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OFFICERS' NEWSLETTER 114

BRANCH LIAISON SECRETARY

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2016 Officers' Conference

Attached with this mailing are the approved minutes of the 2016 Officers' Conference. Please ensure they are distributed as widely as possible as they contain information on current and possible future developments.

The information contained in this newsletter is for use of RCTS Officers and Members only and should not be communicated outside of the society
1st December 2016



Minutes of the Meeting of Society and Branch Officers
held on 23rd October 2016 at
The Cumbria Grand Hotel, Grange-over-Sands

Meeting commenced at 09.15

In attendance

Representing the Management Committee and Officers:-

Gordon Davies – Society Chairman
Bob Green – Society Secretary
Reg Wood – Society Treasurer
Mike Robinson – Managing Editor, The Railway Observer
Eric Palmer – Vice President and Chairman, Development Sub-Committee
Alan Cooke – Branch Liaison Officer
David Kelso – Web4 Co-ordinator
David Goddard – Membership Secretary
Terence Jenner – MC Member
John Day – Members Weekend Co-ordinator
Steve Ollive – Assistant Treasurer, Renewals
Bob Ellison – Assistant Treasurer, Branch Finances
Ronnie McAdam -- Publicity Communications
Hugh Gould – Vice President

Representing the Branches:-

Bristol – Paul Udey, Roger Newman.
Cambridge – Robert Bartlett
Cheltenham – Richard Neale, Richard Morris
Chichester – Geoff Adams
Croydon and South London – No representation.
East Midlands – John Hitchens.
Furness, Lakes and Lune – Alan Sattanstill
Hitchin – Steve Lacey, David Elsdon
Humberside – No representation.
Ipswich and District – Eric Palmer, John Day
Lancashire and North West – Ian Derrick
Merseyside, Chester and North Wales – No representation.
Milton Keynes – Mark Richards
North East – Malcolm Hammond
Northampton – No representation
Peterborough – Robert Warburton
Scotland – Richard Thorburn, Ronnie MacAdam
Sheffield – No representation
South East – Mike Woodward, John Holloway, David Blackman
South Essex – Rodger Green.
South Wales / De Cymru – No representation.
Solent – No representation.
Surrey – Andy Davies, Irene Rabbitts, Peter Bosomworth, Tom Kolisch
Sussex – No representation.

Thames Valley – Nigel Farebrother, Denis Horsman

Watford – No representation.

West Midlands – Derek Morris, Bob Barby

West of England – No representation.

West Riding – Bob Green, Malcolm Riley, Steve Batty

Windsor and Maidenhead – David Goddard, Sally Goddard, Steve Ollive, Alan Cooke

1. Opening of Conference Address – Gordon Davies (Society Chairman)

Mr Vice Presidents, Ladies and Gentlemen.

In opening this conference I would like to welcome you all to The Cumbria Grand Hotel here in Grange over Sands.

I hope that you will find conference of interest and benefit but more importantly return next year.

We all have had a superb weekend here in Grange over Sands and I would like to extend my personal thanks to organising team of John Day, Irene Rabbitts and Andy Davies. This year they have once have put together a excellent weekend for us all which has as usual it has worked like a well oiled Class 37 rattling along the Cumbrian Coast line. Please show your appreciation to John, Andy, Irene for the amount of effort and work put in to make this weekend so enjoyable.

Last year it gave me great pleasure to welcome and introduce to you our new President The Reverend Canon Brian Arman. Brian is unfortunately not able to be with us this year. As you know Brian has been in the wars and had a hip replacement operation on the Thursday 8th August. Unfortunately there were problems with the new hip and Brian had to have another operation in what turned out to be a lengthy event on Monday 12th September. I am delighted to report that I have received a phone call from Brian who informs me that he is home and on the very slow road to recovery. The tremendous pain he endured prior to the operation has gone and he is getting about the house with the aid of sticks and he was as he is always he is his usual cheery self. He thanks all of you for the kind messages and cards he has received and he hopes to be back in circulation in the new year. Arthur Turner from the Bristol branch rang Brian on Friday evening and was informed that Brian has been to see his surgeon that afternoon and he was very pleased with Brian's progress.

