

Railway Ramblings

Issue 152

March 2023

The monthly newsletter of the RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch



*RH&DR "Northern Chief" sets off from Hythe Station
August 2021*

Photo credit: John Dossett

Railway Ramblings is published by the committee of the Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch of The Railway Correspondence & Travel Society. Such committee does not endorse any personal opinions expressed in this publication.

Branch Programme

Special Note: In the event of any late change to the programme, everyone on the distribution list for this newsletter will receive an email advising the details of the change.

During March 2023

At Hitchin (19:30-22:00, doors open from 19:00)

14th March **Harringworth Viaduct – A Victorian Gem** *John Hillier*

At Welwyn Garden City (14:00-16:30, doors open from 13:30)

28th March **The LMS Patriot Project – How are we doing?** *Colin Hall*

During April 2023

At Hitchin (19:30-22:00, doors open from 19:00)

11th April **Northwards from Kings Cross** *Rob Freeman*

At Welwyn Garden City (14:00-16:30, doors open from 13:30)

25th April **The Epping Ongar Railway – Past, Present & Future**
Eddie Veckranges

Note: This presentation will immediately follow the AGM, which will start at 14:00

Donations will be requested for attendance at branch meetings – these, together with book sales, go towards the costs of hiring the venues, speakers expenses/fees and the provision of tea/coffee & biscuits during the meeting. These are currently suggested as £2 for members and £3.50 for non-members.

Hitchin meetings are held at Tilehouse Street Baptist Church Hall, Upper Tilehouse Street, Hitchin SG5 2EE

Welwyn Garden City meetings are held at the Methodist Church, Ludwick Way/Cole Green Lane junction, Welwyn Garden City, Herts AL7 3PN

“Zoom” Virtual Presentations

Some RCTS branches are offering Zoom virtual presentations. In addition, there are “national” Zoom presentations (on the fourth Thursday of each month). Details of these can be found on the RCTS website (and in the *Railway Observer*). Members can register and then take part in any of these events.



Chairman's Platform

I have been much encouraged by the gradual increase in the number of you returning to our branch meetings. Perhaps, as the weather improves (I hope) and the daylight hours increase, this trend will continue. With a good programme of presentations and the opportunity to gather with like-minded people it is surely what belonging to the society should be about. If you haven't yet returned what more could you want?

Elsewhere in this issue (pages 9 & 10) you will find the results of the recent Branch Questionnaire. Dave Elsdon and John Dossett have collated the responses and made their analysis of the numbers. Thanks to all of you who contributed to that questionnaire, it gives your committee a steer for the future direction of the branch. Whether or not you responded, please read it through and let us know if you have further thoughts.

From my reading of the results, most respondents seem content with the presentations that we have been able to offer. As you will no doubt realise, most of the presentations are booked a long way in advance but the questions we asked you about preferences are important and we will be asking you more about that in future – we need to try to ensure that the future balance between old & new, UK & abroad, traction & operational, matches what you want to have.

One final thought – the big question - What does the RCTS need to do to attract younger people to be members?

Steve Lacey

New Members for the Branch

We welcome Roger Smith, of Welwyn Garden City, and Martin Nash, of Hitchin, as new members of the RCTS and to the Hitchin and Welwyn Garden City Branch.

Branch AGM

This will be at Welwyn Garden City on 25th April 2023. As a supplement to this copy of *Railway Ramblings* (pages 15 to 22) you will find the agenda, the minutes of the 2022 AGM, together with the usual Officers' reports for last year (2022-23).

Please give these a read and I would really like as many as possible to attend. If you have any questions, if you can give advance notice then this will enable the Officers to give a considered reply.

Please note that this year, the AGM will be immediately followed by a presentation about the Epping & Ongar Railway.

Steve Lacey



Epping Ongar Railway - Special Experiences



Steam and Diesel Driver Experience

Have you ever dreamt about taking to the footplate of a steam or diesel locomotive, feeling the power of the engine as it hauls a train along a full-size railway? EOR can now offer you the opportunity to drive an engine from their home fleet, getting a truly authentic experience as you control the locomotive and train, complete with coaches behind, tackling the EOR challenging gradients, obeying the signals and stopping at platforms.

EOR offer driver experience days with either diesel or steam traction on selected dates throughout the year.

For more information and to book:

[Steam and Diesel Driver Experience \(eorailway.co.uk\)](http://eorailway.co.uk)



Signalbox Experience

Have you ever wondered how the movement of trains is controlled on a busy railway such that trains, locomotives and rolling stock are in the right place at the right time? Unlike signalling simulators, if the sequence of signalling is wrong the trains really can get stuck in the wrong place causing genuine inconvenience to real people. So, why not come and learn for yourself how it's done at one of the EOR signalbox experience days.

