



Minutes of the Officers' Conference

held on Sunday 20 October 2019 at
Holiday Inn Leicester, 129 St Nicholas Circle, Leicester LE1 5LX

Please note that the full lists of those present and apologies given, plus the reports from the various Trustees/MC members, where these are available, are included at the end of the minutes as appendices.

Conference opened promptly at 09.15

1 Chairman's Address – Gordon Davies

Gordon welcomed everyone to this year's conference and especially first time attendee Steve Rickett from South Wales Branch. This was followed by a minute's silence in respect of well known members who have died this year:

Bob Barby from West Midlands Branch – died October 2019

Alan Lovecy from Sheffield Branch – died October 2019

Malcolm Riley from West Riding Branch – died February 2019

Thanks were given to the organising team for this weekend. John Day is stepping down as Members' Weekend Coordinator after this weekend and there is still a vacancy as no-one has come forward yet. In the meantime, Bristol Branch have stepped in to organise the event for 2020. It is uncertain at the moment what will happen after that. Gordon expressed his delight at being able to surprise John with an Honorary Life Membership at last night's formal dinner for all the work he has done for the Society for many years both as Society Secretary, Branch Liaison Secretary and, more recently, as Members' Weekend Coordinator.

Other changes:

- 1 David Elsdon stood down as Exhibitions Officer earlier this year and a new person is sought to take on that role;
- 2 Gordon is stepping down as Society Chairman – he will be succeeded by Callum MacLeod subject to the approval of members present and voting at the AGM in April 2020;
- 3 Bob Green is stepping down as Society Secretary – he will be succeeded by Geoff Adams subject to the approval of members present and voting at the AGM in April 2020.

Callum and Geoff are wished every success in their new roles.

The recruiting drive continues and, as of this morning, membership stands at 2997 and all are urged to promote membership at their branches. Many branches have been very busy with in third place Surrey – 8, second place Hitchin – 22, and first place Chichester – 26 who have the certificate for the highest number for a second year running. Thanks to Roger Sandford for all his work as the Society's Publicity Officer.

The second report has been submitted to the Charity Commission with no response which should mean that there are no issues with it. Trustee and MC minutes continue to be uploaded onto the website and a show of hands indicated that very few of those present actually read them. After the Trustee training in February it was clear that there was a need to look at how the Society is run and that it is cumbersome having both Trustees and MC, so a small team is currently looking at Governance.

Lastly, thank you to all Trustees/MC members for their hard work and to everyone at Branch level for all that they do to keep the Society flying as well.

The full address is included as Appendix 1 to these minutes

2 Apologies for Absence

The full list of apologies received and those present is included as Appendix 2 to these minutes.

Nearly all branches completed an attendance/apologies return although not everyone signed in at the meeting so if anyone is missing from the list of those present who should be included, please let me know so that it can be amended. Two additional apologies were received at the meeting and have been included.

3 President's Address

This was read out by Reg Wood on behalf of Society President the Reverend Canon Brian Arman as he was unable to be here due to a family celebration. Brian said how delighted he was to be invited as Society President to visit the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway and highlighted their ambition to rebuild the line and their 'can do' optimism. The RCTS too has much to celebrate – the Railway Observer (RO), the Archive and Library, the Development Committee looking at ways to grow new branches. The single greatest asset is the membership and those who give extra. Special thanks to Gordon and Bob who are stepping down – they will be greatly missed. Thank you to the Members' Weekend team and to John Day who is standing down as coordinator – much has been achieved in recent years.

Good wishes to everyone.

The full address is included as Appendix 3 to these minutes.

4 Confirmation of the 2018 Minutes

This was proposed by Richard Morris 14278 (Cheltenham Branch), seconded by Tom Kolisch 22316 (Surrey Branch) and accepted by those present.

5 Matters arising from last year's minutes not covered by the agenda

None was raised.

6 Archive and Library

Chief Archivist Andy Davies gave a PowerPoint presentation with an update following on from last year. Since then there have been a couple of steps back and a few steps forward. This included slides showing the sequence of works to resolve the damp problem. Other things of note – Librarian Peter King's record included in the AGM supplement, the availability of the pdf of the advertising flyer for the Archive and Library at Leatherhead, progress with regular opening hours, and thanks to all the volunteers who helped with the stock check. Wednesday opening seems to attract more people than Saturdays so opening hours are under review. Opening times are being advertised in the RO, on the website and in the SLS (Stephenson Locomotive Society) journal. The SLS are also looking for a new library. Research questions come in regularly by email, and thanks go to the reviewers who send the books through once reviewed.

The rail tour list was completed in April 2019 and is now available; the book list has been completed and is now on the website from July 2019; there are around 300 books for sale; the magazine list was completed in September 2019 and the accident report list is underway. The RAIB (Rail Accident Investigation Board) list has been generated and is available as a pdf either on the PC or on the Internet; four large slide cabinets and a light box have been acquired with the help of Colour-Rail; and a high quality A3 flatbed scanner is now working – thanks to Jeremy Harrison.

Further work is required on the photographic material and decisions need to be made with regards to the magazines. There is still not enough space for the working timetable collection so this has not yet been moved to Leatherhead. Tasks for 2020 were outlined as well as asking all those present to let their members know about Leatherhead, use the Library Boxes to borrow books, advertise the loans service and an invitation was given to visit and/or come and help.

There remains a slight damp problem which still needs to be fully resolved and this is being looked into.

Lastly – thanks to all the volunteers who have helped over the past year. Without them we would not be able to successfully run the Archive and Library.

Questions:

1 Malcolm Hammond 17454 (North East Branch – Darlington)

Would it be possible for branch secretaries and chairmen to have a copy of the presentation?

Answer – yes and Andy would be happy to present it himself if possible.

2 Callum MacLeod 12817 (Scottish Branch)

Donation envelopes from last night's dinner raised £260.00. This was a last minute arrangement but could we Gift Aid it next time?