One other person who cannot be with us this year is Bob Ballard from the Milton Keynes branch. Bob has supported the Members' Weekend for many years and has over the years pleaded that the Members Weekend should be held in the North West area and the one time that takes place he is waiting to go to hospital for a knee replacement, he is not a happy bunny that this has clashed with this weekend however he sends you all his best wishes.

I have been attending the Officers conference for many years and I cannot remember ever a society chairman and certainly not my predecessor John Redgate making an announcement that an MC member is about to become a father. Congratulations to David Goddard and his wife Sally on this great news. The baby is due at exactly 14.23 on the 15th of January according to this new app which is called 'Real Times Babies'.

One person who has decided that after 13 years service on the MC, David Kelso, he will not be seeking re-election to the Management Committee. David will also be stepping down off a couple of the sub-committees that he currently sits one however he is still going to be around. No one can doubt the amount of time and effort he has put in for the society over the years. I am sure you join

me and my colleagues on the MC in thanking David for the commitment he has shown over many years.

I must now take time to thank you all for the tremendous support you gave the MC at last year's OC and at the AGM in April on the proposal to change the status of the society from an unincorporated body to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). My thanks to all the MC members who were involved with the preparation of the material that was presented in the March RO as well as the preparation of the application form which was 30 pages plus. Special mention must be made for the work that Terence Jenner did for the society in giving the superb presentations at both the OC last year and at the AGM in April as I am sure that without Terence, and his knowledge of the law, we would be still here filing in page one or maybe page two of the application form.

The application was presented to the Charities Commissioners on the 13th July and we have waited and waited and waited for a response. Terence eventually received an e-mail some weeks stating that the application has been received, the message stated that they are dealing with, do not ring them, do not email them otherwise you will go to the bottom of the queue.

However Terence received an e-mail on Tuesday with some good news. Our application has been successful. However the Charity Commissions have suggested some very minor amendments to which Terence will explain more to you later this morning.

At the AGM in Coventry in April I made an appeal that we were desperately looking for a Society Publicity Officer. Well that appeal did not fall on deaf ears as about two weeks later I received an e-mail from Steve Hewitt from the South Essex branch expressing an interest in the job. I am pleased to inform you that Steve has now been appointed the new publicity officer for the society. Unfortunately Steve cannot be with us today as he is at home celebrating his parents fiftieth wedding anniversary.

Now for two more appeals. Noel Machell from the Lancs. and North West branch has been the Assistant Treasurer Publication for some considerable time. Noel has stated that he wishes to step down from the role so we have a vacancy for that position. If you are interested please contact the society treasurer, Reg Wood for details of what is required.

We are also looking for a Society Marketing Officer. Again if you have marketing skills or know anyone in your branch who has and is looking for a job please contact myself or Eric Palmer the chairman of the development committee for further details.

The annual recruitment campaign goes on. Alan informs me that we have recruited 205 new members in 2015. Congratulations to you all for your efforts. Alan will let you all know the final total for 2016 in a future Newsletter.

Please carry on the good work and let us see if we can recruit even more in 2017. The £15 special offer is still there as please use it to the best advantage and let get more new members into the society in 2017.

This leads me on to the name of the branch that has recruited the most new members in 2016. In joint first place with a total of seven new members each is South Wales Branch and Bristol Branch. Congratulations to both branches for their hard work and effort.

Will someone from the Sales Wales and Bristol branches please come forward and accept the certificates.

My thanks go to all my colleagues on the MC for the long hours they put in serving the society. The beginning of the year was especially arduous as we had more MC meetings in preparing the ground for CIO and the work that went in preparing the CIO supplement that accompanied the March RO.

I would also like to thank all the other society officers as well as all those on the various sub committees as well as all of you at branch level, whether you put the chairs out at meeting, make the tea or whatever you do to keep the society and branches in functioning.

