



Minutes of the Meeting of Society and Branch Officers held on 22nd October 2017
at The Park Inn Palace, Southend-on-Sea. SS1 2AL
Meeting commenced at 09.15

In attendance

Representing the Management Committee and Officers:-

Rev. Canon Brian Arman – Society President
Gordon Davies – Society Chairman
Bob Green – Society Secretary
Reg Wood – Society Treasurer
Alan Cooke – Branch Liaison Officer
David Goddard – Membership Secretary
Andy Davies – Society Archivist
Terence Jenner – Honorary Legal Adviser
John Day – Members Weekend Co-ordinator
Steve Ollive – Assistant Treasurer, Renewals
Bob Ellison – Assistant Treasurer, Branch Finances
Hugh Gould – Vice President
David Bird – Publications Sub Committee Chairman
David Jackman – Acting Webmaster

Representing the Branches:-

Bristol – Brian Arman, Reg Wood, Paul Udey, Roger Newman
Cambridge – no representation
Cheltenham – Richard Morris, Richard Neale
Chichester – Richard Ashby
Croydon and South London – Jeremy Harrison
East Midlands – Rodney Allen, John Hitchens
Furness, Lakes and Lune – Alan Sattanstill
Hitchin – Steve Lacey, David Elsdon
Humberside – no representation
Ipswich and District – John Day, Chris Ignatowicz
Lancashire and North West – No representation
Merseyside, Chester and North Wales – No representation
Milton Keynes – Mark Richards
North East – Malcolm Hammond
Northampton – No representation
Peterborough – Robert Warburton
Scotland – No representation
Sheffield – No representation
South East – John Holloway, David Blackman
South Essex – Rodger Green, Chris Ignatowicz, David Jackman, David Flatman
South Wales / De Cymru – Andrew Hemmings
Solent – No representation
Surrey – Peter Bosomworth, Andy Davies, Irene Rabbitts, Tom Kolisch
Sussex – No representation
Thames Valley – Denis Horsman, David Evans-Roberts
Watford – Geoff Plumb
West Midlands – Bob Barby, Derek Morris
West of England – No representation.
West Riding – Bob Green
Windsor and Maidenhead – Steve Ollive, Alan Cooke, David Goddard, Sally Goddard, Beatrice Goddard

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

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Before I start the official business you will have read in Alan Cooke's Newsletters the deaths of three members of the Society, John Stone from the South Essex Branch, John Edgington from the West Riding Branch and Peter Gray from the West of England Branch

The passing away of John Stone, John Edgington and Peter Grey is a very sad loss for the society. Could we all please stand for a minute as a mark of respect to all three. Thank you.

In opening this conference I would like to welcome you all to The Park Inn Palace Hotel here at Southend on Sea. 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.

I am pleased to welcome:- David Flatman from the South Essex Branch and Chris Ignatowicz who is treasurer for both the Ipswich and South Essex branches who are attending conference for the first time? I hope that you will find conference of interest and benefit but more importantly return next year.

We all have had a superb weekend here in Southend and I would like to extend my personal thanks to organising team of John Day, Irene Rabbitts and Andy Davies. This year they have once again have put together a excellent weekend for us all. Please show your appreciation to John, Andy, and Irene for the amount of effort and work put in to make this weekend so enjoyable.

As some of you know Andy had a misfortunate accident on Friday and broke his arm, we wish Andy a very speedy recovery

Our President The Reverend Canon Brian Arman could not be with us last year however I am delighted to see that he is here this year after having his second hip replacement operation.

Our current Branch Liaison Officer Alan Cooke will be stepping down from the MC after 20 years service MC at the next AGM in April 2018. Alan has had a long and distinguished career with the Society. He has been society secretary on two occasions and branch secretary of the Windsor and Maidenhead branch from 2007 to 2010 and Branch secretary of the erstwhile London Branch from 1988 to 1998. Alan will continue to work for the society as one of our many back-room persons who work tirelessly in the background for the RCTS. Many thanks to Alan and let's show our appreciation to Alan for all his work and efforts.

The big question is who is going to replace Alan. Well in the first time in the Society's history we will be appointing a lady to join the MC. I am absolutely delighted that Irene Rabbitts from the Surrey Branch will be taking over from Alan as the Branch Liaison officer next April. Thank you Irene for taking on the role.

One other first for the Society is this will be the first time we will have had a husband and wife on the MC as Irene is married to Andy Davies. You may ask why Irene is Mrs Rabbitts and not Mrs Davies, well I understand perfectly well why, who on earth would want to go around with a surname like Davies!!!

