



Minutes of the Meeting of Society and Branch Officers
Held on 20th October 2013 at
Holiday Inn, Gatwick Worth Hotel, Crawley

In attendance:-

Representing the Management Committee and Officers:-

Hugh Gould – President
David Cole – Vice President
John Sweet – Vice President
Gordon Davies – Society Chairman
Bob Green – Society Secretary
Reg Wood – Society Treasurer
Mike Robinson – Managing Editor, Railway Observer
David Jackman – Webmaster
Eric Palmer – Chairman, Development Sub-Committee
Alan Cooke – Branch Liaison Officer
David Pick – Chairman, Library Sub Committee
David Kelso – Publicity Officer
John Redgate – MC Member
David Goddard – MC Member
John Day – Members Weekend Co-ordinator
Steve Ollive – Assistant Treasurer, Renewals
Richard Morris – Membership Secretary

Representing the Branches:-

Bristol – Callum Macleod, Roger Newman, Paul Udey
Cambridge – Jim Crane, Robert Bartlett OBE
Cheltenham – Richard Morris
Chichester – *Geoff Adams*
Croydon and South London – Jeremy Harrison, Peter Wilson
East Midlands – John Hitchins, Mike Smith
Furness, Lakes and Lune – Alan Sattenstall
Hitchin – David Cole
Humberside – Peter Louth, Carey Vessey
Ipswich and District – John Day
Lancashire and North West – *no representation*
Merseyside, Chester and North Wales – *no representation*
Milton Keynes – Bob Ballard
North East – Margaret Fraser, Malcolm Hammond, Jim Sedgwick, Tony Skinner
Northampton – Ron Hart, David Pick
Peterborough – Robert Warburton
Scotland – Ronnie McAdam
Sheffield – Peter Hall, David Munday
South East – David Blackman, John Holloway, David Kelso
South Essex - *no representation*
South Wales / De Cymru – Ron Collins
Solent – Mike Green
Surrey – Peter Bosomworth, Andy Davies, Bob Ellison, Alan Norris, Irene Rabbits
Sussex – Paul Baston, Geoff Adams
Thames Valley – Nigel Farebrother
Watford – Geoff Plumb
West Midlands – Derek Morris, Peter Smith
West of England - *no representation*
West Riding – Bob Green, John Smith
Windsor and Maidenhead – Alan Cooke, David Goddard, Sally Goddard, Steve Ollive

1. Opening of Conference – Gordon Davies (Society Chairman)

Gordon Davies opened the meeting by marking the death of Croydon Committee Member Robert Prescott who died as a result of a road traffic collision on 8th October. Robert had been elected to the Croydon committee in 2004 and was appointed Branch Publicity Officer in 2006.

In opening this conference Gordon welcomed all to Crawley and thanked the delegates for attending today. He welcomed those attending conference for the first time:-

David Blackman (South East) and Alan Sattenstall (Furness, Lakes & Lune).

He hoped that they would find the conference of benefit but, more importantly, return next year.

Last year we had a splendid Members Weekend at Dunfermline. That was the first to be organised by John Day and his special team and that based on their success they were all itching to get on with the 2013 event. This weekend has been equally successful therefore Gordon asked all to show their appreciation to John Day, Andy Davies, Irene Rabbits and members of the Surrey branch who have again worked tirelessly to put this weekend's events together.

Our chairman reported that at the beginning of this year we launch the '2013 Branch Recruitment Initiative'. This initiative was designed for branches to recruit new or lapsed members at their indoor meetings or at exhibitions or sales stands at a special price of £15. Gordon was pleased to report that we recruited 59 new members under this scheme. Sadly some branches had not recruited a single member however 16 branches did get new members to join the society. So congratulations to:- Cheltenham, Northampton, West Midlands, West Riding for getting **1** new member each; Peterborough, Windsor & Maidenhead (**2** new members); Croydon & South London, Milton Keynes, North East, Peterborough, Watford (**3** new members); Furness, Lakes & Lune (**4** new members); Bristol, East Midlands, Ipswich (**5** new members) and Hitchin with **12** new members. He then presented the Hitchin Branch representatives with a certificate to mark this amazing achievement. He then thanked all the branches that managed to recruit new members. The same initiative is being run for 2014 and full details were in Newsletter 46 that Alan Cooke had distributed some weeks ago. Let's hope that we can double the **59** total for 2014.

