

BRANCH LIAISON SECRETARY

Irene Rabbitts, 34 Victory Park Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2AZ

Telephone: 01932 855015

e-mail: liaison@rcts.org.uk

Officers' Newsletter 194

30 August 2020

AVR Nominations – deadline 11 September 2020

Thank you to those who have already sent in the Active Volunteer Recognition (AVR) nominations for your branches. There are still nearly two thirds outstanding however, so please will you let me have them as soon as possible as the deadline is now less than two weeks away. Forms can be emailed – preferably, or posted. If you have decided not to make a nomination this year please let me know that too so that it can be registered as a positive opt-out and I do not keep asking you.

The reason for doing this in good time is that all nominations have to be approved by the Trustees in advance of the renewals process which generally starts at the beginning of October. With around two thousand five hundred renewals letters to process with different types of membership and payment method, this is quite a task so getting the information about AVR nominations approved and to the renewals team in good time is important.

If you have any queries or difficulties about making an AVR nomination for your branch, please ask. You can contact me by email liaison@rcts.org.uk or by telephone 01932 855015 (answerphone if unavailable). If you leave a message on the answerphone, please leave your name and telephone number clearly so that I can call you back.

Member Survey

All members will have received a copy of the Member Survey, to complete and return, with their copy of the August *Railway Observer* (RO), either a printed copy with the printed RO or an email invitation to complete it digitally. Instructions on submitting the survey are included in the survey document itself so are not repeated here. As part of the survey we are asking for volunteers and a number have already come forward which is excellent news. Where appropriate details of these responses will be forwarded for actioning by the relevant branch.

The more members who complete and return the survey, the better and more representative the information gained will be. So please complete and return your copy as soon as possible if you have not already done so, and urge all your branch members to do the same. The closing date for email returns is 15 September 2020, for postal returns it is 25 September 2020 and prompt action to encourage as many as possible to take part before the deadline would be greatly welcomed.

Thank you for your help, it is important to have your say and to know what you think about taking the Society forward.

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

Updating Branch Contacts and Branch Activities on the Website

I am pleased to see that some branches have taken the opportunity during these restricted times to update their contact details on the branch pages of the website. Thank you. If any other branches need help to do the same, please contact the webmaster for assistance at webmaster@rcts.org.uk.

Recruitment – current special offer

It may seem strange to be raising the subject of recruitment right now but there are very few railway enthusiasts who are completely isolated. After all, we make contact via telephone, internet, Skype, virtual meetings, social media, and in person within our social bubbles or simply through essential shopping for groceries for example. We also look for relatively quiet places on the railway network where we can continue to observe what is going on - in a responsible and socially distanced way of course. So we continue to make contact with others who might be interested in joining the RCTS.

With this in mind please remember that the current membership offer continues with up to sixteen months' membership available from 1 September at the current annual rate for new members - £31.00 for hard copy *RO* and £19.00 for digital membership. It has also been decided that the discount for signing up for Direct Debit (DD) payments has been doubled to £2.00 so please seriously consider doing this. DD can save you time and money and helps the Society at the same time. If your branch is lucky enough to be able to hold a meeting or attend an event where someone can sign up straight away, digital membership is free for the rest of this year. There may be some unique opportunities to recruit so please take advantage of any that you come across.

Best Practice – A Guide for Branches - update

This item is specifically for branch officers. My thanks to all who responded and I am pleased to say that most have understood what we are trying to achieve with this project ie to tap into all the knowledge and expertise that is already out there at the branches in order to provide a guide for branches who may currently have difficulties, need some new ideas or encouragement and would benefit from help from those more experienced. It is for new branch committee members too, in addition to the information in the Officers Handbook. Much is indeed common sense but guidance from more experienced people helps. Interestingly, some who responded have said that they have already taken some ideas from the first draft. Constructive criticism was requested and received – thank you, and we will be making changes to the first draft accordingly. It will take some time as some of the feedback was a little contradictory but some suggestions about reformatting the whole document and changing the style were very clear so all of this is being taken on board.