Answer (from Society Treasurer Reg Wood) – although casual Gift Aid is not well publicised, we can claim it. This has already been used for the casual donations made so far at the Library.

The full PowerPoint presentation was sent out with Officers Newsletter 183 as a separate attachment to the email so it is not being duplicated with these minutes. Branches can use the separate pdf to make it easier to show at a branch meeting if they so wish. A further copy of the presentation can be made available at any time on request.

7 Society Finance

Treasurer Reg Wood confirmed that this was the first time he had given a presentation under a rotating glitter ball! He explained that as the financial year runs from 1 November to 31 October, the reporting numbers were to 31 October 2018 and the forecasts were for the year to 31 October 2019. It is more challenging as the Members' Weekend is in October rather than back in the past when it took place in November after the financial year end. There was a small deficit for last year but it is expected that this will be £5000 for the year to 31 October 2019. Publication sales were up and provided a small surplus. The margins on book sales reduced due to increased stock provisions. Fixed costs remain steady. Stock was valued at £32,200 at the year end. With a lot of new members everyone is asked to remind them about member discounts on Society publications.

It was a good year for donations with £16,000 to the Archive and Library and now that Gift Aid has been sorted out with HMRC, £6000 has already been claimed, so everyone is encouraged to promote it and to complete the Gift Aid form with their membership renewal. So far, of the funds raised in this way, half has gone to the Archive with the rest going into general funds. Other investments have been made towards the new website, into future plans for diesel publications, and digital imaging and scanning.

Administration costs are often not discussed and one hears about fraud. RCTS administration costs are kept within 19% of overall income. There are some big numbers involved in Society activities and the on-going deficit has to be addressed which means that a decision has been made to increase membership subscriptions (hard copy RO) to break the £30.00 barrier.

There have been some issues with regards to VAT with some branches and Reg explained the timescales for claiming VAT and the information on the subject in the Treasurers Guidance Notes. Prompt returns are required or all branch VAT refund claims may be held up.

Especial thanks for all their hard work were given to all the members of the financial team: Eric Rattray – Assistant Treasurer, Branches; Denis Horsman – Assistant Treasurer, Publications; Peter Smith, Gift Aid; John Redgate; Vron Cooke – Assistant Treasurer, New Members; Steve Ollive – Assistant Treasurer, Renewals; David Goddard – Membership Secretary; all branch treasurers.

There were no questions.

The full report is included as Appendix 4 to these minutes

8 New Website

Gordon thanked David Jackman for all the work he has done and Assistant Webmaster Jack Knights for his contribution. David began by saying that there was good news and bad news.

The good news – the new website went live before the Society AGM in April. All was 'OK' to start with and then the bugs started appearing. These are now being sorted out.

The bad news – Concrete 5 (the platform used for the new website) is a blind alley as it is becoming obsolete with a need to upgrade, and there are other issues. So the MC is reviewing the situation regarding the website.

David is standing down as webmaster in April 2021 so by then a new website will be needed as well as a new webmaster. The new webmaster may wish to become more involved with any upgrade or changes to the website.

Questions:

1 Malcolm Hammond – one of his members is having difficulty getting onto the website and the reply went into his spam box. We need to remind members to check there if they have not received a reply.

Answer – The website has properly moved over but some parts remain on the old system. The sign-on is on the old system and is fairly primitive. If anyone has any problems, they should contact the webmaster.

2 Denis Horsman 22099 (Thames Valley Branch) – was sent with a question. There has been talk of resurrecting the forum and local input. Will this be on hold for now?

Answer – it depends on what is wanted. It is possible to create new pages so the person concerned should ask David Jackman for the correct permission to do this, noting that it is easy to add content in the wrong place so they would need to be careful.

3 Tom Kolisch – has recently had trouble logging off.

Answer – the log-off is on the old web pages so that is where it can be accessed.

Jack Knights, Assistant Webmaster, commented that you do not have to be a computer expert to update branch programmes and meeting reports and these do not usually go wrong. However, pictures are more difficult. It is disappointing that only a few are updating their branch pages at the moment. Gordon confirmed that it is more difficult to upload pictures onto the website and the answer confirmed that there are a few issues with this. The website is an on-going subject.

9 Development Committee

Paul Chancellor – Development Committee (DC) chairman had given his apologies for Conference and his report was read out by Irene Rabbitts. The report outlined the three key areas for the DC – to grow the membership, suggest ways of promoting the Society, and improve the offering to the members with targets to grow the membership by 5% year on year. This is a sizeable challenge but the investment in promotional efforts have proved effective to date.

Most Society nameplates have now been placed on public display with work underway to place the final two.

The package of benefits for members has increased and further ideas from the membership on products and services that might be of interest are welcomed. There are further ideas on improving what the Society does - for example more network locations visits and new branches, but volunteers are needed to move the ideas forward, and the gains in membership from having a presence at national exhibitions will be lost if no-one comes forward to take on the role of Exhibitions Officer. Additional volunteers are needed for the new branches project and the DC is also seeking one new member who is prepared to take an active role in generating and taking forward new ideas, so please look at your local membership and encourage them to take part.

Steve Lacey (21146 – Hitchin Branch) as a member of the DC was introduced to talk about the Society's 100 year celebrations. Although sent through for early publication in the RO, the initial article to members about the first ideas were belatedly published under Talking Points in the September RO. These include a series of 100 events which can include big things perhaps on a national basis, and smaller things based around the branches. Anything will be considered of general interest to the public as well as the Society. Please contact Steve for more information or to talk about any ideas you may have.

Question:

1 Roger Newman 5965 (Bristol Branch) asked if any new special offers to members could be included in a small paragraph in the RO with a complete list also appearing in the RO periodically, in the Annual Report and perhaps with the Officers Directory.

Answer – these ideas will be actively considered.