EOR offer signalbox experience days on selected operating days throughout the year.

For further information and to book:

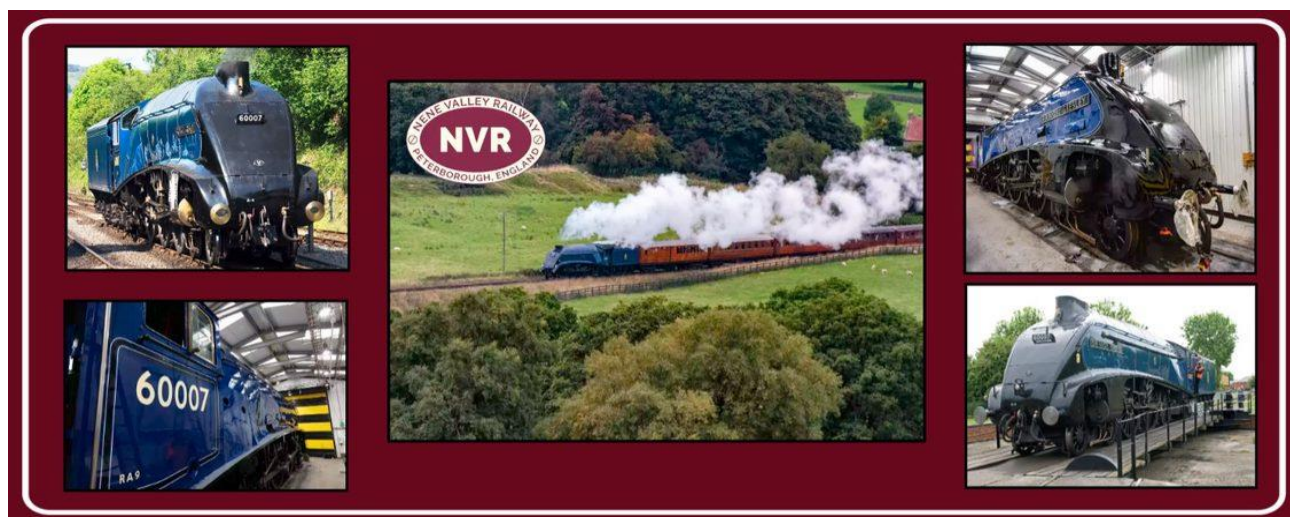
[Signal Box Experience \(eorailway.co.uk\)](http://eorailway.co.uk)

Information and photos courtesy of the EOR



Sir Nigel Gresley to Visit the Nene Valley Railway

Thanks to the Sir Nigel Gresley Locomotive Trust, ex-LNER A4 'Pacific' no. 4498 (60007) *Sir Nigel Gresley* is scheduled to visit the Nene Valley for two weekends during April. This locomotive will be pulling passenger trains over the Easter Weekend 7th -10th April and on the following weekend, 15th & 16th April.



Sir Nigel Gresley was the 100th Gresley Pacific built by the Great Northern Railway / London and North Eastern Railway. Built at Doncaster as works N°1863, the locomotive entered service in 1937 following a naming ceremony at Marylebone station on 26th November. The locomotive was mainly based at London King's Cross, with a spell at Grantham during World War II, and was briefly re-numbered as N°7 before becoming N°60007 when the LNER was merged into British Railways. On 3rd June 1956, *Sir Nigel Gresley* had the honour of hauling the Royal Train from King's Cross to York with H.M. the Queen on board. The "Stephenson Locomotive Society Special" of the 23rd May 1959 was the first train in the UK with a booked schedule of over 100 mph and during that trip, N°60007 set the official post-war speed record for steam traction of 112 mph.

Sir Nigel Gresley is back in blue for the first time since being overhauled,

Tickets

Advance booking is advised but "All Day Rovers" can be purchased on the day, subject to availability.

A limited number of tickets will be on sale to ride the footplate of 60007, entering the footplate will be via the famous A4 corridor tender, which leads from the coaching stock to the locomotive footplate, you will then ride the footplate for approximately five minutes. Tickets for the Footplate Experience are limited and will be an additional payment on top of your standard travel ticket.

All bookings & enquiries: <https://www.nvr.org.uk>

Reproduced courtesy of the Nene Valley Railway

The March Puzzle – Martin Elms

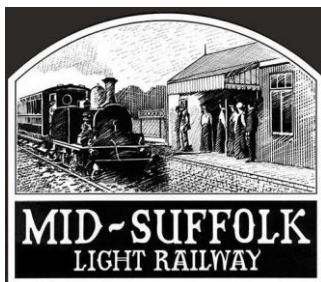
This month, the first letter of the answer to the following questions will spell the name of an area in Western England publicised by the GWR and the name of the express passenger train that served it.