Society AGM – advanced warning of new date

This is an advance warning that the RCTS will be holding a virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Saturday 24 October 2020. Pre-registration for this event is essential in order to receive the Zoom link, and full details of how to do this will be appearing in the September *RO*. Unfortunately, that edition has been delayed and may not reach everyone until 15 September 2020 but this will still provide sufficient notice for all members. The information regarding the proposed rule changes issued for the postponed AGM from April 2020 remains the same so please read and consider this carefully. Please let your branch members know about the Society AGM and advise them to look out for the details in the September *RO* and on the Society website www.rcts.org.uk. The AGM is important so please encourage as many members as possible to take part. Thank you.

National Railway Museum et al re-opening

If you are keen to get out and about and can do so safely, it is good to know that many places are reopening and among them are the National Railway Museum (NRM) at York and Locomotion at Shildon with both reopening successfully on 4 August 2020. Entry to both is free but you will have to book a set time beforehand. To find out more about pre-booking and which exhibits and facilities are available and which are still to reopen, please visit their website at www.railwaymuseum.org.uk for the museum at York or www.locomotion.org.uk for Shildon.



Photograph courtesy of the NRM website

Heritage railways and other railway related organisations are also gradually opening their doors again as they are able to put suitable Covid-19 safety measures in place which is good news for all of us who are interested in railways.

Virtual Meetings – Updated Instructions for Using Zoom

I am pleased to say that more branches have now enjoyed virtual meetings both for branch meetings and branch committee meetings. You may even have benefitted from the occasional 'pop up offer' from Zoom that has lifted the 40 minutes maximum for a meeting using the free version. It appears to have been a publicity effort but it was useful while it was on offer. Jeremy Harrison has kindly updated his instructions for using Zoom for virtual meetings provided with Newsletter 190. This is included as Appendix 1 so please have a read as it is likely to be useful if you are not already familiar with using this platform.

While we are all looking forward to returning to some sort of normality, this is something that we can use in the meantime and that may be of use in the future as well. The situation does appear to be improving but it may still be some time before most branches can hold face to face meetings again which is partly down to the venues being able to ensure Covid-19 safety and partly down to the demographics of our members and visitors some of whom are at high risk. If you need help in setting up virtual meetings please contact either David Jackman webmaster@rcts.org.uk or Jeremy Harrison croydon.web@rcts.org.uk.

And finally....

Thank you for keeping the membership informed and, especially for branches, please do not forget to include all your activities on the branch pages of the website to help show that we are still actively engaging, as well as enabling those who cannot yet get out and about very much to enjoy the opportunity to join in branch activities and perhaps a virtual meeting or two – distance no object!

Keep well, keep safe

Kind regards

Irene

Zoom – a Simple Guide to Attending Meetings

Zoom lets you participate in virtual (on-line) meetings through your computer, tablet or smart phone. You can see and hear other participants and, provided you have a web-cam and microphone they can see and hear you. You can also view a presentation, made by one of the other participants, through the system.

A benefit of Zoom is that, as an attendee, all you need is access to the internet. The meeting host, who has set up the meeting, does need a Zoom account (if using a free account the meeting is restricted to 40 minutes, otherwise it can be all day)

Please note that the limitations to this guide: it does not cover hosting, or (beyond a basic level) presenting at a meeting, or the many other features of Zoom.

To use Zoom to attend a Meeting

1) You will usually be sent a link in an e-mail which will look something like this:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89534130562?pwd=THkwWVRiS2I1MjhRaU9BZnNuY0phUT09>

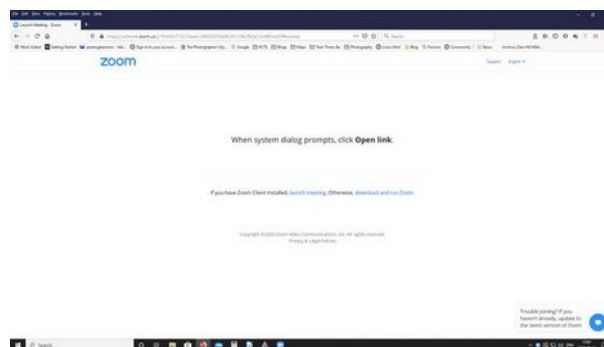
The e-mail will usually come from the person who has organised the meeting (the host) and will include the date and time of the meeting. It will also include a Meeting ID and a Meeting Password.