Eric Palmer has stepped down as Chairman of the DSC and Paul Chancellor has taken on that role. Unfortunately Paul cannot be here today.

As you know if you attended the AGM in April or read the minutes in the July RO I was not able to attend the AGM as I was at home recuperating after a rather serious abdominal operation. What should have been a routine two operation due to complications lasted over seven hours however all is well and I have made a fully recovery. I would like to thank all the branches and individuals who so kindly sent me get well cards and emails wishing me a speedy recovery and to those who gave me a call wishing me the same. Your kindness was very much appreciated and again a very big thank you very much..

This bring me around to letter by David Kelso published in the October RO stating that I had not informed David Pick, the then Deputy Chairman or the MC that I was going into hospital.

To start with he has a lot of his facts wrong concerning Leatherhead and the B5 RO and it was in February this year not late 2016 that I became unwell. I have to ask you what kind of chairman do you think I am that would not inform the David Pick the Deputy Chairman and my good friends and colleagues on the MC that I was going to be out of action for some time. The first thing I did when I got home on Friday the 7th of April after my consultant informed me that I was going in to hospital on the 18th was to ring David Pick. He was not at home however I left a message and a couple of days later David called. It was then he informed me that he had decided not to stand for re-election to the MC therefore he would not be able as deputy chairman to officiate at the AGM on the after meeting here. A quick call to John Redgate who 'volunteered' to officiate as Acting Chairman at the AGM on the 29th of April.

Again what kind of chairman do you think I am that would not inform you the society officers that I was going to be out of action. Alan Cooke as requested by me sent you all Newsletter 124 on the 15th of April informing you of what was happening. So for David Kelso to write that letter is an absolute disgrace and nothing but a pack of untruths and misinformation. The rest of his letter is no better as it was he who refused to debate the business case, which thus deferred the approval of Leatherhead project in June 2016. All this is recorded in the excellent minutes taken by Bob Green, the Society Secretary Maybe David Kelso should revisit the minutes to refresh his memory of events and get the correct information.

I am very sad to report that it is all part of the disgraceful behaviour of certain MC members (past and present) who will not accept majority decisions made by the MC and want their own way. The hidden agendas and dirty tricks department are in full swing and trying to get done without proper debate and undermine their colleagues on the MC. I honestly believe as others do that the letter by David Kelso was nothing more than attempt to blacken my name. At the MC meeting in February this year we discussed and agreed nominations for the MC for the AGM in April. Within days Bob Green, received an email from an MC member offering the name of someone who we had not discussed for nomination to the MC. However the string of emails sent in support of the nomination clearly indicate that this discussion with others had been going on for several weeks. Why it was not brought up at the MC meeting is a mystery. As I said earlier Hidden Agenda and in my opinion this kind of behaviour is nothing short of dishonesty.

In the MC discussions relating to AGM nominations the classic undermining of the MC is that of a certain MC member who rang around members to try and get someone to stand against me as Chairman at the AGM. As I was up for re-election as Chairman in April I gave the MC the opportunity to discuss whether they wanted me to continue as chairman as I would have been prepared to withdraw my nomination if the MC did not want me to continue. I even walked out of the meeting room at the December meeting to give them the opportunity to discuss my nomination. I was informed there no dissenting voices so I am still here. Again its hidden agendas and dirty tricks. I have appealed at previous MC meetings, as has my predecessor John Redgate at MC meetings for all to be open and honest and accept the decisions made in committee and that we work as one team. Even our President at the last meeting he attended stated that this in fighting caused by a very small minority of MC members is unacceptable but this has obviously fallen on deaf ears.

So to my colleagues on the MC and others who seem to have forgotten that they are now also trustees of the charity which we became last year a reminder that we should all be working as a team not against each other otherwise this society will tear its self apart and may not see its centenary in 2028. I'm sure our President will also have some words to say on this subject in his address.

Now let's look on the bright side. The annual recruitment campaign carries on. Following comments from members at the AGM that the differential between the special offer to recruit new members at £15 and the full year subscription of £28 was much too wide and conceivably a disincentive to continued membership at renewal time in October. This issue was considered by the MC who have now adjusted the recruitment offer to £20 for the printed RO and £15 for the digital version. Please carry on the good work and let us see if we can recruit even more in 2018. This leads me on to the name of the branch that has recruited the most new members in 2017. In first place with a total of 10 new members each is Surrey Branch. Congratulations to Surrey for their hard work and effort. Will someone from the Surrey branch please come forward and accept the certificates.

