

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

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Officers' Newsletter 230

24 April 2024

Dear All

There is quite a lot of information in this Officers' Newsletter and for some items you will need to follow the links in the text to access the full information. Please read and share as necessary.

Officers' Conference 2023 Minutes

The full draft minutes complete with appendices (present, apologies, Chairman's letter after the event) have been attached as Appendix 1 to this newsletter. For those who attended, please let me know of any errors or omissions and, for those who were unable to attend, I hope you find them interesting and that this will encourage you to join us at future Officers' Conferences.

Regional Meetings 2024

The time for Regional Meetings is almost upon us and there is still much to do and arrangements to be confirmed for which I need your help. The current details are in the table below so you can see that there is still some information missing regarding dates and times although most is now confirmed. Where this is still outstanding, I would like confirmation of date, time and venue as soon as possible, and that the chairmen and secretaries who have been kind enough to volunteer are available for those meetings. Dates, times and venues are particularly important as I still need to coordinate Trustee representatives for each of the meetings and I cannot do so without the correct details.

Whilst there are already some items for inclusion on the Agenda, this is a golden opportunity for Branch Officers to raise issues that they would like to discuss that are relevant to their Branches as well as to the RCTS as a whole, and for dialogue between Branches and the centre in a more informal setting than the Society AGM or Officers' Conference. This is about working together, sharing ideas for the common good, and enabling the Society to go forward into the future as a stronger organisation.

It would be a first for me if all Branches were represented in person, rather than most Branches in person with comments and reports submitted with their apologies for absence for the remainder. I am very happy to talk to any Branch about how they might manage this.

The information contained in this newsletter is for use of RCTS Officers and Members only and should not be communicated outside of the Society

RCTS	GREAT WESTERN	LONDON & SOUTH	NORTHERN HOME COUNTIES	MIDLAND & NORTH WESTERN	WREMNESH
LOCATION	59 Kenmore Crescent Filton Park BRISTOL BS7 0TP	Maybury Centre 27 Board School Road WOKING GU21 5HD	Digswell Village Church Warren Way DIGSWELL AL6 0DH	Waverley Hotel 9 Pedley Street CREWE CW2 7AA	Edmondson Room National Railway Museum, YORK (tbc)
DATE	Saturday 15 June 2024	Saturday 22 June 2024	Saturday 08 June 2024	Thursday 30 May 2024	Thursday/Friday tbc
TIME	11am	11am	11am	11am	11am
TRUSTEE					
CHAIRMAN	Brian Arman (secretary Paul Udey)	Steve Ollive (secretary Denis Horsman)	David Smyth (secretary David Elsdon)	Nigel Bowker (secretary Alan Sattenstall)	Derek Stuckey (secretary Tony Skinner)
	Great Western:	Bristol; Cheltenham; Thames Valley; South Wales; West of England			
	London & South:	Chichester; Croydon & South London; Solent; Surrey; Windsor & Maidenhead			
	Northern Home Counties:	Cambridge; Hitchin; Ipswich; Milton Keynes; Northampton; Peterborough; South Essex; Watford			
	Midland & North Western:	Furness, Lakes & Lune; Lancashire & North West; Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales; West Midlands			
	WREMNESH:	East Midlands; Humberside; North East; Scottish; Sheffield; West Riding			

Speaker listings

Up until now I have not been very much in favour of setting up a list of potential speakers for Branch meetings as I am aware of how difficult it can be to set up, manage and maintain such a list. However, I have received a very eloquent request that could not be refused so this is the first note that we will be trialling the idea - to see how it goes.

With a view to starting, I am looking for information from Society Officers, Branches and others on good railway themed speakers who would be prepared to give presentations to Branches. The following information will be required:

- Speaker name and contact details – email address, telephone number;
- Speaker location and roughly how far they are prepared to travel;
- Fees/travel costs/other costs (eg overnight accommodation for long distances);
- Subject/subjects covered;
- Prepared for in person only presentations/hybrid presentations/virtual presentations.
- Any other relevant information.

Please contact me with details or suggestions as soon as possible on liaison@rcts.org.uk or 01932 855015.

