



Minutes of the Meeting of Society and Branch Officers
Held on 25th October 2015 at
The Golden Valley Hotel, Cheltenham

Meeting commenced at 09.00

In attendance:-

Representing the Management Committee and Officers:-

Brian Arman – Society President
Gordon Davies – Society Chairman
Bob Green – Society Secretary
Reg Wood – Society Treasurer
Mike Robinson – Managing Editor, Railway Observer
Eric Palmer – Vice President and Chairman, Development Sub-Committee
Alan Cooke – Branch Liaison Officer
David Pick – Chairman, Library Sub Committee
David Kelso – Web4 Co-ordinator
David Goddard – Membership Secretary
John Redgate – MC Member
John Day – Members Weekend Co-ordinator
Steve Ollive – Assistant Treasurer, Renewals
Bob Ellison – Assistant Treasurer, Branch Finances
Ronnie McAdam -- Publicity Communications
David Bird – Publications Committee Chairman
Hugh Gould – Vice President

Representing the Branches:-

Bristol – Paul Udey, Roger Newman, Brain Arman
Cambridge – Robert Bartlett
Cheltenham – John Howland, Richard Morris, Stephen Wilson
Chichester – Geoff Adams
Croydon and South London – Peter Wilson, Jeremy Harrison
East Midlands – Rodney Allen, John Hitchens
Furness, Lakes and Lune – Alan Sattenstall, John Broughton
Hitchin – Stephen Lacey
Humberside – no representation
Ipswich and District – Eric Palmer, John Day
Lancashire and North West – no representation.
Merseyside, Chester and North Wales – Richard Neale
Milton Keynes – Bob Ballard, Mark Richards.
North East – Malcolm Hammond, Tony Skinner

Northampton – David Pick
Peterborough – Robert Warburton
Scotland – Richard Thorburn, Ronnie McAdam
Sheffield – David Munday
South East – Mike Woodward, John Holloway, David Blackman
South Essex – Steve Hewitt
South Wales / De Cymru – Andrew Hemmings, Stuart Warr
Solent – no representation.
Surrey – Andy Davies, Irene Rabbitts. Peter Bosomworth, Tom Kolisch
Sussex – no representation.
Thames Valley – Nigel Farebrother. Denis Horsman
Watford – Geoff Plumb
West Midlands – Derek Morris, David Walker
West of England – no representation.
West Riding – Bob Green, Steve Batty, Bill Jagger
Windsor and Maidenhead – David Goddard, Sally Goddard, Steve Ollive, Alan Cooke

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

Mr President, Vice Presidents, Ladies and Gentlemen.

In opening this conference I would like to welcome you all to The Golden Valley Hotel here in Cheltenham. Cheltenham as you know was the birthplace of the RCTS in 1928. 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 and that you will be back next year.

A special welcome to Stephen Lacey from Hitchin who is attending for the first time.

I hope that you will find conference of interest and benefit but more importantly return next year. We decided to start conference at 9.00 this year's so as to allow time for a full debate on the possible change of the Society to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which we will deal with on agenda item 6.

We have had a marvellous weekend here in Cheltenham and I would like to extend my personal thanks to organising team of John Day, Irene Rabbitts and Andy Davies who were joined this year by Richard Morris from the Cheltenham branch and once again they have put together a superb event which has as usual it has worked like a well oiled machine. Please show your appreciation to John, Andy, Irene and Richard for putting together a brilliant weekend.

It give me great pleasure to welcome and introduce to you our new President The Reverend Canon Brian Arman. I as well as my colleagues on the MC were delighted when Brian accepted our invitation to become President when Hugh Gould stepped down from the role after 23 years.

Brian is the Chairman of the Bristol branch and a past master of selling books as he has many years experience in that activity. So be warned if Brian approaches you and he has some books under his arm you will buy them whether you wanted them or not.

Brian has already had invitations to visit various branches and I am sure is Brian is going to have a varied and interesting term of office and we all wish him well in his new role. Brian will be speaking to you in a few minutes.

Speaking of books I am pleased to announce that volume 2 on the Stanier Class 5 has just been published and is available to members at £27.00 and is available on the sales stand.

I am also delighted to welcome from the Northampton branch Terence Jenner who is advising us on the possible change Society's to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

We were in a Development sub-committee meeting earlier this year and we were discussing the possible change to a CIO. Someone stated that we should seek the advice and help of a solicitor. David Goddard our membership secretary consulted the 'Skills Register' on his laptop's database and he discovered one word 'Legal' against one members name. The rest as they say is history. Terence was contacted and agreed to join our small team of MC members who are looking at the issue. That team is David Pick, Reg Wood, Mike Robinson and the work that Terence has done for us so far so far has been very informative and beneficial..

