio. Under pressure LSH have indicated that their advice to Abellio was that the property should be further renovated and brought up to dwelling house standard or for use as office accommodation. This in spite of the fact that the Local Authority, Network Rail and Heritage Railway Trust had all indicated that the property was not to be let again as a domestic rental. However it is in the interest of LSH to go that route as they would earn fees to manage the let.

In late April David's Kelso and Pick visited the station masters house at Leatherhead at the invitation Southern Railway's Properties Division. The house overall was in a much worse state of repair than Ingatestone but was larger in size and again classified as a Grade 2 listed building. We were assured that all the necessary work of renovation was to be carried out by the end of the year (2012) as they wished to convert one of the ground floor rooms into a waiting room on the up (London) platform. Renovation of the building would commence with the replacement of some roof tiles but there was a delay in sourcing tiles matching with the originals. The delay meant that due to the imminent Olympics, work could not start until afterwards as Southern did not want, understandably, the platform shrouded in scaffolding during this period. We were

advised that our interest was valued and that we would be kept informed of the renovation process and invited to view the property again as the project progressed. Work on the former Stationmasters House at Leatherhead duly commenced in the 20th August. We received advice of this together with copies of Network Rails work schedule and copies of Network Rail's floor plans. Southern have since issued an invitation for the Library Sub Committee to view the work in progress on Wednesday, 24th October. We will also take the opportunity to hold a Committee meeting afterwards to discuss what we have seen and decide how we progress and deal with other matters related to the library. We are more confident that Leatherhead will succeed. Southern's approach has been in direct contrast to that experienced by the parties concerned with Ingatestone so much so that we have now written off Ingatestone from our deliberations. There appears to be a genuine desire to have us at Leatherhead but we still have a substantial number of hurdles to overcome.

In the interim work has continued at Uxbridge in sorting the stock and disposing of surplus duplicate copies of books and magazines. Terry Silcock has offered much of this for sale as you will have seen. Terry in his role of development of the Society's Digital Archive has been working on the RO CD ROM project and as you will have seen here more volumes are now becoming available for sale to members and the public.

The earnest desire of the LSC is to be able to report at next year's AGM that we are well underway in the design and fit out of the Leatherhead premises to house the Society archives that are currently spread around the UK.

7. Society Finances – Reg Wood

My Annual Report was presented to the AGM and has been published in the RO. As with last year the economic downturn is continuing to affect the Society, as it does to all of us individually. At this meeting last year I forecast Society income to reduce 25% in 2010/11. I was pleased at the AGM to report it in fact reduced 16% to £91,100. This year a further reduction of 7% is forecast to £85,000. Last year the significant reduction was on Publication Sales, our largest earner, which normally accounts for 44% of our income; in 2011/2 it is Library Sales that are reduced due to the retirement of our Librarian Terry Silcock. Last year the Society reported a loss of £1,800. This year forecasting is made pleasantly difficult with the new book published late in the year and with this we project a break even. The Society must continue to be careful with its expenditure. One aspect of this is bank charges. We are charged 70p for every cheque we send out though only 20p for electronic bank payments. From today I wish to pay officer's expense claims electronically direct to your bank accounts. You will find extended expense claim forms on your tables. Please complete the bank section when you make claims in future, and remember to let me know if you subsequently change your bank accounts. We use around 400 cheques each year so this step should save bank charges of up to £200 plus postage of a further £160.

For Branches, our messages are:-

(a) Remember that we no longer accept Cardnet payments. Collect sales in cash or by cheque, but bear in mind that with cheques we require the customers name and address, including postcode, to be written on the back.

(b) Consider what your branch can do to promote and help the Society. Promote our new Society clothing. Please visit book retailers (suggest the independent owner occupier model shops and heritage railway shops) routinely to present our RCTS published books, take orders and supply stock to them. Remember Branches earn 15% commission on their sales earned as a thank you for your work here. We have our major new *BR Standard Volume 5* and reprints of other books in the series available support you.