All will have read in the August RO we are introducing the facility of renewals by Direct Debit for 2014. We tried to get this facility some years ago but there was a great deal of red tape involved and it need personal financial guarantees from the MC that it was deemed impractical. The banks have now changed the rules and Direct Debit is much easier to get these days. Steve Ollive will give you some more details later in the conference. Gordon urged all to take up Direct Debit, and he asked branch chairmen to publicise this new facility at their branch meetings so that we can get many members on board with Direct Debit. We have also introduced an electronic version of the RO and for 2014 there will be discounted subscription offer for members to pick up an electronic version only or, for the full subscription, continue to receive a paper copy. Mike Robinson will give more details later. Steve and his team have been extremely busy getting out the renewals letters and most will be on your doorstep soon if not already there.

In his address our Chairman mentioned last year that the Development Sub Committee was considering setting up a voluntary 'Skills Register' of our members where we could then tap onto their skills when required. There is a line on the renewals form for members to register their skills and again he urged branch chairmen to promote this at branch meetings and get members to put up their hands and say I can do something for the RCTS. Last year he appealed for members to come forward and offer their skills to the Society no matter what they were. Noel Thompson, (Branch Secretary, South Wales) went back to his branch and mentioned this to one of his members. Peter Fortune has come forward and will be taking on responsibilities for Trade Sales and already he has generated some quite significant sales with retail outlets. Peter's details will appear in the December RO.

Books have been an integral part of the Society's history and he was pleased to repeat what he announced at the dinner on the previous evening that two members who have been active with publications over many years have been appointed to the office of Vice President in recognition of their long and distinguished contribution to Society activities:-

T.M.B. Silcock - Terry to all his friends has just stepped down as Society Librarian, a position he has held since it was announced in the October 1968 RO. Under his guidance the library grew from strength to strength and it generated a considerable amount of revenue to the coffers with the sale of new and second-hand books as well as CD ROMs. Terry encouraged the use of branch loan boxes, which enabled members to use the library facilities on their doorstep. It must not be forgotten that Terry was supported by his wife Beryl who had assisted him with his library activities, to which Gordon add his thanks and appreciation.

R.K. Taylor - likewise Dick to all his friends was the project co-ordinator for the five volumes of the BR Standards series of publications and also the editor for the LMS series when he took over from the late Bill

Greenwood. The first Standards book was published in 1994 and the series was concluded with volume five which appeared in 2012 and there is no doubt that the entire series is a definitive history of the last steam engines built by British Railways. Gordon was sure all would join him and his colleagues on the management committee in thanking both Terry and Dick for their enviable contributions to the success of the society and there is no doubt that their elevation to Vice President is a well deserved accolade for them both.

After many months of 'silence' regarding the placing of 'The Railway Observer' nameplates on a Class 43 power car on the NR Measurement Train, progress is now being made and hopefully a power car will soon be wandering the rails with the RO plate fixed. The reason for the delay was due to contractual changes however we now have a green light and hopefully it is all systems go for a naming ceremony most probably at Derby.

Finally Gordon extended his thanks to his colleagues on the MC, Society Officers, those who serve on the various sub committees and to all who do so much work at branch level. To conclude he hoped that the discussions are productive and that we focus on maintaining Society activities and enhance the services we give to our members in the many years ahead, thus ensuring that the RCTS remains Britain's Leading Railway Society.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from:- Brian Arman (Bristol), Bruce Oliver (Chichester), Geoff Lipscombe (Croydon and South London), Rodney Allen (East Midlands), Jim Waite (South Essex), John Foreman, Les Brackstone (Humberside), Cyril Crawley, David Elsdon (Hitchin), Steve Dexter, Mark Richards (Milton Keynes), Alan Burgess (Peterborough), Mike Woodward (South East), Alan Lovecy (Sheffield), John Godfrey, Ted Vaughan (Solent), Paul Snelling (Sussex), Dave Birkett, David Evans-Roberts, Denis Horsman, Stuart Hicks, Andrew Jenkins (Thames Valley), Bob Barby, Ian Reid, David Walker (West Midlands), David Beeken, John Holroyd, MJ Holt, Bill Jagger (West Riding).