Terence ended his long career at BR as 'The Solicitor to the British Railways Board', and then he became 'The Solicitor to The Strategic Rail Authority' From February 2001 to September 2013 he was The Chairman of the British Railways Board. The society is in very good hands as far as this issue is concerned.

At our last MC meeting on the 6th of October the MC were unanimous that the Society should go for charitable status and apply to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. (CIO)

I strongly urge you support this recommendation from the MC. The change will protect the society, its officers, its members and the MC. Your RO will still come through your letterbox or appear on your electronic device, there will still be branch and outdoor meetings, the members weekends will continue as normal as will the AGM but as far as everybody is concerned it will be very much 'Business as Usual'

I shall say no more about the possible change as Terence will be giving you a presentation later. However I urge you all to listen very carefully and when you get back to your branches you should allocate some time at a branch meeting or AGM to put over the points that you will hear today as the final decision will be taken by the members at the Society AGM at Coventry on Saturday the 16th of April next year.

At last year's conference I spent some time informing you how important it was to recruit as many new members as possible. You may remember the roll of Sellotape and the bar of chocolate. Well the message certainly got through and I believe that the tremendous efforts of branch officers plus the excellent articles written by Peter Fortune which were published in 'The Railway Magazine' this year has had some effect.

Up to Friday we have recruited 160 new members which is higher than the total of 159 for the whole of 2014. Congratulations to you all. This is only year since 2001 when we have exceeded 160 was 2003 when we gained 163 - and so on to 200 - 225 in 2015. Alan will let you all know the final total for 2015 in a future Newsletter.

Please carry on the good work and let us see if we can recruit even more in 2016. The £15 special offer is still there as please use it to the best advantage and let get more new members into the society in 2016

This leads me on to the name of the branch which has recruited the most new members in 2015. In third place with a total of 5 new members is South Wales Branch, in second place is Bristol Branch with 8 however the overall winner with a total of 13 new members recruited at branch level is South Essex. Congratulations to the South Essex branch and I would like to call on Steve Hewitt from the South Essex branch to come forward and received this small token of the MC's appreciation for doing a grand job again this year, well done Steve and the team at South Essex branch.

We have amended the three fold information leaflet that is used to inform people about the society. The new leaflet has new graphics on the front so please dispose of any of the old leaflets with the Pendalino and the Class 60 as they are out of date. If you want supplies of the new leaflet please contact Bob Ballard.

You will have heard me mention at the AGM in Coventry last year and there was information in the RO that the society was bequeathed the photographic collection of the late Michael Mensing. The collection is now in our store in Stevenage however a lot of work has gone on sorting out the slides and cataloguing these for future use. It may transpire in the future that the society will publish a book with a collection of some of the excellent images in the collection.

My thanks go to all my colleagues on the MC for the long hours they put in whatever they are dealing with. I would also like to thank all the other society officers as well as all those on the various sub committees as well as all of you at branch level who do so much work to keep the society and branches in functioning.

To finish I do hope that all your contributions this morning are productive and that we carry on in maintaining all RCTS activities and enhance the services we give to our members and hopefully we will get many more members new members in future years thus ensuring that the RCTS is still 'Britain's Leading Railway Society'.

Next year will be a decisive time for the Society and I again implore you to take the information that you will shortly receive from Terence and that you support this initiative on the change to a CIO and I of course urge you all to attend the AGM at Coventry in April.

Thank you for listening.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from:- Rob Davidson (Watford); John Godfrey, Mike Green (Solent); Rodney Lissenden (Vice President); Geoff May, Michael Cox, Richard Ashby (Chichester); Keith Mapley (South East); Peter Clark; Malcolm Snowball, Jim Sedgwick, Margaret Fraser (North East); David Elsdon (Hitchin); Alan Turton, Jon Penn, Dave Douglas, John Cashen (Merseyside, Chester & North Wales); Paul Baston, Paul Snelling (Sussex); Alan Lovecy, Jim Bryant (Sheffield); Steve Rickett (South Wales); Malcolm Riley, David Beeken, John Holroyd, Mike Holt (West Riding), Carey Vessey, John Foreman (Humberside); James Crane (Cambridge); John Sweet; Dave Beecroft, Bev Steel (Ipswich); Alan Norris (Surrey); Gordon Earl, Ian Reid, Peter Smith (West Midlands); Chris Meredith, John Archer (Croydon & South London); Ken Falconer, Jim Harrold (Scottish); Barry Butler, Alan Burgess, Colin Greatrex (Peterborough); Charles Woodland, David Mitchell, David Dormon, David Hunt (West of England); Peter Hall; Ted Vaughan (Solent); Ian Derrick, Roger Sutcliffe, Noel Machell (Lancs & North West), Peter Fortune (South Wales).