To finish I do hope that all your contributions this morning are productive and that we carry on in maintaining all RCTS activities and enhance the services we give to our members and hopefully we will get many more members new members in future years thus ensuring that the RCTS is still 'Britain's Leading Railway Society'.

Thank you for listening.

Following on from Gordon's address Terence Jenner (14821) reported on the Society's CIO application. The application to the Charity Commission was submitted in July with an acknowledgement received the following month. A reply was received on 18th October agreeing that the Society objectives are indeed charitable but suggesting that we combine the heritage and educational objects in the constitution. All the trustees will have to sign that they agree with this revision. Added that we are approaching the end of the beginning once the paperwork has been sent off and accepted. We will then be approved.

Gordon added that there will be no changes to the document issued in April. A newsletter will be sent out when the process is complete which will include instructions from Reg Wood.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from:- Mike Green, Ted Vaughan, John Godfrey (Solent), David Bird – Publications Committee Chairman, John Redgate – MC Member, David Pick – MC Members, Rodney Allen (East Midlands), Malcolm Snowball, Jim Sedgwick, Margaret Fraser (North East), Paul Baston, Paul Snelling (Sussex), Richard Ashby, Geoff May (Chichester), Philip Grosse, Clive Holden (Furness, Lakes & Lune), Rob Davidson, Geoff Plumb (Watford), Alan Lovecy, Jim Bryant (Sheffield), Peter Wilson, Jeremy Harrison, Chris Meredith, John Archer (Croydon & South London), Dave Beecroft, Bev Steele (Ipswich), Stuart Warr, Andrew Hemmings, Peter Fortune (South Wales / De Cymru), Charles Woodland, David Mitchell, David Dornom (West of England), Ken Falconer, James Harrold (Scottish), Ian Reid, Peter Smith, David Walker, Gordon Earl (West Midlands), Alan Turton, Jon Penn, Geoff Morris, Dave Douglas, John Cowlshaw, John Cashen (Merseyside, Chester & North Wales), Bob Ballard, Stephen Wilson, John Howland (Cheltenham), John Holroyd, Bill Jagger, David Beeken, Mike Holt (West Riding), Jim Crane (Cambridge), Jim Waite, Steve Hewitt (South Essex), Ron Hart (Northampton), David Bird (Publications Committee Chairman), Peter Hall, Alan Norris (Surrey)

3. Confirmation of the minutes of the 2015 Officers Conference

Minutes of the 2015 Officers Conference were proposed for acceptance by Bob Ellison (8624), and seconded by Malcolm Hammond (17454).

4. Matters Arising not covered by the Agenda

No matters arising were raised.

5. The Railway Observer – Report by Mike Robinson (RO Managing Editor)

Gentlemen –

Another year of progress for the RO, with as last year, over 900 pages of news, features and anecdotes and a monthly average of 51 high quality images - in total 630 - selected from over 1800 - or 150 per month submitted over year.

The digital RO option continues to grow in popularity prove encouraging with around 14% of our membership - almost 300 members - now opting for that method. One digital development we were planning last year has not yet progressed largely because of a general pressure on editorial resource and a lack of marketing support. This is our plan to offer a 'free to all' sample RO on the Pagesuite site. With an active marketing program involving the railway press suspended we would really only have been preaching to the converted, and other Society issues such as exploitation of the Michael Mensing archive and the CIO development took over my personal priorities. However with a new Marketing Officer now in place it is my intention to hopefully provide a demo Digital RO during the coming year.

