

BRANCH LIAISON SECRETARY

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Officers' Newsletter 169

(December 2018)

Digital Equipment

Insurance via the Society's policy is expected to be available once again for 2019. Any branches replacing older items or acquiring new equipment now need to provide this information. Please will you let me have an up to date list of any equipment that your branch owns so that the records can be amended accordingly to reflect the items involved and their cost for insurance purposes.

The current insurance policy proposed by our brokers for 2019 has a policy excess of £175.

Officers' Directory February 2019

Updates will need to be provided as soon as possible and preferably by the end of this month if the draft is to get to the RO Editor Mike Robinson for publication in early Spring 2019 – it is already too late for the January 2019 RO and probably February too. With a lot of work to do on Members' Weekends for 2018 and 2019, branch accounts, etc, I have not had enough time to ask for the updates sooner which is why it will be a little later for the beginning of 2019. Please will all Branch Secretaries and National Officers check that their entries in the July 2018 Directory are correct and let me know of any changes. I would greatly appreciate it if all branches respond either to confirm that the current information is correct or with the details of any updates required.

Branch AGM Minutes

Now that we are nearly at the end of 2018, it is time to remind all branches that they should provide a copy of the minutes of any Branch AGM that has taken place or is about to take place for 2018. There is a complete record for 2016 and I am only waiting for two sets of Branch AGM minutes for 2017 which is a pretty good record. The two missing sets will be requested separately so this is just a gentle reminder for those two branches.

I appreciate that the minutes for this year will not have been agreed as a true record until the following year's AGM, but this will be shown in due course. In the meantime, please will those branches who have not yet provided AGM minutes for 2018 do so as soon as is practically possible. Nine branches have already provided them for 2018 and while some branches do not have their AGM until December and will not have minutes yet, please will everyone note that it is important to provide these records. It is more important now that we have CIO status and that the Society as a whole – including the branches, is functioning properly. It is good practice to keep proper records and this is part of that process.

The information contained in this newsletter is for use of RCTS Officers and Members only and should not be communicated outside of the Society

Index to Newsletters for 2018

An index to all the Newsletters for 2018 will be coming out in January 2019. It will list all the subjects against the relevant Newsletter numbers for ease of looking up any subject that you may wish to refer back to.

Officers' Conference 2018

Minutes of the Officers' Conference held on Sunday 14 October 2018 at the Marsham Court Hotel in Bournemouth are attached to this Newsletter as appendix 1. Please read and let me have any feedback - for example if there are any corrections required with regards to officers attendance and apologies. As these come through in a variety of ways and sometimes in a rather haphazard fashion, it is possible that mistakes can be made. Mistakes can be corrected so it is important that you let me know if any changes to this are required.

Experience!

This has been quite a year – some of which I would not want to repeat. Most of it has been really good and I would like to say thank you to all of you who have supported me during the year while I have been learning about the role of Branch Liaison Officer. It is your encouragement and belief that have kept me going through the more difficult times. You never know what it is like until you try and the important thing is to have a go instead of sitting back and moaning. I cannot forget that I am here to support all of you in the work that you do to run the branches – each with its own unique set of circumstances. Although my remit is specifically branches, it does go wider in some ways eg with sending these newsletters out to all Society Officers. Whatever your role, without you the Society and the branches would not function or exist in anything like the way they do now. Thank you.

AVR – a replacement for the former AHL

There will be a separate Newsletter to explain about the Active Volunteer Rate as presented at the Officers' Conference 2018 in Bournemouth. This is the proposal for replacing the former AHL and will be put to the membership at the Society's AGM on Saturday 27 April 2019 at Coventry. As soon as the guidance that was requested and promised is ready, it can be circulated together with the presentation.

and finally

A Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year to everyone

Kind regards

Irene



Minutes of the Officers Conference
held on Sunday 14 October 2018 at
The Marsham Court Hotel, 3 Russell Cotes Road, East Cliff, Bournemouth BH1 3AB

Conference commenced promptly at 09.15

Present

Representing the Management Committee (MC) and National Officers:-

Rev Canon Brian Arman – Society President
Gordon Davies – Society Chairman
Bob Green – Society Secretary
Reg Wood – Society Treasurer
Irene Rabbitts – Branch Liaison Officer
David Goddard – Membership Secretary
Andy Davies – Society Archivist
Mike Robinson – RO Editor
David Bird – Publications Committee Chair
John Redgate – MC member
David Jackman – Acting Webmaster – apologies for absence
John Day – Members' Weekend Coordinator
Paul Chancellor – Development Committee Chair – apologies for absence
Eric Rattray – Assistant Treasurer, Branches – apologies for absence