The following branches did not submit Apologies for Absence

Lancs and North West
Merseyside, Chester and North Wales
West of England

3. Confirmation of the minutes of the 2012 Officers Conference

Minutes of the 2013 Officers Conference were proposed for acceptance by Derek Morris (West Midlands) and seconded by Callum Macleod (Bristol).

4. Matters Arising not covered by the Agenda

No matters arising were raised.

5. President's Message – Hugh Gould

Hugh Gould advised that this would be the last Officers Conference he would address as Society President. He reminded the meeting that he became President in 1992 and he felt that after 22 years it is long enough so will step aside at the AGM in 2014. Hugh recorded that he has enormously enjoyed his role as President and warmly congratulates each Society Branch for the way they develop and continue to serve the members. Hugh senses that the Society is going from strength to strength and wishes the Society every good fortune for the future. Hugh highlighted the visit to Bluebell on Saturday and was so pleased to see so many young people taking an active role in running that railway.

6. Library sub-committee – David Pick (Chairman, Library Sub Committee)

Acting 'Caretaker' Librarian Peter King continues to look after the Library activities and the current premises based at Uxbridge and reports that it has now been cleared of items surplus to requirements. Recently, back numbers of the Society magazine The Railway Observer were offered free to members for the price of covering the post and packaging. This offer was taken up by a significant number of members to enable them to complete their personal collections. The remaining surplus to requirements magazines will be recycled. The Society has of course kept mint copies at the Library for all years of publication for archive use.

Uxbridge: The library building remains secure and watertight and the physical condition of the stock is being maintained, with Peter visiting at least once a week. Terry Silcock continues to maintain the library catalogue and advise with involvement and interest. No attempt has been made to change the layout of the shelving and furniture, as this would be a major undertaking. Due to safety issues the premises cannot be made available for general use by members.

Leatherhead: During the past year the exterior restoration of the Stationmasters house has been completed and an onsite meeting was held in November between representatives of Southern Railway, Surrey County

Council, Mole Valley District Council, The Railway Heritage Trust and the Society (represented by David Kelso and David Pick). A further meeting with RHT took place in January to determine the extent of restoration required to the interior of the building. Subsequently, an onsite LSC meeting has been held to prepare a preliminary report on how the current layout of the building might be best used for archive research with regard to shelving and furniture. Electrical and security issues were also addressed. It is hoped that the Society will be able to enter into a lease agreement and secure occupancy of the building from the middle of the year. At this point a lot of work will be required to be done and we shall be calling for help from volunteers in the South London area.

Books forwarded to the Society for review in The Railway Observer are afterwards forwarded to Peter King for possible addition to the library. **Magazines** continue to be donated to the Society Library from various sources as previously. **Manuscript type material** mainly notebooks and lists have been transferred to the Society Archive at Stockport under the oversight of Bob Burchell. Enquiries from members addressed to the Library are currently being dealt with by Peter King and David Pick.

Photographic Archive: The collection currently has approximately 44,000 listings in black and white as well as colour. In addition there are several thousand negatives and slides awaiting review and selection. Currently six members sort through the collections discarding non-railway subjects and material that is not of an acceptable standard, before captioning those for final consideration of being added to the archive. We are much indebted to the team undertaking this painstaking task of Patrick Carey, David Cole, Trevor Davis, Robert Llewellyn and Vic Woods. The sixth member John Broughton is also responsible for the processing of orders and we welcome his return after illness and wish him well. Since email ordering and payment through 'pay-pal' has been introduced, sales have increased considerably.

Callum Macleod (Bristol) asked if the renovation inside Leatherhead Station House was beyond us doing it ourselves. David said it probably was beyond our capabilities but Network Rail may ask us for a contribution towards. Bob Ballard (Milton Keynes) asked if we noticed Leatherhead was on Gerry McFadden's (Managing Director, Southern Railway) list of stations listed for further refurbishment. David said he was aware. David Kelso reminded the meeting that the Railway Heritage Trust are taking an interest in the refurbishment of the station and are 'on our side' for the future use of the building.