The DC report is included as Appendix 5 to these minutes

10 The Railway Observer

Mike began by apologising for the late arrival of the hard copy RO this month and clarified that there had been a note on the forum advising of a delay. We were advised that this was partly due to industrial action issues at the Post Office sorting office at Heckmondwike, partly to do with the link between Amadeus and the Post Office, and partly affected by holidays amongst the editorial team.

There have been a number of queries about accessing the digital RO on the Society's website and a quick demonstration had been planned but was deemed not necessary at the OC as those present were aware of the process. While the digital RO is uploaded onto the website on time each month, it is hard to predict when the hard copy RO will arrive through the letterbox.

Mike went on to describe progress over the last year with few changes to report and the biggest issue continuing to be sufficient material of good enough quality. If someone has an article but no accompanying photographs it should be possible to source suitable photographs from the photographic archive so that should not be a deterrent. Photographs for the RO often tend to favour particular areas or particular subjects and a good spread is required and further photographs are required for both mainline and Southern/South East area subjects plus some more from Scotland. With more RO area representatives there would be better coverage, and perhaps new angles and locations in the best weather conditions. Having sadly lost both Alan Lovecy and Bob Barby who were regular contributors, new people are sought.

Our printers Amadeus have helped with improving the quality of the magazine and with maintaining cost effectiveness – other printers would probably charge more. Finally, thanks to the editorial team, those who work behind them and to all the contributors. Keep up the good work.

Questions:

1 Tom Kolisch – what would be the cost for a full page advert?

Answer – a ball park figure for a one page advert would be approximately £150 but check with Deputy Managing Editor David Bird.

2 Steve Rickett 22382 – what is the position regarding 35mm negatives for submission?

Answer – there is a detailed list of instructions on the website. Scan some samples and submit them to Mike to have a look. Do not send either a hard copy or a negative.

The RO report is included as Appendix 6 to these minutes.

11 Publications Committee

David Bird began with an update on the LMS series starting with the Patriot book launched in November 2018. The Patriot Trust has made a purchase of 120 copies and is being treated as a trader for the contribution that they have made to the book. Work continues on The Royal Scot which is expected to be ready for publication in 2 years' time. Work on the Stanier 8F book has begun with input from both RCTS members and members of the Stanier 8F Society. Some parts are complete and work is on-going on the rest. Hopefully, this will be ready for publication in about 2 years. It is unlikely that there will be any further titles in this series with no authors available to carry out the work.

Picture Books - in spite of good intentions, the Mensing project is still not ready yet although further research to help with the captions has progressed. Different methods of publication are under consideration one of which is digital printing – a sample was shown to Conference. One of the advantages of this method is that it allows small print runs and it is easy and simple to order additional copies in smaller batches at a later date. Production costs are also slightly cheaper. South Wales Branch member Stuart Warr has come forward with an idea for another photographic book using his own black and white images and captions. This is being looked at as a possibility and has somewhat overtaken the Mensing project for the moment. If this goes ahead it is likely to use the new production technique and could be available in 2020, hopefully, with the Mensing book towards the end of 2020. There are other possible books of this type under consideration if the first are successful.

The Publications Committee (PC) has also been offered some other hard back titles that are not necessarily steam related including some on diesel subjects.

David mentioned the 'selling to Branches' policy explaining briefly how it works and reminding branch officers of the opportunity to take up this option if they are interested and have not already done so.

Sales over the past year were provided in more detail – an improvement on the previous year, and an update regarding the work done by the members of the PC. Book storage and despatch continues to be done by Booklaw of Nottingham. Thanks to all members of the PC for their work over the past 12 months. There were no questions.

The full report is included as Appendix 7 to these minutes.

12 Delegate discussion in groups re:

- a) branch committee meetings and branch committees (see note 12a to the agenda)
- b) Society news (see note 12b to the agenda)

Unfortunately, at this stage of the Conference, there was not a great deal of time so it was not possible to discuss all subjects fully. One delegate from each table presented the results for their group. The general consensus was as follows:

a (i) Now that the Society is a CIO, branch committees are expected to hold at least 4 meetings a year, one of which can be the branch AGM. The general consensus is that as much business is now conducted in the virtual world by email, then it is acceptable to have virtual meetings as long as a proper record is retained of the decisions made, noting that care must be taken over what is included in emails. Some were, however, concerned that the value of face to face meetings might be lost so at least some committee meetings should be face to face rather than virtual. It was felt that the final decision should rest with the individual branches.

a (ii) The current Rule 3b restricts the size of a branch committee to a maximum of 7 members – some branches have more although most have less and some struggle to recruit enough. The general consensus is that one way round the rule is to have any additional committee members as ex-officio perhaps acting as deputies who can then take over as others stand down. Having a deputy could be really useful if someone is lost very suddenly especially, perhaps, with regards to branch financial records on laptops/computers. The point was also made that committee members need to be active and not everyone who helps out at branch level needs to be on the committee. The overall consensus was that it might be helpful to amend Rule 3b as suggested with a minimum of 3 – Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, removing the maximum requirement.

b Society News – in the RO

Most groups did not have time to discuss this point in the limited time available. The few that did seemed to be generally happy with the situation as it is and agreed with the caveat that if members wanted change, they would have to be clear about exactly what, and would have to be prepared to put the work in on a regular basis and in keeping with the required publication timescale.

Notes to go with the Agenda are included as Appendix 8 to these minutes.

13 Discussion of Action Points from Regional Meetings

This had been circulated in advance of the weekend and there was little time for discussion as the Conference had to finish promptly, so questions were invited from the delegates. The new format for the Regional Meetings Summary was welcomed as being much easier to read and print out if required. Malcolm Hammond stated that he would like to see branch representatives better prepared before the meeting particularly with regards to branch presentations. No-one disagreed with this and it was clear that some branch representatives have found this easier than others.