IMPORTANT – Message from Society Chairman James Milne

"Many of you at Branch level may have shared my own dismay to see pictures in the railway press of heritage lines running recreations of rail tours from the past, and this year particularly 60-year commemorations. The latest involved the Spa Valley Railway and the 22 March 1962 *Sussex Downsman* - a joint RCTS/LCGB tour, and during 2023 the Mid-Hants ran an RCTS special complete with a replica headboard, when we could have loaned them the real thing, had we known!

Personally, I would like to think that we can be much more proactive in this area, so am attaching a spreadsheet (Appendix 2) to show rail tours from 1964 (i.e. 60 years' anniversaries) from the Six Bells Junction website, the date of the tour in 1964 with an outline of the route, and possible heritage railways, on or close to the route in '64. I have then annotated the possible RCTS Branch(es) that could contact the heritage operations shown and their other local contacts to offer loan of RCTS headboards, and leverage publicity through *The RO*, if a recreation, commemorative tour is planned.

I do realise that many of the lines travelled in 1964 no longer exist, but seize the initiative and talk to your local heritage operations to build closer ties and explore whether they would like to come and talk at your Branch Meetings. Even those Branches not specifically mentioned in the spreadsheet should be promoting their Branch and the benefits of Society membership. Good luck!"

James Milne – Society Chairman

(please note that you can access the full list of RCTS rail tours on the website by clicking on the following link: <https://rcts.org.uk/library/#collections>)

It only remains to thank you all for your continued support of the Society and to ask, as our Chairman does, for your continued commitment and being prepared to look at new ideas and perhaps better ways, to improve what we do and how we cooperate more fully with others in celebrating and carrying forward our shared enthusiasm for railways.

Kind regards

Irene

Appendix 1

Minutes of the Officers' Conference

Saturday 28 October 2023

Danum Gallery Archive & Museum, Waterdale
DONCASTER DN1 3BZ

1 Opening of Conference by Society Chairman

Society Chairman James Milne welcomed everyone to Conference commenting that Danum was an appropriate meeting place for railway enthusiasts and saying thank you to those involved in organising the day. As Chairman he hoped the Conference would deliver a 'modern railway society'.

Emergency evacuation procedures were announced although no emergency was expected.

First time attendees to Conference were especially welcomed by name (and Branch) as follows:

Robin Gibbons – East Midlands
Nigel Bowker – Merseyside, Cheshire & North Wales
Barrie Burns – North East
Tony Field – Cambridge
Peter Ifold – Solent
Alistair Jolly – Cambridge
David Cross – Trustee
Gordon Adams – Thames Valley
Stewart Jolly – Bristol

This year's Conference would be more practical and instructional than usual with workshops on finance, digital, and new/recently appointed officers. Benefits would be directly proportional to input from the floor, so participation was actively encouraged.

The future remains challenging as can be seen with fellow railway interest groups but James highlighted the possibilities of exciting developments to come, with a hope to show progress and innovation over the next 12 months. He planned to meet as many people as possible during the workshops and briefly outlined the programme for the day ahead.

2 Apologies for Absence

These are listed as an Appendix after the minutes, as is the list of those Officers present.

3 President's Address

Brian Arman highlighted that we were going through interesting and challenging times and used anecdotes appropriate to the location for illustration, as well as his own railway enthusiast behaviour as a child when he was caught out by his father watching trains and locomotives when he was quite insistent that he had attended Sunday School. Everyone present was attending because of a love of and an interest in railways. He acknowledged that there are still issues post Covid and a need for people to come forward, but he also noted a sense of hope and encouragement and gave some examples of Branches with issues that have made progress. There are green shoots which may be small but this weekend should be seen as fertilizer and encouragement. There is real hope and he thanked everyone present for attending.

4 Confirmation of the 2022 Minutes

With a little humour about Beachy Head, James reported on the trial of charging for hybrid Branch meetings carried out by Windsor & Maidenhead Branch. This had been successful and had not adversely affected attendance. National Zoom meetings were now chargeable to non-members with donations from members encouraged. Current membership of the Society is not declining as with some other organisations.

The minutes of the 2022 Officers' Conference were accepted unanimously.