7. Subscription renewals and Direct Debit payments – Steve Ollive (Assistant Treasurer)

Steve Ollive thanked Richard Morris, David and Sally Goddard for spending the previous weekend at Maidenhead printing and packing renewal letters which went to the Post Office on Monday. As at the Conference weekend Steve has already had 30 responses – 10 of which are going for the direct debit option. Steve asked all branches to encourage members to respond in a timely manner, and if they can to collect renewals and send them in en masse. Peter Hall (Sheffield) asked a question from a lapsed member who let his membership fall because renewing on line messed up his internet banking arrangements which he has been unable to use since. Reg Wood (Society Treasurer) responded by commenting that this is sounding very much like an isolated incident with the members' own banking arrangements, as we've not heard of anything like this from other members and we get plenty of internet banking payments for subscriptions. Gordon Davies reiterated that we are keen to push the new Direct Debit arrangements, and encouraged Branch Chairmen and Secretaries to highlight this new way of paying for membership. It is felt that Direct Debit will help us recruit and, indeed, retain members.

8. Society Finance – Reg Wood (Society Treasurer)

Reg Wood was very pleased to report at the AGM that the Society has been given a "clean" audit by our external auditors. He was also very pleased that our small Society Finance team and our volunteer Branch Treasurers continue to account very well for our Finances. Thank you all.

Branch Financial Management and Reporting in the Accounts

Our auditors have observed how well the finances of some of our Branches are developing and raised some concerns and recommendations they feel appropriate. One concern is the substantial value of branch funds that are not included in the main Society Accounts. The Treasurers team and the Society Management Committee have considered these. Today he will introduce advice and guidance to Branches on steps we have adopted to address the auditors recommendations:-

- Branch treasurers should send in with their financial returns copies of their branch bank statements to confirm cash and bank balances held at the accounting dates (Year End is 31st October)
- Branch bank mandates must have at least two authorised signatories. Cheques drawn must require at least two signatories, one of which must be the branch Treasurer. Best practice is to have at least three names on the mandate. I believe most if not all of our branches already comply.
- For branches holding substantial uncommitted funds – £2,000 and above is considered substantial – a requirement to obtain an independent internal audit of the branch Accounts is to be introduced. This will not be added to our external professional audit brief or to our central officers tasks due not only to

cost and workload but also to avoid the impression of a 'big brother' approach to our branches. Instead, each branch involved – we anticipate about half of them - should seek a volunteer who is not on the branch committee, and who has some experience of business or not-for-profit sector management to perform the Branch's audit. Some guidance will be provided. Uncommitted funds are those not required to fund the Branch's operation in the forthcoming six months.

- Branches will be encouraged to donate excess funds to the national Society. The Management Committee will select a future project (or two) to which branch donations would be applied. The first of these will be the new Society library project. Where branches hold funds exceeding £2,000 at Year End (31st October each year), funds not immediately required by the branch – and necessarily the balances in excess of £2,000 – should be passed to the Society Treasurer for central safekeeping. Such funds will be ring fenced for the originating branch to recall when required. The Financial section of the Branch Officers Handbook will in due course be extended with the above requirements explained and branch financial timetables re-presented. Where individual branch visits would be helpful for training or advice, all three members of the Finance team (Bob Ellison, Noel Machell and myself) stand ready to help and such meetings will be encouraged where branch officers change or difficulties are encountered.

A number of the auditor's recommendations have not been accepted and his challenge for this year end is to justify our stance in protecting branches from further administration burdens.

Forecast Financial Performance This Year

Last year the Society achieved a total income of 6 figures - £102,000 – a tribute to all active members in a time of recession and after our running costs were deducted we broke even. This year I am forecasting a small loss and hope the actual turns out slightly better.

Direct Debit

The society is introducing Direct Debit renewals to our members this year. This will reduce our administration effort and cost – and that of members too – so please encourage your branch members to accept our invitation to complete the Direct Debit mandate forms that we are about to send out to them.