3. President's address to Conference.

The president opened his report by thanking the Chairman, Gordon Davies and everyone present for being so kind. He added that it was an extraordinary honour to have been asked to become President.

He went on to say that he has already asked to speak to some branches but while being knowledgeable about the GWR but can also talk about the S&D and the LSWR. He looked forward to visiting the branches and meeting everyone.

In talking about the proposed move to a CIO he said that he had been through this process twice in his professional life. There was no need to be anxious because it was designed to protect the Society Officers especially the treasurer because he would no longer be personally liable. This is an important step forward for the society so that we become an organisation that legally exists.

He closed by expressing his thanks to Hugh Gould; he had done a great job for the RCTS and fully intended to do so as well.

4. Confirmation of the minutes of the 2014 Officers Conference

Minutes of the 2014 Officers Conference were proposed for acceptance by Bob Ballard (10372) and seconded by Ronnie McAdam (16090).

5. Matters Arising not covered by the Agenda

No matters arising were raised.

**6. Society Constitution and Proposed Change to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.
Copied from slides as part of a PowerPoint presentation by Terence Jenner.**

SLIDE 1

PROPOSED CHANGE TO SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

TRANSITION TO CHARITABLE STATUS

TERENCE JENNER

SLIDE 2

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING PROPOSED CHANGES

MAKE SOCIETY FIT FOR PURPOSE SO AS TO MAINTAIN ITS POSITION AS THE UK's LEADING
RAILWAY SOCIETY

BETTER SECURE THE POSITION OF THE SOCIETY, ITS MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

OTHERWISE TO CHANGE AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE IN ITS CURRENT GOVERNANCE
ARRANGEMENTS

SLIDE 3

BENEFITS OF CHANGE -1

Society Management

LEGAL PROTECTION OF OFFICERS

LEASE OF LEATHERHEAD STATION PREMISES

SAFEGUARD SOCIETY ASSETS

*NAMEPLATES,
VALUABLE COLLECTIONS
BOOKS ETC
PHOTO ARCHIVE*

BEST PRACTICE–Other Societies doing same.

SLIDE 4

BENEFITS OF CHANGE -2

Longer Term Development

POTENTIAL TAX SAVINGS

POSSIBLE HERITAGE FUNDING FOR RELEVANT PROJECT

SLIDE 5

WHAT IS A CHARITABLE INTEREST ORGANISATION?

SEPARATE LEGAL STRUCTURE– A PROTECTIVE LEGAL SHELL

GOVERNED BY THE CHARITIES COMMISSION

SLIDE 6

FORMING A CIO

DETERMINE :

THE CHARITY'S PURPOSE:-
AN OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE
HOW IT WILL BE FUNDED

PRODUCE A GOVERNING DOCUMENT (Business Plan)

CHOOSE A NAME -The Railway Correspondence & Travel Society

RECRUIT TRUSTEES

SLIDE 7

RCTS DRAFT CIO OBJECTIVES CLAUSE

To qualify for charitable status the Society will demonstrate an educational and heritage purpose which benefits the public by claiming:

- 1- We advance the education of the public in the subject of historic and current railway operation by Publishing a regular monthly magazine- the Railway Observer, Publishing authoritative books of detailed historical records of railways, including locomotives, traction equipment, infrastructure and development. Forming and supporting geographically dispersed local branches with a programme of speakers and visits, and enabling the public to study and understand the practice of historic and current railway operation.
- 2- We develop and conserve an extensive library & archive centre to advance the knowledge of the public in an understanding of historic and current railway practice.
- 3- We disseminate to both public and heritage interests photographic images of historic and current railway operation.
- 4- We promote for the benefit of the public and public bodies the maintenance of the railway heritage by Publishing a regular monthly magazine- the Railway Observer. Publishing authoritative books of detailed historical records of railways, including locomotives, traction equipment, infrastructure and development. Forming and supporting geographically dispersed local branches with a programme of speakers and visits enabling the public to study and understand the practice of historic and current railway operation

SLIDE 8

WHO WILL BECOME CHARITY TRUSTEES

ALL PRESENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OFFICERS

Why ? To ensure no conflict between Charity Trustees and Management Committee

All Charity Trustees are expected to show a level of skill and experience expected of any reasonably competent person.

