

RCTS

Railway Correspondence and Travel Society

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NEWSLETTER No 8

SEPTEMBER 2002

1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter, and an opportunity to catch up on some of the things going on within the Society during the last few months. Spring and summer brought us some indifferent weather but generally the railscene is showing signs of recovery despite some of the ongoing problems following a number of incidents in the past months.

Looking now at some Society business it is pleasing to report that the five Regional Groups met during May and June and a revised and updated summary of action points is sent as a supplement to this Newsletter. (Regional Chairmen and Management Committee Members please note that the version enclosed with this newsletter supersedes the one sent in August.) A number of the action points have been or are currently being dealt with and their status is noted accordingly.

2. SEPTEMBER RAILWAY OBSERVER

The Society, and the printers of the R.O., apologise unreservedly to ALL members for the extremely late running September issue of the R.O. The cause being arrival and installation of new printing equipment that did not go exactly as planned at Stoate & Bishop.

Once we established there was a major problem every effort was made to notify Branch Secretaries of this, either electronically or by first class post. This was in effect done in less than 24 hours, bearing in mind mail had to go through the postal system. I know of two branches that were able to make immediate announcements. As will be realised this has also impacted on the booking facility for the Members' Weekend in Bristol.

We would urge any member who has not yet done so, and who wishes to take part in any of the events during the Members' Weekend, to complete the booking form and mail this to Paul Udey with great haste.

The Management Committee is currently discussing other issues that arise from this, however, the following matter is really in the hands of the branches and members themselves.

"It is believed a situation like this emphasises the fact that there is a need for each branch to have someone who can be reliably contacted by Email. This in turn would give all branches the information as quickly as is humanly possible. Another point being the Members' Email database, of which mention has been made in previous Newsletters. The more members on this list means that word can be spread further and much quicker."

3. BRANCH NEWS

We extend a warm welcome to our newest Branch, Croydon and South London, where the first meeting took place on Monday 2nd September. The Society was represented by Secretary Alan Cooke and yours truly, who doubled up as guest-speaker for the night. Steve Hodge and the new C & SL committee put in lot of hard work to get the new branch running and their efforts were rewarded with an attendance of about 25 members and guests. It was encouraging to note that in a couple of instances long serving members were attending their first ever branch meeting. It also looked likely that a couple of new members would be recruited. So fingers crossed and much success to the branch.

We also extend a warm welcome to S.Machell who has taken over the secretarial reins at Furness Lakes & Lune and to Rodney Allen who is the new chairman at East Midlands.

4. BRANCH MEETINGS

Whilst some branches meet throughout the summer for the rest the Branch meetings season generally begins in earnest during September. There are a number of things that Branches should be reminded of, especially relating to guest speakers. It has come to my notice that some branches are rather layback when it comes to dealing with guest speakers. At this point it seems reasonable to outline some of the procedures that should be adopted when you have visiting guests to your branch. Speakers give up a lot of time and put in a lot of effort in to provide members with enjoyable evenings of entertainment. It is therefore a common courtesy to follow some basic rules in the days leading up to the meeting, during, and after the meeting.

First of all contact your guest speaker at least ten-days before the meeting. Check travel arrangements, arrange to meet your guest and to ensure your guest is "fed and watered." If your guest is not local then ask if overnight accommodation is needed, arrange this at your branch – do not expect guests to arrange their own accommodation, although in some cases they will be happy to do so. Some guests have to work during the day, then travel to your venue and present. Sometimes it is a lot to ask for guests to make long journeys home after meetings.

Also make sure that any equipment the speaker requires is available, again, many speakers do like to use their own projector for example but sometimes like to be provided with extension lead, screen, projector stand etc.

During the meeting, it can be very distracting to the speaker and to other members of the audience if there is "side talking", crunching food (such as crisps and sweets), leaving the room to get drinks etc, etc. Please announce to the audience at the start of the meeting that there will be a half-time interval when any of these otherwise distracting activities can take place.

It is also necessary to ensure that your guest speaker is offered his/her reasonable expenses, do not take it for granted that a presentation is done for nothing. After the event ensure that a letter of thanks is sent. If your guest is not a Society Member a nice touch as a follow up could be to send your guest the R.O. the meeting report appears in. You never know – this could be source for a new member!

