



**THE RAILWAY CORRESPONDENCE
AND TRAVEL SOCIETY** (Founded 1928)
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NEWSLETTER TO BRANCH SECRETARIES

Dear *John*,

The heading is the first change. My predecessor, Steve Ollive, who did such an excellent job over the past ten years entitled his missives, "Newsletter to Society Officers". All my letters, which will be copied to other officers within The Society, are specifically for you, the branch secretaries.

The second change is, that whilst Steve Ollive was known as Branch Organisation Officer, I shall be operating under the title of Branch Liaison Officer. This is both more accurate and also appropriate. I am still continuing as secretary for Surrey Branch. As part of that team, I am involved in the organisation and running of the branch. It most certainly is not my intention to organize your branch. The Oxford Dictionary gives several meanings for the word liaison. I feel that the following is the most appropriate in describing my role. Officer - serving as go-between for allied forces. Whilst we are not a military operation, we are all on the same side.

It would be most discourteous of me not to supply you with some brief details of my Society history. At least then, you will have some idea of whom you are dealing with. I joined The Society in 1967 as a member of London Branch. This was the halcyon era of trips arranged by the late Peter Cattell. Sadly, over the years, London Branch fell into decay, so much so, that I gave serious consideration to leaving The Society. Fortunately, however, Surrey Branch was founded. Within a year I had taken up the option of life membership and had volunteered to serve on the branch committee. Incidentally, we have just had our branch AGM. Of the original committee, formed five years ago, there are now only two members remaining. Food for thought methinks.

You now know a little more of me whereas there are several of you of whom I have no knowledge at all. I hope that we shall be able to rectify that sooner, rather than later. This brings me rather neatly to my next point. There have been several branch AGMs this year. May I please ask you, if you have not done so already, to send me full details of your committee. I also need copies of your fixtures so I may send these to all the other branches. Copies of fixtures from Humberside and Ipswich branches are attached.

I also attach a letter from Steve Ollive regarding The Society internet page. The importance of this cannot be overstressed and I would urge you to make every effort to help make this as successful and professional as possible. This has to be one of our best ways of attracting new members.

Membership recruitment has been discussed long and hard at the last few management committee meetings. It is an inescapable fact that the youngsters of today have little or no interest in railways, Society constantly changes and with it so do fashions. When I was a lad, summers meant cricket and railways. These days it is football and computer games. Therefore we have to attract the older enthusiast. There are many of them, and, sadly, a great number have been members and resigned. How often do you hear, "I am a member of so many railway societies that something had to go." It always is The RCTS that goes. I think back to only a few years ago when I almost resigned. The fact was that London Branch had nothing to offer.

The point I am making here is that, it is now more important than ever, to look after your existing members. Just because they do not attend meetings does it mean that they are any less a member than you or I? Establish contact with them and make them feel wanted. Put yourself in their shoes. What do you want from The Society? At the beginning of the year, the list I received from Peter Davies, contained 26 members who had not renewed. This was about average for the whole country. I felt that the branch could not stand the loss of 13% of the membership. I therefore contacted all 26. It soon became apparent that there had been a problem with the renewal form. A significant number claimed that they had never received the form. The majority thanked me for taking the trouble to contact them and the final result was that only 7 have not renewed.

It is still not too late, even now, to contact your non renewals, if you failed to do so earlier in the year.

You will have gathered that this is an issue that I feel very strongly about. It will therefore come as no surprise to you that it is included in the agenda for the regional meetings.

You will have probably heard from your area leader with regards your own meeting. Please do your best, even if you cannot attend personally, that your branch supplies two delegates. The idea of these meetings is that you all have the opportunity to discuss your concerns and also your successes. Always be receptive to new ideas. Your branch members elected you to look after their best interests. I am sure that you already do this but always beware of complacency. That is the recipe for disaster. I have to say there has been far too much complacency within The Society over a number of years and we all must now pull our collective weight. It is always easy to say no because that means you do not have to do anything. Achievement is as a result of effort, so be positive, say yes, and become an over achiever. The more we all put into this wonderful hobby of ours, the more everyone will benefit.

In conclusion, please remember that I am dedicated to improving The Society. I hope you are as well. Collectively, we will achieve much. Always feel free to contact me, should you have anything you wish to discuss.

Yours sincerely



Steve Hodge - Branch Liaison Officer

P.S. Society secretary Alan Cook has a word processor which is surplus to his requirements. Please contact him if you^{know} of anybody who needs such a machine.