Representing the Branches and Apologies for Absence:-

Bristol – Brian Arman, Reg Wood, Paul Udey, Roger Newman, Tony Horstman
Cambridge – Robert Bartlett OBE. Apologies - Jim Crane
Cheltenham – Richard Morris, Richard Neale
Chichester – Geoff Adams, Roger Sandford. Apologies – Richard Ashby, Geoff May
Croydon & South London – Peter Wilson, Jeremy Harrison. Apologies – Chris Meredith
East Midlands – Rodney Allen, John Hitchins
South Essex – Steve Hewitt
Furness, Lakes & Lune – Alan Sattenstall
Hitchin – Dr Steve Lacey, David Elsdon
Humberside – no representative available. Apologies – Carey Vessey
Ipswich – John Day
Lancashire & North West – no representative
Merseyside, Chester & North Wales – no representative available. Apologies – Alan Turton, Jon Penn, Dave Douglas, John Cashen, John Cowlshaw, Paul Treby
Windsor & Maidenhead – Steve Ollive, David Goddard, Alan Cooke. Apologies - Sally Goddard
Milton Keynes – Bob Ballard. Apologies - Mark Richards
North East – Malcolm Hammond, Jim Sedgwick, Margaret Fraser. Apologies – Malcolm Snowball, Tony Skinner
Northampton – Jack Knights. Apologies – David Pick
Peterborough – Robert Warburton. Apologies – Barry Butler, Alan Burgess, Colin Greatrex

Scottish – no representative available. Apologies – Richard Thorburn, Ken Falconer, James Harrold, Ronnie Mcadam
South East – John Holloway, David Blackman. Apologies – Mike Woodward
Sheffield – Alan Lovecy, Jim Bryant
Solent – Ted Vaughan. Apologies – John Godfrey, Peter Ifold
Surrey – Andy Davies, Peter Bosomworth, Tom Kolisch, Irene Rabbitts
Sussex – no representative available. Apologies – Paul Snelling, Paul Baston
South Wales – Stuart Warr. Apologies – Peter Fortune, Andrew Hemmings
Thames Valley – Denis Horsman
West of England – no representative
Watford – Geoff Plumb. Apologies – Robert Davidson, Richard Dyett, Lizzie Davidson, Larry King
West Midlands – Bob Barby. Apologies – Derek Morris, Alan Jelly, Ian Reid, Gordon Earl, Chris Berridge
West Riding – Bob Green. Apologies – Bill Jagger, Dave Beekom, Mike Holt

Others not listed above:-

Steve Batty, Bob Ellison. Apologies – Kurt Sickelmore, Vron Cooke.

1 Chairman's Address – Gordon Davies

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, in opening this conference I would like to welcome you all to the Marsham Court Hotel here at the fine seaside resort of Bournemouth. A very warm welcome is extended to those of you who are attending their first conference and they are:

Roger Sandford – Publicity Officer and Chichester Branch representative;
Tony Horstman – Bristol Branch committee member.

I hope that you find this experience of interest and worthwhile and, more importantly, that you will be back next year.

We have all had a superb weekend here in Bournemouth and again I would like to extend my personal thanks to the organising team of John Day, Irene Rabbitts and Andy Davies who were joined this year by Richard Neale. This year they have once again put together an excellent weekend for us all. Please show your appreciation to John, Andy, Irene and Richard for the amount of effort and work put in to make this weekend so enjoyable.

Before we start on the official business there is one person here today who deserves a special mention as today is a very special day in his calendar as he has reached the magnificent age of the big 6 – 0. A very happy birthday to Richard Morris. (*birthday card presented*). A bit of bad news for you Richard, due to these miserable governments we have had over the last few years you are going to have to wait for your Winter Heating Allowance so keep wearing the sweaters and overcoats when you are at home in the middle of winter!!!

I am delighted to announce that last Saturday the 6th October, the Society's new Archive and Library at Leatherhead was officially opened by Paul Atterbury who you may have seen on the BBC's Antiques Roadshow. There were over 40 in attendance including Mr Raj Haque - the Chairman of Mole Valley district Council, and our Society President the Rev Canon Brian Arman. Society Vice Presidents, a representative from just about every branch and, last but not least, Terry and Beryl Silcock our last librarian and his wife. We have a fine new facility at Leatherhead and I would like to thank all who were involved in setting up the Archive and Library. I am not going to say any more otherwise I will steal what Andy Davies is going to tell you in his

presentation later. All I can say is that if you have the opportunity please visit Leatherhead and see what is on offer.

To celebrate that the Society was in its 90th year, the Development Committee came up with a bright idea of offering free membership to anyone who joined between June and the end of this month (October). This suggestion was accepted by the MC and you will have seen the offer in a Newsletter and in adverts in the commercial railway press. You will have also seen various features in magazines about the Society as well as the regular column we have in The Railway Magazine.

I am delighted to report that as of Wednesday morning this week we have recruited a grand total of 815 new members. That is a magnificent total but the big question is will they renew their membership when they receive their letter from Steve Ollive in a couple of weeks' time. Brian is going to speak about that in his address shortly.

As you can well imagine recruiting 815 new members generated a vast amount of work for our Assistant Treasurer New Members - Vron Cooke, and our Membership Secretary David Goddard. Many thanks to you both for the amount of time and effort you have put in to deal with the extra work.