Leatherhead

The project to find new premises for our new library and archive has been a very long task however I am pleased to report that we are nearly at a conclusion. The MC unanimously has agreed to go forward and lease the stationmaster's house at Leatherhead station. The MC visited the premises in February and it must be stated that the renovation of the interior of the building is superb. You may wonder why it has taken so long to get to this

stage. There are quite a few factors. The MC was not going to rush into signing a lease until a proper business plan had been put together detailing all the facts regarding to costs, staffing and other issues had been considered. After a number of rejected attempts this has only just been re-tabled. The lease will be for twelve years however we have now just negotiated to have an option to break the contract if necessary after a period of six years. I have received what is called an 'Early Access Letter' which precedes the signing of the lease and hopefully by the 1st of November we will be able to gain access to the premises. Terence has been keep an eye on the legal issues in case the society signs up and has to pay for HS2.

Andy Davies from the Surrey branch has been appointed 'Chief Archivist' and he will now gather his team to assist with the smooth running of the archive and library. Quite a few members have responded to Andy's appeal for help and Andy will be contacting them in the near future once the project gets going. We now have to install racking and storage shelves. Andy and his team will have a mammoth task in moving the existing library from Uxbridge and all our photographic material from Stevenage and Northampton and other archive material in store in Stockport.

My thanks to all who gave so generously to the Library appeal, your money will be put to good use.

A special mention and thanks must be made to David Pick as chairman of the library sub-committee for all the hard work he did in managing the project and getting us to this stage.

B5 Railway Observer

The minutes of the AGM held in Coventry this year and published in the July RO gives all the information on what transpired with the proposed change of size from the current A4 to B5.

Again misinformation appears in print in recent RO's regarding the proposed increase in size from the existing A4 to B5. So let me remind you, the MC at our June 2016 was shown sample copies of the new size RO. We were informed that the extra cost would be about £10 a month giving a total of about £240 per annum. We asked our editor Mike Robinson to go to our printer and get the true cost which we were informed of less than one day prior to our MC meeting on the 3rd of December. The cost of production of the B5 RO would incur an additional cost of nearly £5k per annum an increase of approximately 12% and this may increase subscription costs. The MC decided at that meeting that there quite a few issues to be resolved and that all the members should be consulted if a change of size was in order. Mike had run an unofficial survey in the November RO however it did not cover all aspects of what we as an MC required from all our members. Even though I was not at the AGM John Redgate read out my address and in which I stated that we would not change the size of the RO without conducting a full consultation with all our members. After all this is your magazine.

The MC requested that in order to reduce the envisaged production costs Mike should get quotations from other printers to which he has subsequently refused and has also stated the he will have nothing to do with a consultation process with our members. B5 is not dead but is deferred until the full picture becomes known.

Web4 Project

The project for obtaining a new enhanced website has unfortunately had little work done on it in the last two years. As announced at the OC at grange over Sands David Kelso has stepped away from the project and David Jackman our acting webmaster has now taken on the reins for this project. I am delighted that David is with us here at Southend and will give you an update on recent events later in the conference.

Despite what I reported earlier my thanks go to all my colleagues on the MC for the long hours they put in serving the society but please, please start working as one united team. A mention must be made to John Redgate who unfortunately cannot be with us today, a very big thank you for being thrown in at the deep end and chairing the AGM in my absence.

Look around this room what do you see, well railway enthusiasts of course, this is your hobby. You have all decided you want to work for this fine society and that is why you are all officers who work very hard at branch or national level. My thanks to you all for your contributions to the running of the Society no matter how large or small. Volunteers can very easily be switched off when it no longer becomes a pleasure and they see others pulling in a different direction and not reporting the true facts. So to those who have other ideas please heed the warnings I made earlier.

To finish I do hope that all your contributions this morning are productive and that we carry on in maintaining all RCTS activities and we do recruit many more new members but infighting and adverse comments and criticisms of colleagues in our house magazine will only deter new members and may stop some existing members from renewing their membership. Let's not forget that 2018 is the ninetieth year of the Society and let's all hope that the RCTS celebrates its 100th year in 2028 as 'Britain's Leading Railway Society'.