The overwhelming feedback I receive suggests that the RO supports the membership extremely well, and with perhaps no more than a third of the membership regularly attending meetings is perhaps the key element in the Societies ability to develop and maintain our level of membership - which currently is around twice as many as the total membership of both our historically competitor Societies. Nonetheless I commented at the last OC that I felt that for an essentially volunteer production, with the RO we have now reached the limit of what can be achieved on a monthly basis, a fact which many of you will note from the often patchy geographical reporting which appears in the RO. We do strive to cover the entire GB mainline network but despite branches and members in all parts of the country, National Network reports are rarely received from some quite significant parts of the country. Reports for the Southern are almost entirely the work of our local editor's personal trawl through internet, as are those from Scotland - supplemented by my frequent visits to GSW territory. However, despite occasional photo forays by members from elsewhere, and around 5% of our membership resident in the area, I sometimes wonder if a railway still exists east of Swindon! I understand that some Branches do have reports on their local web pages which never see the light of day in the RO and I would simply ask the appropriate Branch Officers to ensure that the material placed on such pages is at least forwarded to the local RO editor for consideration.

One feature we are planning to change is the International news column. Here we suffer an even more arbitrary coverage than for the UK so in conjunction with editor Peter Robinson I am planning to change the emphasis of this by dropping the monthly 'news column' to perhaps quarterly, and replacing it with a bi-monthly illustrated feature based on members travel around the world. Early days for details but I do have a couple of member features already in preparation and in the coming months will explain more in the RO. Hopefully features from members will recall travel outside the UK borders, both past and present.

I don't plan to bang on - yet again - about the need for more volunteers or the often desperate need for feature articles - these are I am afraid constants in the Editor's life and I have learned to live with them; but I trust you will continue to remind your local members of the need to support the RO if we are to avoid either publishing a blank page in the RO, or indeed not having sufficient members of the Editorial team to continue delivering on a monthly basis.

As for other possible changes to the magazine, when you read your November magazine you will note that we are considering increasing the size of the magazine from A5 format to B5 format - giving an overall 20% increase in page area. As well as allowing us to make the very best of the images we publish this will also allow us to use a significantly larger text font size throughout the RO - something which should benefit the majority of our current membership most of whom are within the age demographic where eyesight tends to deteriorate. We have yet to take a decision on when, or indeed if, this change should take place, but as you will see in November Over The Points I have launched a membership survey asking for e-mailed views on the possibility.

Finally, as ever, a big thank you to Amadeus who have again excelled in delivering a quality magazine in a timely fashion, and to the 30 or so members of my editorial team, who collectively spend something like 400 hours a month producing the RO and supporting me to ensure we kept the ball rolling maintaining by 'on-time' delivery of the RO to your doorstep in almost every month.

Thank You.

There were no questions on this topic.

6. Website Web 4 Project – Report by David Kelso (Web 4 Project Leader)

The first thing that must be said is that the project has not moved on as fast as one would have wished. There are number of reasons for this some of which I touched upon in my report to the 2016 AGM in April. I must also add at this stage that I am extremely grateful to David Jackman and Jack Knights for keeping the existing site live and moving forward.

Much of my time has been taken up with other matters related to the CIO and Leatherhead together with work on the images for the new LMS Pacifics book. The sourcing of high quality images both B+W and colour has proved extremely challenging over the timescale of the three classes of locomotive as has the processing of the chosen images and I am grateful that John Cowlshaw who joined me to work on the RO images has also taken on some of the work load on the Pacifics images.

Last year I referred to the challenges that our designer BlueGreen was facing in moving existing pages across to the new site. That has to a large degree been overcome and this was demonstrated to us in the early part of the year. To achieve this transfer we now need to get people trained up to undertake this task.

Currently BlueGreen are commencing work with David Goddard on the membership management side of the site and David will be beginning to work directly with BlueGreen in the coming weeks. Our minds are currently being exercised along with BlueGreen in the task of transferring the photo archive to the new site with an altogether new facility for buying prints of various sizes which will be delivered to the purchaser within 48 hours of ordering and also offering the alternative of digital downloads of the image files. We are fortunate that one member who has his own digital archive site has recently offered to become part of this operation.

Once my work on the Pacifics book is completed I plan to re mobilise the recruitment activities through the winter months referred to in last years report.