Trustee Liability Covered, as MC Liability, by Society Insurance

SLIDE 9

MATTERS TO BE PUT TO AGM

SEEK APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE OF CHANGE TO CIO -An explanatory memorandum explaining the nature of the changes proposed will be included with the R.O. AGM supplement

APPROVE DRAFT CONSTITUTION-The draft will be included with the R.O. AGM Supplement. The explanatory memorandum will draw attention to the draft objects clause, and to those provisions where the Charities Commission model template has been modified to suit the particular circumstances of the Society.

APPROVE REVISIONS TO SOCIETY RULES-The revised draft of the Rules will be incorporated in the R.O.AGM Supplement. The explanatory memorandum will draw specific attention to those provisions in the Rules that need to be modified as a result of becoming a CIO and other changes that have been suggested as a result of a review of the Rules instigated by the Management Committee.

APPROVE APPOINTMENT OF THEN CURRENT MANAGEMENT OFFICERS TO BE CHARITY TRUSTEES- The Management Committee Officers in post on the proposed implementation date, currently expected to be 1st November 2016.

APPROVE CONTINUATION OF CURRENT FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS OF SOCIETY AS A CIO- No change in the current funding arrangements of the Society is proposed.

SLIDE 10

WHY A REVISION TO THE RULES?

Minimal changes are needed to comply with Charity Commission requirements but will also be slightly updated to reflect recent operational changes.

Review team is already in place under leadership of former RO Editor Callum McLeod.

SLIDE 11

PROPOSED TIMESCALE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

OCTOBER 7TH 2015 Management Committee approve plan in principle - *APPROVED*

OCTOBER 28TH 2015 Present Proposals To Officers Conference - *TODAY*

APRIL 1st 2016 In Advance of AGM Full Charity Prospectus is published to all Members as a supplement to April Railway.

APRIL 2016 AGM Approval sought from Membership at AGM

1ST NOVEMBER 2016 Subject to CIO Approval, Implement Change to CIO Status

This presentation was followed by an extended question and answer session.

Mike Robertson (20991) asked that when it come to the vote at the AGM will only be those present be able to vote or is a postal vote planned? In reply Gordon Davies said that those present could be asked if they wanted a postal vote to be carried out.

Tom Kolisch (22316) asked why is the vote is to be held in April?

Bob Green said that the Society and CIO rules specify that the membership should be given a chance to vote upon the changes and the AGM in April is the appropriate occasion for this.

Tom Kolisch (22316) enquired whether proxy votes would be available?

Bob Green replied that proxy votes were not allowed for in the Society rules.

Tom Kolisch (22316) wanted to know the expected cost of the changeover?

Reg Wood replied that this was all very new for everybody but he expected the total cost to be in the order of £800 - £1000. The largest part of the cost will be in communication – the extra postage cost of sending out all the documentation in March.

Irene Rabbitts (20072) asked if there were any alternatives to a change to a CIO.

Gordon Davies replied that a number of other societies had made the same change. Terence Jenner added that the only other option was to change to a company limited by guarantee; this would mean that the MC would become directors and we would become a business. The change to a CIO is a much better option.

Andrew Hemmings (10071) suggested that as a CIO we might be able to enlist government funding.

Robert Bartlett (16273) enquired about the status of branches, previously reporting of branch funds has been part of the main society accounts. Reg Wood in reply said that after consulting with the auditors some change is required in regard to branch funds that apply to uncommitted funds. Below £2500 there is no change but when greater they will need to demonstrate good practice by arranging their own audit or independent examination.

Alan Sattanstill (21212) suggested the slides used this morning be made available via the Members' area of the Society website.

Malcolm Hammond (17454) wondered how it was intended to inform the whole membership of the Society. Gordon Davies said that it was planned for this to be done via the December RO.

Richard Neale (9339) welcomed this initiative and mentioned that the Development Sub Committee had looked at this some years previously.

Steve Lacey (21146) reported that the Nene Valley Railway had run into problems with Gift Aid due to the HMRC changing the rules. Reg Wood replied that there was still work to do behind the scenes in getting the correct data pulled together.

Derek Morris (14276) enquired whether the advantages of changing to a CIO will be affected by changes to tax allowances etc. In reply Reg Wood said that may be an issue in the future but we have to be aware of this and cater for all eventualities.