Thank you for listening.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from:- Bob Ballard (Milton Keynes), John Redgate (MC Member), Rob Davidson (Watford), Robert Bartlett (Cambridge), Jim Sedgwick, Margaret Frazer (NE Branch), Steve Wilson, John Howland (Cheltenham), Roger Moulden Hitchin), Ronnie McAdam, Richard Thorburn (Scottish), John Godfrey, Mike Green, Ted Vaughan (Solent), W.Jagger, D.V.Beeken, M.J.Holt, J.Holroyd, M.A.Riley, (West Riding), Mike Woodward (South East), Jim Waite, Patrick Dewsnap, Steve Hewitt (South Essex), Paul Baston, Paul Snelling (Sussex), Stuart Hicks, Peter Simmonds, David Birkett, Denis Brown (Thames Valley), Stuart Warr, Peter Fortune, Steve Rickett (South Wales), Alan Lovecy, Jim Bryant, David Munday (Sheffield), Eric Palmer (Ipswich), Alan Turton, Jon Penn, Dave Douglas, Paul Treby, John Cashen, John Cowlshaw (Merseyside, Chester & North Wales), David Pick, Keith Sykes (Northampton), Gordon Earl, Peter Smith, Ian Reid (West Midlands), Peter Wilson, Chris Meredith, John Archer (Croydon & South London), Geoff May, Geoff Adams (Chichester), Charles Woodland, David Mitchell, David Hunt, David Dormon, Peter North (West of England), Eric Palmer (outgoing Development Sub Committee Chairman), Mike Robinson (Managing Editor Railway Observer), Ian Derrick (Lancs & North West)

Additionally the following branches did not respond to the invitation to attend: --

Cambridge
Humberside

3. President's Address

The President opened his address by saying that he had a lot to say and by thanking everybody for their support during his recent visits to hospital. And that he decided to make an effort to wear proper vicar attire.

He went on to describe the enthusiasm that he sees when visiting the branches, noting that people work very hard at all levels. Unfortunately when he opens a new issue of the RO he does so with some trepidation and the Bristol Branch have had to censor what issues are put out at meetings.

Regarding the Leatherhead Archive; this will cost a lot of money, which may only be used by only 0.2% of the membership. On the positive side we will gain a huge archive of material.

The proposed B5 sized RO gives rise to two conflicting opinions: it's progress or I don't want to change and it's going cause a major increase in subscriptions. I do not want to see a war over this; it will only be destructive and tear the Society apart. I am upset and distressed that this is happening.

For the good of the Society we need a ballot about the B5 RO to be conducted soon and we need to get the new website up and running. We also need a far greater presence on Social Media.

Bless you all.

4. Confirmation of the minutes of the 2015 Officers Conference

Minutes of the 2016 Officers Conference were proposed for acceptance by Richard Neale (9339), and seconded by Robert Warburton (12759).

5. Matters Arising not covered by the Agenda

Richard Ashby (22537) stated that his letter in the October RO was not intended for publication and did not reflect his opinion. In reply Gordon Davies (17822) paid tribute to John Redgate who stood in for him at the AGM at short notice following his spell in hospital.

6. Website – Web 4 Project – Report by David Jackman

I do not have a lot to say except to give an overview of the project, which is in four phases: the first has been approved. The second phase will include the members' pages and is awaiting approval although is not currently holding up progress. The new site is expected to go live next year or possibly in early 2019.

- Malcolm Hammond (17454) commented that delays in launching the new site is causing difficulties for the branch in that they cannot take down unwanted material.
- David Evans-Roberts (11690) suggested that delays might put off potential helpers. In reply David Jackman (16198) said that training would be provided to encourage those that want to get involved.

7. CIO Developments – Report by Terence Jenner

My main point this morning is that there can be no gain without pain. In the context of the Society as a charity this means: -

Gain

1. The ability to claim Gift Aid
2. The ability for the Society to contract in its own name. Important in the case of Leatherhead and nowadays a practical necessity whenever a large project is involved.
3. Better legal protection for the Society's Officers and assets.
4. The ability to apply for grants.

Pain

1. More oversight and regulation by outside third parties.
2. More transparency in the way the Society's Officers communicated with each other and with Members.
3. Active engagement of Members especially at AGMs.

Meanwhile there are four areas of the Society's activities where issues had arisen with regard to the Society's charitable status: -

1. The number of branch meetings and reporting back of branch activities. Although it might be thought over bureaucratic, it was important that the Society as a whole is able to demonstrate to the Charities Commission that the activities carried out the branches was exclusively related to the Society's charitable objects and that branch funds were applied exclusively to the Society's charitable purposes.

2. The Charities Commission were prone to look at with displeasure at discrimination between Members especially where: -

- (a) those receiving the benefit were in positions of power within the Society and
- (b) the Benefit had not been approved by the Membership in an Annual General Meeting.

This point was especially relevant to the practice of the Annual Honorary Membership list which the Management Committee had, with the benefit of legal advice, decided to discontinue immediately.

This did not mean that those who put in a substantial amount of time and effort into the Society's activities should not be suitably rewarded; only that such recompense should be proportionate and approved by the Membership in an Annual General Meeting.