5 Workshops

There were three workshops taking place at this stage in the programme so those present separated into their respective groups. The Digital Workshop took place in the main Flying Scotsman meeting room, the Branch Treasurers Workshop took place in the St Leger room and the small group for the Introductory Workshop departed down to the main museum gallery. Each group had its own programme which was outlined and circulated with Officers' Newsletter 224 dated 29 September 2023 so no need for repetition here. Each group also provided additional information to delegates as appropriate.

Lunch was served at 13.00

6 Welcome Back

Everyone was welcomed back after lunch and James announced that the afternoon would take the form of presentations and an open forum.

7 Digital Updates

This was led by Society Digital Officer Matthew Shaw who apologised about the onsite technology not working as expected, in spite of staff trying to resolve the problem. He covered five main areas as follows:

- a) The Main Website;
- b) Digital Archive;
- c) Photographic Archive;
- d) Mailjet and Zoom;
- e) Future Projects.

Details were provided in each area with particular aspects highlighted such as keeping Branch webpages up to date, interesting and welcoming. Also key is ensuring that the RCTS back catalogue of publications is more accessible as well as being a good source of income for the Society. The new scanning equipment purchased as part of the photographic archive project was listed, with details of what is possible and how members can help both onsite at Leatherhead and remotely. Mailjet has proven to be an effective way to email the majority of the membership, approximately 85% of whom have provided email addresses, and which can be used for membership renewal notifications which saves a considerable amount of money on postage and paper. The challenge is those who do not read their emails. The Society's Zoom licence has been renewed but differently from previously as usage has changed now that Branches have mostly reverted to face-to-face

meetings. The licence now covers larger numbers without paying an additional fee but without the number of separate licences paid for last year.

Other digital projects will be to refresh our own website, progress on selling photographs directly instead of using Zenfolio, for practical as well as financial reasons – especially as the photographic archive project progresses and becomes more accessible. Print and postage costs are ‘rocketing’ so digital aspects of our activities may have to be used more widely in the future.

James thanked Matthew, confirming that his work and progress is backed by the Trustees.

A brief introduction of new Trustee David Cross, who is also the RCTS Nameplate Administrator, explained this aspect of what he does and the great collection of locomotive nameplates in the museum at Danum.

8 The new Health & Safety Policy and Guidance

This was introduced by former RCTS Chairman Callum MacLeod who confirmed that it was his concerns that led to the closure of the former RCTS library at Uxbridge on health and safety grounds. Whilst the RCTS has always had a regard for health & safety, there had been no written policy in the past. Now that we are a CIO and registered charity, it was important to be seen to have a formal written policy to be followed at all levels within the Society. Thanks were given to the working party – Richard Morris, Paul Chancellor, Irene Rabbitts, Callum MacLeod. The Policy itself is brief; the Guidance is more detailed on all Society activities both at national and Branch level and is available on the website. The Guidance includes a sample risk assessment form.

Further examples of what is required, and why, were discussed and it was highlighted that it is not complicated or threatening. Discussion included offers of help and sample completed risk assessments. Venues used by the RCTS and its Branches should all have health and safety policies and completed risk assessments, so these would be useful to anyone arranging meetings or visits.

9 Branch Attendance Statistics – Initial Findings

This was introduced by Branch Liaison Officer Irene Rabbitts who wholeheartedly supported the Chairman’s request for Branches to provide information on numbers attending Branch meetings together with information on subject matter, date, day of the week, time of meeting etc. A simple form had been circulated with Officers’ Newsletter 222 (28 July 2023). It was pleasing to note that three quarters of Branches had already provided the information by the time of Conference. It may be that the original form will need to be amended in future to better reflect Branch activities and it may be that it will also be ‘rolled out’ to other Branch activities in future. One of the initial findings is that only about 26% of Branch members attend meetings. There will be a proper analysis in due course once **ALL** Branches have provided their returns for 2023. As this is the first year for the attendance returns, it is hoped to provide a greater insight in future and input from Branches about improving the questionnaire would be welcomed.

10 Free Discussion led by the Chairman

The format for this year’s Conference meant more time available hence this item on the Agenda, so - Questions were raised from the floor on asking members to make sure that they keep their email addresses up to date and perhaps to include this in bold type in the *Railway Observer (RO)*.