As always the branches have been busy recruiting as well and as it is customary at Conference, it is time to give recognition to the branch who has recruited the most new members this year. Well this year it is a draw. As we have two joint winners the third in line was Bristol with 13 new members. There are two branches that have recruited 14 new members each and those two branches are Ipswich and Chichester.

Congratulations to Ipswich and Chichester.

A framed certificate was presented to John Day representing the Ipswich Branch and Roger Sandford for the Chichester Branch

The free offer ends at the end of the month but as you will have seen in Irene's latest Newsletter, the campaign for new recruits continues with a special offer for 2019.

The MC and Trustees have now started to publish the minutes of their meetings on the website and there are already some there in the Members' section. It will be necessary from time to time to redact certain items as these may be of a personal or confidential nature.

I have also in My Chairman's message in the RO started to include a resume of relevant items discussed at the MC.

We have presented our first annual report to the Charity Commission in August and this is now on their website. Anyone who has visited this website will know that it is not the easiest of websites to work on. However, Bob Green – assisted by his wife Lorraine, eventually got there and so far we have no feedback so we assume that what we have presented is correct, time will tell. Irene Rabbitts has now been appointed as a Society Trustee.

We had two new recruits to the MC following the AGM in April. David Bird – deputy editor RO and Chairman of the Publications Committee, is now on his second stint on the MC, what a glutton for punishment. Joining David is Paul Chancellor who is chairman of the Development Committee. Sadly, Paul cannot be with us today.

Last year I had a rather unfortunate encounter with our marvellous National Health Service and was out of commission for some time. Despite what you read and hear in the media I could find no fault in the treatment and service I received. I informed the MC at the June 2017 meeting that I would complete my three year term as Chairman and then I would step down as Chairman and from the MC at the AGM in 2020. At our meeting last month I confirmed what I stated in June. Therefore, there will be a vacancy for the Society Chairman's job.

Bob Green, our hard working Society Secretary, has also informed the MC that he will be stepping down as Secretary at the AGM in 2020 and this is one year earlier than he had originally planned. Therefore, there will be a vacancy for the Society Chairman and Secretary posts at the 2020 AGM. So if you feel you can contribute and take on these roles please give Bob or I a call.

Web 4 Project

Unfortunately, David Jackman cannot be here today so he has sent me his report to read out.

"The existing website has struggled on thanks to the efforts of the web team: Alan Cooke, David Jackman and Jack Knights. The move of the Photographic Archive to Zenfolio last year has provided a steady stream of sales and the October update has just been added with an extra 1,000 images, but too much of the site has been on hold pending the arrival of the new one. Work on this has been on-going with little to show so far but that is about to change. Hopefully, it will become much more visible over the next few months."

I am sad to report that Terence Jenner our Honorary Legal Adviser, has had to step down as a Society Trustee and from the MC due to ill health. Without Terence's help and advice I doubt we would have gained CIO status in such a short time. Due to his expert knowledge we have a new Archive and Library facility at Leatherhead which is a fine addition to our portfolio. I can assure you that Terence is already sorely missed.

You will recall that a king-pin of the West of England branch for many years was Tom Reardon. He was, as far as I can remember, present at every AGM and Officers' Conference. Tom has recently suffered from quite a few falls and, as a result, is now in a nursing home. He was always the first to propose and/or second a motion.

As always I would like to thank my colleagues on the MC for the unbelievable amount of hours they put in every year. My thanks also extends to those who work so hard to produce the RO as well as those at branch level who ensure a constant programme of indoor meetings as well as all the outdoor fixtures, and who man the sales and exhibition stands that you see advertised in the RO.

All this effort and hard work ensures that the RCTS remains 'Britain's Leading Railway Society'. Many thanks to you all.

Thank you for listening.

2 Apologies for Absence – noted together with the names of those present. Only two branches did not respond.

3 President's Address – Rev Canon Brian Arman

Congregations never clap before a sermon. Gordon has stolen all my thunder. Thank you to all who have been involved in the weekend and to 'all of you' (present at Conference). There are only about 5 branches who have not yet invited me or that I have not yet visited. It is a privilege and the welcome has been extraordinary. Branches are particularly important, and now that we have 815 new members it is important to retain them. The letter from the President in the December RO was directed at new members. It explained three points:

- a) The RO is a first class means of dissemination of information – compliments to all involved.
- b) Branches – make contact and go to meetings if possible, and make them welcome – perhaps having a designated welcomer at branch meetings. If someone new comes then really make them feel welcome. An example is my own branch with the book sales being a focal point, and an integral part of the proceedings. It is a friendly place, there is a good speaker and the 'floor show' with the books. It has an impact. So find a way to reach out. A branch newsletter – whether email or hard copy, helps to make people feel that they belong and that they matter. A more organised basis for this could give guidance at Regional level or national.
- c) Senile dementia. There is research that shows that the incidence of dementia between railway enthusiasts and the general population is 2% amongst rail enthusiasts compared with 15% in the general population. So being a railway enthusiast is good for your health and wellbeing. From standing on the end of a platform and being happy to wait and see what comes to today, things have changed. Can we develop something of a technical nature to develop this interest for the membership. "I am not a techie myself".