1. Name of locomotive D603
2. Locomotive depot with code 63C
3. Where was the British Railways locomotive testing plant?
4. Maiden ? station - between Yeovil and Dorchester
5. H.A. ? Great Northern Railway Locomotive Superintendent
6. Western ? - locomotive D1022
7. Which railway company had its locomotive works at Lochgorm?

8. Bright-coloured vehicle near Middlesborough?
9. Name of locomotive 61016
10. Walschaert's, Stephenson and Poppet are types of what?
11. Location of East Anglian London EMU depot
12. E6001 is a what type of locomotive?
13. Name of ECML Viaduct at Berwick?
14. Name of locomotive 34018

As usual, best of luck – my solutions are on page 13. No cheating!

Martin Elms



Extending the Line - Update

Work to extend the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway line from Dovebrook to Aspall Halt (on the line of the original trackbed) is being carried out by Colchester-based infrastructure company TES2000. These works commenced on Monday 16th January 2023 and lasted three weeks - until 3rd February.



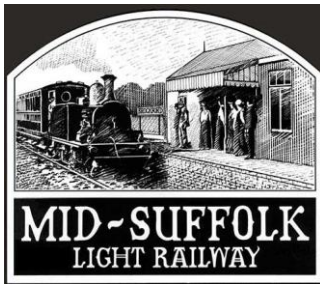
To start with, each of 400 sleepers were drilled for the chairs and the rails dragged into position in the cess. During the first week some 300 tons of ballast had arrived on site – creating a sizeable pile in the car park.



Packs of 24 sleepers travelled down on a flatbed trolley and ballast travelled in a boxed trolley – pulled by one of the RRVs (Road-Rail Vehicle). The TES2000 track gang gave themselves a target of 3 panels of 60 ft rail per day. By the end of the first Friday 30% of the track was done – including ballasting and levelling.

Naturally, during this time the site was closed to all but a few MSLR support volunteers. Your editor, along with a handful of other guests, was invited to visit the site on 26th January to view progress. It is not yet known when the extension to Aspall Halt will be usable, although test trains will soon be run. The railway has still to obtain a Transport & Works Act Order before passengers can be carried on this extension.

Photos & article: John Dossett



Mid-Suffolk Light Railway - the 2023 Season

The 2023 year's operating season starts with the Easter Steam-Up on Sunday 9th April and Monday 10th April. After that is the Bank Holiday Sunday Steam-Up on Sunday 30th April.



Visiting loco 'Marcia', the 99-year-old Peckett 0-4-0T from the Kent & East Sussex Railway, will completing her outing with the MSLR on the weekend of 9th & 10th April before returning home.

A Coronation Gala is planned for Sunday 7th & Monday 8th, this being the additional Bank Holiday for the coronation of King Charles III. Then the next running days will be the 'Middy in the 40s' event on Sunday 28th & Monday 29th May. Trains will then run each Sunday (with various themes) through to the 'End of Season Steam-Up' on Sunday 3rd September 2023.

Information and photo courtesy of the MSLR

Newsletter Distribution

This e-newsletter is distributed by the Branch Chairman (Steve Lacey). If you do not currently receive a copy directly but would like to do so, provide him with your email address and you will be added to the list. Conversely, if you currently receive a copy but wish to be taken off the distribution list then please advise him accordingly. Steve's email address is gricersteve@hotmail.com

Questionnaire Results

At the end of 2022 we asked readers to give their views on a small number of questions about the future direction of the branch. By the closing date of 14 January 2023 some 24 responses had been received. In most instances the questions gave a few options including “Don’t mind” or “Other”. Some respondents also provided additional information or suggestions.

The following is a summary of the responses and our initial analysis –

Venue

Data

Hitchin 9, WGC 11, Digswell 3, Don’t Mind 7, Other – Stevenage 1, Letchworth 1, Panshanger (WGC) 1.

Analysis

Adding in the “Don’t Mind” number, 16 are happy with Hitchin and 18 with WGC. Proportionately this is in line with the current typical attendance at each venue. The other suggested venues may need further consideration if either of the current venues prove unsustainable.

Day of the Week

Data

Mon 1, Tue 8, Wed 2, Thur 4, Fri 2, Don’t Mind 12.

Analysis

Again, adding in the Don’t Mind number, the majority are content with the current choice of day, although one response indicated that Tue was not a good choice. With the considerable number of Don’t Minds this suggests that the meetings could be held on different days of the week, but more data would be needed from members before making a change.

Time of Day

Data

Morning 2, Afternoon 12, Evening 7, Don’t Mind 6

Analysis

Here the data indicates a less clear picture as the question was not cross-linked to the venue. Two respondents definitely wanted Hitchin meetings to be in the afternoon and seems probable that several who liked a Hitchin venue would prefer afternoons. However, an advantage of an evening meeting is that it provides for members who have not retired.