There was a request about advertising flyers for members to hand out when out 'spotting', especially when younger enthusiasts are seen, to publicise the RCTS. David Cross confirmed that there are 2 flyers – one a welcome to new members, the second about the RCTS and what we do – to be reviewed at a future Strategy Group meeting. This can be made available to Branches and members. It was suggested that something new and more attractive than currently available was required. Society President Brian Arman corroborated the need for such material by giving an example of being out and about wearing the RCTS logo and being asked what it meant. An e-copy to each Branch would be a means of circulating it for Branches, other Officers and Members to use as required. Discussion highlighted that some Branches have their own single sheet flyers and others have regular bulletins or newsletters. Promoting Branch activities was deemed important.

There was discussion about updated Branch membership lists – provided annually or on request.

Callum MacLeod spoke of a recent request about the Society's Certificate of Appreciation.

Chief Archivist Andy Davies requested Branch programme cards together with Branch histories, newsletters etc for the Archive at Leatherhead as there is currently only a very limited selection. Electronic copies would be acceptable.

There was discussion on promoting Branch activities and engaging with neighbouring Branches which led on to a brief update on the 2023 Regional Meetings, highlighting some of the issues raised. All the Regional Meetings were held in 2023 although there is a question on the viability of the smallest one. There is a common problem with older committee members wishing to step down but difficulty in recruiting new people to take over. The expense of running meetings is increasing so door donations have also had to be increased. Help from the Digital Officer with updating Branch webpages has been welcomed. Better communication on reimbursements from the centre would be welcomed. Branch finances and help from the centre were discussed with most Branches being in favour of financial independence. The continuation of Life Memberships was not generally well supported although this was not unanimous and some wished it to continue. The increasing costs of postage and printing were raised as relevant here as was the information that those who lead an active lifestyle and are actively engaged in interests - like railways, tend to live longer. There was support for establishing and maintaining good links with other organisations outside of the RCTS as mutually beneficial. Finally, the importance of a warm welcome to both members and guests at Branch meetings was made clear.

11 Any Other Business

- a) 2024 Members' Weekend – at this time no Branch or group of Branches had come forward to organise the event. Malcolm Hammond, representing North East Branch, suggested that they had ideas for a potential 2025 members' Weekend and would look into the possibilities.
- b) With no Members' Weekend confirmed for 2024, it is likely that the Officers' Conference will be a one-day format as for this year.

12 Date and Venue for 2024 Society AGM

This will be held on Saturday 20 April 2024 at Wolverhampton. Thoughts and ideas on an alternative venue for the Society AGM in 2025 were requested partly because of the high costs of the Wolverhampton venue. It could be a heritage centre, should be rail connected and also have road access.

13 Closing Remarks

James firmly stated that we should be proud of this Society and its achievements, giving brief examples of what has been done. He had done an audit of Branch webpages in June and some do not even have any words of welcome – this needs to be remedied and help is available, so no excuses. He thanked Brian for running the Introductory Workshop today and those running the finance and digital workshops. He reminded everyone that if Branches are asked by the centre for something, all should comply as there is good reason for asking. He was impressed by the energy and positivity in the room today – tremendous. Let us harness that and work together, no more of the 'Centre versus the Branches', but rather let us pull together.

He thanked everyone for attending and taking part.

