

BRANCH LIAISON SECRETARY

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Officers' Newsletter 191

June 2020

Dear All

We are still facing uncertain times but as infections rates fall and restrictions are eased, it is time to look at what we can do about it as we gradually return to some sort of 'normality'. We still need to take care but we can now start to look forward again. So this is about positive things to think about as well as some more every day issues.

Meetings – into the future

As you are all aware, government restrictions remain in place with regards to holding face to face meetings. This means, for now, that we have to look at alternatives and some of these were mentioned in the last newsletter – 190, circulated on 5 and 6 June 2020.

Face to Face Meetings

Please note however, that the following applies to England – our friends in South Wales/De Cymru and Scottish branches will be aware that slightly different advice might be given by the devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland respectively. Face to face meetings will be allowed at some stage although we do not know when this will be or what restrictions may be in place once meetings of more than 6 people are allowed. Restrictions are already eased for healthy over 70s but caution is still essential of course. There has been a lot of talk but there is nothing definite yet. Once meetings of more than six people are allowed, it is almost certain that there will still be some restrictions and we will need to consider how this affects us with regards to social distancing, refreshments, handling cash donations, handwashing/using hand sanitiser and the possibility that wearing face masks may be compulsory for example. With public transport to get to meetings and possible limits on numbers of people allowed, there will be much to think about. It is hoped that there will be an announcement about further lifting of restrictions on or around the 4 July 2020 so until then, it is a case of wait and see.

We will need to think about how to assess the risks attached to holding meetings and once we know more we will share this with everyone. We will have to follow any regulations and keep to the guidance on managing the risks. Part of this will involve consulting with the meeting venue on what they have in place – some facilities may not be available as being too risky for example, or a particular room or hall may be too small to allow for sufficient social distancing. A second part of what we will need to do is to keep a record of everything we have done to manage and minimise any risks. It might seem like extra hassle, but it is important to show that we have done everything in the best possible way for everyone's benefit and safety.

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Live Streaming

One thing that has not been discussed yet is the possibility of live streaming once meetings resume, to cater for those who are still facing restrictions ie those who are shielding or who are in a vulnerable group eg over 70s with underlying health conditions. This would require some level of equipment and an internet connection, but keeping it as simple as possible, perhaps using a webcam with audio – linked in with the laptops, projectors and PA (public address) systems that many branches already have, is something to consider. I have attended a funeral service (NOT Covid-19 related) very recently via live streaming and while it was not the same as being there in person and there was no way to interact with others attending, it meant I could still share and be a part of it. If this is possible at some of the venues that we use – ask permission first of course, it might help to include those who still cannot attend meetings once we are allowed to meet up again.

Virtual Meetings

This is a real possibility for branches and it was dealt with in some detail in the last newsletter so the information will not all be repeated here. I am happy to send another copy of Officers' Newsletter 190 to anyone who would like it.

Since that was sent out I know of at least one more branch that has planned an experimental meeting this time with a PowerPoint presentation, and I hope that more will be trying out virtual meetings. Even when the situation is 'back to normal' and we can meet in person, virtual meetings might still be very useful sometimes for keeping in touch with branch members and others who cannot attend in person. It could be a possibility for branch committee meetings too sometimes, provided that we remain within the Rules for holding branch committee meetings in person.

Other Ways to Keep in Touch

And do not forget that there are other ways to keep in touch with the branch members and regular guests so make use of the opportunities out there. I never fail to be surprised with the ingenuity and ideas that people come up with so please share what you do so we can all benefit.

Officers Directory July 2020

Unfortunately, it is not possible to include the July 2020 Officers Directory with the July edition of *The Railway Observer (RO)* this year. It is hoped that a fully updated version will appear with the January 2021 edition instead.

However, as there have been quite a number of changes to Society Officers since the July 2019 edition, the decision was made that an update should be produced, published and distributed in the interim as widely as possible. The sections including Trustee/Management Committee, Other National Officers and Branch Secretaries have all been updated accordingly and some of you have heard from me recently asking for information. Thank you for your help, I could not do it without you. The updated information has already been published on the website and is also attached to this newsletter as Appendix 1 so please distribute this as widely as you reasonably can amongst your branch membership or, if you are not a branch officer, to your RCTS colleagues who are not on the Officers' Newsletter distribution list.

Please note that contact details for the Acting Chairman and Acting Secretary will also appear in the July *RO* which, together with the May and June editions is now being printed and should, hopefully, reach the relevant members during the second week of July. The electronic version of the July edition will be available on-line by the end of June.

Keeping Branch Information up to date on the Website

Which brings me neatly on to the subject of keeping information up to date on the website such as making sure that all branch contact details are updated as soon as there is a change. Keeping branch information up to date is even more important right now as 'normal' activities are curtailed.

I have noticed that some branches are better than others at posting reports from their more recent meetings before lock down. While there is scope to write longer reports for the website, you do not have to do so and you can simply use the same text as for the branch meeting reports published in the *RO*. The important thing is to make sure that the information is there so that any interested parties can have a look and see what branch meetings are about and perhaps feel encouraged to join in. And do not forget to advertise your virtual meetings where these are not restricted experiments.

You can post reports from other branch activities too, as well as advising about good local places for observations, and including additional local information of railway interest. Even with lock down there are possibilities. Adding photographs is something that works well and can enhance your branch pages not only attracting attention but also showing that we are actively engaging with railways even with the current restrictions in place. It is not difficult to post reports and add photographs yourself, and you can get help with this if you need it.

In the meantime please go ahead with planning future meetings – provisionally confirming dates with your venue if you can and have not already done so. With very different venues around the branches, it is possible that some branches will be able to hold face to face meetings once restrictions are eased while others cannot because of the nature of their individual venues but we need to be ready.

So please plan your meeting programme as much as you can, check with your venue and get the provisional dates up on the website for people to put in their diaries. We are still here and we are still working so let us show everyone what we are doing.

Most importantly, keep well and keep safe.

Kind regards

Irene

Appendix 1



RCTS OFFICERS DIRECTORY JULY 2020

Founded by L B LAPPER and A E BROAD

President REVEREND CANON BRIAN ARMAN, 59 Kenmore Crescent, Filton Park, Bristol BS7 0TP

Vice Presidents D F COLE, E V FRY, A H GOULD, R A LISSENDEN, E C PALMER, T M B SILCOCK, J B SWEET

The Railway Correspondence and Travel Society - a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with The Charity Commission under registration number 1169995

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Appendix 1

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VACANCY

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Appendix 1

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Appendix 1

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