3. The issue of charitable donations by the Society. There is no problem where a Speaker had directed that instead of a fee a donation should be made to a charity of his/her choice. Best practice was to the effect that when making the payment the Society should make it clear that it is doing so at the request of the Speaker. Where the Society has a discretion then ideally the charity chosen should be one that had the same purposes as the Society. Some latitude was permitted in making payments to charities that had similar but not identical purposes provided that the amount was small and overall did not involve the depletion of branch funds.

4. As a matter of practice Charity Trustees who resigned as members of the Management Committee were expected to resign as Charity Trustees as well. However there was nothing, as yet, in the Constitution or rules, which compelled them to do so.

And finally, a homily- Never put down something in writing you would not like to see replayed back to you at a later date. There is no such thing as an informal communication. Equally always be honest and straightforward in what you write. Always be prepared to justify your decisions. The test of good decision is whether it is rational in all the relevant circumstances.

- Chris Ignatowicz (22041) queried how to record donations to a charity in the branch accounts. In reply Terence said that they should be kept under Speakers Expenses.

- Tom Kolisch (22316) asked about what type of charities was it appropriate that we make donations to. Terence replied that ideally the charity should have objectives compatible with ours.
- Richard Ashby (22537) expressed the hope that the branches would be kept up to date with the fact and developments around CIO. Reg Wood (10811) replied that the branches would be kept up to date via update Treasurers Guidance Notes.

8. Society Finance – Report by Reg Wood

Firstly, may I say how good it is to be back in Southend. I moved away from this area with my first wife back in 1970 and its my first visit back in 47 years!

The Society's financial year runs from 1 November to 31 October each year.

The 2015/6 year produced a surplus of £7,709 compared to a deficit of £11,434 in 2014/5. Our Forecast for 2016/7 is for a deficit of £5,800.

This year magazine fees for The Railway Observer covered the costs of its production, printing and despatch. Our policy is to use income from publication sales, bank interest and donations from members to maintain the annual subscription below what would otherwise be needed if all other running costs were to be met directly from the subscription.

Publication sales recovered a little from 2014/15's record low, achieving £13,785 (2014/5 £11,604) and contributed a small surplus of £2,331 (compared to 2014/5 deficit of £516) to our results. Our margins on book sales recovered to a more normal 16.9% with our fixed costs being spread over rather more sales. 2015/6 sales were assisted by The Stanier Class 5s Vol 2, launched just before Year End 2015 with 298 copies sold in year. Publications Stock reduced £4,000 during the year. In the current year we Estimate Sales at £14,800 with a surplus of £5,000, assisted by the launch of The Stanier Pacifics. We are content that sufficient provisions are held to write down stock valuations of slower selling titles.

During the year our major initiative to develop our new website has continued with a further investment in 2015/6 of £6,000 and in 2016/7 £4,000 (cumulative £13,350) of expenditure capitalised as Work-in-Progress. In 2015/16 work continued on our preparation of a saleable library of digital images with a further investment of £1,000 in a further 2,200 top quality scanned images. This year a further £1,000 has been invested. Our library of images has now grown to more than 9,000. Promotion was launched on our website last year, and income in 2015/6 from these sales grew 4% to £4,891.

During the year our new processes already introduced to bring greater transparency to Society, and particularly Branch, finances operated well with Hitchin and Surrey Branches investing a total of £3,300 with Central funds, and Branch funds totalling £12,083 now held in the national Society funds for safekeeping. This figure is included in our Balance Sheet as both an Asset (at bank) and also shown clearly separately as Creditors due to the Branches when required. Other branches with significant funds have secured an independent audit/examination and confirmation of their Accounts. I thank Branch committees for their help.

Further financial developments will see Budgets developed for each Society Committee and principal activities, coupled with the Committees becoming responsible for Budgetary Control of their activities. I presented a paper on this to the MC in June and I am now finalising the Budget setting.

The Society reduced administration costs significantly during 2015/6, by 17% to £17,905. This year, additional Development Committee initiatives and the Leatherhead project meetings have slightly increased costs to a forecast £20,100.

I am very pleased to report our first year as a CIO, together with our major Archive/Library project has attracted more than £9,000 in Donations. Bristol Branch have kindly offered £500 towards the project too.

In carrying out the role of Society Treasurer, I receive invaluable support from my assistant treasurers, Bob Ellison and Denis Horsman. At Year End Noel Machell retired and I offer my particular thanks for his common sense advice over many years.