Appendix 1 to OC minutes

Present at Conference 28 October 2023

	Name	Branch role	Preferred training session
BTL	Stewart Jolly	Treasurer	Finance
		Chairman/Society	
	Brian Arman	President	Workshop leader
	Reg Wood	Society Treasurer	Workshop Leader
CBR	Jacky Wood	Branch member	choice not logged
	Alistair Jolly	Web manager	Web workshop
	Tony Field	Secretary	Introduction
CHM	Richard Morris	Treasurer	Finance
CHR	Roger Sandford	Chairman	Web workshop
		Chair/Assistant	
EMD	Robin Gibbons	Treasurer	Finance
	Rodney Allen	Treasurer	Finance
FLL	Alan Sattenstall	Secretary	Web workshop
HTC	Dr Steve Lacey	Chairman	Finance
	David Elsdon	Secretary	Web workshop
MCN	Eric Rattray	Treasurer	part of finance workshop team
	Nigel Bowker	Secretary	Introductory
MHD	Matthew Shaw		Web workshop leader
	David Goddard	Treasurer	Finance
	Sally Goddard	Secretary	Introductory
	Beatrice Goddard		
	Malcolm	Honorary Committee Member	Introductory
NEA-D	Hammond	Chairman	Web workshop
	Barrie Burns	Committee member	Web workshop
SCT	Callum MacLeod	Treasurer	Finance
SFD	Derek Stuckey	Chairman	Finance
	Alan Hardman	Treasurer	Finance
SOE	Peter Ifold	Treasurer	Finance
	Denis Horsman	Secretary	Finance
SRY	Tom Kolisch	Fixtures	Web workshop
		Treasurer/Branch	
	Irene Rabbitts	Liaison	Introductory
TVY	Andy Davies	Chairman/Chief Archivist	
	Gordon Adams	Web	Web workshop
WFD	Geoff Plumb	Chairman	Web workshop
National	James Milne	Society Chairman	
		Trustee/Development	
	David Cross	Officer	Introductory

Officers' Conference 28 October 2023 – Apologies

BTL	Paul Udey	Branch Secretary	Apologies
	Robert Bartlett		Apologies
	Richard Neale		Apologies
CSL	Chris Meredith	Chairman	Apologies
	Peter Wilson	Secretary	Apologies
	Jeremy Harison	Web	Apologies
ESX	Rodger Green	Chairman	Apologies
	Iain Scotchman		Apologies
HSD	Carey Vessey	Chairman/Secretary	Apologies
	Peter Louth	Treasurer	Apologies
	Paul Holloway		Apologies
IPS	Bev Steele	Secretary	Apologies
	John Day	Vice Chair	Apologies
	John Cashen		Apologies
	Steve Ollive	Chairman	Apologies
	Mark Richards	Secretary	Apologies
LNW	Roger Sutcliffe	Chairman	Apologies – all committee
NHN	Richard Deacon	Chairman	Apologies
	Alan Burgess	Treasurer	Apologies
PBR	Colin Greatrex	Secretary	Apologies
	Barry Butler	Chairman	Apologies
	Richard Thorburn	Secretary, Exhibitions etc	Apologies
	Jim Bryant	Secretary	Apologies
	John Godfrey	Chairman	Apologies
	John Goodrich	committee member	Apologies
	David Doulton	Internet/web	Apologies
	Jeremy Segrott	Chairman	Apologies
	Steve Rickett	Treasurer	Apologies
	Andrew Hemmings	Deputy Chair	Apologies
SWL	Peter Fortune	Secretary	Apologies
	Andrew Jenkins	Fixtures	Apologies
	Phil Darlaston	Chairman	Apologies
	Stuart Hicks	Treasurer	Apologies
	Bob Ellison	Committee member	Apologies
	Charles Woodland	Secretary	Apologies
	David Mitchell	Chairman	Apologies
	David Dornom	Web	Apologies
	David Hunt	Treasurer	Apologies
	Richard Dyett		Apologies
WMD	Ian Reid	Secretary	Apologies
	Paul Smith	Treasurer	Apologies
	Derek Huntriss	Fixtures	Apologies
WRD	Bill Jagger	Chairman	Apologies
	David Beeken	Treasurer	Apologies
	John Holroyd	Committee Member	Apologies
	Bob Green	Secretary	Apologies
	Mike Holt	Committee Member	Apologies
National	Andrew Lait	RO Topic Editor	Apologies
	Steve Batty	RO Editor Branch News	Apologies
	John Redgate	Trustee	Apologies
	David Bird	Trustee/Publications etc	Apologies
	Mike Robinson	Trustee/RO Managing Editor	Apologies

Letter from the Chairman after Conference



Dear RCTS Member

I just wanted to record my sincerest and personal thanks and gratitude for the donation of your own valuable time and effort to attend the Officers' Conference in Doncaster yesterday.