14 Date and venue for the 2020 RCTS Annual Members' Weekend

Roger Newman from Bristol Branch confirmed that this is planned to be based at the Holiday Inn at Junction 25 on the M5 at Taunton. There are still one or two issues to be resolved with the hotel but they are nearly there. There is a proposed visit to the Diesel & Electric Group at Williton on Friday afternoon. The Friday evening buffet will be followed by a talk from a well-known Society member! The main Saturday visit is a day at the West Somerset Railway with a minibus for an alternative visit to include the Willow Centre, Streets and Glastonbury. The Saturday evening after dinner speaker will be Mark Smith of the Heritage Railway Association. The Officers' Conference on Sunday morning will be followed by an afternoon visit to the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway who have been very welcoming and have offered full access. The date is to be the weekend of 23-25 October 2020 and more information will be forthcoming once details have been confirmed.

The Chairman thanked Bristol Branch for taking this on for 2020.

15 Date and venue for the RCTS 2020 Annual General Meeting

This will be held at the Welcome Centre, Coventry on Saturday 25 April 2020.

16 Any Other Business

None was notified in advance.

Steve Ollive 14617 – Assistant Treasurer, Renewals, asked all present to encourage their branch members to chase up renewals and to check them eg no cheques required for those on Direct Debit, to return them to the correct address, and return them in a timely fashion. Help in this would be welcomed.

Callum MacLeod stated that we owe a debt of gratitude to Gordon who is stepping down as Society Chairman at the 2020 Annual General Meeting and to Society Secretary Bob Green who is 'doing a runner' at the same time. Our thanks to both.

Gordon thanked him for his kind words, thanked everyone present for coming and supporting the Members' Weekend this year and closed the meeting promptly.

Appendix 1

Chairman's Address 2019, Leicester

Ladies and Gentlemen - In opening this conference I would like to welcome you all to Holiday Inn here at the fine city resort of Leicester. 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 extend a warm welcome to **Steve Rickett** who is attending conference for the first time and I hope that you will find conference of interest and benefit but more importantly return next year.

Before we commence the conference I am sure that many of you will have heard that Bob Barby from the WM Branch passed away on the 4th of October. Bob had served his branch for over 60 years and was a regular attendee at the Officers' Conference. Irene has sent out a Newsletter with the details of Bob's Funeral. Alan Lovecy from the Sheffield branch died suddenly on the 7th of October. Sadly we also lost Malcolm Riley from the WR branch in February.. As you know Malcolm had been involved with outdoor visits for many years.

CAN WE ALL PLEASE STAND FOR A MINUTE AS A MARK OF RESPECT FOR OUR DEPARTED FRIENDS

I am not going to say a lot this morning as I do not want to steal the thunder of my colleagues who will giving their presentations later. We all have had a superb weekend here in Leicester and again 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 driving the accessible minibus.

Again this small dedicated team have put together an excellent programme of events for all of us to enjoy.

PLEASE SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION to John, Andy, Irene and Richard for the amount of effort and work put in to make this weekend so enjoyable.

You will have read in the RO that John Day is stepping down as the Members' Weekend Co-ordinator and despite an advert appearing in the RO nobody has come forward to fill John's shoes. If anyone here today knows anyone with organisations skills who could take on this role please let me know. For all the work that John has done for the Society at both national and branch level I was delighted to present John with an honorary life membership at last night's dinner. Congratulations to John - well deserved.

The vacancy for the Members Weekend Co-ordinator is still open as nobody has come forward to volunteer for that role. Next year's Members Weekend was in doubt, however, the Bristol branch have come forward to organise the event for 2020. Roger Newman will give us brief details later this morning. So what will happen in 2021, that depends on a volunteer, anyone willing?

David Elsdon as the Exhibitions Officer also stepped down earlier this year and we are looking for someone to take on the task so again is there anyone willing to take on this task?

As you know I am stepping down from the role of Chairman at the next Annual General Meeting (AGM) in April 2020 so this is an appropriate opportunity to present the Society Chairman designate. Callum MacLeod from the Scottish Branch, please stand up. I am sure you all know Callum as he was RO Editor for many years and is no stranger to the Officers' Conference. Bob Green, Society Secretary is hanging up his quill at the AGM in April. Bob please stand up, just in case nobody knows who you are. Bob is being succeeded by Geoff Adams from the Chichester branch. Geoff please stand up. These two appointments are, of course, subject to ratification at next year's AGM. I am sure you join me in wishing Callum and Geoff every success in their new roles

We continue our drive to recruit new members and those of you who read the Railway Magazine will have seen our new advert designed by our Publicity officer Roger Sandford. It is very eye catching and it is working as we have had quite a few applications to join the Society. As of this morning we now have 2997 members in the society. Well done Roger but explain to me what does GWR mean on the side of that Class 800? I can say that today as our President is not here.

As always the branches have been busy recruiting as well and as it is customary at conference it is time to give recognition to the branch who has recruited the most new members this year. In third place is Surrey Branch with 8, second place is Hitchin with 22 but comfortably in the lead for the second year running is Chichester with 26 new members. Chichester recruited 14 new members last year, it must be the sea air!! Congratulations to Chichester once again.

Again we have another special offer running for 2020 to entice new members to join the Society so please branch chairmen, or whoever does the announcements at branch meetings, please mention the offer at all events. Have a sign of some sort by the signing on book advertising the offer and let us get the membership total over the 3,000 mark.

After the AGM in April we presented our second annual report and financial accounts to the Charity Commissioner in July. So far we have had no response on either reports so I am assuming that all is well. However, you never know one day they may come back to us but for now we sit and wait. Our new website went live in March and I must thank David Jackman who for all his hard work in burning the midnight oil in getting phase one up and working. David will be giving some info on the new website later. We continue to place MC and Trustee minutes on the website once they have been confirmed at the subsequent meeting. Now **HANDS UP** who has visited our website and read any of the minutes – only 5! Thank you.

As always I would like to thank my colleagues on the MC for the amount of work they put in every year. My thanks also extends to all those on the editorial team for their efforts in producing the RO. One must not forget the Publications Committee who produce our publications and the Development Committee who come up with ideas to enhance the Society. Last but not least, a big thanks to all at the branches who continue their work in providing indoor and outdoor fixtures and those who man the sales and exhibition stands that you see advertised in the RO and elsewhere.