I am also grateful to John Redgate, Vron and Alan Cooke, Steve Ollive and David Goddard for their substantial input in their roles which helps me with the finances of membership and publications. I am most appreciative of the efforts of Branch Treasurers across the Society, and my particular thanks go to Bob Ellison in pulling all their Branch data together.

- Alan Sattenstall (21211) stated that at the Furness, Lakes & Lune Branch they have a mixture of income from different sources, most recently publications have not been as successful as they used to be but photos are doing well.
- Chris Ignatowicz (22041) asked why the branches need to send their accounts to the national officers? In reply Reg Wood said that they need to be collated for addition to the national figures for the AGM. Gordon Davies reminded everyone that each of the new branches had started out with a float from central funds.
- Chris Ignatowicz (22041) enquired how we were planning to make the most of Gift Aid? Reg Wood replied that this is still under development but he is planning for minimal impact on the branches. Naturally we are on a learning curve. We are almost ready with Gift Aid claim forms for donations that members may care to make when they renew their membership for 2018.

9. The Railway Observer – report by Mike Robinson, read by David Bird

Gordon Davies announced that he had received an email from Mike Robinson stating that he would not be at the conference but did not give a reason why. David Bird stated that Mike would not be in attendance as his presence could be divisive.

So far as it has been able, the RO team has delivered another year of progress for the RO, with over 900 pages of news, features and anecdotes and an average of around 54 images per month.

Some things have changed. The rather controversial OTP feature has gone to be replaced by a new photo feature based on members recollections of their enthusiast history, for which your submissions would be welcome, and we have changed the order of batting to give rather more prominence to current and future news rather than recent operations.

Thanks to the efforts of our members we have had rather more illustrated feature articles, something we are always keen to encourage.

We are also continuing to discover new, accomplished, photographers within our ranks who submit work for the first time and are particularly grateful for their submissions. Indeed, thanks both to them and to our more established photographers for sending us such high quality pictorial offerings, I trust they all consider we portray their work in the best possible way within the format available.

Whilst no further development has occurred, the Pagesuite digital RO option continues to remain popular with around 12% of the membership opting for it. The digital version is of course available to all members whether they be printed or digital subscribers. For those unfamiliar with its use it also provides a very powerful direct search facility which gives access to a growing RO digital archive extending back to when we first went digital in 2013. Any of these issues of the RO can also of course be downloaded as a Pdf via either the Pagesuite facility or directly from the members area of the website.

Returning to the issue of format, after the original proposal to go to the B5 size from January 2017 was rejected by the MC, we have negotiated down the additional annual cost of the change by around £3,000 to £1,800 - or £150 per issue. Cost of mailing the larger magazine is not an issue as the RO, because of weight, is already charged at 'large letter' rate and we have much latitude before another cost breakpoint is reached. We have also established it will be possible to reduce costs still further in the future once we have made the transition to B5.

Each Branch Secretary should in the last few days have received an email containing both the results of the RO survey conducted via the November 2016 RO, and the papers presented to the MC arguing for the change. Despite this demonstrable evidence in favour of change, the MC recently rejected a further proposal to adopt the B5 format as from January 2018, partly on grounds of cost, but also despite the results of the survey you should now have before you, because of allegedly inadequate member consultation!

With the evidence suggesting that those in favour of the change outweigh those against by at least 2 to 1, the MC continue to insist on further work before a decision can be taken. Thus far, the RO Team have spent the equivalent of a week's effort establishing B5 acceptability. Whether we ever go to this format now depends entirely on the MC convincing itself that we ought to move forward. Until such a decision is taken the RO team plan to spend no further time on the project. So, if you are in favour of the benefits of the B5 RO and its potential to act as flagship to promote the growth of the Society, then get your members to make their voices heard!

- Gordon Davies said that he want to add a few facts that could be confirmed by reading the MC minutes: --
 1. The B5 version of the RO was first Introduced and shown at the June 2016 MC meeting. Mike Robinson stated at that meeting that it would cost £20 a month extra to produce the larger size RO. However by December 2016 the actual cost was given as nearly £5,000. Mike had been asked to obtain the actual cost for the next MC meeting in September 2016.
 2. The revised costing were supplied the day before December 2016 meeting which did not give the MC sufficient time to consider the numerous issues concerning the change of size.
- Steve Ollive (14617) said that he had received a lot of requests from renewing members for instructions on how to access the digital RO with others reverting to the printed version. David Jackman (16198) suggested that the digital RO was in the wrong place on the website.
- Malcolm Hammond (17454) said that there was poor colour contrast on some pages that had colour images and that he would like to see images on one page only rather than carried over to two, and more modern traction images please.
- Roger Newman (5965) wanted to record his appreciation of the Managing Editor for making the RO a success.
- Tom Kolisch (22316) suggested that the branch meetings are the best advertisement for the society and as such should be at the front of the magazine.
- David Blackman (21810) said that it was a sad state of affairs when those that make contentious comments in the RO are not present to state their case and answer their critics.
- Richard Ashby (22537) commented that the editorial team need to think more about accessibility and consider alternatives to page size and maybe try a larger or clearer font and a better choice of colour.