Echoing some of my closing remarks, I did not detect any negativity at any time during the day, either in the plenary sessions or the workshops. There was a determination from all delegates to give of their all towards the Society and a willingness to share ideas, as well as being receptive to new processes and objective criticism.

This was a perfect example of the "centre" and the Branches working together and as a consequence working better together.

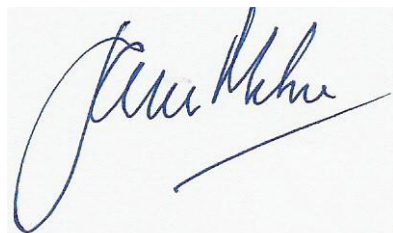
So, I would ask you at your next Branch meeting to report back on the success of the day (unless you disagree with that sentiment) to your fellow Branch Committee members and your general Branch membership.

Our President, in his Opening Address, observed that he has sensed "hope" in recent Branch meetings he has attended. I believe that we are already well beyond the green shoots stage of a recovery in our fortunes, so let's use the energy and positivism shown yesterday and ensure RCTS both flourishes and blooms.

Where there are challenges – and these are being experienced by most railway enthusiast groups – there are also opportunities, and I will personally commit my time as Chairman to seeking those out for the benefit of the Society. As you may have gathered by now, I am driven with determination and an objective of building and strengthening for the future. Having achieved success in my corporate life it is an infectious "bug" that I will attempt to engender in every Officer and Member to make our Society bigger, stronger and the authoritative voice that RCTS and *The RO* have built up into an undoubted reputation since 1928.

Together, we must continue this success story into our next Century, but not at the expense of losing our sense of proportion and humour! Based on the evidence of yesterday, and acting together, we can make this work and maintain our eminence as "*Britain's leading railway society*".

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Milne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

James Milne, Chairman RCTS
29th October 2023

Appendix 2

List of 60-year railtour anniversaries (from Six Bells website)				
1964				
Date	Tour Name	Possible Heritage Rly	Other Comments	Possible RCTS Branches
02/05/1964	North Eastern Limited	NYMR	Newcastle-York-Whitby - Battersby-Middlesbrough-Newcastle	North East (NEA); West Riding (WRD)
03/05/1964	The Cornubian		Exeter-Plymouth-Penzance-Exeter	West of England (WEN)
09/05/1964	East Midlander No7	GCR & GCR (North); Didcot Railway Centre	Nottingham-Leicester-Didcot-Eastleigh-Swindon-Nottingham	East Midlands EMD; Thames Valley (TVY)
23/05/1964	Preston Docks & Ribble-Lune rail tour		Preston-Heysham-Morecambe-Lancaster-Preston	Lancashire, North West (LNW); Furness, Lakes & Lune (FLL)
30/05/1964	North Staffordshire rail tour	Churnet Valley	Birmingham-Caldon Quarry-Kidsgrove-Congleton-Stoke-Birmingham	West Midlands (WMD)
13/06/1964	Solway Ranger		Leeds-Carnforth-Penrith-Sellafield-Carlisle-Leeds	Lancashire North West (LNW); Furness, Lakes & Lune (FLL)
27/06/1964	High Peak Rail Tour		Sheffield-Guide Bridge-Middleton Top-Cromford-High Peak-Sheffield	Sheffield (SFD)
06/09/1964	West Riding rail tour		Bradford-Huddersfield-Holmfirth-Clayton West-Bradford	West Riding (WRD)
12/09/1964	Notts & Lincs Rail tour		Nottingham-Newark-Woodhall-Horncastle-Firsby-Skegness-Nottingham	East Midlands (EMD)
19/09/1964	Wenford Special	Bodmin Railway	Wadebridge-Boscarnes-Wadebridge	West of England (WEN)
26/09/1964	The Scottish Lowlander		Crewe-Carlisle-Riccarton-Galashies-Niddrie-Glasgow-Crewe	Scotland (SCT)
18/10/1964	Midhurst Belle rail tour	Bluebell railway	Waterloo-Woking-Midhurst-Littlehampton-Brighton-Victoria	Solent (SOE); Chichester (CHR)
24/10/1964	The Jubilee Requiem		all ECML only London-Newcastle and return	