



THE RAILWAY CORRESPONDENCE AND TRAVEL SOCIETY

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Dear *John*,

Newsletter to all branch secretaries

Let me start this long overdue newsletter by apologising to you all for my failure to perform this year. The last newsletter was a year ago and I should have done at least two since then. I have let everyone down. I am upset about this because you deserve better. As a result of my failings, my colleagues on the management committee have received some unjust criticism. This both saddens and embarrasses me.

I make no excuse other than to say, that, due to my lack of knowledge, I have experienced considerable problems in attempting to master the computer we had installed earlier this year. This was supposed to be the panacea but thus far it has proved to be anything but. So it's back to the typewriter for this letter.

The members weekend which will take place at Doncaster this year, is fast approaching. I hope that the majority of you will have already completed and returned the booking form that was inside this month's Railway Observer. I hope also that we shall see a goodly contingent of your members. John Day set the standard at Ipswich last year, and we must do our best to maintain that. In the meantime, I would be delighted to hear from you with your agenda items for the officers conference. You need not write, a telephone call or an e-mail will do.

I have received the minutes from the regional meetings held this year. These are being collated and will be fully discussed at the officers conference.

Just in case you may not be aware of what has happened, let me inform you of the current situation of London Branch. Following the formation of the four peripheral branches, London went into decline. Earlier this year when it proved impossible to form a committee, it was decided that the branch would no longer be able to hold meetings. Discussions with The LCGB took place, with the result that, starting in January 2001, joint meetings will be held. This will be on a trial basis, with The LCGB being the senior partner. This explains why you have not received a fixture list from London. The branch still continues to represent The Society as was demonstrated at Old Oak Common in August. Geoff Brockett remains as secretary and he hopes to see the branch stand on its own feet in the future. We wish him well in his endeavours.

This time last year I was writing to you about our newest branch, Milton Keynes. One year on and their most recent meeting attracted forty people, double the figure at their first. This is very encouraging and the Milton Keynes committee deserve our congratulations on their success. Long may it continue. Congratulations are also due to South East Branch who, in July, held their 100th meeting. There is a branch that keeps on getting better and better. Should the opportunity ever present itself, go to one of their meetings. You had better arrive early as two hours is a long time to stand, even if Dick Hardy is the speaker.

Branch treasurers are renowned for being miserable largely due to lack of funds. Put a smile on the face of your treasurer this Christmas.

Contact the following: John Chalcroft,
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John will supply you with excellent calendars and Christmas cards which you can sell with a percentage going to branch funds. At Surrey Branch we made over £30.00 last year. We will comfortably exceed that figure this year, with over one hundred cards already sold. So contact John for full details. He knows I have told you about him and is looking forward to hearing from you. You will not be disappointed and nor will your members.

Please do not forget the present membership offer of 15 months membership for the current subscription rate of £16.00. It is working but you have got to push it hard. Whilst on the subject of recruitment may I remind you to put the letters "EX" in the advertising code box of the enrolment form, whenever you hand these out at exhibitions.

My thanks to those of you who have sent me the 28 copies of your branch fixtures. I have enclosed the latest batch. It would help me enormously and save me considerable time, if for the future you could, where ever possible, send these to me before the end of August. This would mean that I will be able to send out many more in one go and you would receive them before the start of the new season of meetings. I have already explained why you have nothing from London. One other branch is going to print just about now. This leaves two other branches.

When I sent out the last batch of fixture lists, John Redgate asked me to remind certain branches that they had not sent him the financial returns he requires. When we spoke the other day, he accused me of having taken no action. Those branches concerned will know that I had and that you haven't. Please keep The Society Treasurer happy - he is not the man to upset.

There are also a small number of branches who have not sent the minutes of their last AGM together with details of their current committee.

Geoff Bayliss has asked me to make an appeal to all branches holding Society publications that no longer appear on the current list. Geoff has been losing sales due to lack of stock so I would urge you all to examine your branch stock and bring any appropriate books to Doncaster.

I have to say that you have all been very patient with me, because not one of you has contacted me to ask about the minutes from last year's officers conference. They are not with this letter, as you will by now have gathered. I did try to put them on to the computer. The feeling of horror when I was unable to find them is not one I wish to experience again. They will be with you shortly.

Yours sincerely



Steve Hodge (Branch liaison officer)