10. Development Sub-Committee – Report by Paul Chancellor, read by David Goddard

The DSC has met three times in the last twelve months. However for the future it is planned to have four meetings each year to match with those of the MC so that items going forward from the DSC to the MC can be dealt with in a timely fashion.

Eric Palmer, who has served as a DSC member and latterly chairman for many years stood down from the latter role at the June meeting and Paul Chancellor was elected as Chairman.

The primary role of the DSC is to bring forward ideas both to develop what the Society has to offer to the membership and to find ways to gain new members. However it has to be kept in mind that branches also play a major part in both in that meeting programmes are a key part of what we offer our members and also traditionally branches have recruited at least 50% of new members. To assist in the latter the DSC once again asked for and got approval for a discount subscription offer to attract new members. It is therefore disappointing to know that some branches do not appear to ever mention this at their meetings.

The £15 'new member' scheme is again available for 2017/18 however this scheme has been amended so that new members now join at £20 for a printed RO and £15 for digital membership. The increase in price came about following comments at the AGM and the Regional Meetings that the differential between the 'joining' price and the renewal price was too great and there was a risk of new members not renewing their membership. The DSC has suggested a number of initiatives to bring in new members, ranging from asking members to give out ROs to fellow enthusiasts at stations to running the 'Drive a 185' competition. Mortons Publishing is sponsoring a regular column in the Railway Magazine and it is expected that another title will also feature an RCTS column from the start of next year. A review of which exhibitions and events that the Society funds centrally to promote membership has seen us attend the Old Oak Common open day and we will be at the Nene Valley diesel gala, both events targeting our activities at the under-represented Modern Traction enthusiast. However for at least the next two years we will not have a stand at the Warley show. Recent discussions have centred on our 90th anniversary and what we can do to promote the Society on the back of this and also to try and set out a long term vision of what the Society wants to offer and how to get there.

Unfortunately, despite all of these efforts membership continues to decline. All of the ideas from the DSC will remain only as ideas if we cannot get members to help us implement them. Those approached to distribute ROs at stations declined to do so and we struggled to find just two members to take our stand to Old Oak despite the fact that they would get free admission to the event. I believe that the DSC and MC are putting together ongoing plans and coming up with many constructive ideas that can maintain a vibrant society but without members and branches willing to put them into action, ultimately our membership will continue to drift downwards.

- Derek Morris (14276) said that he was glad that the annual Warley Exhibition had been taken under central control but saddened to see that the Society had pulled out completely.
- Roger Newman (5965) asked what was happening with the revised Branch Officers' Handbook? In reply Gordon Davies said it had been parked with attention being concentrated on CIO issues.

11. Publications – Report from David Bird

The highlight of the past year has been the publication of the latest title in the LMS series of books. This was that on the LMS Pacifics including the Turbomotive. We printed 1,500 copies of the title and it was available from mid-June 2017. We opted for a low key launch just so we could get the book into the market place. Now that reviews have been completed we are planning a more serious publicity campaign in the commercial alongside their reviews and therefore launch of the title for 'hopefully' the Christmas market, there I have said the c word in October. To date we have sold 443 copies and supplied RCTS branches with a further 166 copies, most I expect are now sold by them having had a few repeat orders for stock.

As the result of various discounted promoted and sale offers on our books we have maintained a steady trickle of orders for our other titles during the year. The two books on the Black Fives sold a further 114 copies with another 101 books within the LMS series being sold. The Standard series still remain popular and 69 copies were moved during the year. In total we sold 332 other titles which added to the Pacific book sales means we sold 775 books during the year. This compares to 380 in the previous year. I would stress that my figures do not reflect any sales via branches or at national exhibitions as these figures are provided direct to the treasury team.

In addition we moved 60 Easibinders, no ties and three badges. Ties are here this morning with David Goddard should anybody wish to purchase one.

I would mention that we lost the Amazon facility during the year. This has proved a problem in the way they conduct business and ultimately we could not meet their new security arrangements (wanting people's banking details and such like). All contact seems to be by the web and extremely difficult to make headway. Whilst it did help to bring out titles to a wider audience the running of it was most difficult for the member responsible and hence we ended the arrangements. We may try again when the RCTS treasurer has a chance to get involved, now we are a charity and recognised as such.