Some meetings will be set up with a requirement to pre-register, in which case the invitation e-mail will include an instruction: 'Register in advance for this meeting:', with a link of the form:

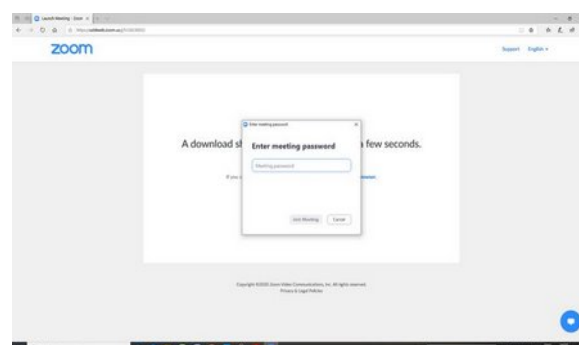
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcrfuChqD8tH9xs8B4bO8w0304jRI7y8-MY>

You should click this link, and register for the meeting, entering the requested details, including your name and e-mail address, after which you will receive a confirmation e-mail, nominally from the meeting host at the e-mail address <no-reply@zoom.us>, with meeting details, including a 'Click Here to Join' link.

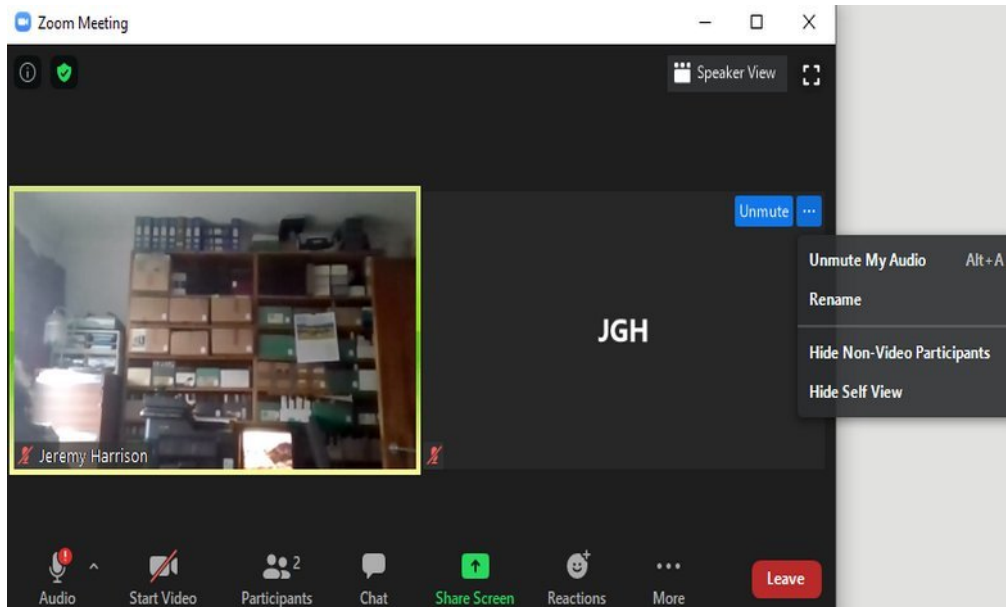
2) When the date and time of the meeting comes, click on the meeting link. This will open a new window or tab in your browser, and, if you have the Zoom app correctly installed, launch Zoom into your meeting: otherwise you will be asked to "Launch" or "Download and Install" Zoom. (You may also be offered the possibility of attending the meeting through your browser, but this is not recommended)