There is something else. A tie-up between the RCTS and RTC has been suggested. Now there is a new company at Tyseley. Is there a way we can work together with them to take a coach or two for members?

The fascination with railways is growing and developing. There are friends in the TOCs and elsewhere so perhaps we need to develop more links in that direction?

Brian finished with humour about the length of time of talking. The Society Chairman thanked Brian, mentioning his own branch and the importance of welcoming members especially new ones. A suggestion came from John Day that perhaps we could look at a larger Society name badge that would have the Society logo, the person's name and their duty/role – a standard design for all, that the branches could finance. It was agreed that this would be a good idea.

4 Confirmation of Year 2017 Officers' Conference minutes

(previously circulated with Newsletter 151 – February 2018)

Correction – Robert Bartlett – 16273, Cambridge Branch. There should be a correction on page 6, item 2, where it was recorded that Cambridge had not attended. This needs to be amended as Cambridge Branch was represented.

Acceptance of the minutes with the correction above:

Proposed: John Day 8775, Ipswich Branch

Seconded: Richard Neale 9339, Cheltenham Branch

Agreed: All

(there is now a corrected version of the minutes of the Officers' Conference 2017 that can be made available on request)

5 Matters Arising not covered by the Agenda

None were raised.

6 Leatherhead Archive and Library – Andy Davies

The Archivist Andy Davies explained that the presentation would be going out as a Newsletter (*Newsletter 167*) by email and asked all to distribute it as widely amongst their membership as possible either by email or perhaps by showing it as part of a branch meeting. He then went through the photographs and PowerPoint slides providing more detail and explanations starting with the timeline in finding the location, to the official opening and onwards. Especial thanks and credit was given to all the volunteers who had worked very hard to achieve the success of the project while admitting that he had 'said his prayers' along the way. Particular recognition goes to Terry Silcock and that has been acknowledged by naming the main study room overlooking the railway lines as the 'Silcock Room'. The list of volunteers was a long one and Andy hoped that he had not overlooked anyone while compiling it and gave assurance that anyone missed would be added. The next steps were listed and the receipt of new material eg through bequests, followed by publicity and advertising. Roger Sandford has already prepared a press release from the official opening that would be going out the following week. There are some hard decisions to be made about what is kept and what may need to go particularly with regards to periodicals because of the volume of space required to store everything. The formal presentation was followed by questions and answers.

Question – Alan Sattenstall 21211 (Furness, Lakes and Lune) – Are there any plans to generate revenue?

Answer – Yes. Unwanted items will be sold. Members can access the facility for free, non-members will be asked to make a donation. If people would like us to do research for them then we will have to ask for a donation.

Question – Callum Macleod 12817 (Scottish) – Is there any policy regarding an uncontrolled increase in books?

Answer – We will have to be selective about what we can accept eg Working Timetables. Andy Davies will be watching this aspect carefully.

A question about access was raised and this will be an issue for wheelchair users as the doorway between the office and the rest of the building is fairly narrow. The building has Grade II listing which restricts the possibilities. However, standard tri-walkers will be 'OK' and visitors requiring books from rooms that they cannot themselves access will need the help of volunteers as necessary.

Other questions included what will happen to collections of books if they are not needed for the Library – they will be redirected to local branches as appropriate. A related question was about unwanted periodicals – similarly, a list will be distributed and made available to see if anyone would like them before any consideration is given to recycling them. Library boxes will be continued as before subject to sorting out the logistics, although it is most likely that the branches who would like them will need to sort out collection and returns. The issue of damp in the building was raised and reassurance was given that this is being followed up with the leasing company. It is being addressed but has not yet been resolved.

There was thanks from the Nene Valley Railway via Steve Lacey 21146 (Hitchin) for the shelving from the old Library facility for which they made a payment – rather than the Society having to arrange disposal.

7 Society Finance – Reg Wood

The Society's financial year runs from 1 November to 31 October each year.

The 2016/7 year produced a very small surplus of just £2,311 compared to last year's £7,709. Our Forecast for 2017/8 is for a deficit of £8,710 but this includes financial investment in the Society's future.

Publication sales increased more than 40% in 2016/7, achieving £19,657 (2015/6 £13,785) and contributed a surplus of £6,539 to our results. Our margins on book sales were also maintained with our fixed costs being spread over higher sales. 2016/7 sales were assisted by *The Stanier Pacifics*, launched just before Year End 2017. In the first 9 months of 2016/7 we achieved Sales of £16,500. During 2017/8 we have reprinted *The BR 9Fs* and we are proud to report we have just placed the printing order for a further popular book that David Bird will doubtless include in his report on publications. With our influx of new members, branches are invited to remind them of their membership discounts on publications.