(c) Present the benefits of joining the society to guests at meetings, and take new memberships and renewals for us

(d) Publicise your meetings to grow attendances at your events, e.g. local radio and newspaper 'what's on', promote your events on local websites, the Society website and in local libraries

(e) Insert a local branch promotion sheet in the books you supply to others

(f) makes sure you claim for all the input VAT you are entitled, and account promptly and correctly for VAT as appropriate on your sales. The Society reclaimed from HMRC VAT Input tax of £4,000 last year, equivalent to about £1.50 on the subscription rate. The Society's recent VAT inspection by HMRC confirmed our processes are robust though concerns were expressed at the number of VAT transactions submitted late. Please make

every effort to send your returns in on time including all appropriate VAT invoices to address the risk that late entries may be disallowed by HMRC. Full details are in the Branch Handbook

(g) Know the Society's timetables - e.g. for financial returns (book stocks, sales, VAT, etc) – and work to them. This will help make time for your volunteer national officers to complete their jobs on time (e.g. the audit, the budget, published accounts for the AGM) and focus efforts on initiatives to develop the Society.

(h) Work as a team within your Branch committee. If your Treasurer or any other officer is struggling to meet his responsibilities, he needs help from the Committee. Our size means we are legally compelled to e.g. register for VAT, publish accounts to members etc and our independent auditors must see the information we ask for from Branches in good time.

Our Branches and volunteers are our strength. Your MC volunteers are here to help us all develop the Society for the future.

Derek Morris [WMD] remarked that he had problems with the Post Office in Kenilworth not accepting Branch cheques for stamps and their printer who produces the branch programmes also dislikes cheques as their bank has changed the terms of how they are dealt with. The Branch bank told the treasurer they could not have a card although that has now changed and they can have a debit card. Cheques require two signatures – the debit card can only have one. Gordon Davies stated that the MCN Treasurer uses a card and is trusted as sole signatory by the committee.

David Walker [WMD] – suggested keeping a basic register of two individuals dealing with a transaction whilst only one of them actually signs the card slip. Reg suggested negotiating with the bank for a ceiling to be placed on amounts spent on a card.

Ronnie McAdam [SCT] asked if details of members banking information would be kept secure. Reg said they would.

Mike Smith [EMD] commented that he doesn't have an issue with Post Office accepting cheques. Similarly Roger Newman [BTL] has not had a problem at his normal Post Office outlet, but did at a different outlet.

8. Railway Observer – Mike Robinson

Gentlemen – I begin with an apology. My RO and I suspect yours did not arrive this month until the 3rd a disgraceful failure given the objectives I set the team last year! However I have no one but myself to blame – in handing over the October issue for David Bird to finalise whilst I went cruising in the Black Sea, I neglected to pass on some important files, which consequently had to be recreated at the last minute whilst I was still away. Otherwise I am sure our friends at Amadeus would have had it on your doorsteps by the 1st.

I mention that because it illustrates how far we have progressed in the past year. At the time of last years conference the chances of members seeing a given months RO before the second week of the month were rare indeed. Since changing our process and, along with it, re-assigning our print contract some four months ago we are now presenting you with the RO on, or as close to the 1st of the month as is practicable – and for those of you using the yahoo web link – at the time the magazine goes to press.

As part of reviewing and streamlining the RO production process we developed a formal quality specification for the RO, and invited a number of companies including Stoate & Bishop – our then prevailing printers - to respond with offers. David Bird, David Kelso and I then visited each contender, inspected the premises and samples of their existing work, and discussed both their offer and how the company would approach the RO process. A short list of printers were asked to process samples of RO source material and images, and the results were then evaluated by the assessment team.

The outcome of this was a decision to award the contract to the Amadeus Press of Cleckheaton starting in July 2012, with a long term arrangement dependent on satisfactory performance over the initial six months. Four months into this period, I can confirm that we are entirely happy with Amadeus performance in terms of both magazine quality and timely delivery and look forward to a positive outcome to our contract review in December.

I should also say that since subsequent to our move, our former printer, Stoate and Bishop, have gone into liquidation. Whether our decision to move the RO contract to Amadeus had any impact on this is not known,

but as the RO team have had a long relationship with S&B, I would just like to express our sadness at this turn of events, along with our thanks for their supporting RO production for so many years.