Year End Financial Timetable

Most branches have tried hard to achieve our timetable for their financial returns and he thanked all for their efforts. We are still seeing late quarterly VAT returns which has been noted with concern by HMRC. Could I urge the branch committee teams to work together and support each other to meet the required timetable in all branches. Thank you.

Alan Sattenstall (Furness, Lakes and Lune) asked where the accounts are presented. Reg said that the accounts were printed in the AGM supplement with the April RO.

Mike Smith (East Midlands) asked about interest gained on Branch funds held in Society accounts. Reg reported that this was something that needs to be looked at, but currently interest paid is so very minimal.

David Cole (Vice President) asked about the revision of the finance pages in the handbook particularly regarding accounting for VAT on sales of second hand books. David also expressed concern about donations at the door of Branch meetings. We do need to be very careful about how requests for attendance donations are made. Reg mentioned that we had been selected for a VAT inspection this year, for the first time in a very long time. The HMRC Inspector asked Reg to go back 7 years, which request he duly obliged. We got a clean bill of health. The Inspector revealed that the VAT people are taking a greater interest in the 'not for profit' sector.

John Redgate highlighted some of the mysteries that the VAT people use to determine who and when they visit for inspections. John then asked for some clarification on Reg's proposed changes to the way Branch finances are accounted and audited. Reg advised that he would prefer some changes to happen straight away, others could happen over the next 12 months. John Day (Ipswich) commented that getting volunteers to do the basic Branch functions is becoming difficult and is not going to be made easier by increased pressure from Treasury regulations.

Tony Skinner (North East) made comment about the levels of scrutiny with regard audits / independent financial reviews, and encouraged us to use such existing scrutiny models rather than try and invent a new one.

Alan Norris (Surrey) asked if there is any way of de-coupling Branch accounts from Society accounts.

9. The Railway Observer - Mike Robinson (Managing Editor)

Mike Robinson stated that there must be something about October. After 12 months in which the RO has arrived on the doorstep by the start of the month, the production gods have once again struck at October and delayed of the RO until 4th or 5th. Still a 91.5% punctuality record is not too bad for today's railway industry so perhaps we can live with that. Whilst the October RO was a little late, it is worth noting that we were expecting it to be much worse as Amadeus had a major failure in their - inevitably German - printing machinery and warned Mike a couple of days into the process that, as replacement parts needed to be flown in from Germany, the RO may be a week late in arriving on the doorstep. That it was not due to the Teutonic

thoroughness that those of us are familiar but to the expeditious role played by our printers Amadeus in looking after the customer - Network Rail please note! We have now been with Amadeus for almost 18 months and the results of the transfer from Cheltenham have far exceeded our expectations, with the Amadeus actively helping us to improve the quality of the magazine at an affordable cost.

The quality of the paper has improved significantly, and the stiffened cover with its high gloss lamination not only increases durability but is an outstanding showcase for the front and rear images and worlds away from this time last year. In addition to developments at Amadeus I hope we have also improved the basic quality of the product in the following ways:-

- A 20% size increase resulting from adopting 76 pages as the monthly standard
- A near 50% increase in picture coverage from around 30 a month to around 44 a month accompanied by a monthly centrespread photo feature allowing us to do justice to the potential of current digital photography.
- Introduction of a contents page to allow you to find your way around the magazine more easily
- Perhaps slightly more controversial - we introduced a twice yearly freestanding Officers Directory supplement, rather than using the centre pages of the RO to list both Officers and Fixtures – with the latter being moved to a more logical 'supportive' position at the back.
- Formalisation, in the form of Over the Points, our introduction last year of a front page leader in which issues concerning both the Society's future and the general railway industry are highlighted. Thus far only Gordon, Paul Chancellor and myself have contributed to this feature, though I would like to extend a general invitation to all Society Officers to put pen to paper and contribute something of general interest and relevance.

The other major feature of RO development this year has been a transformation in the RO's web presence and the development of a high quality digital RO offer and as part of this. We abandoned the rather clumsy and poor quality service via Yahoo in favour of quick and easy access via the Members area of the Society website. To support RO development in this and other areas into the future we also established a small RO steering group, one of its first tasks being to determine how we might also provide members, in addition to an RO digital PDF, with what we call a flip page RO.