Travel

Data

Car 18, Bus 1, Train 3, Walk 1.

Analysis

It would be easy to conclude that as the majority currently travel to meetings by car, the choice of venue is not of paramount importance but any future change should, if possible, provide for public transport being a viable option.

Presentation Content

Data

Era: Steam 6, Modern 3, Any 16

Location: UK 9, Overseas 2, Any 14

Topic: Traction 2, Operational 4, Any 18

Analysis

The data largely speaks for itself. Most respondents seem happy with the somewhat eclectic mix that is currently provided. This aspect of the branch programme warrants further consideration in terms of balance.

Meeting Donations

Data

Members: £2 (3), £3 (11), £4 (7)

Non-members: £3:50 (3), £4:50 (10), £5 (5)

One respondent suggested £2:50 and £4:00.

Analysis

The majority of responses support an increase in meeting donations to, at least, £3 for members and £4:50 for non-members.

Dave Elsdon & John Dossett

What Happens Next?

The branch committee will further discuss the questionnaire results and use the data obtained to inform their choices about the changes needed to try to get the branch onto a financially sustainable future.

The March Presentations (1)

Harringworth Viaduct – A Victorian Gem - John Hillier

14th March at Hitchin



The River Welland in Flood

The talk takes us on a journey over the past-200 years or so when the area along on the banks of the River Welland, which form the border between Northamptonshire and Rutland, was transformed into a noisy thriving industrial landscape for about 4 years whilst the viaduct towering some 70 feet over the village of Harringworth was being built.

It was around here that in 1829 Thomas Cook, arguably Rutland's most famous resident, began work and where his marriage in Barrowden led to the birth of global travel. It was thanks to the 'The Railway Age' that communications were improved and which led eventually to an influx of people to the Welland Valley as workers came from far and wide to help build what was is *the longest continuous brick-built viaduct in the country*. Its completion in 1878 gave improved connectivity for passengers and freight travelling to and from London from the Midlands and the North.

Whilst the viaduct was being built lawlessness and strife were commonplace although steps were taken to improve the welfare and conditions of the thousands of people who had gravitated to the area to work. Construction of the line between Kettering and Manton also led to the development of Corby as a 'steel town' and a host of supporting quarries and industries.

Today, even though traffic flows have reduced, the viaduct still plays an important part in the UK rail system and even carries trains running direct into and from Europe. Although the local quarries became silent in the 1970's, after several years when the sounds of quarrying were no more, quarrying has now begun again in the nearby hills which means that that these sounds once again mingle with those in such a rural location.

The talk will end with a varied selection of views, many unique, showing the various moods of Harringworth Viaduct taken by the speaker over the past 30 years or so.

Notes about the speaker - John Hillier

Although he first visited the area in 1969 it was not until the mid-1980's that John Hillier first saw the Viaduct and it was thanks to a move in 1992 with his family from the Peak District to within sight of the structure that he became captivated by 'the 82 arches'. John then began to put his railway interests and photographic skills to good use by recording the viaduct in its many moods.

A member of the Railway Photographic Society since 1965, and Chairman of Stamford and Rutland Photographic Society for several years, 'the viaduct' continues to feature in his work and the talk will show how the viaduct can be photographed from so many different angles and positions.

The talk will include images taken from many vantage points around the area plus some taken from the air and also from the footplate of "Bahamas" when it crossed the viaduct in October 2021. John project-managed the overhaul of this steam locomotive after having raised over £1m to restore it to working order once again.

John has authored several books and his work also appears in print from time to time. He recently organised the Young Railway Photographer of the Year Competition which resulted in an exhibition at the National Railway Museums at York and Shildon. He took part in the "Architecture of the Railways Built" TV programme about the viaduct and has recently been involved with more filming by the viaduct, this time taking part in a film for the NRM about "Flying Scotsman", an engine that has travelled across the viaduct several times.

Information and photo: John Hillier

Exhibitions

March

18th & 19th March The London Festival of Railway Modelling
at Alexandra Palace.
A large exhibition at which our branch will be staffing an RCTS
information and recruitment stand.

April

15th April We are attending a "Railway Event" at Mill Green Museum, Bush Hall
Lane, Hatfield AL9 5PD (Open 10.00 to 17.00)
(limited parking)

22nd April Luton MRC Exhibition at Stopsley High School, St. Thomas' Road,
Luton, LU2 7UX. We will have a stand, including book sales.