Bill Jagger (17418) suggested that an advantage of becoming a CIO is that we may be able to gain lottery funding to deal with the Society Archive.

David Blackman (21810) asked whether we would be able to approach the Railway Heritage Fund for funding. Reg Wood in reply said that this would make no difference,

David Goddard (21347) pointed that as a Branch Treasurer he would see CIO status as an advantage when booking stand space at an exhibition.

John Redgate (13470) asked whether the branches would have to register for VAT. Reg Wood replied that he did not expect the VAT status of the branches would change and can continue to use the Society's VAT number.

John Redgate (13470) enquired if the Society would have to lists branch assets, In reply Reg Wood said that currently the opinion was that branch assets would only need a single line to cover all branches.

Gordon Davies closed by announcing that the slides seen this morning would be made available to all Officers by way of a Newsletter.

7. The Railway Observer – Report by Mike Robinson (RO Managing Editor)

Gentlemen –I think most will agree that the past year has been another year of progress for the RO. Since the last OC we have delivered over 900 pages of news, features and anecdotes supporting our collective love of railways, not to mention a monthly average of 51 high quality images - in total 630 - selected from over 1500 submitted over the same period.

The digital RO option with a reduced membership fee continues to prove encouraging with around 10% of our membership now opting for that method, and the digital RO itself, available around 10 days earlier than the 'snailmail' option, is, given access levels, clearly proving a hit with most members.

Thus far we have not sought to exploit the digital RO in the wider world outside the Society but this will change in the near future with the presence of a 'free to all' digital sample RO on the Pagesuite site. By tying this in to some associated railway press advertising, this will provide a platform for promoting the RO and the Society to the general public in the hope of attracting new members. At the same time, via the Pagesuite site we will also be making each months digital RO available as a paid for e-mag at a monthly Paypal price of £2.50. Again this will hopefully reach a much wider audience result in some ad-hoc purchasers taking out memberships if they like what they see - and realise that they can save £9 per year by being a member!

Whilst I am certainly biased, I suspect most members will agree that the RO supports the membership well, and with perhaps only a third of our membership regularly attending meetings forms perhaps the key element in the Societies portfolio in terms of maintaining membership. However it is no exaggeration to say that for an essentially volunteer production, the limit has been reached of what can be delivered on a monthly basis. Whilst we have never yet published a blank page we have frequently - because of a lack of suitable material - come close. Thus, a fallback to the Editors oft-derided offerings from his camera or archive!

However, to continue delivering a lively interesting magazine, not only do we need new, younger, editorial team members to help with the monthly production, but perhaps more importantly, a regular supply of interesting, illustrated articles to extend the range of each months magazine.

You may recall that at last years Conference I alluded to the possibility of introducing a regular 'Vintage' photo feature using related images from members own collections. That this has not happened is down to a single factor - lack of submissions by members! Whilst I expect to start a new set of member reminiscences in the new year, finding suitable features is very much a 'hand to mouth' exercise and I would ask you all to take back to your branch meetings the message that future RO's depends very much on the availability of 'interesting' material. For those with a burning desire to see their photo efforts in print, this is a much surer road to success than submitting yet another picture of a Class 66 in a fairly common location.

Also, despite appeals the last couple of OC's we have had little contributions from Society officers for 'Over The Points', and to date only a single unsolicited member submission for our 'Where's It' feature.

So, as well as considering whether you as individuals can contribute items for the RO, do your best to encourage members to raid their collective memories and archives. Other than the paid for digital offer I mentioned earlier - and a change in the cover colour - 2016 will see no significant changes to the RO, though I am hopeful that we will have a new monthly 'heritage traction' report to segregate essentially main line vintage operations from the Regional reports.

Amadeus have again excelled in delivering a quality magazine in a timely fashion and constantly support us particularly in our efforts particularly get the best out of some occasionally dubious images.

Finally the Editorial team. As was highlighted in the October 'Over The Points' we still need volunteers - only a single offer of assistance being received to date. The Editorial Conference last weekend spent much time considering the issue and one possible outcome is that, with the scarcity of member reports in some areas we may well eliminate the local Ed Rep role in those areas, simply directing reports to the appropriate Editor. I am currently working through this with the Ed team and any changes will be reflected in the January 2016 Officers Directory.

Meanwhile as ever a big thank you to the 40 or so members of the Editorial Team for their unstinting supporting in ensuring we continue to promptly deliver what I am sure you will agree is an interesting extremely well produced magazine each month.