At this point Mike demonstrated the new digital RO – with the page turning facility and highlighted several of the features the YuDu page turner gives us. Accessing the on line RO is restricted to members who are registered on our website. I think you will all agree that that is a well worthwhile initiative and would urge you all to register for Members access to the website and enjoy the RO - generally at least a week earlier than the your printed version arrives. Whilst the 'flip version' – let's call it e-RO - is currently only available on laptops we are hoping that it will contribute to an increase in membership from the younger generation, and if this proves to be the case we may then make it available via tablets etc.

Of course in addition to Amadeus, the changes made to the RO are entirely attributable to the diligence and enthusiasm of the RO editorial team numbering over 40 individuals. Without this editorial support your RO would never see the light of day. As Mike states every year we are always seeking new recruits to join the team - either to cover possible new features or to perhaps replace those team members who have decided to call it a day - though he is happy to say that during the past twelve months we have had no resignations! 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. Mike stressed however that, as with all walks of life now, the RO production is essentially a computer based operation and candidates should at least have access to a computer and e-mail. We continue to seek interesting new articles and features to include in the RO and as well as having one or two items in the pipeline. Articles such as Maurice Boddy's 'In Control' series and Raymond Savill's 'Schoolboy Reminiscences' have received an enthusiastic welcome from many members this year, as has Derek Plumb's continuing 'saga' of his train spotting days. And in this context don't worry too much about handwritten or typed scripts as we now have transcription assistance making editorial life much easier. 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.

In closing Mike thanked everyone who has helped the Editorial team to achieve its objectives for the RO over the past year, in particular not forgetting those who have submitted articles and photos for the first time, and to thank all members of the Editorial Team for helping us move through another action packed and very rewarding year.

Roger Newman (Bristol) asked whether Steve Batty's word count for Branch news section would be restricted with obituaries now appearing with Branch news as opposed to elsewhere. Mike says not.

John Hitchens (East Midlands) asked about the Grantham exhibition and criticism of the lack of volunteers to man the proposed RCTS stand. John highlighted that East Midlands were unaware of there being a planned RCTS attendance. Gordon Davies said he had a letter from Rodney Allen to which he will respond separately. David Kelso asked members to follow the guidelines, particularly relating to captions, with regard to submitting photos for inclusion in the RO as he is getting an increased number of photos and is keen to ensure he captures the correct caption with each photo.

10. Website Development – David Jackman (Webmaster)

It has been a quiet year for the website though not for the Webmaster. A number of branches are now adding their own meeting reports and I'd like to encourage more branches to join in. It isn't difficult and doesn't require anything more than access to an internet browser. If anybody is interested please contact me, either at the end of this meeting or via webmaster@rcts.org.uk. Sadly other Contributions from branches have tailed off during the year (with the notable exception of Sheffield). Several people have put a lot of time and effort into developing the Liveries Library which is available on the members' pages. More contributions are always welcome! The current website has now been around a while and is beginning to show its age. In particular the home page needs updating and the navigation around the site improving, as it is often not obvious where to find something. If you have any ideas as to what you would like - or not like - to see, please pass your comments to me.

11. Development Sub Committee – Eric Palmer (DSC Chairman)

The Development Sub-Committee has been extremely busy this year and considerable progress has been made with new projects. David Elsdon, the Exhibitions Officer, has joined the committee and he is providing input in improving our profile at national and local exhibitions. David Walker has stepped down from the committee but he has made himself available to give advice when necessary. New distinctive banners are now available for branch use, which has already increased awareness of the society and its activities.

We are delighted to report that agreement has been reached to display our society nameplate on a National Rail Power Car. This has been carried for some years by 60001 and has only been achieved by the persistent efforts of a small group of DSC members who were determined to see the nameplate displayed nationally. More society owned nameplates have been placed on display to the public at Highley on the Severn Valley Railway; at Didcot on the Great Western Railway; at Haven Street on the Isle of Wight Railway and, as you saw yesterday, at Sheffield Park on the Bluebell Railway. Plans are in hand to display more Society plates at other railway sites.