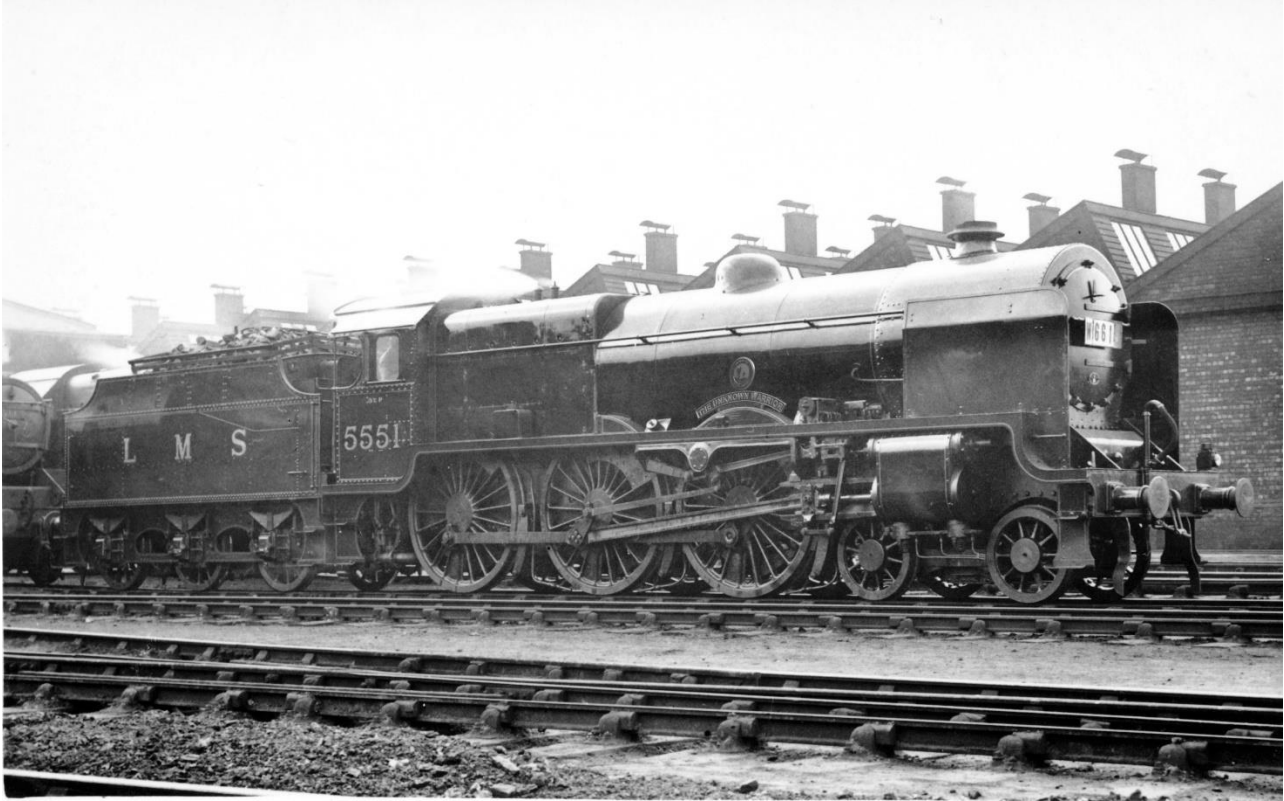
29th April De Havilland MRC Exhibition at Ludwick Way Methodist Church,
Ludwick Way, WGC, AL7 3PN. (Our meeting venue). We will have a
stand, including book sales.

The March Presentations (2)

The LMS Patriot Project – How are we doing?

- Colin Hall

28th March at Welwyn Garden City



5551 The Unknown Warrior (imagined)

Our speaker, the Project Chairman, will give a presentation bringing us up-to-date on the ups and downs of this project to the present day.

The LMS-Patriot project is building a working Patriot Class steam locomotive as a National Memorial Engine, recreating a railway heritage and Remembrance link established after the Great War and lost in the 1960s.

Inspired by the Great War Centenaries of recent years - Armistice Day and the repatriation of the Unknown Warrior to Westminster Abbey - the locomotive will be named *The Unknown Warrior*.

Information and photo: Colin Hall

Puzzle Solutions

Solution to the puzzle in this issue (page 6):

1. Conquest. 2. Oban. 3. Rugby. 4. Newton. 5. Ivatt. 6. Sentinel. 7. Highland. 8. Redcar. 9. Inyala. 10. Valve gear on steam locomotives. 11. Ilford. 12. Electro-diesel. 13. Royal Border Bridge. 14. Axminster.

Solution: CORNISH RIVIERA

Branch Committee

The Current 2022-2023 Hitchin Branch Committee

Elected at the 2022 AGM



Steve Lacey
Chair



Dave Elsdon
Secretary



Paul Holloway
Treasurer



John Dossett
Newsletter



Roger Moulden



Join the Branch Committee

Please consider joining your branch committee.