One of the most rewarding elements of the print review was the process improvement possibilities we discovered, the most important of which is the fact that the RO that I finally compile on my laptop, goes directly to the print process as, an albeit large, PDF file including all final photographic images, and with no intervention whatsoever by the printer. In essence when the magazine is complete, I simply press the Print via Amadeus icon on my laptop - and the file is sent electronically to Amadeus where it is queued for printing to the schedule we have specified. This new production approach also enabled David Kelso to develop a revised imaging process, which has cut the submission horizon for photographic images by around two weeks, and which, when taken in conjunction with the week earlier doorstep delivery of the RO, gives an overall three week improvement in the topicality of the image when you first see it in the RO!

Finally on production matters - it is important to note that changing the process and the printer has not cost us a penny – in fact we are saving money and as a result are hoping to reinvest this bonus by producing a monthly 76 page RO from January 2013.

Turning to the future, we have not dismissed the possibility of taking the RO to A4 size. It may still happen but if it does it will not be before 2014. Following on from our successful print contract evaluation, and with the support of the DSC, we have now formed a small RO Editorial Subgroup to consider amongst other things the case for and against an A4 RO. The group – consisting of ‘the Two David’s’, Paul Chancellor and Phil Deaves, has held a successful initial meeting and is now developing ideas to be acted on by the Editor, or as appropriate, placed before the MC and / or the DSC.

You will recall last year I mentioned a possible readership survey. Our emphasis over process changes has so far caused this to be deferred and given that we have now established the Editorial Strategy group further development of a possible survey will be dependent on the considerations of that group. However, with the age profile of the RCTS gradually increasing it is important to understand the needs of both existing and potential future members in taking the magazine forward and it is likely that the survey will see the light of day at some time over the next year.

I began last years report by commenting on the importance of the team in producing the RO and I again thank our team of 40 or so committed volunteers who collate, edit and process the material received from members each month. After 18 months or so they have, I think, now got used to the anarchic ways and impossible timescales imposed by your current editor and continue to respond well to the challenges presented to them!

However we do still have difficulty recruiting further volunteers to the team and I would again re-iterate my call last year for you at your branch meetings etc. to promote the idea of becoming involved as part of the RO team to suitable candidates. As ever, the only qualifications are an interest in railways, an awareness of what is happening in a particular area, and a willingness to become involved with a team of like minded individuals. Ideally recruits will be computer literate – but we don’t want to discard useful assets if they are still members of the ‘pencil and string brigade’ (*sorry, a discourteous reference to my previous existence trying to get train planners to use a computer system!*)

Finally – in reviewing the past year, I would like to thank everyone who contributed in one way or another to the 1000th special celebratory issue of the RO in June. A wonderful fund of reminiscences, articles, and images which I know from the postbag was greatly welcomed by many members –and a sound indicator of the massive fund of knowledge and experience waiting to be tapped and exploited in some way in our hopefully 76 page 2013 RO. I am currently looking at ways of expanding the RO’s ‘historic’ coverage and the June experience leaves me in no doubt that if the Editorial process can handle it there is much potential material to work with. If you have reminiscences, stories, or potential illustrated articles - however long or short – I would be delighted hear from you. As ever, all contributions to the Managing Editor – just drop a line to me via e-mail or post to the usual address.

I would again like to close by thanking everyone who has helped the Editorial team to achieve its objectives for the RO over the past year, to thank all members of the Editorial Team for their continued help and forbearance, and in particular to thank the ‘Two David’s’ - Bird and Kelso - for the help, guidance, and support they have given me as we have passed through what I think has been a very active, and for me personally, a very rewarding period as editor of the RO.

Ronnie McAdam [SCT] asked about submission of photographic material. He has a member who submits a lot of photographs, but rarely gets anything published compared with others who regularly get photos

published. There seems to be a difference of opinion between the local members and the editorial team as to what is newsworthy and what isn't especially so. Mike suggested that if the caption highlights that the image is of something particularly rare or significant then it is more likely to be considered for publication. David Kelso highlighted the guidance about the information needed in captions. This is as much for giving as much detail to the photograph for folks who are not familiar with the local area.