Another group of DSC members have contributed to discussions on the subjects of direct debits and the digital RO. The committee have continually recommended proposals for a special low joining fee and this has resulted in an increase of new members over the last two years. This exercise will continue with a special offer of £16 for newcomers who will enjoy membership for 2014. We are encouraging all branch secretaries and chairmen today to embrace this initiative to really make all visitors at meetings and at exhibitions aware of the benefits of membership of the society. An advertisement appeared in Rail News in February for new members and consideration is being given for future advertisements in National magazines.

A new Branch Survey has been circulated and completed by (remarkably!) all 50 branches. Branch secretaries have received a copy and it is now possible to provide an up to date picture of how each branch operates.

With regard to the Library at Uxbridge, duplicated items and surplus stock continue to be cleared in preparation of the Society plan to bring together the library, archive material including photographic and memorabilia. Discussions in connection with the former Leatherhead Stationmaster's House are ongoing with the Southern company but progress is painfully slow. Network Rail's Property Division has completed the renovation of the outside of the building with the roof having been retiled and the roof detail either repaired or replaced. Further work has been carried out to the entrance doors and windows and the exterior generally, making a vast improvement on a year ago. Much work needs to be carried out on the interior but at least it has been cleared in preparation for alteration and decoration.

The 5 year Business Plan has been updated for 2014-2018 and a number of its recommendations have already been activated as already mentioned. Other facilities already completed include the setting up of a liveries register, permanent discounts on society publications, access to the members only website and advice on wills and bequests. One of the targets in the Business plan is to increase membership by 5% each year. Although one or two branches have already achieved this I would ask all branch secretaries and chairmen to actively promote the £16 new member offer at all branch meetings and at exhibitions.

The Branch Officers Handbook has not been overlooked and it will be brought up to date and placed on the members' area of the website. This has been a very busy year and I complement all the DSC members for their support. Apart from only three formal meetings each year a great deal of business is conducted by telephone and e-mail.

12. Publicity – David Kelso (Publicity Officer)

After the launch of BR Standards Volume 5 the first half of this year has been a relatively quiet period as usual. We dabbled in some membership recruitment advertising in Rail News. However it became apparent that we were facing a change in the graphic image that fronts the website and much of our recruitment material. The DSC took this on board and Andy Lickfold approached BlueGreen who handled the new image

programme in 2006 with Andy. Yes, it is 7 years since we introduced the new Society image. The DSC concluded that there should be no change in the overall image and corporate colours of the Society but we should take the opportunity of the impending franchise changes to update the graphic image. At that time it looked as though there would not be a Virgin liveried Pendolino for much longer. Also we had lost the naming of the Class 60. BlueGreen was asked to present proposals for a new graphic with new generation trains. This all fell apart with the WCML franchise debacle so it was decided to put aside this change until such time as the refranchising programme was under way again and this would allow us to use, for example, images of the Vossloh Class 68, the Thameslink Class 700s and the IEP Class 800s.

We made a decision not produced a Sales Leaflet for 2013. This was due to a number of factors one of which was that the Pubs Committee was undertaking a major investigation into alternative despatch options for the Society publications. This was forced upon us by the ever increasing Royal Mail costs and we did not wish to print a leaflet that would very quickly become out of date.

David reported that we have now published the first volume of the LMS Class 5s. It will be released to the public at the forthcoming Warley Show at the NEC and shortly afterwards to the book trade. The release has been planned in this way to protect the Society's sales at Warley from discounting by traders. A 2014 Sales Leaflet is in preparation and advertising in the railway press is under way in the run up to Christmas. I also expect the review copies to go out in the coming weeks and hopefully the reviews will appear early in the New Year to mop up the left over Christmas money.

As stated last year that there is no doubt in his mind the promotion of the Society in the future is by electronic means and it has been my pleasure to work with Mike Robinson to develop the electronic version of the RO over the last few months which has allowed us to move forward with the changes that have been presented to you to-day. Other work is going on in the background, which will allow us to develop the digital offering to members and potential members. However it continues to disappoint me that so few members with IT skills are willing to step forward to assist in this major change in the Society's image. David remarked that all would agree that we have made a major step forward with the RO since we changed our printers and he hoped we could find the necessary resources to do the same with our digital offering. 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.