Anyone prepared to take on the committee role is invited to discuss this with Steve Lacey or Dave Elsdon in the first instance.

Railway Ramblings is published by the committee of the Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch of The Railway Correspondence & Travel Society. Such committee does not endorse any personal opinions expressed in this publication. The committee comprises Steve Lacey (Chairman), David Elsdon (Secretary), Paul Holloway (Treasurer), John Dossett (Newsletter Editor) and Roger Moulden. The Railway Correspondence & Travel Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation Registered with the Charities Commission.

Railway Ramblings

AGM Supplement

March 2023

Branch AGM Notice and Agenda

The RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch AGM will be held on 25th April 2023 starting at 14:00. The venue will be The Methodist Church, Ludwick Way/Cole Green Lane junction, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3PN.

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
- 3 MINUTES OF 2022 AGM
- 4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THOSE MINUTES
- 5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
- 6 SECRETARY'S REPORT
- 7 TREASURER'S REPORT & FINANCIAL SUMMARY
- 8 ANY QUESTIONS FROM THE OFFICERS' REPORTS
- 9 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE FOR 2023/24
- 10 BRANCH FUTURE
- 11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Dave Elsdon
Branch Secretary

Minutes of the Hitchin & WGC Branch 2022 AGM

Held on Tuesday 8th March 2022 at Tilehouse Street Baptist Church, Upper Tilehouse Street, Hitchin SG5 2EE commencing at 19:30

Present:

Steve Lacey (Chairman), Paul Holloway (Treasurer), Dave Elsdon (Secretary)
John Dossett (Newsletter) and a number of branch members.

Apologies for Absence:

Adrian Scrutton, Clive Johnson, Vic Wood, Mandy Fulbeam, Roger Moulden

Minutes of the 2020-2021 AGM: had been circulated.

Matters arising from those minutes: None

Chairman's Report 2021-2022

When I took on this job, I never expected to be reporting on such a year! However, with the support and commitment of my committee and the branch members, we have survived! It has taken innovation, aided by the main RCTS in helping us mount the initial Zoom meetings and dare I say it, co-operation with Bedford and St Albans LCGB to start running our own Zoom programme. It is great to see the railway clubs helping each other with our common aims. When Covid abated a bit we ran some "live" meetings, but with understandably reduced numbers. This has resulted in losses over the year despite the ability to donate to meetings via the RCTS web site. At least, I no longer have to answer questions about our large contingency fund at AGM's! In case you have not been there recently, you will notice the club website has been re-vamped and is now much better, in my opinion. It now, also allows our editor to download directly into our pages and I thank John for many last minute alterations, which have had to be made over the last year. Email has proved invaluable in keeping you all abreast of changes, so if we do not have your email please drop me a note on gricersteve@hotmail.com and I will add you to the list. I must also thank Dave Elsdon for producing an ever changing programme, Vic for clawing money from you at the door and their wives for providing refreshments in the last few live meetings. Stay safe and well, as we look forward to a more hopeful year.

Steve Lacey. Branch Chairman

Branch Secretary's AGM Report 2020-2021

As always, I would like to thanks all the other committee members for their time and assistance in helping me with all aspects of organising the Branch over this very different year. I would also like to thank Martin Elms for all his help in the past at meetings and exhibitions, Martin chose to leave the committee earlier in the year. We also have modified

the name of the Branch to represent our wider interests and reflect on where our membership and activities primarily take place.

Our Chairman Steve has done a great job setting up and hosting our Zoom meetings and always expressing a great appreciation for our speakers at all our meetings, I thank Paul, our treasurer for keeping the finances under control and re-arranging payments etc. with the banks who now wish to charge for making payments. John Dossett also deserves all our thanks for the great monthly newsletters "Railway Ramblings" that he produces and for keeping contributors on their toes for getting articles in on time. John has also undertaken the job of Branch website co-ordinator and that also is working out well. One final thank you is to Vic and Janet Wood for all their assistance at live meetings

Finally, I thank you our membership for your continued support at whatever meetings we hold, I hope you are all ready to come back to live meetings and exhibitions very soon when the days get longer and hopefully warmer than it is on this very cold January evening when I'm writing this,

Dave Elsdon. Branch Secretary

Treasurer's Report & Accounts for Year to 31st October 2021

I am pleased to present this report for the twentieth AGM of the branch and my fourth as Treasurer.

Attached to this report is the Income and Expenditure report for the year in two formats – the first shows comparison with last year and the second splits the year being reported by location. The coronavirus pandemic has had a major effect on the figures for both years with last year only covering the 6 months to March 2020 when we entered the first lockdown and the current year covering zoom meetings in the earlier months and live ones from August 2021.