Finally I would say, as would BlueGreen, that in hindsight it might have been much easier to have started with a blank sheet of paper and a blank PC screen rather than attempt to transfer the hundreds and hundreds of pages from the existing site to the new setup. However I am confident that we will win in the end.

Jack Knights (21634) urged Branch Correspondents that when sending reports to say who they are and what branch the report is about. Also please send images if at all possible.

7. Publications Subcommittee – Report from David Bird (Publications Committee Chairman) and presented by Gordon Davies

The Stanier Class Five volume 2 was completed during the year and was available to members and public from mid-October. Sales have been steady without being spectacular. In the year to date we have sold via the web, Amazon, trade and post a total of 380 books. This does not include sales via branches or exhibitions where the sales figure is about another 150 books. Volume 1 sales totalled 64 books during the year. The Standard series had 61 sales. The remainder of the book titles accounted for 102 book sales. Again this does not reflect branch or exhibition sales. During the year we did actually sell out of the 'Railways of Keysham' book and it has been deleted from the website accordingly.

John Jennison has now completed the textual aspect of the book on the LMS Pacifics and currently we are completing the 'proof-reading' exercise and photographic selection for the book. It should consist of 256 pages including some 140 b/w and 60 colour photographs within the total. Due to the need to meet our own standards we have delayed publication from this year until early next year when it meets those standards. It will not be far away now.

The 'Patriots' book will be the next to publish and as previously indicated the plan is to produce the book so that it falls in line with the steaming of the "The Unknown Warrior", currently under construction at the Llangollen Railway workshops. We are in contact with the Trust that is behind that project and they will contribute to our book despite others being in the field on this topic. We anticipate both the locomotive and book will launch in 2018 and we intend to mark that event with simultaneous launches. Watch the RO for announcements.

We have a special offer on publication purchases in time for Christmas. Both volumes of the Black Five books are available at a cost of £49.50 and the Jubilee and Stanier 2-6-0 book are available together at £39.50. Details will be in the Nov & Dec RO and Railway Magazine.

Work on the project of considering picture books based on photographs from the Michael Mensing collection continues. Preliminary work on sorting and selecting pictures has commenced with this project. Captions will then need to be considered as well as the presentation of various types and size of the pictures. However, the book will be only be published when it does not abstract work or help from the Pacific and Patriot books.

The committee met three times during the year to handle the work and manage the projects in hand. No change in personnel although Noel Machell has expressed a wish to step aside. We are therefore in need of somebody who has financial skills to assist the committee's job of producing books. Do I hear any volunteers? Please speak to Gordon, as I'm not here, if you can assist the team.

I would like to extend my thanks to the team for their help and assistance to me during the past year.

As ever we still seek new topics for publication so if anybody has a wish to be an author or can offer a manuscript I am always available to receive such offers. I await your approach. In this regard we were disappointed with our efforts to prepare a project covering 'Modern Traction'. The RCTS approached a number of respected railway people, authors, engineers etc but unfortunately we only received one positive reply from the many letters issued. We still will consider the matter but can only hope we get some better reaction from the industry/experts out there.

John Hitchens (6600) commented that the East Midland Branch attends a number of exhibitions but finds it is unable to sell new books at full price. He added that it is time to reduce the price of the Standards books.

Alan Sattenstall (21211) asked whether the Society had a sales target for each book? In reply Gordon Davies (17822) that we take guidance from what is happening in the commercial sector in deciding the quantity of each title to print.

8. Development Sub committee – report by Eric Palmer (Development SC Chairman)

Firstly may I welcome Steve Hewitt to the committee. He is a South Essex member who has been with the society for 22 years and he has agreed to take on the task of Publicity Officer a role with which we really do need some help. Unfortunately he cannot be with us today due to a family commitment

2016 is a milestone year for the Development Sub Committee, which was launched just ten years ago under the Chairmanship of Richard Neale. The Management Committee set us numerous tasks including improving the society image, consideration of new opportunities, the retention of the existing membership base and, of course, to increase membership year on year.