Alan Sattenstall (Furness, Lakes and Lune) asked whether 'Correspondence' still reflects the Society's modern image. Gordon Davies said the Society's name – or how it breaks out – is something we're beginning to think about.

Jim Sedgwick (North East) asked if it was possible for the MC to give Branches the poster stands rather than charging Branches for them. Paul Udey (Bristol) reminded the meeting that David Elsdon, who holds the poster stands, would lend them to Branches for use.

12A. Regional Meetings (Alan Cooke – Branch Liaison Officer)

Alan mentioned that we held regional meetings this year. He had revised the presentation of the regional meeting minutes which was generally well received. Alan thanked the two retiring Regional Chairmen, John Foreman and Bob Ballard for their work over the past few years.

13. Publications Sub Committee – Gordon Davies (Reporting on behalf of David Bird, Chairman, Publications Committee)

David Bird has taken over from Gordon as Chairman of the Publications Committee and John Wood has now taken over from David as the committee secretary. Mike Robertson now processes all the orders and despatches the books from our store in Coventry. Delivered to Coventry just a week ago was the first volume in a two-part series on the LMS Class 5 locomotives or as they were more well known, The Black Fives. This first book has been penned by John Jennison from Sutton Coldfield and is entitled 'A detailed history of The Stanier Class Five 4-6-0s - Volume 1 Nos. 5000-5471'. Volume 1 is published at £29.95 however RCTS members can purchase this at a discount price of £27.00. Certain branches will have the book on sale at the regular branch meetings or exhibition sales stands on production of a valid membership card or they can be purchased from our website, however postage charges apply for both UK and overseas sales. Gordon reminded all that if a member wants a couple of copies at the discount price then grab his money whilst you can. The more we sell the less we have in our store at Coventry. It will also be launched to the general public and members at the Warley National Model Railway Exhibition at the NEC at Birmingham on Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th November. John is now busy working on Volume 2 and this is scheduled for publication in 2014/15. Again Gordon paid tribute to David Bird, David Kelso and Rodney Lissenden for the unbelievable amount of time these three individuals have dedicated to the production of this book. A big 'Thank you very much' is well in order.

If branches want stocks of our new book please send your order to Mike Robertson using the branch stock order form that accompanied Newsletter 43 published in September 2012. Due to the very high postal rates the sub-committee has introduced a charge of £3.00 to all UK orders received and processed by Mike Robertson. We have looked at alternative delivery providers but have found that Royal Mail is still the most convenient for the Society to use. Whilst other delivery company's rates may have been slightly lower the processing of the orders and the collection methods would have suited a small business but not our distribution centre at Coventry.

Other publications are being worked on and it is still considering the reprinting of titles now out of stock and of course we are always on the lookout for new material to publish if suitable. If you know of an author or anyone with suitable material that the Society may consider then please contact David Bird.

The publications committee has now taken on the responsibility for the *RO* CD ROMS. Alternative production methods are being considered and this information will appear on the website and in the *RO* at a future date. Gordon mentioned that Peter Fortune from South Wales has come forward with an offer of assistance to the sub-committee. His offer of help has been accepted and he has taken on the responsibilities for 'Trade Sales' and already generated some quite significant sales with retail outlets. If you know of any independent bookstore, railway museum or preservation site in your area that sell railway books then please pass that information to Peter so that he can contact them and see if we can offer them any of our books for sale. The Society offer generous discounts to the trade so hopefully we can increase the amount of books we sell. Peter's details will appear in the December *RO*.

The publications side of Society activities generates a considerable amount of revenue to the Society's bank accounts and that make Reg Wood a very happy man indeed. Gordon took the opportunity to thank all the members of the sub-committee and anyone else involved with publications for all their hard work and efforts. The committee met three times during the year to discuss the running of the committee.

14. Date and Venue for 2014 Officers Conference

Llandudno – October 2014

15. Any other competent business

AGM 12th April 2014 Welcome Centre, Coventry

David Cole (Vice President) proposed vote of thanks to MC, DSC, PSC for all the work done on behalf of the members over the past year.

Meeting closed 12.00hrs