There has been no income from exhibitions since Stevenage in January 2020 and the sooner we can get back doing these the better.

The door/raffle money per meeting for members at £2 and visitors at £3.50 has been the same since September 2019 and no amendment to these rates will be made for the current financial year.

With regard to the funds shown as held by the Society, please note we, as a branch, are not allowed under Society rules to keep any funds in excess of £2,500 with the balance being transferred to the Society and held by them in a ring-fenced account. This means they cannot use it and it is available as and when we need to call some down, which we expect to do to enable us to pay bills in the current year. Any interest earned on these funds is retained by the Society but at 0.02% would only have given us 73p in the year. The slight reduction in funds held by the Society reflects transactions with them during the year.

It is anticipated that we will make a further loss in the next financial year until we get back to attending exhibitions and our members feel more able to attend the restarted live meetings.

Paul Holloway. Branch Treasurer

RCTS HITCHIN BRANCH					
INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT					
YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2021					
			Year to		Year to
			31/10/2021		31/10/2020
INCOME					
	Sales and Donations		39.50		620.80
	Zoom meeting donations		88.00		-
	Door monies/Raffle		105.00		465.50
	Total		232.50		1,086.30
EXPENDITURE					
	Room Hire		327.00		606.00
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - live		167.35		171.00
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - Zoom		190.00		-
	Exhibition expenses - inc stand fees		-		236.48
	& travel costs		-		
	Postage, stationery etc		23.40		29.89
	Programme printing		-		68.00
	Refreshments		7.38		13.92
	Total		715.13		1,125.29
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR					
			- 482.63		- 38.99
BRANCH BALANCE					
	As at 31 October 2020				
	Held by Branch		1,588.90		1,588.13
	Held by Society		3,643.65		3,683.41
			5,232.55		5,271.54
	As at 31 October 2021				
	Held by Branch		1,181.51		1,588.90
	Held by Society		3,568.41		3,643.65
			4,749.92		5,232.55
	Movement in year		- 482.63		- 38.99

Election of Committee for 2022-2023

All present committee members were prepared to stand for another year. Agreed

Any other Business

The Secretary announced that there would be a forthcoming change to the programme for the 12th July 2022 with the speaker to be confirmed as early as possible.

David Elsdon
Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Secretary

Reports for the 2023 Branch AGM

Chairman's Report 2022-23

First, I must pay tribute to the Branch Committee without whom we could not function. I do the easy bit, standing at the front talking! Without my colleges providing the "script" I would be lost. I also wish to thank John Dossett for his tireless work on producing what is widely regarded as the best branch newsletter around. I also wish to thank Dave Elsdon and Vic's wives for providing our refreshments since our return to live meetings following Covid. This was supposed to be a temporary arrangement, but to date nobody else has volunteered. If you are able to help, please let us know, as we cannot expect others to help out indefinitely. Being the last to submit their report to the AGM leaves me little unique to say, so perhaps I should concentrate on the "bigger picture".

All railway clubs (and indeed other clubs) are suffering decreasing memberships and attendances over the last few years, worse since Covid. The number of members in the RCTS has held up better than most, in part, due to an active attempt to recruit more members, especially in the younger age groups. I acknowledge the help given in this by members of your committee, who helped at Open Days and exhibitions. Locally, we have tried to keep the meetings as accessible as possible, with a choice of venues and time of day. We have also recently sent out a questionnaire to try to gauge your views on how to best serve your needs. The results of this are being analysed and will form the basis of the way forward for this Branch. Nationally there are suggestions of amalgamations and working in association with others to consolidate the future of railway enthusiasm. Clearly Covid has concentrated minds and change is afoot, but we must be careful not to "throw the baby out with the bathwater".

Finally, whilst all of the committee are willing to stand again, we are also happy to stand aside and let new blood take over if any of you wish to put yourselves forward. Thank you for supporting the Branch, without you there is no club.

Steve Lacey
RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Chairman

Secretary's Report 2022-23

I must start by thanking the other committee members for all their time and effort they have put into keeping the running the Branch in such a successful way. Steve for all his help with organising all the meeting equipment and books plus their storage and transport whenever we need it. Paul for his accounting skills and keeping the Branch on a steady course financially, I have never known such superb accounting records in all my time with the Society, and John who keeps us so well informed about meetings and events in our area. All are doing a great job. Roger our other committee member has been extremely unlucky in the past year with illness, which is why primarily the four of us are keeping the Branch running. In addition, I must thank Vic Wood and his wife Janet for helping with the door registration and the refreshments at Hitchin and my wife Jill for being tea lady at Welwyn Garden City.

Our attendances at meetings has recently been improving as the year went on, let's hope they continue to do so with the better weather coming making travelling easier.