Thank You.

Stuart Warr (17013) enquired about the number of Images taken by Mike Robinson in most issues of the RO. In reply Mike said that although a large number of images were received for publication he was looking for a selection that he could use each month to complement the text. Some months the balance was not satisfactory so he had to use some of his own. The ECML did not receive a lot of coverage from other photographers, as does the southern end of the WCML.

Stuart Warr (17013) asked about the policy about cropping of images. David Kelso replying to this said that he needed to amend the instructions for image submission; previously he had asked for the image straight from the camera without any manipulation. This is in case it has been carried out in a non standard way. Additionally they should not be cropped as well.

Roger Newman (5965) complained that the images intended for Part Three of *The Finnish Invasion* had been decimated. Mike Robinson apologised for this.

8. Website Web 4 Project – Report by David Kelso (Web 4 Project Leader)

The project is moving forward all be it at a slower rate than was anticipated and progress is some two – three months behind where we should be based on the original plan.

This is entirely due to a number of factors and unexpected problems which have arisen within the Society and the South East branch during the earlier months of this year culminating in the sudden withdrawal from the publicity officer and publications sales job of the incumbent who took over these roles to allow me to lead the Web4 Project.

Never the less as you can see from the screen in front of you a great deal of progress has been made in developing the style and presentation of the new site. The primary objective being to make it readily available on the numerous devices that exist to-day to provide web access.

Our designer Bluegreen has been continuing to overcome the main challenges of how to move some 300 pages from the existing website to the new software utilised on the new site and to meet our other major requirement that updating the new site should be possible by any nominated member. In other words branches and others will be able to update their own pages and add new pages, photographs and notices of branch changes etc. without resort to a central webmaster.

With the launch of Class 5s Volume 2 now well underway I hope that in the coming winter months to be able to return to working with Bluegreen to move the project forward. This will include the delayed meeting of the members of the existing web committee to introduce to them in detail the new routines for updating their pages and to develop the plan for the existing pages transfer to the new site. This is now likely to occur early in the new year. Bluegreen will be providing a training package for those who volunteer to go forward with the new site. We shall then also be looking for additional volunteers from branches that are not presently active on the existing website and also seeking to secure the services of a body to fill the new post of Web Editor.

I shall be happy to answer your questions either inside or outside of this meeting as you will appreciate we do not have the time in this meeting to enter into detail.

9. Publications Sub committee – Report from David Bird (Publications Committee Chairman)

I have to report that book sales are extremely slow, not only of our publications but the railway book market in general. The market appears to be changing with other types of media entering and offering different themes for sale. Certainly the market for RCTS definitive books is shrinking and there is a growing wish for 'coffee table' books. We are considering if we can join that market using the Photographic Portfolio that we have available to us.

We have published recently the long awaited Volume 2 of the Stanier Class Five 4-6-0s and initial sales are encouraging. The book is available this weekend for those who may have some loose change about their person.

Other titles in the LMS series continue to progress slowly. We have suffered a further personal loss in that Ray Townsin (author of the Patriots) passed away earlier this year. However, his manuscript (80% complete), photographs and research material has been bequeathed to the society and thus we will be able to continue to progress the book to a conclusion. We are looking at a publication in possible early 2018 to coincide with the launch of the 'new build' Patriot Unknown Warrior in that

year. The target for the locomotive to be in service is the 100-year anniversary of the ceasing of hostilities.

Our next title to be printed in the LMS series is likely to be the book on the Pacific classes. This is in an advanced stage of development with John Jennison leading the way. We are hoping for publication towards the end of next year. In the pipeline, apart from the Patriot class, remain the Royal Scot class, 8F class and LMS passenger tanks. All depends on the fitness of the authors and committee members!!!

We have now sold the title the 'Railways of The Isle of Wight' to the IoWSR as they wanted to update and expand on the contents of Don Bradley's original publication. We were unable to source an author from within so decided to let the IoWSR do the job. That society will now work on the update and publish the book under their banner. However, our name and that of the author will still appear on the new book.

The committee meet three times a year to manage the activities of the committee and the remaining projects that are in hand. Unfortunately we have suffered further losses of personnel with the retirement of John Wood and more recently Peter Fortune from the committee. We have been able to persuade Alan Cooke to join the team and provide us with his expertise. However, we are still in need of someone who has knowledge of sales and by this we mean attracting people, companies or booksellers to our products. Any one interested in this capacity is asked to contact myself at any time.