3) You may then be asked for the Meeting ID, and Password (should not be required if you have clicked the join meeting link)



- 4) You will probably get another message: Click on "Join with Computer audio".
- 5) You may also have the opportunity to enter your name – set it to something meaningful.
- 6) You may have to wait for the host to admit you to the meeting, if Zoom's 'waiting room' feature is in use.
- 7) You should have now joined the meeting and should be able to see and hear other participants. (In this case, one is not in front of his camera, the other doesn't have one)



The icons at top and bottom of the Zoom screen may only appear when you move your cursor nearby, those on 'your image' (which will be black rectangle with name, as here, if your camera is off) when your cursor is on 'your image'.

Those at the top (left to right – those on the right are the two you're likely to want):

- 'i in circle' displays information about the meetings
- 'shield' (normally green with tick) shows your Zoom settings
- Speaker or Gallery view selects whether to show all participants equally, or emphasise who Zoom thinks is speaking (try it and see)
- 'broken square' Enter full screen mode.

Those on 'your image' are mute or unmute (yourself), or three dots to give menu, as shown here: the important option is 'rename', to change your name.

Those at the bottom (again, left to right):

- Audio/Mute/Unmute Will only say audio if there is an issue, otherwise click on the 'mute' icon once to turn your sound off, then on 'unmute' icon again to turn your sound back on. It is good practice to turn your sound off straight away and only turn it on if you want to speak (alternatively, pressing the space bar will temporarily unmute yourself). This prevents extraneous noise being heard and helps to avoid feedback. The host may also mute participants during a presentation. If you have been muted and want to ask a question during a presentation, use the Chat function and the presenter will answer at the next convenient opportunity.
- Stop/Start Video Click on the icon to turn your camera off or on. A diagonal red bar will appear when your camera is turned off. Click on the icon again to turn your camera on and the diagonal red bar will disappear.
 - Both these may have a little up arrow by them, giving a menu of additional functions

- **Participants** shows number of participants in the meeting. Clicking it will produce a list of them; and gives access to a 'raise hand' command.
- **Chat** Click on the icon to open up a message box where you can type messages. Type your message in the box, select who it's to ('everyone' or individual), and press "Enter" to send. Icon will change when there are unread messages for you to read (note: in this state the bottom icon bar will not self hide, until you've clicked to look at them).
- **Share Screen** **You should only use this if invited to do so.** Clicking on the icon enables you to share your screen with everyone – this is how a presentation can be shown. The host may control who is allowed to share their screen.
- **Reactions** permits you to put a 'thumbs up' or 'clapping' icon up on your image.
- **Leave** Click on "Leave" to Leave the Meeting (you may have to click again to confirm).

When a presentation is being given

You don't need to do anything, but the display will change:



Note:

- This is full screen (you will probably want this, for best effect) with cursor moved to display icons at top and bottom of screen (if cursor is left static, icons will self hide)
- Video panel (showing meeting attendees) is on right, part overlaying the image
- At top centre, there a green panel indicating whose screen you are seeing
- With, next to it, a back panel 'View options' – clicking will display a menu: commands include
 - Hide video panel – you might want this, for best effect
 - 'Side by side' - divides your screen (adjustably) between what is being shown and video panel

Further advice

- Zoom provide a 'test meeting' facility, at <https://zoom.us/test> – this will let you install the Zoom app, and try it out, in advance of your meeting.
- There are many 'How to join a Zoom meeting' videos on YouTube – for a selection, take a look at https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=how+to+join+a+zoom+meeting
 - **REMEMBER:** when your microphone is unmuted and your camera is on, you **CAN** be heard and seen – if you want to fall asleep, fiddle with something, have a family row, etc. it is only polite to turn them off. (And the host does have a remove command, to kick you out of the meeting, if it comes to it!)
 - **THINK** about what will be behind you (it will be seen – are you happy about this?); also note that if there is bright light behind you, but none on your face, you will look like a black shape.
 - As the bigger the image (screen), the better, consider attaching your device to your TV.