I have tried to be much more selective where I sort our speakers from trying to choose majority from within easy travelling distance and who are possibly Society members as this helps to keep expenses down.

We had a very successful outing to the Nene Valley in August 2022 thanks to Steve's efforts there and his contacts within. Although we could not hold him responsible for the beautiful summer's day we all enjoyed.

Finally, I am always willing for assistance when trying to find speakers, so if you have any contacts who could help I will be grateful to hear from you.

Thank you all for your support.

Dave Elsdon
RCTS Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Secretary

Treasurer's Report 2022-23 & Financial Summary for the Year to 31st October 2022

Yet another year has passed when I have had to report a loss for the year. If only I could see a profit at some time in the future.

Attached to this report is the Income and Expenditure report for the year in two formats – the first shows comparison with last year and the second splits the year being reported by location. The result of the coronavirus pandemic has affected the figures for both years as the number of members attending live meetings has not returned to pre pandemic levels.

We attended one exhibition in the year at Welwyn Garden City in April and it was good to get back to the old routine. We currently have two exhibitions booked for the current year –Luton on 22nd April and Welwyn Garden City on 29th April.

The door donation money per meeting currently is £2.00 for members and £3.50 for visitors has remained the same since September 2019. These rates will be reviewed by the Committee prior to September 2023 as the increased cost of hall hire makes some increase unavoidable.

In the closing balances the funds shown as held by the Society are there as we, as a branch, are not allowed under Society rules to keep any funds in excess of £2,500 with the balance being transferred to the Society and held by them in a ring-fenced account. This means they cannot use it and it is available as and when we need to call some down. Any interest earned on these funds is retained by the Society but at 0.02% would only have given us 70p in the year. The reduction in funds held by the Society reflects the sum of £750 drawn down by the branch during the last year to give us day to day funds. It is anticipated that a further sum will be drawn down in the current year as the lack of income from exhibitions remains.

Let's hope the current financial year will show some signs of positivity.

Paul Holloway.
Hitchin & Welwyn Garden City Branch Treasurer

RCTS HITCHIN & WELWYN GARDEN CITY BRANCH					
INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT					
YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2022					
			Year to 31/10/2022	Year to 31/10/2021	
INCOME					
	Sales and Donations		207.52	39.50	
	Exhibitions		153.45	-	
	Zoom meeting donations		72.00	88.00	
	Annual outing		190.70	-	
	Door monies/Raffle		626.95	105.00	
	Total		1,250.62	232.50	
EXPENDITURE					
	Room Hire		981.00	327.00	
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - live		438.25	167.35	
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - Zoom		60.00	190.00	
	Zoom meeting/licence costs		57.56	-	
	Exhibition expenses - stand fees		20.00	-	
	Postage, stationery etc		13.24	23.40	
	Programme printing		24.00	-	
	Refreshments		33.15	7.38	
	Annual outing		217.80	-	
	Bank/Credit card charges		65.51	-	
	Total		1,910.51	715.13	
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR			- 659.89	- 482.63	
BRANCH BALANCE					
As at 31 October 2021					
	Held by Branch		1,181.51	1,588.90	
	Held by Society		3,568.41	3,643.65	
			4,749.92	5,232.55	
As at 31 October 2022					
	Held by Branch		1,271.62	1,181.51	
	Held by Society		2,818.41	3,568.41	
			4,090.03	4,749.92	
Movement in year			- 659.89	- 482.63	

RCTS HITCHIN & WELWYN GARDEN CITY BRANCH					
INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT					
YEAR ENDED 31 OCTOBER 2022					
			Hitchin	Welwyn GC	Exhibitions & Outings
INCOME					
	Sales and Donations		115.00	92.52	-
	Exhibitions		-	-	153.45
	Zoom meeting donations		36.00	36.00	-
	Annual outing		-	-	190.70
	Door monies/Raffle		267.00	359.95	-
	Total		418.00	488.47	344.15
EXPENDITURE					
	Room Hire		486.00	495.00	-
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - live		115.00	323.25	-
	Speakers Fees/Expenses - Zoom		30.00	30.00	-
	Zoom meeting/licence costs		28.78	28.78	-
	Exhibition expenses - stand fees		-	-	20.00
	Postage, stationery etc		6.62	6.62	-
	Programme printing		12.00	12.00	-
	Refreshments		16.58	16.57	-
	Annual outing		-	-	217.80
	Bank/Credit card charges		32.76	32.75	-
	Total		727.74	944.97	237.80
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR			- 309.74	- 456.50	106.35
SPLIT EXHIBITIONS & OUTINGS 50/50			53.18	53.17	- 106.35
REVISED SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR			- 256.56	- 403.33	-

- End of AGM papers -