9. Website Development – David Jackman

2012 has been another steady year for the website. The main traffic generator remains mystery photographs and I thank Cyril Crawley for the time and effort he spends running this. Participation from Branches is OK, with every branch having current fixtures on the site and meeting reports being supplied by the majority but very few taking things further.

The big change during the year was the launch of the Officers and Members pages, which are secure and require users to login to the site in order to access them. The officers' pages are growing and contain Branch Newsletters, the Branch Officers' Handbook, Branch Accounting Forms, Treasurers' Guidance notes and the minutes for previous years of this conference. Currently the main content of the Members pages is the .pdf version of the RO, which is available from the website a week or so before it hits your doormat. As a result of this we are reviewing the use of the two Yahoo! Groups, 'rctslibrary' and 'rctsofficers', to distribute the electronic RO and any feedback on this would be welcome.

Thanks to everybody who has submitted material to the site over the last year and especially those of you who have been looking after your own pages, as it saves me the job! We are always looking for additional material, for people prepared to assist running the website and also for any feedback or comments you have. If you find something this isn't working properly, or is terribly out of date, please tell me so that we can fix it.

10. Development Sub Committee – Eric Palmer

The Development Sub Committee was established by the Management Committee in March 2006 charged with improving the society image, increasing membership and producing a guidance handbook for Society and Branch officers. The committee consists of ten members – three Management Committee members, five representing the branches and two with specialist knowledge of RCTS needs. Meetings are held three times a year.

Since its inception the DSC has successfully implemented a new society image and an update of the image is being considered (but not the iconic logo), has provided branch officers with a regularly updated handbook and has provided all members with a membership card. The membership card has allowed us to establish good relations with the British Transport Police. An excellent three page article appeared in the March 2009 edition of The Railway Magazine describing the activities of the RCTS – the nation's largest railway enthusiast group and hopefully another article will appear about us in a future edition.

Details of legal and executive services (The Wills and Bequests leaflet) have been provided for members and a very comprehensive 5 year business plan is being instituted to ensure the continued success and development of the society for the future.

The Society holds a very large quantity of slides, negatives and prints donated by members which are now being held in safe storage at Stevenage to ensure that they do not deteriorate with age. Work has begun on scanning these for eventual sale to members and non members.

The Society Library, long established at Uxbridge but lately found unsuitable for our needs was closed in June 2011. The DSC has investigated numerous sites to re-establish the library and currently two station masters houses within striking distance of London are offering possible homes for our collection of books, photographs and archive material.

The DSC has recommended that a members only web site be introduced to show the availability of RCTS signature clothing, a liveries library, local photographic locations, digital versions of the RO, lists of speakers and part of the Branch Officers Handbook, Society AGM Minutes, Newsletters and Officers Conference minutes.

The committee recommended that a section headed Branch Histories be set up and these have appeared in the Railway Observer. In addition a small working group is offering the RO Editor support in developing and achieving a sound strategy for the future – the Editor has welcomed this initiative

The committee has made arrangements for a number of nameplates owned by the society to be displayed at preserved railway sites with suitable material promoting the Society. Plates are now on display at the Severn Valley Railway at Highley and the Great Western Railway at Didcot. Other plates will shortly be displayed at the Bluebell Railway and the Isle of Wight Railway. It is hoped that more plates owned by the society will be displayed at selected preservation sites.

The DSC has actively recommended branches to experiment with afternoon speaker meetings – the first meeting was held by the Northampton branch in 2006. Other branches have now arranged such meetings and attendances are very encouraging.

Strenuous efforts are being made to ascertain the future of our Class 60 – 60001 *The Railway Observer* currently out of use at Toton. Unfortunately the operating company is not able to give any undertaking as to the future of the locomotive or the nameplates at this time.

These are only a few of the many tasks undertaken by members of the Development Sub committee. The committee is actively seeking new ways to increase membership and it is committed to ensure that we continue to be Britain's Leading Railway Society.

David Tyreman [NEA] commented about afternoon meetings. North East instigated such a few years back, but have not continued as the series did not attract sufficient numbers to make it worthwhile continuing.

John Day [IPS] suggested care is needed on the type and subjects of presentations for afternoon meetings.