Basic Troubleshooting

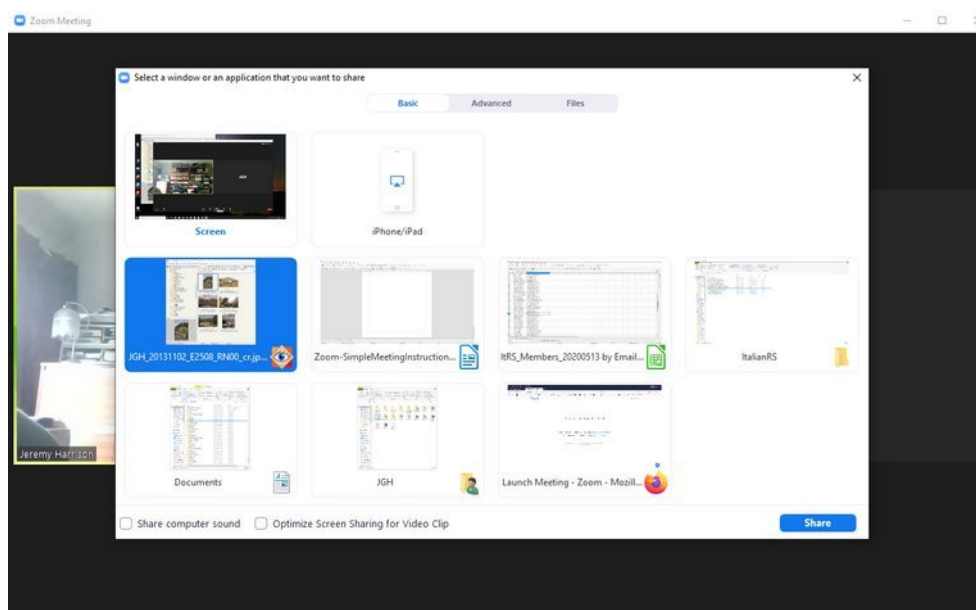
- The Zoom software doesn't open : If it doesn't seem to work, check that your computer security settings allow you to download files. This is an "exe" file, so some security settings may stop it.
- I can't hear anything: Check that your speaker is working by clicking on the drop-down arrow next to Mute and then "Test Speaker and Microphone". At the start of the meeting, there may not be anything to hear.
- No one can hear me: Check that your microphone is working by clicking on the drop-down arrow next to Mute and then "Test Speaker and Microphone". Also check that you are not on Mute.
- I can't see myself: Check that your webcam is working. Also check that your webcam has not been switched off by clicking on Stop Video
- Zoom keeps freezing or sounding strange: Your internet connection may be going slow. It may be better the closer you are to your internet hub.

Basic Presenting using Screen Sharing

If you are asked to present some images at a meeting, you may do so using the screen sharing facility. Note that this is but a brief introduction to it: it has many other features and options. Also, I understand there are extra issues with screen sharing from an Apple device. (Showing a video (movie) is not recommended, and has extra considerations).

You are strongly advised to have a practice 'dummy run' before doing any serious presentation.

Before joining the meeting (ideally – certainly before starting to screen share) you should launch the program you are going to use to display your images (I use FastStone Image Viewer, but you can use whatever you prefer and are used to – it only needs to be on your device, not your audience's) and prime it 'ready to go'. When the time comes for you show your images, click on the 'Share Screen' icon, at bottom centre of your Zoom window (see above). An extra window will appear, as shown:



Select either your screen (top left icon) or your program (as here – marked by blue background), and then click the 'Share' icon (bottom right) – and you will start screen sharing. What you are sharing will be surrounded by a green line (this is what the other participants will see): you will also see a green 'You are screen sharing' indicator, with a red 'Stop Share' extension – click this when are are done (or ask the host to stop your sharing).

Document produced by Jeremy Harrison, for RCTS, 2020-06-12, revised 2020-07-27, based, with permission, on a document created by Peter Robins for MDRS.