During the year our major initiative to develop our new website has continued with a further investment in 2016/7 of £7,000 (cumulative £16,850) of expenditure capitalised as Work-in-Progress. These are big numbers for a 'hobby' society. There will be very little to show until the work is finished.

In 2016/17 and the current year, work has continued on our expansion of our saleable library of digital images with a further investment of £1,300.

This year Budgets have been developed for each Society Committee and principal activities, with the Committees becoming responsible for Budgetary Control of their activities using quarterly reports from me.

The Society has constrained administration costs to around £20,000 per year despite additional work and meetings for our additional Development Committee initiatives and the Leatherhead project.

Talking Administration, could I draw Branches' attention to their VAT returns. These are returned through Eric Rattray on Form 104 usually twice a year for the 6 months to 30 April and the 6 months to 31 October. Your Branch Officers Handbook reminds us that they are required within 6 weeks from period end. HMRC only allow this timescale for any VAT registered organisations. Any later submissions puts the Society technically at fault and means all Branch returns have to be held over until the next VAT return 3 months later. In turn this means Branches have to wait longer for their repayment claims. Branch financial returns should be made within two weeks of the period end as per the Treasurers' Guidance Notes in the Handbook. Please let Eric know if you need help with your VAT financial returns.

I am very pleased to report our first invitation to members to make donations towards Leatherhead and through Gift Aid where possible has been very successful. We attracted £10,000 in donations in 2016/7, and in the current year have successfully claimed £6,000 in Gift Aid from HMRC.

We have invested more than £23,000 cashflow in our major new Leatherhead Archive and Library and indeed more than £28,000 had the rent bill been submitted by our railway landlords. It seems they have "bigger fish to fry" just now with their industrial disputes etc rather than billing RCTS! I look forward to our Branches helping us raise members awareness of this new service.

In carrying out the role of Society Treasurer, I receive invaluable support from my assistant treasurers Denis Horsman and Eric Rattray. I am also grateful to John Redgate, Vron and Alan Cooke, Steve Ollive and David Goddard for their substantial input in their roles which helps me with the finances of membership and publications. I am most appreciative of the efforts of Branch Treasurers across the Society, and my particular thanks go to Eric Rattray in pulling all their Branch data together.

There were no questions about Society Finances.

8 The Railway Observer – Mike Robinson

There is not too much to report and it has been a fairly good year with an average of 50 quality images being published rather than the usual 60. A lot of images are provided but the problem has been an overload of the same types of images making selection harder. The digital option take up is approximately 20% this year. It will be interesting to see the outcome of the balance between digital and hard copy RO with the new special offer free memberships and whether or not this will make a difference to the percentages. This year has seen more features, more articles and more people's experiences of the railway scene. It takes longer to fill the magazine if there is insufficient good material. The scale of the task in producing the RO each month is shown by the hours put in by all those who contribute to its production and having to find new sub-editors adds to the workload. There is a need for more people to help in the editorial team and in providing material. It is hard to maintain standards and quality as the RO is entirely reliant on volunteers. It is also hard to ensure a consistency of reporting while trying to cover the whole network which has proven difficult in some areas, for example in Scotland. The issue is that some areas are not well covered and people are needed to cover these areas.

The printers used are still Amadeus and we receive a lot of help from them with production, over and above what might be expected from the contract.

Finally, I would like to thank the 30 or so permanent members of the team and everyone else who contributes.

Questions and answers followed:

Question – Richard Neale 9339 (Cheltenham) – while appreciating the issues in getting the magazine out, there are complaints about the late arrival of the hard copy RO and some have threatened to leave the RCTS. What about changing the date, would that help?

Answer – Not in reality. The digital copy appears on time on the website. The current process means that the digital copy is uploaded onto the website at the same time as the copy is sent to print. It is unlikely that changing the date would solve the problem. It is no longer just a compilation exercise but a need to actively write and select pictures. The RO Editor outlined the timescale and timeline of production and reiterated that it goes to the printers and is uploaded onto the website at the same time.

Question – John Day 8775 (Ipswich) – Those involved should be commended for all the work of 'putting the RO to bed'. As the time gap between the digital version and the printed version is not the Editor's fault, could we renegotiate with the printers?

Answer – Not sure that this would help at the price we pay. The Editor pointed out that there is a note on the forum as soon as the digital version is available on the website so perhaps all officers would like to spread this information to their respective branches. This can be used as a guide that the printed version should be out about 7 to 10 days later. John Day agreed to relay this to his

branch members together with the reasons. Although the time gap has been contentious the explanation may help.

Question – Malcolm Hammond 17454 (North East, Darlington) – We had a presentation last night from South Western Railway. The Editor has said that sometimes there is not enough content for the magazine. Should we approach the TOCs for information and thus generate more articles that way?

Answer – Yes, this could be done but it is a question of resources and volunteers to do this and build relationships with the TOCs etc and the Heritage Railways. An example from the November RO was given to show that this can work.