Andrew Jenkins [TVY] reminded the meeting that not all Society members are of retirement age and were not able to attend afternoon meetings. John Day said that, of course, afternoon meetings are in addition to evening meetings.

David Walker [WMD] mentioned that their afternoon meetings in Birmingham, rather than Coventry, were to attract a different audience to the evening sessions.

Ken Falconer [SCT] said his Branch has piloted Saturday afternoon meetings. These have attracted members travelling from some distance, who couldn't otherwise attend evening meetings.

11. Publicity – David Kelso

The first half of the year has been a relatively quiet period however things changed when due to the efforts of David Pick and others we placed the first of the Society's locomotive name plates in the Engine House at Highley on the Severn Valley Railway, shortly followed by the King plate at Didcot Railway Centre. Each event was featured in the heritage sections of the railway press. A feature of these displays has been the willingness of the organisations concerned to have these plates on display and to let the RCTS have facilities to promote the Society. An agreement has now been reached with the Isle of Wight railway for the Ryde plate to go on display at Haven Street in the near future with the same facilities. Further efforts are being made by David Pick and company to place other plates in our collection at other suitable locations accompanied by the same publicity material.

No sooner had these events taken place than we were advised of the completion date for the production of BR Standards Volume 5 resulting in activity moving up a couple of gears. Released to members last month and to the public at the beginning of October the advertising band wagon started to roll and we were lucky to be offered full page A4 advertisements in a couple of magazines at a very reasonable price. Other advertising has been placed and will appear in the run up to Christmas. Review copies are about to go out and hopefully the reviews will appear early in the New Year to mop up the left over Christmas money. All indications are that Standards 5 has been very well received. We had one customer at the recent Folkestone exhibition who arrived on the stand at 5 minutes past opening time, said he had seen the advertisement, asked for a copy, gave us £30.00 and refused to take any change. In addition an A5 promotional flyer has been produced for Volume 5 and this is now available from Bob Ballard for insertion into membership packs. It is also being placed in all despatches of other RCTS books including the first four Standards volumes.

Under the auspices of the DSC publicity is now working with our new Exhibitions Manager, Dave Elsdon, to produce new exhibition display material and we have just ordered two prototype roll up display banners for use at national exhibitions. These are going on trial at Peterborough and Warley and if proved of value will be made available to branches next year. Resulting from the nameplate exercise we are now including the QR code on all our publicity material as it comes up for reprinting. For those of you who do not know what a QR code is it is that little black square that looks like a demented chess board that is now appearing on much advertising material for all manner of products and services. By scanning this with one of the more advanced handheld devices, a mobile phone to you and me, the user of the device will be taken directly to the RCTS website.

There is no doubt in my mind the promotion of the Society in the future is by electronic means and I just hope that we can find the resources from within the Society to allow us to exploit this brave new world for the benefit of the Society and the members. So if you have an interest in or have the skills in IT be it in media advertising, the Internet, publishing or archiving then please make yourself known to any of the officers.

In closing thanks are due to all those officers of the Society who support the publicity effort and particular thanks are due to the chairman and members of the DSC for their unstinting support and contributions to the cause.

Steve Ollive [MHD] – noted that it took a long time to find the nameplate display at the Severn Valley Railway. It is on the second stair case in the Engine House, which seems to be less used than the main staircase.

Reg Wood [BTL] commented that the Museum at Bo'ness (B&KR) had an old RO on display and suggested the opportunity exists to update the Society's image at this railway.

David Tyreman [NEA] suggested 'Locomotion' at Shildon might be considered for displaying one of our nameplates.