As ever we still seek new topics for publication so if anybody has a wish to be an author or can offer a manuscript I am always available to receive such offers, I await your approach,

David McCollum {12087} commented on a article seen in a recent issue of *The Railway Magazine* that stated that the LMS series of books cannot be completed. Also in the October issue of *Steam Railway* were discussing the decline in the second hand book market, which meant that only highly regarded publications such as ours found a ready market.

10. Development Sub committee – report by Eric Palmer (Development SC Chairman)

Firstly may I thank Alan Cooke, the Branch Liaison Secretary, for very ably acting as secretary in compiling the minutes of the Development Sub Committee until October 2014. Due to changes in his personal circumstances Alan was not able to continue with this job. His meticulous style of minute taking has been a hard act to follow.

Peter Fortune also stepped down as Society Publicity Officer again due to changes in personal commitments. However he has put together six excellent articles highlighting the activities of the society which have appeared in *The Railway Magazine* during the year.

The DSC is working to a formal five year business plan which is constantly under review and which is updated each year. The aim of the plan is to retain existing members and grow the membership by 5% year on year. I am pleased to report that our efforts, and your efforts, are beginning to bear fruit and the number of new members recruited this year has been the highest for several years. Never miss an opportunity to recruit a new member – every newcomer is vital to us.

Without a doubt the image of the society is changing. The layout and presentation of the RO is now of a very high standard and is a very powerful recruiting tool. *The Railway Magazine* has the highest

circulation of all the railway magazines and each RCTS article is seen by at least 37000 interested enthusiasts. Recruitment leaflets and membership application forms have been revised, brought up to date and reprinted. Some branches have been able to get agreement to distribute leaflets on rail tours which is a very valuable way of widening awareness of the society. And, of course, 15 months membership for only £15 must be a very good reason for joining Britain's leading railway society.

A great deal of emphasis is being placed on recruitment and I am encouraging every member not only branch officers to do their best to encourage more visitors to indoor meetings to experience a friendly interesting evening or afternoon in the company of like minded enthusiasts. Unfortunately each year we lose some members through natural wastage hence the need to continually redouble our efforts to recruit new ones.

I must record the strenuous efforts which DSC members are making to update the society website, to bring to fruition the company archive building at Leatherhead, the growing modern traction liveries register and plans to improve our exposure at major exhibitions such as Warley.

The society is on the move again – watch this space!

Ronnie McAdam (16090) suggested that as we now recruiting record numbers of new members that they receive a welcome in the RO. In reply Gordon Davies said that this was already underway as a result of an initiative by the Development SC.

11. Regional Meetings – report from Alan Cooke. (Branch Liaison Secretary)

The 15th round of Regional Meetings was held this year and this time we were back to five meetings being held after last year's mix-up. As in previous years the majority of topics for discussion did not come from the branches and to save me head scratching this year the Development Sub Committee came up with some ideas that were gratefully received and used.

But to retain the vitality and usefulness of these meetings we really do need topics for discussion otherwise they just become a pleasant day out. I am disappointed to have seen comments from one branch saying that the MC imposed the agenda – it was, but in the absence of any other input. So can you please supply me with some ideas for next year's round otherwise you may end with other peoples ideas on what you want to discuss. If I can get some ideas for discussion to me by 31st January then I have less of an excuse for being a little late with getting the agenda out.

The discussions indicated that the branches were a lot happier with communication than in the past and their presentations showed a degree of professionalism and confidence in the future that the Society needs in facing an increasingly sophisticated market.

I have maintained a similar method of presentation of the minutes where the comments have been reproduced in full. This means a huge unwieldy document but I hope you have been able to make sense of it. This year though I have benefitted from Jeremy Harrison's assistance in improving the overall appearance. Thank you Jeremy.

In closing I would like to thank also the Regional Meetings Chairman; Rodney Allen, Ian Derrick, Robert Warburton, Mike Green and Brian Arman for making matters run so smoothly.

12. Society Finance – Report from Reg Wood (Society Treasurer)

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Financial Results 2013/14 Last year your Society published a deficit of £4,149 on turnover of £90,633, or 4.6%. I am pleased to report that I was able to report at the AGM that the Society has once again been given a “clean” audit by our new external auditors R S Porter and Co.

The primary elements of our Income are of course our Subscriptions, closely followed by our Publications Sales. Thanks go to those branches who stock and promote our Publications, and I would be very pleased to see more doing so.