The 'Patriots' book is still planned to be the next publish but as members will probably be aware, steaming of the "The Unknown Warrior", is somewhat delayed. We remain in contact with the Trust behind that project and they still intend to contribute to the book if possible. As November 2018 is immovable we may have to make our own plans to progress the Patriot book even if the new build is not in step with us. Our author John Jennison has completed a large part of the manuscript and picture selection has begun and we would hope to be able to include the new build story if at all possible. We of course will continue to liaise with the Trust going forward. The picture book project involving the Michael Mensing photographic collection continues apace and we have scanned a large number of his pictures ready for the booklet. Captions continue to be written and quotes are being sought from two sources for a book size of 128 or 160 pages. If the Patriot book does not complete in time this pictorial offering may be the next from our production line. We will keep members informed. The committee met three times during the year to handle the work and manage the projects in hand. During the year Noel Machell stepped down from his role as Treasurer – Publications. We thank him for his efforts over a number of years. In his place we are pleased to welcome Denis Horsman from Thames Valley branch who has taken over the treasurer role for us.

The despatch and storage of our titles remain with Booklaw of Nottingham who continue to process orders speedily and efficiently. I will be personally thanking them for their efforts next week when I carry out the annual stocktake.

As ever I would like to extend my thanks to the team for their help and assistance during the past year.

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.

- Andy Davies (16964) urged better proof reading in our publicity material.
- Roger Newman (5965) enquired about the recent Pacifics books being leger than standard A4 size. In reply David Bird (13905) said that this was due to an error by the printers.
- Geoff Plumb (11111) reported that the Pacifics book was the review of the month in the current issue of *Steam Railway*.

- Revd. Canon Brian Arman asked that we reprint BR Standards Vol.4. David Bird replied that this was under consideration.

12. Discussion of the Action Points from the Regional Meetings – Report by Alan Cooke

I would like to thank all the branches who have attended the five regional meetings this year and for their contributions to the debate and discussion.

The regional meetings were set up as a forum for branches to express their ideas and opinions on the society so that the MC and the development committee could work on these suggestions so as to increase membership and promote the society and the branches.

The 17th round of Regional Meetings held this year had an agenda that consisted mainly of ideas and topics that came from myself and the MC. Again I asked all the groups and branches well in advance for agenda items but again I was disappointed that the branches have contributed very little towards the agenda. Some topics have been referred to my MC colleagues for comment; these have been added to the summary document although a couple are still awaited.

An attempt to make the meetings more interesting and relevant was an item on the agenda that asked each of the Regional groups to come up with ideas on how to celebrate the Society's 90th anniversary and present them at this meeting. As you can see only two have bothered to do so. The other three groups did not even reply when I asked if they were planning to do this.

Another issue that concerns me regarding the Regional Meetings is in finding a Chairman to succeed those that are stepping down. In EMNESH after both Rodney Allen and John Foreman stood down, only by Bob Green stepping forward was there a replacement. And Bob is busy enough at national and local level. And in the North West and Midlands group Iain Derrick has stood down as chair but a replacement is not in sight yet.

I really do doubt the commitment of the branches to the Regional Meetings and currently I would recommend that they be curtailed, possibly for a year or so. In closing I would like to thank all the chairs of the Regional Meetings over the years for making them work. My successor in Branch Liaison will be touch whatever is decided.

13. Presentations by the Regional Meeting Groups on the Society's 90th Anniversary.

a) London & South

This is in the form of a PowerPoint presentation by Jeremy Harrison. This is included as Appendix 1 to the minutes.

b) EMNESH

This is in the form of a Word Presentation by Bob Green This is also included as Appendix 2.

c) Cheltenham Plaque

Richard Neale showed an image of a plaque that is planned to go on display at Cheltenham Railway station to commemorate Leslie Lapper and Aubrey Broad the Society's founders. This is being progressed by the Cheltenham Branch who are working with Great Western charities. They plan to meet next month to agree a location.

14. Date & venue for 2018 Members' Weekend and OC

John Day announced that the 2018 Members' Weekend and Officers Conference will be held over 12th – 14th October based at The Marsham Court Hotel, Bournemouth.

15. Date & venue for 2018 Annual General Meeting

Gordon Davies reminded everyone that the 2018 AGM will be on 28th April and once again will be at the Welcome Centre in Coventry.

16. Any other Business

Revd. Canon Brian Arman announced that branches were welcome to get in touch with him by phone, his number is 0117 969 0010.

Meeting closed at 12.20