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'.

Thank you for listening.

AGENDA ITEM 4

Our President Brian Arman cannot be with us today as his wife is celebrating a very special birthday. She had told Brian months ago that she was quite willing for him to be here today, however, his children had informed him that if he did not attend the birthday party they were organising, not only would not be allowed to sleep in the garage, he would not be allowed to sleep in the bus shelter at the end of the road.

Brian has sent a message which will be read out by Reg Wood.

Appendix 2

Attendance and Apologies

Branch	Abbreviation	Present	Apologies Given
Bristol	BTL	Paul Udey Roger Newman Tony Horstman	Brian Arman
Cambridge	CBR	Robert Bartlett	Jim Crane
Cheltenham	CHM	Richard Morris	
Chichester	CHR	Geoff Adams Roger Sandford	Richard Ashby Geoff May
Croydon & Sth London	CSL	Peter Wilson	Jeremy Harrison Chris Meredith
East Midlands	EMD	Rodney Allen John Hitchens David Couzens-Howard	Paul Clark Michael Poole apologies from rest of committee
South Essex	ESX		
Furness, Lakes & Lune	FLL	Alan Sattenstall	
Humberside	HSD		
Hitchin	HTC	Steve Lacey	David Elsdon Paul Holloway John Dossett Adrian Scrutton
Ipswich	IPS	John Day	
Lancs & North West	LNW		Ian Derrick
Merseyside, Chester & Nth Wales	MCN		Alan Turton Jon Penn David Douglas John Cashen John Cowlshaw Paul Treby
Windsor & Maidenhead	MHD	Steve Ollive David Goddard Sally Goddard Alan Cooke	
Milton Keynes	MKY	Mark Richards	Bob Ballard
North East - Darlington	NEA D	Malcolm Hammond	Jim Sedgwick Margaret Fraser
North East - Newcastle	NEA N		Malcolm Snowball Jacqui Apperley Keith Stewart Tony Skinner
Northampton	NHN	Jack Knights	David Pick
Peterborough	PBR	Robert Warburton	Barry Butler Alan Burgess
Scottish	SCT	Richard Thorburn	Ken Falconer James Harrold
South East	SEA	John Holloway	Ronnie McAdam David Blackman Michael Woodward
Sheffield	SFD		Whole committee

Solent	SOE		Ted Vaughan John Godfrey Peter Ifold Dave Doulton Richard Whitehead
Surrey	SRY	Peter Bosomworth Tom Kolisch Bob Ellison	
South Wales	SWL	Steve Rickett	Peter Fortune Andrew Hemmings Stuart Warr Nigel Wassell Lin Bryant Ron Collins
Thames Valley West of England	TVY WEN	Denis Horsman	Charles Woodland David Mitchell David Hunt David Dornom Rob Davidson Alan Jelley Ian Reid Chris Berridge Gordon Earl Derek Huntriss Peter Smith
Watford West Midlands	WFD WMD	Geoff Plumb Derek Morris	D Beeken M Holt C Jagger
West Riding	WRD	Bob Green John Holroyd Steve Batty	
Trustees/MC members not listed elsewhere		Gordon Davies Reg Wood Andy Davies Mike Robinson David Jackman David Bird Irene Rabbitts	John Redgate Paul Chancellor
Other National Officers			Eric Rattray Terry Silcock Callum MacLeod

I am aware that not everyone signed in on the day so if there was anyone present who did not sign in and whose name is not on the list of those present, please let me know so that the list can be amended accordingly. Unfortunately, no apologies after the event can be recorded.

Appendix 3

President's Message

Message to the 2019 Reunion

Dear Members

Earlier in the year I was invited, as your President, to visit the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway Preservation Society's activities at Woody Bay on Exmoor. I was given a very warm welcome and a guided tour of all their facilities including the restored station and workshops. A footplate ride on the replica of 2-4-2 Lyn was a wonderful experience – especially as I noted that the boiler had been built locally in Highbridge. I was also given a guided tour of the other sites along the line that are owned by the society. One gained the impression that the L&B's ambition to rebuild the line largely on its original formation was not a step too far. Altogether there was much to admire from the beautifully restored coaches to the immaculately kept buildings, but especially the 'can do' optimism which seemed to infuse every element of the society's work and vision. As you will perceive I came away hugely impressed, an impression which I am sure that those who join us for the 2020 members weekend in Taunton will, if all goes to plan, also come to share.

In my view the RCTS has also got a lot to be optimistic about. For example, the RO continues to be a truly quality publication whilst the Library and Archive is rapidly establishing itself as a major asset to the Society and to the wider railway historical research community. The Development Committee is working hard to find ways to continue to grow the society and to encourage the formation of new branches in areas such as Manchester where the society is poorly represented. But without doubt our single greatest asset is our members and within the membership those who lead and organise our local branch meetings and national activities, who give many hours of their time to the Society's life and work. On behalf of the whole membership a special thank you must also go to our retiring Chairman Gordon Davies and Secretary Bob Green both of whom deserve our warmest approbation for the many years of service that they have both given especially through the challenging period during which the society was converted to charitable status. Both will be greatly missed and we all wish them well in their 'active' retirement.

I would also like to take this opportunity of thanking John Day, Andy Davies, Irene Rabbitts and their team for organising this weekend's events which I am sure will have been very enjoyable. As you will all be aware John is now standing down as the reunion organiser. The Society owes him a great debt of gratitude for all his hard work on our behalf and I personally want to thank him and his team for all that they have achieved in recent years.

As perhaps you will already know I am unable to attend because of family commitments – I'm getting too old to spend another 6 months sleeping in the garden shed, but I am looking forward to continuing to serve the Society through the coming years under its new leadership and during a fascinating period of growth and change on our nation's railway network.

With every good wish and blessings

Brian

PS I thank Reg for being such an able amanuensis!