Following successful advertising in National magazines we were able to recruit a record 205 new members during 2015 – this was the highest number recruited in one year since 2001. Recruitment is a real up-hill struggle with the numbers of successful new entrants each year being off set at the end of the year by the inevitable loss of members through death or from resignations. However the latest figures circulated to you by the Branch Liaison Officer show a marked decline in our losses over the last two years. In September 2014, despite recruiting new members, the membership fell by 90, in 2015 the fall had reduced to 33 and at September this year the membership is only 4 less than it was at this time last year. To maintain our success I am asking you and your committee to redouble your efforts to encourage visitors attending meetings and also those appearing at exhibitions to come and join us.

We are constantly looking for new openings to publicise Britain's leading railway society. On the 10th December last year we placed two more of our society owned nameplates – Sheffield United and Sheffield Wednesday - on view at the Holiday Inn in Sheffield, each with a plaque confirming our ownership. We have updated our presence at major exhibitions with, for the first time, a very successful stand at the Great Central Auction at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire. Work has started on the internal renovation at Leatherhead station but we do not have a completion date as yet, well you know what builders are like! As Gordon mentioned earlier we have not signed the lease as we are not yet registered as a charity.

In conjunction with First TransPennine we are holding a competition towards the end of this year which will be advertised in the commercial railway magazines with two first prizes of a session on the Class 158 driving simulator at York. This is open to all with one prize going to a society member and another for a non-member who will also be invited to join the society at a reduced rate. A society member who wins will also get free subscription for one year. Work is still going on with the final details.

Finally I must take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues on the DSC for all their hard work and efforts.

There were no questions on this topic.

9. Regional Meetings – report from Alan Cooke. (Branch Liaison Secretary)

I would like to thank all the branches who attended the five regional meetings this year and for their contributions to the debate and discussion.

The regional meetings were set up as a forum for branches to express their ideas and opinions on the society so that the MC and the development committee could work on these suggestions so as to increase membership and promote the society and the branches.

The 16th round of Regional Meetings held this year had an agenda that consisted mainly of topics that came from the MC. I appealed to all the groups and branches well in advance for agenda items. However, I was disappointed that the branches have contributed very little towards the agenda. The regional meetings are your events and all groups wish that they continue in the future so please for next year's round of meetings please get your thinking caps on for some really interesting and maybe evocative agenda items for discussions in 2017.

Don't forget that the naming of 43014 as *THE RAILWAY OBSERVER* started out as a suggestion at a Regional Meeting so it can be done.

I carry out a number of roles towards the running the Society but find that managing the Regional Meetings does takes up a considerable amount of time and effort assembling the agenda including asking for agenda items which meets with minimal response. And afterwards compiling the five sets of minutes with all their varied answers into a single document that that is becoming more unwieldy. Are you happy with the style of minutes that I have adopted? And of course there are the branches that have not attended a regional meeting in years, one of which has cited the travelling time in getting to the meeting as being a reason. I believe that those branches that do not attend are missing out on a fundamental and very important event in the Society's calendar.

In future I want to see more input from the branches regarding the agenda, as I stated earlier they are your meetings and the Society needs more contributions so that we get much more benefit from them. Do you think that you are?

The MC has been in discussion about the format for next year and is looking to the branches to play a greater part. One idea being considered is that each group will give a five-minute presentation on their ideas and suggestions that will be presented at next year's OC. This is not a new idea and has been done in the past. We can arrange for digital projectors if you want to make a really impressive impact in presenting your ideas. Another is for all the meetings to be held on a Saturday so that newer, younger committee members who still work and cannot attend mid week events can be encouraged to attend.

In closing I would like to thank Rodney Allen, Ian Derrick, Robert Warburton, Mike Green and Brian Arman for chairing the meetings. Rodney is standing down this year with a welcome return by John Foreman in 2017. So thank you again Rodney for your efforts in recent years.