12. Publications – Gordon Davies

As you will have read in the RO and in the commercial press BR Standards Volume 5 was published in August. This is the third volume which has been penned by John Walford from Bury and this brings to a finale the history on the last steam locomotives produced by British Railways. It is a fitting end to an authoritative series which is held in high esteem by discerning railway enthusiasts and historians. In this volume there is a well deserved dedication to R.K. (Dick) Taylor who over many years has edited the series and has spent immeasurable hours working on this project. All the authors have themselves spent what could be stated as 'ages' researching the information that goes in putting these books together. I spent a day with John Walford at the NRM at York going through hundreds and hundreds of engine record cards just to get the data required and at the end of the day it would be true to say that I never want to see an engine record card ever again! Such dedication not only by John and all the other authors who have contributed to the series is of course commendable but we must not forget the 'back-room boys' on the publications committee and others who write the captions and who are just as dedicated in ensuring that our publications are some of the best finest produced in the UK. Mention must be made of Rodney Lissenden and David Kelso who also spent an unbelievable amount of time gathering, selecting and processing the colour photographs for volume 5 before they were handed to David Bird and his magic 'Quark' who then processed the photos and the text to produce the final electronic version in a memory stick which was then handed over to printers to complete the finished product. The photograph on the cover was taken by Ken Falconer at Carstairs in 1967 is quite amazing and sums the aura of steam about to disappear into the distance for ever but I wonder what became of the three children on the platform? I am sure that Ken would have never thought that one of his photographs would adorn a Society book published 45 years after he had taken it, congratulation Ken.

As a Society we owe a great debt to all who have been involved in producing all five volumes and a very big 'Thank You' is very much deserved by all. The process for putting books together had changed from all recognition in the last few years and the staff at Amadeus Press in Cleckheaton have guided and advised the publication team on the new process and techniques and that assistance is very much appreciated.

So all concerned with publications have now put their feet up for a well deserved rest you may think, not likely. Work is well in advance on volume one of the 'LMS Class 5' books which is being written by John Jennison from Sutton Coldfield and the whole process just carries on and hopefully the first volume will be going to press sometime in 2013.

BR Standards volume 2 was reprinted and is now available from our store in Coventry. Ray Townsin who penned 'The Jubilees 4-6-0s' has compiled enough new information so that this will book that it will be reprinted later this year however with the new information and updates this will be published as a second edition.

Other titles are being worked on and the publications committee is looking at reprinting and updating some publications which have been out of print for some time such as 'A Locomotive History of Railways on the Isle of Wight' and 'The Railways of Weardale'

We had a good response to our Call for Authors which appeared in the October 2011 RO however there was nothing suitable for publication.

When titles stocks become low we recall those books back from branch stock so that we can satisfy demand from customers who have order by post or on the Society website. Some of the books returned are fit for nothing but pulping especially some of the soft back books as they have been stored in conditions that are far from ideal which results in un-necessary damage. Some books are returned with coffee stains, pen marks and even some have the ravages of being stored in damp conditions. Please store your books in suitable damp proof containers as they are valuable assets. If displaying books at branch meetings or exhibitions only one should be on show and used as a 'Counter Copy'.

Finally a big thank you to John Wood who has now stood down as Sales Officer. Mike Robertson who has been dispatching our books from Coventry has now taken on the role of Sales Officer and Dispatch Officer. Please make sure your orders for branch stocks are sent to Mike and if you require books for a sales stand or exhibition and please give Mike plenty of notice that you require stocks. A new order form and all Mike contact details appeared in Newsletter 43 which was published some weeks ago and distributed to all branches.

Rodney Allen [EMD] – noted a reluctance of his members to part with money for books costing over £10. Rodney said EMD diversify with sales of other books, maps etc, in order to assist with Branch income.

13. Date and Venue of 2013 Members Weekend and Officers Conference

Members Weekend scheduled for 18-20th October 2013 at the Gatwick Worth Hotel, Three Bridges.

15. Any Other Business

Callum MacLeod [BTL] advertised the West Somerset Railway Literary Festival and asked for volunteers to help the Branch with manning the stand they will have there.

Steve Ollive [MHD] advertised the Society holiday visit to Switzerland in 2013, staying in Lausanne. This will be advertised shortly in the RO.

Steve also highlighted that the membership renewal invitations for this year would be later being sent out due to the work commitments of Rich Morris and himself.

David Goddard [MHD] thanked all for contributions to the raffle at dinner last night - £210 raised for The Railway Children.

Derek Morris [WMD] advertised the Warley Railway Exhibition in November and notified that the Branch would be hosting a stand there. Offers of assistance to help with running the stand would be appreciated.

The meeting ended at 12.25.

Richard Morris
Officers' Conference Minute Secretary