Appendix 4

TREASURER'S REPORT TO THE OFFICERS CONFERENCE

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

The 2017/8 year produced a deficit of £3,531 compared to last year's surplus of £2,124. Our latest Forecast for 2018/9 is for a deficit of £5,000 before any use of reserves.

Publication sales increased 13% in 2017/8, achieving £22,261 (last year £19,657) and contributed a small surplus of £821 to our results. Our margins on book sales reduced to 4% due to increased stock provisions. Our fixed costs remained steady. Sales were assisted by a reprint of *The 9F 2-10-0s* over half the print run being sold in the year. *The Patriots*, a further title in our LMS series, was printed in 2017/8 for a launch at the beginning of this financial in November 2018. This year more than £10,000 has been invested in new publications, and at Year End our stock was valued at £32,200. With our influx of new members, branches are invited to remind them of their membership discounts on publications.

This year I am delighted to be able to report good progress on income. Members donations towards our new archive and library raised £16,000 and their Gift Aid declarations (where appropriate) allowed us to claim £6,000 in Gift Aid from HMRC. Please extend the MC's thanks to members. Half of the funds have been included in the 2017/8 Accounts with the balance carried forward against capitalised library assets.

During the year our major initiatives to develop our new archive/library and website continued with a further investment of £19,500. Surrey Branch also donated £2,000 to the former for which the MC is most grateful. Also £1,000 was spent on information for our projected diesels publications.

In 2017/8 work continued on our expansion of our saleable library of digital images with a further investment of £1,700. Images from our substantial library can be purchased through our website.

The Society constrained administration costs to around £18,000 per year despite work and meetings for our additional Development Committee initiatives and the Leatherhead project.

Talking Administration, could I draw Branches attention to their VAT returns. These are returned through Eric Rattray on Form 104 usually twice a year for the 6 months to 30 April and the 6 months to 31 October. Your Branch Officers Handbook reminds us that they are required within 6 weeks from period end. HMRC only allow this timescale for any VAT registered organisations. Any later submissions puts the Society technically at fault and means all Branch returns have to be held over until the next VAT return 3 months later. In turn this means Branches have to wait longer for their repayment claims. Please let Eric know if you need help with your VAT financial returns.

In carrying out the role of Society Treasurer, I receive invaluable support from my assistant treasurers Denis Horsman and Eric Rattray, and on Gift Aid Peter Smith. 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 Eric Rattray in pulling all their Branch data together.

REG WOOD
Society Treasurer

Appendix 5

Development Committee Report

The committee has three principal areas of responsibility- to grow the membership, suggest ways of promoting the Society and improve our offering to the members.

On the former the last eighteen months have been very productive. The Society has an official target to grow the membership 5% year on year. As we have traditionally lost between 150 and 200 members each year that means that we need to recruit at least 300 new members to achieve the target. The 'free' membership campaign of 2018 and the ongoing 50% off offer to those joining in 2019 has now brought the membership total up to almost 3000, thus returning us to a total last seen some ten years ago. However this has come at a considerable cost for advertising, money that could be saved if other ways could be found to achieve the target. One that has brought us a good return has been the attendance, organised by the central team, at the Crewe and Carlisle open days, netting almost 100 new members. The problem encountered here is that of getting the local branches to provide stand cover, with both events requiring some members travelling in excess of 200 miles each way to compensate. However, as pointed out previously, if each branch recruited ten new members each year we would almost reach our new member target and also save a lot of money.

On Society promotion, clearly our membership adverts and attendance at exhibitions go a long way in doing that. We also have had minor success in getting some press releases published and we have our monthly column in the Railway Magazine. However, the size of the challenge was highlighted by a member who carried out a survey of his friends who have an interest in railways which suggested that only 5% of them had even heard of the RCTS. The current final element of our promotion activities has been the continued placement of Society owned nameplates at heritage sites with just two now waiting to be found a good loan opportunity. Work is already underway to identify opportunities for publicity in our 100 year celebrations.

Growing the package for members has seen a number of member benefits being negotiated and publicised in the RO. The Development Committee (DC) team would be pleased to receive any ideas from members about products and services that they use as an enthusiast where we might be able to negotiate a group discount, as well as any way of adding things to our membership offer.

The DC does have a number of ideas to greatly improve what we do such as more network location visits and new branches. However, to do this volunteers are needed which so far have not been forthcoming. Firstly we need a new exhibitions officer, the lack of which is likely to remove the possibility of 100 new members recruited at national exhibitions in 2020. Volunteers are also needed to help in our 'new branches' project and the network visit programme, whilst finally the DC is also looking for one new member, the main qualification being an ability to think outside the box to generate and take forward new ideas. Whilst it is appreciated that Society officers are already giving much time, we would ask that they look hard at their local members to see whose arm they can twist to help the key area of improving the Society for the benefit of all.

Appendix 6

The Railway Observer Report

Whilst we have had no startling new innovations over the past year, we continue to build on our sound relationship with our printers Amadeus to further improve the quality of the magazine which drops on your doorstep each month. With a high gloss cover, coated paper and 76 monthly pages packed with reports, articles, and topical well reproduced illustrations, I think you will agree that we now have a standard of publication matching the best of the commercial rail magazines available on your local WHS bookshelf!

Although we have not always achieved our objective of getting the printed RO onto your doorstep at the start of each month, we do have a precisely defined and dated production schedule for each month essentially driven by the submission dates which appear on the inside front cover of the RO. However, with only a small team of volunteers and virtually no redundancy in terms of either task fulfilment, software provision or final print production, we are very much at the whim of external circumstances to make the critical path succeed. Factors outside our control do affect the delivery schedule – not least the current October issue where having initially predicted delivery because of team holidays as around the 10th of the month, I understand problems in the Royal Mail sorting office delayed things by a further week.