9 Development Committee – Bob Ballard

Bob Ballard as Vice Chair of the Development Committee (DC) presented the report as Chairman Paul Chancellor was unable to attend in person.

The development committee has met four times in the last twelve months and continues to try to align its meetings with those of the Management committee so that items arising can be dealt with in a speedy and efficient manner. This should now also be facilitated by the MC decision that the chair of the Development Committee should sit on the MC. During the last twelve months long serving members Eric Palmer and David Pick have left the committee whilst Alan Cooke, Roger Sandford and Steve Lacey have joined. Alan's role is that of secretary whilst Roger, of course, covers publicity/marketing which is a key area for attention for the DC.

The terms of reference of the DC are currently under review by the MC but the main areas of activity by the group are a) growing the membership and b) developing the Society membership offering.

There are several facets to growing the membership including trying to find ways of reducing non-renewals. However, the focus so far has been on the annual 'special offer' to attract new members and it was agreed that the Society should offer free membership for a limited time in 2018 to celebrate its 90th anniversary. Unfortunately, the offer had to end in October due to the way that the renewals process works but it has been highly successful attracting some 800 plus people, the challenge now being to retain as many of these new joiners as possible. The MC has agreed to a special offer for 2019 at 50% of the standard rate but also agreed with a DC recommendation that the digital membership rate be reduced as the differential between printed and digital was out of step with commercial titles and also did not sufficiently promote the best financial return from a Society view point. Free digital membership will continued to be offered for part of 2019 for those who join at a branch meeting or an exhibition.

A high proportion of the new members were attracted by the Society's first real membership advertising campaign at a cost of £2000 spread across five titles. A press release was sent to the full range of Railway titles and our cause was also helped by multipage articles about the Society appearing in at least four titles covering both the 90th anniversary and 80 years since the first rail tour with the Stirling Single - this included getting the NRM to display the loco with our headboard for a short period, again backed up by a press release. The regular column in the Railway Magazine has continued and the first of a hoped for series in RAIL has also appeared. No less than £9000 has been allocated for advertising our membership offer in 2019. However, savings could be made in this area if a number of branches were more active in signing up more members. Our 2019 target is to increase membership by 5% so we have to both compensate for those who leave and the required growth meaning that we will probably need around 300 new members to reach the target - thus if the branches recruited ten new members each the Society could save £9000 by not having to advertise!

DC funded exhibitions have been attended at the Nene Valley, Gloucestershire Warwickshire, and East Lancashire Railways along with the DRS open day at Crewe, all of these being with the specific purpose of recruiting new members. The latter brought in over fifty but the attendances at the heritage lines (aimed at diesel events) have been less rewarding. However, it should be noted that whilst the Society pays the costs of attendance at these events, help is required from local members to work on the stand and in that respect there has not been a change from previous years where on occasions the local response to a request for help has been sadly lacking. It is anticipated that at least two open days will be attended in 2019 but ideas for other exhibitions/events that would be worthwhile attending would be welcome.

What we offer to our members is obviously key to both attracting new ones and retaining our existing members. The first challenge is to review/re invigorate our vision of what the Society should look like and to that end the DC has asked the MC to provide a 'Vision' for the Society and once we have that the DC can work towards implementing it. That said items such as the RO, publications, the Archive and branch offerings are outside the remit of the DC and thus it can only look at ideas such as discounted offers from third parties and possibly a centrally organised outdoor tours programme. Unfortunately, a major constraint to any progress is the lack of volunteers as all of the DC members already hold other Society posts and therefore have limited time available to undertake any of the necessary tasks. This was also highlighted in last year's report and unless the Society as a whole finds a way to motivate the silent majority to become active, the great ideas that are around will remain just that as we will have no one available to implement them.

It was also raised that previous Exhibitions Officers had looked at advertising the Society and promoting membership rather than sales of Society publications so this is perhaps something to consider including in the future?

Question – Callum Macleod 12817 – Are there any new branches in planning?

Answer – (Gordon Davies – WGD) – there has been discussion and there are some areas with no branches partly due to a previous negative response. It is being looked at for the future.

Question – Ted Vaughan 18410 (Solent) – Statistics for Solent Branch from the free offer are not fully known but the majority of branch members are 66+ with very few younger members. The distributions seems to be dispersed with recruitment in the periphery rather than the centres around Eastleigh and Southampton. Are we looking at this too narrowly?

Answer – WGD – It is probably partly that society itself has changed so how do we tap into this and get members more actively interested? It is a widespread problem to get people actively involved and the RCTS is a generalist society rather than specialist.

There was some discussion about the special free membership offer not translating into attendances at meetings. Most seem to have been recruited at exhibition stands and these could be people from anywhere rather than local to the branch. Members seem to be widely dispersed so what about trying a new meeting place to cover some of these members which could then become the nucleus of a new branch? Such a branch initiative could generate new developments.

Question – Richard Neale 9339 – The DC efforts over the past year are to be applauded. However, there can be unintended consequences eg posting out to more members incurs additional costs. It is an immense pressure for the volunteers who deal with renewals.