Forecast Outturn 2014/15 Our financial year ends on 31 October each year. My current forecast is for a further deficit this year due to our further investments to improve your Society. During the year your Management Committee has invested £10,000 in our new book, *Locomotives of the LMS – The Stanier Class 5s Part Two* which is on sale here this weekend. We also invested £3,900 in our photographic archives, £3,350 in our new website project and a further £250 in clothing for sale. We also achieved £3,000 income from the sale of our bookstore portakabins following subcontracting of this function. Finally, I have to report that a substantial sum from late expense claims for 2013/14 have been included in this year's Accounts.

Bob Ellison is writing out to Branches to remind them of our accounting timetable and processes, and I would urge you to get your expenses and financial returns completed on time. Thanks in advance.

This includes your Branch VAT claims and returns to send in claims to recover VAT they have incurred, deducting the element of VAT on their Sales, as the Society can reclaim the tax from HMRC, and pass on to Branches. Last quarter alone we reclaimed almost £1,600. We also need your Publications returns and payments as soon as possible to help reduce our deficit to a minimum.

I am very pleased to report that we have welcomed a substantial number of new members this year. Following two years of financial deficits, the Management Committee have decided to apply a small increase of £1 to the subscription rate for 2016, though our special new member offer of £15 will remain unchanged to continue its success – with your help in the Branches.

Transparency I am pleased to report that all the Branches above the financial surplus funds threshold have now either “invested” their surplus funds with the national Society in a ringfenced account for return when needed, or arranged an annual independent verification of their branch accounts. The auditors are pleased with this. Branches can see the invested funds as a separate figure in our Society Accounts Balance Sheet under Current Liabilities. I thank you for this. Should any others feel able to “invest” their funds with us I would be delighted.

Treasurers Skill Training Should any Branch Treasurers who missed the recent Treasurers training session be interested in attending a future event, or if you change your Treasurer, Bob Ellison would be pleased to hear from them.

Direct Debit Membership Renewal Our introduction of Direct Debit membership subscription renewal was been successfully introduced. I urge Branches to invite members to sign up as it saves them £1 on their sub, and it gives them trouble free future renewals/ Steve Ollive would be delighted to hear from them.

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) Your Management Committee is planning to invite members at the AGM to approve the Society converts into a charity as a CIO. Your Treasurer is working with the auditors and the Charity Commission to ensure the transition is smooth and the Branches see no real changes to their operations. The legal, taxation and financial benefits will be fully presented separately.

Thanks Our Treasurers team comprises myself together with Bob Ellison on Branch financial matters, Noel Machel on Publications matters, and Steve Ollive on Renewals. I thank Bob, Noel and Steve for their invaluable support throughout the year.

13. Library Sub committee – David Pick (Library Sub committee Chairman)

The Library Sub Committee has not met during the past 12 months as all efforts have been centred around Leatherhead.

Photographic Archive - continues to expand and currently stands at some 44000 images, with just under 2000 added during the past year. The cost of the continued increase the amount of images available has been self funding by increased sales due to better publicity and the auction of surplus material.

Leatherhead Archive - Since last years Officers Conference the November meeting promised with the Southern took place followed by a further meeting with the Southern Property Agent (TPT). It was as a result of this meeting that the solicitors acting for Southern discovered that despite the Society being formed some 87 years ago there were problems with the drawing up of a long term lease on property as we (the Society), are basically an unincorporated body and as such, a long term property lease could exert undue personal financial pressure on Officers (the MC) of the Society.

However, having informed the Southern solicitors of our plan and timescale to reform the constitution of the Society the solicitors have instructed TPT to re-open negotiations with regard to the drawing up "Heads of Terms" agreement in connection with a property lease. This meeting will take on Thursday, 19th November 2015 at 10.00am at the Southern Railway Headquarters at Go Ahead House, East Croydon. It is intended that the Society representatives will be myself and Terence Jenner as David Kelso is unfortunately indisposed. It is expected that Southern will be represented Paul Best (Project Manager) and John Quinn (TPT).

14. Date and Venue for 2016 Officers Conference

Irene Rabbitts announced that the 2016 Members Weekend and Officers' Conference would be held over the weekend of 21st – 23rd October 2015. We will be based at the The Cumbria Grand Hotel, Grange over Sands, Cumbria.

The 2016 AGM would take place at The Welcome Centre in Coventry on 16th April.

15. Any other competent business

No topics were raised.

Gordon Davies thanked everyone for attending and wished them all a safe journey home.

Meeting closed at 12.05 hrs.