It needs to be borne in mind that aside from the final print process, which we contract to Amadeus, every other element of each month's RO development is undertaken by volunteer members, each of whom commit to delivering a certain task within the schedule. Of course, being volunteers, the process depends on the precise periods of time they can make available. This inevitably varies from month to month dependent on each volunteer's personal domestic commitments, alternative priorities, holidays and - let's not forget as most of us are getting older, health issues.

This is in no sense a criticism of our excellent RO team, just a statement of reality. It is, however, my job as Team Manager if you like, to make the blend work each month and I simply want to emphasise that if you contact one of us and do not get an immediate response, please be patient as we are probably in the middle of a crisis! Irrespective of branch matters, every member's core link with your Society is the RO and that is entirely dependent on the 30 or so (ageing) volunteers dedicated to giving you your monthly fix of railway operations! They all do an excellent job and I trust you will join me in saluting them all.

It is worth noting that over the past year, provided as individuals you had each equipped yourselves to access the excellent new RCTS website whether by laptop, desktop or smartphone, you have been able to access, I am sure, every edition of the digital RO on the first day of the every month. Digital access comes with all classes of membership and costs you nothing extra. Around 20% of our membership now opt exclusively for the digital version and when time permits we plan to look at one or two digital only enhancements to increase the appeal - by including on-line access to some relevant movie clips.

For those of you have never seen it, maybe the following demonstration will be helpful:

[HOPEFULLY A DEMO OF DIGITAL RO ACCESS]

So there you have it. I trust you will now feel sufficiently confident to try it out and promote its availability within your branches over forthcoming months.

As regards the detail of the past year, we published over 900 pages of news, features and anecdotes and with a monthly average of 51 high quality images – in total 630 selected from around 2000 submitted over year. I am pleased to say our appeal for more photo submissions continues to be successful and over the past few years we have added several excellent new photographer to our regular informal panel of submitters. However, we are always looking for new contributors particularly for those less well represented areas: in particular the WCML south of Crewe; the ECML south of Doncaster; the GW east of Swindon; and as ever the former Southern Region. Might I be right in thinking it a little naff to be seen carrying a 35 mm SLR on stations in the affluent Home Counties?

Seriously though folks, do put the word out. I would like significantly more representation from these parts.

The other area, which as Branch Officers you can help with, is promoting the generation of articles from your local members. So as I said last year, do please ask your local members to 'brain-dump' some of their more interesting enthusiast experiences or interest into a laptop for us to consider publishing, and if they can be supported with acceptable images, so much the better. However, with the RCTS Photographic Archive at our finger tips, do not worry. If you have no images you feel suitable, we can possibly find something in that excellent repository – which again I recommend you look at via the website. The main thing is to record your experiences for us all to enjoy.

Feedback continue to suggest that the RO supports the membership extremely well and, with perhaps no more than a third of the membership regularly attending meetings, is perhaps the key element in the Society's ability to develop and maintain membership which, with the addition of almost 750 potentially new members, is now around 3,000 and almost three times as many as our nearest traditional competitor society.

As ever, we are in constant need of potential replacements for members of the Ed Team who wish to retire, or for possible new editorial ideas. Watch Talking Points for details of these as they arise, but if anyone feels like offering themselves as an ad-hoc editorial volunteer, just ask them to drop me an email or give me a call – you have the contact details.

Before closing, a brief word about our printers Amadeus - we are now in our 8th year of collaboration with them over which time, with their expert technical assistance, we have improved the size of the magazine by 20% and the production quality enormously. They continue to help us understand how to take advantage of emerging print technology which in turn helps us serve you with a richer more focused and time sensitive produce. And we have done all this within a framework where, although costs have increased slightly as compared with 2012, price rises have been significantly below inflation and invariably accompanied by qualitative enhancements. So, on behalf of all RCTS members, I am happy to say a big thank you to Amadeus for supporting us so well over the past seven years.

Finally, a big thank you to those regular contributors of news and images without whom there would be no RO, and, of course as ever, the 30 or so permanent members of the editorial team, who collectively spend something like 400 hours a month producing the RO.

Thank you.

Mike Robinson – Managing Editor, the Railway Observer

Appendix 7

Publications Committee Report

This report covers the committee's activities over the past year starting with:

1 the LMS Series

The PATRIOT book

This title was launched in November 2018. We printed 1,250 and I can report that to date we have sold 645 copies. This includes 120 purchased by the Patriot Trust whose special meeting we attended in November 2018 to help launch the book. Branch sales will also have moved another 100 copies.

a) Royal Scot

Work continued on this title with a view to publication in 2 years' time. We have had to consider the fact that other publishers have and are issuing new books on this class of locomotive. Our version is therefore being held back so as not to clash with these other offerings.

b) Stanier 8F

This project has commenced with input from both RCTS members and those of the Stanier 8F Society. Some chapters have been written, others commenced, tables and facts researched and tabulated ready for addition where required. Other parts are still under research and a lot of this is due to the original RTS member Jim Waite supplying data that he has accumulated over many years. Consequently, we are optimistic that this title can be carried through to a conclusion and added to the LMS series. It is probably some two years away from completion.

As I said last year, any further books in the series are unlikely. We have no authors available to continue the work.

Other Titles (Picture Books)

Despite our best intentions we have not yet been able to complete the Mensing project. We had to refine our search and scan methods in order to get the best selection. This is nearly complete but some captions are still to be worked up. We also have been looking into publishing our books via a difference type of printing. This method is called 'digital printing' and involves using digital presses at printers rather than the traditional litho method. This book is one produced via this method. Our classic books are section sprinted, stitched in sections and then bound into a hard cover. The digital print method allows us to choose any number of pages, not just divisible by 4. Also as you can see, the pages are glued into the cover and each other, we are told extremely strong glue and does not let pages drop out. Another advantage of this style of printing is that it allows us to have small runs ie 200/300 copies. If they sell out in say six months we can order another 200 very simply and quickly. Prices are also slightly cheaper. Therefore we will be following this route for theses types of books. I use the plural as during the year, we have had an approach from a current member Stuart Warr of South Wales Branch offered a book on his lifetime of photography using all B/W images. We agreed to deal with this and as Stuart was keen he went ahead and produced an extensive selection of pictures baked up with captions and ideas for layout. Consequently, this book has overtaken the Mensing one and we expect to be printing this in 2020 using the digital print process. The Mensing book will follow towards the end of 2020. The likely page count is 128 and in landscape format so we can set a style and standard to follow.