Answer – WGD – It takes a lot of work to do this. They are fine initiatives but people (volunteers) are needed to do the work.

Question – Denis Horsman 22099 (Thames Valley) - Back in the Summer, did the proposed press releases go out to local papers? Has anything been done about this?

Answer – Roger Sandford 22560 (Publicity Officer and Chichester branch representative) – Yes, the press releases went out as per the sample previously circulated in Newsletter 164 with the appropriate local details included. This was sent to more than 50 local magazines and newspapers approximately a month ago. The difficulty is that there is no control over the editors and what they will publish. The only area missed was Scotland at the request of the Scottish Branch.

WGD mentioned being at the mercy of editors using the example of the lack of response from the railway press to invitations to the official opening of the Archive and Library at Leatherhead.

10 AHL Replacement Scheme

Mike Robinson gave a PowerPoint presentation of the scheme that has been worked out with Reg Wood, and agreed with the MC, for putting to the membership at the Society AGM in April 2019 for approval. It was presented to those present for comment and to gauge opinion in advance of the formal presentation to the membership. The new scheme will be known as AVR (Active Volunteer Rate)

Question – Steve Ollive 14617 (Windsor & Maidenhead and Assistant Treasurer, Renewals) – Decisions for 2020 membership will need to be received by September 2019 at the latest, for them to be included in the renewals process.

Answer – There will need to be a deadline for recommendations and approvals before the renewals process begins.

Question – Callum Macleod 12817 – Has there been any calculation of how many will or are likely to qualify for the new AVR?

Answer – there has been no precise calculation.

The point was raised that some who had been in receipt of the previous AHL for the work that they do for the Society had not taken the opportunity of life membership and may have missed out as a result.

Question – Ted Vaughan 18410 – will there be a Newsletter in due course?

Answer – Yes.

Question – Robert Bartlett OBE 16273 (Cambridge) – There could be a problem with timing as the branch AGM is held in December. Could a recommendation be pre-approved at the branch AGM in December 2018?

Answer – yes, this would not be an issue and would be accepted.

Question – Malcolm Hammond 17454 – Some members have been long serving members of the committee, could this be used as recognition for them?

Answer – this only applies to active members of the committee and not those who have already retired.

Stuart Warr 17013 (South Wales) made the point that his branch had been very vociferous in the way the former AHL had been withdrawn but stated that the new proposals were acceptable.

Question – Steve Lacey – should we assume that we need to put this to the Charity Commission (CC) before it is rolled out?

Answer – We do not need their permission but we should advise them of what we are doing and that the membership have approved it (if it is approved at the AGM in April 2019). But we do not need the approval of the CC.

Question – Richard Neale 9339 – Are there any criteria as guidance for branches?

Answer – there will be some information to go in the Newsletter but it will be up to the branch committee with the approval of their branch membership.

The new proposals were accepted by those present at the Officers Conference.

11 A Vision for the Future

The purpose of this item was briefly outlined on the agenda with each table at conference to take a few minutes to come up with some ideas for the future including the 100 years celebrations which are only 10 years away.

There were six tables in all and some of the ideas overlapped. Ideas put forward included the following:

- a) Build relationships with local and regional TOCs, open a two way communication channel and work with them, for example on press releases or articles of interest. Such items could possibly be published in the RO;
- b) Look at the possibility of a 'hit squad' for supporting struggling branches;
- c) Build up a relationship with Adrian Shooter at Tyseley with a view to taking over a whole coach for members on a rail tour perhaps from Marylebone;
- d) More local input from branches with regards to building the relationships mentioned in a) and also c) above – successful results could then be shared more widely;
- e) Build relationships with preservation societies eg exchanging press releases (see also local/regional TOCs above);
- f) Look at possible charter train ticketing discounts with an agreement on block bookings. Once this has been done, the benefits could be shared more widely within the Society. Hire a coach on tour;
- g) There are difficulties to be overcome so we need to work out the best contacts within the preservation societies and how to get volunteers to become involved;
- h) Looking at the future and not just tomorrow – how do we get new members and new committee members? Is it time for the three main societies to combine ie RCTS with its magazine and branch network, the LCGB with its rail tours both overseas and possibly within the UK, and the SLS with its expertise on technical aspects. Perhaps a combined organisation would become stronger than any one on its own?
- i) Looking at the 100 years anniversary, this will take some planning which should not be left to the last minute so we need to start thinking about it. What about organising a special train perhaps in conjunction with GWR;
- j) Still on the 100 years anniversary, what about some special merchandising?
- k) where will the Society be in 10 years' time especially with the generation gap with the tendency for wanting instant communication? Perhaps it is time to give consideration to more forms of electronic communication especially as some of the younger generation are not generally 'clubbable' by way of attending meetings etc;
- l) look at new ways to try and engage with recently retired members who have a little more time on their hands and who may wish to pursue their long term interests in greater depth or start a new hobby. Should we think about a different recruitment campaign for different generations?
- m) should consideration be given to looking at strategy at a higher level perhaps with a business review – possibly using external funding, by someone from outside the Society;
- n) try and find out more about members needs and wants particularly younger people who will be the future;
- p) Facebook is becoming 'old hat' so is it time to review our digital strategy?