5. NEW BRANCHES

The Management Committee are pleased that we have opened two new branches in the last year, Hitchin, and the more recent Croydon and South London. We are however disappointed that talk of new branches or meetings in alternative centres from a number of other area's seems to have been non-existent. We would hopefully be looking at meetings taking place in some of the more important centres around the U.K. To start with we cite places like York, Derby, Manchester, South Wales and Glasgow. There are no doubts others that individual branches will have considerations for. Committees need to have a more motivated approach to this

important role in the Society's profile. Regions need to keep this in mind, whilst Regional meetings are held once each year it does not mean that branches cannot talk to each other during the rest of the year. Support is available from the Management Committee, including some initial funding once things are on the move. If you thin to

6. BRANCH FIXTURES

Once again it is necessary to remind branches what is required regarding Branch Fixture Programmes. It is the responsibility of each branch to send their fixtures to John Richards, for the Railway Observer, Ronnie McAdam, for the National Railway Press and to David Kelso for the Web Site.

As of 24th September John Richards is missing a number of Branch Fixture Lists that are urgently required for the R.O. Please help John and get these off to him immediately.

Furthermore, as previously asked for, 30 copies to me for distribution to other branches (See those enclosed with this newsletter). The ONLY exception to this is for those branches that can send their fixtures to me electronically. I can then print the required copies and forward them to branches. You must however ensure that you send copies yourselves as per paragraph one – above.

At the time of writing only ten branches have sent their meetings programme using one or other of the systems. A further 3 have sent only one copy the remainder none at all. If you are one of the branches that falls into the latter category can you make sure that these are received by me no later than 18th October in order that I can get them ready to hand out at the Members' Weekend.

7. MEMBERSHIP PACKS

Please ensure that your membership packs contain up to date information and correctly addressed documents. Insert your branches latest fixture list, a recent R.O. should be provided, also watch out for the new publications list, make sure that is inserted in the pack. A new introductory letter will also soon be available, so there are plenty of things to keep you motivated in keeping these packs "fresh"

Remember that stationary stock is available from Bob Ballard if you are getting low on supplies.

8. REGIONAL MEETINGS

As mentioned in the introduction the five Regional Meetings took place earlier in the year and issues raised via these meetings cover much of what would ordinarily appear in the Newsletter.

Chairs of Regional Meetings have already received copies of each group's minutes for reference and any branch wishing to obtain copies of these should, if they have not already received copies, contact the Chairperson of their Regional Group.

Copies of the revised and updated summary are enclosed with this newsletter to all Branch Chairmen and Secretaries, as well as to Society officials. This supersedes the summary issued in August.

If any group has items that remain unresolved from previous Regional Meetings. Or matters raised at this year's that I have missed from the summary can these be related to me in order that these can be looked at as live issues.

9. MEMBERS' WEEKEND AND OFFICERS CONFERENCE

By now the majority of you wishing to attend the weekend should by now have sent your booking form to Paul Udey. If you have not done so, and wish to attend, please give your urgent attention to this in order that we can firm up the bookings with the hotel by our early October deadline date. The booking form and "itinerary" was attached as the centrepiece of the September R.O. and should be used to give Paul a definite booking plan for you.

The Officers' Conference Agenda for Sunday morning 27th October is enclosed with this newsletter. Minutes of the 2001 Officers' Conference were circulated following last year's Altrincham weekend. If any delegate wishes to receive a replacement copy please notify me no later than 11th October in order that copies can be printed and made available at Bristol.

It would be appreciated if apologies for absence at the Officers Conference can be advised to me by Saturday 26th October, these can then be listed ready for the gathering on Sunday morning.

It should also be noted that any item you wish to be raised under AOB must be brought to the attention of the Chairman as soon as is possible prior to the start of the meeting.

The dates for the 2003 Members' Weekend, our 75th Anniversary year, at Cheltenham have already been set for the last weekend in October 2003, Friday 24th – Sunday 26th October to be based at the Carlton Hotel, Cheltenham. Cheltenham Branch is now in the process of putting together a programme of events and the invitation of "celebrity" guests for the weekend.

10. EXHIBITIONS

Branches are reminded to ensure that their annual exhibition returns up to the end of October 2002 are sent promptly to Bob Ballard once the financial year is concluded.

Whilst on the subject of exhibitions and sales stands, issues that have been raised at the Regional Meetings and the nature of the responses, especially relating to the fact that no two events are the same, nor are individual branches requirements the same.

How about next time your stand is at an exhibition and up and running, take some photographs and let us have a couple of prints to give the MC an idea of what your stand looks like. We can make comparisons and see if there are things that some branches do that others do not. I am sure that there are a lot of good things that can be shared from this.

11. PUBLICATIONS

It is hoped that the LNWR/LMS Names book and the Railways of Plymouth publication will be available at the Members' Weekend next month. The new Society Tie (and very smart it is too) will be available at Bristol at a cost of £5.50. Branches should contact Geoff Baylis for supplies.

News on Part 2 of the Standards [2-6-0/4-6-0 's] is that it will be available either late this year or very early next year.

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