Ladies and gents, let's make the 2017 regional meetings dynamic affairs with lots of innovative ideas and suggestions.

There were no questions on this topic.

10. Society Finance – Report from Reg Wood (Society Treasurer)

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) What is the financial impact? It will allow members who are UK taxpayers to authorise the Society to claim GIFT AID on their donations and on a portion of their membership subscriptions. A gift aid form will be mailed to all members in the next few weeks with their invitation to renew their subscription. PLEASE urge taxpaying members to complete and return with their renewal.

Those lucky members who pay income tax at the higher rate will particularly benefit from gift aid. Not only will the Society benefit from donations, the member will be able to reclaim the higher rate tax in their income tax return.

Direct Debit Our subscription renewal by DD is gaining ground. DD saves members having to complete the renewal form and send payment each year to renew. PLEASE urge members to complete the DD authorisation form with their renewals. The Society even reduces the sub by a £1 by way of thanks.

Donations for our major archive project We plan to bring together our archives, library and photographic collections, all currently held in closed storage around the country. I am sure members will be pleased the Society plans to reopen its extensive collections. The new facility would be open to members. We need to raise fund for this major project. So, members will receive with their renewal letter an invitation to make a donation to The Archive project. PLEASE urge members to include a donation with their renewal – and if the GA form is also included your Society can increase each donation by 25%, funded by government.

Subscription Rates This year I am forecasting a break even financial result following last year's deficit. We have incurred significant cost increases in post, travel and room hire this year.

I commend to you our image library. Our major collection of images is now available for members to purchase electronically, and there is a good level of interest.

Remember too members discount on our publications, which remain our single largest source of income after subscriptions.

Cry for Help We have a very small volunteer Finance team and Noel Machell wishes to retire. We seek new volunteers (who are not frightened of numbers) to help the MC and I operate and control the Society's finances. Could YOU help or do you know someone who might? Please let me know. Also needed is a Sales leader to develop new sales outlets for our books.

Branch Network Our Branches are vital to attracting and retaining members. I have worked to avoid any CIO impact on Branches and confirm Branch funds invested in the national Society continue to be reserved and shown separately in our Balance Sheet.

Finally I am most grateful to Bob Ellison, Steve Ollive and Noel Machell and all our Branch Treasurers for their invaluable support and inputs towards our financial governance

Steve Ollive (14617) urged all the members that currently have taken out Direct Debits to read the letter that they will shortly be receiving as part of the renewal process.

Roger Newman (5965) asked whether there was a mechanism for donations at branch meetings to be subject to gift aid? In reply Reg Wood (10811) said that until we get agreements in place it is planned to make it available for national donation only at present.

John Day (8775) asked whether the Society has decided what to do with the extra income earned from gift aid? Reg Wood said it is planned to use it to help get the new archive up and running.

Steve Lacey (21146) warned that we need to be careful when dealing with gift aid in that we need to ensure that all the donors are actually paying enough income tax. Reg Wood said that the renewal letter had been proof read by HMRC, members have been asked to ensure that they pay enough tax.

Bob Ellison (8624) thanked all the branches for getting their returns in on time and asked that they keep him up to date with any changes and developments.

11. Date and Venue for 2017 Officers Conference

John Day announced that the 2017 Members' Weekend is set for 20th – 22nd October. We will be based at the Radisson Park Hotel in Southend on Sea.

12. Date and Venue for 2017 Annual General Meeting

Gordon Davies reminded everyone that the 2017 AGM will be on 29th April and once again will be at the Welcome Centre in Coventry.

13. Any other competent business

1. Ronnie McAdam (16080) reminded the branches that they are missing out on a valuable advertising resource; Railnews the rail industry publication has now gone on online and offers free advertising of railway meetings and lectures. He added that the branches can do this themselves and offered to provide a guide to Alan Cooke to pass on via a newsletter.
2. Alan Sattenstall (21211) said that we are missing on Twitter and the Society needs a digital marketing strategy.

Meeting closed at. 11.45