We still have an offer to select and therefore produce further albums of this type from the Photographic Archive including the George Staddon collection. We hope that with the new process and sales to support the idea we can produce other titles in this theme of picture books.

Other Titles

In the last 3 months I am pleased to say that we have been offered hard back volumes to publish on railway topics that are not necessarily steam-related. We are working with the prospective authors and will report further on the assumption that we are able to progress them towards publication.

Selling to Branches Policy

This entails branches buying RCTS book stock from the RCTS central store and then sorting, selling those publications on their own terms. In effect they become a 'book seller'. The idea is as follows:

- 1 To start the process all existing book stock held by any branch is purchased by that branch at 50% of the existing sale price (not necessarily the cover price). The branch counts stock and advises what they have;
- 2 Each Branch sells its stock at its chosen price;
- 3 Any subsequent requests for books to replenish stocks are again purchased from central stock at 50% discount. This remains whether 5 books or 50. Again the purchase would be at current selling price of each title;
- 54 Any new titles would also be available to the Branch at a 50% trade discount. The only CONDITION is that the branch holds the selling price for the first year of each new book at the cover price. The exception is, of course, any sales to members who would qualify for a member's discount.
- 5 The same rules apply for any subsequent top up purchases of new titles.
- 6 After the first year of sales then the branch can sell at whatever price they choose.

I am please to advise that five branches have signed up to the idea and have purchased their stock. Others have politely declined. Should any of the remaining branches wish to discuss further please contact myself after the Conference.

Sales for November 2018 to September 2019

Please remember that these figures do not include any Branch sales as I am not party to what they sell. Those figures are reported to the finance department separately. However, of course, under the new selling policy outlined above, books sold by central RCTS to branches who adopted this idea are included in this series of figures.

The Patriot book was the top seller, we moved 645 copies. Sales have slowed considerably in the last 4 months but this is usual especially as we have had slow reviews being printed in the commercial press. Still awaiting for a couple of them to be published.

The Pacific title maintained strong sales with 74 copies moved in the year.

The two Black Five volumes also showed steady sales with 68 copies moved in the period under review, down from last year of 111.

The Standard series still remains popular and 200 copies of the 5 books were moved during the year. Volume 3 of the series has now sold out and is thus out of stock. This book was available for 20 years and included a reprint but now it is finished. Standards Volume 1 will shortly follow into the out of print category as only some 20 are left in stock.

Within the LMS series we sold 211 books plus a further 99 books of the other titles that we have in stock. In this section please note that the GNR Volumes 1 and 2 are now out of stock. This also applies to the Armstrong Whitworth and Western Change titles which both went out of stock during the year.

In total, therefore, we sold 1229 of our books. This compares to 1104 in the previous year.

In addition we moved 54 Easibinders, 3 ties and 1 badge.

The committee comprised 6 in total but as we have added Roger Sandford (the Society's Publicity Officer) to our ranks, it is now 7. We met three times during the year to handle the work and manage the projects in hand. Much of the work is handled by the medium of electronic mail and the telephone.

The despatch and storage of our titles remain with Booklaw of Nottingham who continue to carry out this function for us. I will be visiting them shortly to carry out the annual stocktake.

As ever I extend my thanks to the committee for their invaluable help and assistance during the past year.

David Bird, Chairman, Publications Committee

Appendix 8

Notes to go with the Agenda

12a)

i) **Branch committee meetings**

The current Rules of the Society state that branch committees should hold at least 4 committee meetings each year, one of which can be the branch AGM (Annual General Meeting). This can present practical problems for some branches where committee members may be widely dispersed or some committee members work shifts that are difficult to coordinate with the availability of other committee members. The Society Rules do not prescribe the form that the meetings should take and one suggestion is a form of 'virtual' meeting that may be conducted by email or similar. Delegates may have additional ideas. The important criterion to remember is that there is a proper record of discussions and a proper record of decisions made.

Please discuss the options and any short guidelines that might be useful in practice to ensure that we can all match the requirements of the Rules.

ii) **Branch Committees and Rule 3 b)**

This restricts the size of branch committees to a maximum of 7 which must include Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. There are some branches that have larger committees that work well. Do delegates feel that this restriction needs to be lifted bearing in mind that getting committee members, rather than restricting their numbers, is a more common difficulty?

If it is agreed that the restriction should be lifted, should Rule 3 b) be re-written eg as follows:

"Each branch should be administered by a committee comprising a minimum of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer elected annually from amongst its members."

If it is agreed that Rule 3 b) should remain unchanged, what would you do about branches where the committee comprises more than 7?

12b)

Society News

Some members have suggested, informally, that they would like more Society news. While they are aware of "Talking Points", "Observers Diary", short branch reports on meetings/other activities in The Railway Observer (RO), as well as information appearing on the Society's website, some have expressed the opinion that they would like to see more Society news and information particularly in the RO as this is the one document that goes out regularly to all members each month including those who do not access the website. There might be several ways to do this that would need to be approved by the Management Committee working with the Managing Editor. If you would like something like this, then clear suggestions as to what you would like to see are required, as well as a commitment to provide the material for publication. If you are happy with the way things are, please confirm this.

There is a caveat - delegates should bear in mind that to make anything like this work, members and branches will need to be clear about exactly what they want, make a good case that it should go ahead and, more importantly, will need to contribute any additional information and meet the editorial deadlines. The RO editorial team have plenty to do already and it would be unfair and unreasonable to expect them to produce any additional material themselves or have to chase up on items that have not been submitted on time.