While some of the above ideas may already be with the MC and the DC, the full list above will, of course, will be available to see if there is anything not already being done that could be taken forward for the benefit of all RCTS members and the Society as a whole.

12 Publications – David Bird

We begin this report with the position of our current titles: - The **LMS Series** and the **Patriot** book. This book has been placed with the printers Amadeus for publication. Printing is expected to be complete and the book with the RCTS for sale/distribution by the early part of November. We are printing 1250 copies at a cover price of £24.95, members will receive a discount of £2.95 from this on purchase from the Society. No sales have been requested by the Patriot Trust despite them being involved in the “Unknown Warrior” chapter. Therefore, any sales will be by any individual approach to the RCTS via advertising made by us. The book will be advertised in the commercial press from the November issues.

a) **The Royal Scots** – John Jennison has started work on this title and the completed work is expected within two years. He does have other work in other areas that requires his attention.

b) **Stanier 8F** – The work has been some time in gestation having been in the hands of Jim Waite for a lengthy period of time. He has not been helped by a lack of assistance from a support team. Much of the research has been completed and the project needs to be completed with technical assistance and background information as to the reason for an 8F existing. I have been in contact with a number of people both within the RCTS and the Stanier 8F Locomotive Society in an effort to progress this matter. I am getting positive feedback from the RCTS point of view and I am awaiting more news from the 8F people. Then I expect that I will write the book out using information provided by the other people involved. I have sent out an outline template which I expect people to work to and provide the different sections in a style similar to current LMS series books. I believe the project will go ahead but that it will probably take about three/four years to complete. There are still some issues but I am working to try and resolve them. Any further books in the series are unlikely. We have no authors and nothing is prepared for anybody else to pick up.

Other Titles

There has been a desire to branch out (a pun there) into books of pictures utilising the Society archive material. The first one will be on pictures taken by Michael Mensing. There has also been a separate suggestion made to us about using the work of George Stadden (all based on his Scottish material). This was due to an approach to RCTS by another publisher. This has been rejected by myself so that we keep all titles in house. There are also many other photographers whose material we have located in our archive to work with. Therefore, we are taking our time with the Mensing book as I now wish to set a standard that the other titles in the series can follow. We still hope to publish the Mensing book next year.

Sales for November 2017 to September 2018 – Please remember that these figures do not include any Branch sales as I am not party to what they sell. Those figures are reported to the finance department separately. The Pacific title maintained a strong volume of sales with 560 copies moved in the year. I have to report that sales have now slowed down completely with only 6 sold in the last 3 months. But as we have sold over 1200 of the 1500 printed the book has ‘washed its face’ as they say. The two Black Five volumes also showed steady sales with 111 copies moved in the period under review. The Standard series still remain popular and 179 copies were moved during the year. In addition to that figure, following the reprinting of the 9F book, we sold another 84 copies of this volume from our 250 print run. We agreed with Booklaw to print 500 copies (they bought the other 250). This enabled us to achieve a cheaper print run. Within the LMS series we sold 106 books plus a further 63 books of the other titles that we have in stock. In total, therefore, we sold 1104 of our books. This compares to 775 in the previous year. In addition we moved 58 Easibinders, 4 ties and 3 badges. Ties are here this morning with David Goddard should anybody wish to purchase one.

The Publications Committee (PC) met three times during the year to handle the work and manage the projects in hand. In this day and age, of course, a lot of the work can now be handled over the internet and by talking over the telephone saving a lot of travelling for people. The dispatch and storage of our titles remain with Booklaw of Nottingham who continues to carry out this function for us. I will be visiting them at the end of the month when I carry out the annual stocktake.

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

13 Discussion of Action Points from Regional Meetings

As time for discussion was running very short and the documents had been circulated to all Society Officers with Newsletter 165 as appendices 3 (Summary) and 4 (Precis), feedback was invited regarding any outstanding queries or comments.

14 Date and Venue for the 2019 Members' Weekend and Officers' Conference

This will be held in Leicester on the weekend of Friday 18 to Sunday 20 October 2019 – more details in due course.

15 Date and Venue for the 2019 Annual General Meeting

This will be held at the Welcome Centre, Coventry on Saturday 27 April 2019.

16 Any other competent business (previously notified)

a) Steve Ollive 14617 – next weekend will be for the main renewals with the renewals for this year's Special Free Membership offer at a slightly later date. Any potential new members can be reminded to look at the half price offer for 2019.

b) Jack Knights 21634 – Work is on-going to keep the present website working properly. All branches are requested to update their branch officers information, contact details and programmes or to send the information through to Jack for him to update for them.

The Conference closed slightly later than scheduled at approximately 12:40hrs.