

BRANCH LIAISON OFFICER

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Officers' Newsletter 239

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Departures and arrivals ...

I would like to start by acknowledging the huge amount of work which Irene Rabbitts has done since 2018 as Branch Liaison Officer, and all that she has done to support Branches across the country. As a Branch chairman, I know that our Branch has benefitted on many occasions from her help and advice, with the updates and guidance on various aspects of running our meetings always very useful. Irene will be a very hard act to follow, and I am grateful (again!) for all her help and support as I transition into the role of Branch Liaison Officer.

I am new to the role, and to the Board of Trustees, having been appointed at the recent Society AGM. My involvement with the RCTS goes back some years though, attending the meetings of the south Wales Branch, serving as a committee member, and then - currently as Branch chairman. I have seen at first hand the key role which Branches play in the life of the Society, and the value of bringing members together – both to connect with each other socially, and to listen to the excellent talks which take place throughout the year. I have also seen how much work committee members and others do to run and develop Branches, some of which is visible (e.g. welcoming guests, serving tea and coffee) but which is often unseen but vital to the continued success of monthly meetings (finding speakers, managing finances, promoting meetings, etc.).

My aim (as was Irene's before) is to help support the work that Branches do, and act as a conduit between Branches and the wider Society (particularly trustees and other officers). Over the next year or so I will be doing my best to meet with as many of you as possible – and I look forward to working with you! In the meantime, if you have questions or queries, do not hesitate to contact me, and I will do my best to help.

Members' Weekend 2026 and national events and exhibitions

We are looking for a Branch or Branches willing to host the 2026 Members' Weekend. This requires advance planning to find a suitable hotel and organise activities. Please drop me a line via liaison@rcts.org.uk if your Branch would be interested or would like to find out more about what is involved. Help and support will be available.

The Society will have a presence at several national events in 2025, including the Greatest Gathering (1st-3rd August in Derby), and the Stockton & Darlington Bicentenary Celebration event at Kirkby Stephen East (August bank holiday). Where these events take place in

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locations where we have a local Branch (or nearby), we are keen to link with the relevant Branch in advance. Any help you can provide – including helping represent the Society at a stand, will be gratefully received. Our hope is that the Society's presence will benefit Branches and the wider Society by promoting membership and meetings, etc. Again, please drop me a line if you are interested in being involved.

Publicising meetings

Staying with the topic of promoting our work, a reminder that we ask all Branches to publicise their forthcoming meetings via the *Railway Observer* and the Branch's web page. If you would like any support with meeting publicity or have examples of good practice of how you have promoted your Branch that you would be willing to share (e.g. through other railway or local media) please let me know! You will get the credit for good ideas that we can share!

Outside visits programme

We have already advertised our outside visits programme in the *RO* and will continue to do so. This year we are limited to the number of members who can take part due to few places being offered to us. Our visit to Freightliner Crewe on 5th July 2025 is full but there is a place available for a visit to NRM Shildon early in the morning of July 30th to be followed by a visit to NELPG at Darlington later the same day. Participants must make their own way between the sites.

Our visit to a Railway 200 event at Kirby Stephen on 26th and 27th of August is also full, but we do have place available for a visit to the East Lancashire Railway on 31st August. There is plenty of availability for the visit to LSL at Crewe on 8th September 2025 although the visit to Barrow Hill on 3rd September 2025 is already full.

Lastly, there are places available for an evening tour by train of Scunthorpe Steel Works - should it still be functioning, on 24th October 2025 – please note that this is also the Friday evening of this year's Members' Weekend in Darlington. Queries and requests join any of the above visits should be sent to Chris Mathews via outsidevisits@rcts.org.uk.

Society Website – request for feedback from Branches

The Society is currently undertaking a review of its website. Branches are obviously important users of, and contributors to, the website. We are therefore keen to hear your ideas on the content and structure of the site, and any feedback on the user interface for uploading information such as Branch meeting information. Please send your ideas to liaison@rcts.org.uk by 20th July, which I will then turn into a summary for sharing with the review team.

And finally ...

A reminder that the Officers' Handbook – available on the RCTS website ([members' area](#)) provides a comprehensive source of guidance on the running of Branches and training for committee roles. Your new liaison officer will be consulting it frequently!