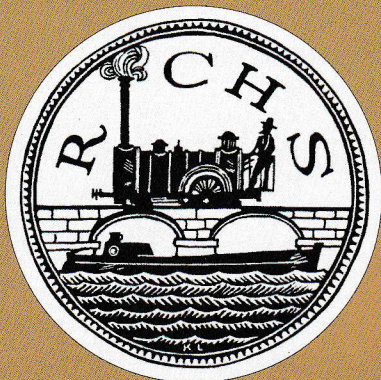




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Cover images:

Front : The River Teme aqueduct. Artist, Elizabeth Mary Bailey of Easton Court. Stated to be from 1856 (but probably earlier, see text). Reproduced by kind permission of © the Hon Dame Shan Legge-Bourke DCVO. Not be reproduced without prior permission. (See pp 487–498).

Back : *Above*: The the former Point quarry at West Williamston, Pembrokeshire showing the navigable channel which served it. *Below*: A barge tied up on the Eastern Cleddau at Haverfordwest, early 20th century (see pp 463–475). Both from the collection of Martin Connop Price.

The Society, 2004–2019

Matthew Searle

It has become customary since 1979 to mark the passing of significant intervals in the Society's history with a summary of progress, the last having been in 2004, and this article brings the story up to its 65th anniversary this year.

Communication

The recurrent theme of the past fifteen years has been the progressive adoption of new technology, so it seems apt to begin this review with a mention of the Society website, which entered on its third public iteration in 2017, providing the Society's face to the world and an up-to-date information service to members.

The Society's flagship remains its *Journal*. A special extra 200th issue was produced. The relative ease of computer-based production techniques has permitted the inclusion of more illustrations, including the regular use of colour on the cover, increasing the attractiveness of the publication. Editors during the period have been successively Peter Brown (2002–07), Peter Cross-Rudkin (2007–14) and Paul Reynolds.

Each issue continues to carry around thirty book reviews; editors of this section have been Martin Barnes, succeeded by Peter Brown in 2007 and Matthew Searle in 2016. The annual bibliography has also continued to appear as a supplement edited by Grahame Boyes and Matthew Searle.

Less formal communication with members is in the form of the bimonthly *Bulletin*, which in a one-man *tour de force* was edited by Tony Jervis from 1983 to 2018. The editorial keyboard and some of the idiosyncratic spirit has been taken over by Rob Shorland-Ball.

Publications

Book publication has also been influenced by the ability of new technology to produce quality short runs at an economic cost, which has particularly been behind the decision to issue some slimmer specialist titles. It has particularly benefited though the period (as has the *Journal*) from the design skills of Malcolm Preskett, which have produced most attractive products, and from the efforts of its in-house distribution officer Neville Birch over much of the period. Books produced have been as follows:

2005 Anthony R Warren, *Register of British Railway and Tramroad Companies*

2007 Miles Macnair, *William James (1771–1837)*

2008 John G Cox, *Samuel Morton Peto (1809–1889)*

2009 Michael Quick, *Railway Passenger Stations in Great Britain: a chronology* (4th, bound, edition)

2011 Terry Jenkins, *Sir Ernest Lemon: a biography*

2012 Grahame Boyes & Brian Lamb, *The Peak Forest Canal and Railway*

2014 Brian J Goggin, *The Royal Under the Railway: Ireland's Royal Canal 1830–1899*

2015 Neil Clarke, *Crossing the River: Fords and Ferries on the Shropshire Severn*

2015 David St John Thomas (ed), *How Railways Changed Britain*

2017 Richard Byrom, *William Fairbairn: the experimental engineer*

2017 David Joy, *Rails in the Dales*

2018 Peter Brown, *The Shropshire Union Canal*

The Publications Committee has been chaired by.

1994–2005 Ian Markey

2005–10 John Gough

2010–13 David St John Thomas

2013– David Joy

Book award

An innovation in 2004 was the inauguration of the Society's Transport History Book of the Year awards. Each year, the *Journal*'s reviewers nominate books for the award, the finalists being chosen by a small panel in the categories (where suitable candidates present themselves) of Railway, Canal, and Other Transport, to which a Popular category was added in 2012. Framed certificates and cash awards are made to the winning authors over the AGM weekend and the overall winner receives a further cash award and the David St John Thomas silver cup to be held for a year. This reflects David's interest in this event, sealed by a legacy in his will to enable the Society to

continue to administer the event, which is intended to encourage good and well-written research and to help promote the Society's name. The award has been administered successively by Tim Edmonds (from commencement to 2010), Stephen Rowson and Philip Brown.

National events

The Annual General Meeting weekend continues as the principal national event of the year, with increasing popularity. The venues have been:

- 2005 Darlington
- 2006 Loughborough
- 2007 Ipswich
- 2008 Leamington
- 2009 Altrincham
- 2010 Hull
- 2011 Bedford
- 2012 Telford
- 2013 Preston
- 2014 Newcastle upon Tyne
- 2015 Grantham
- 2016 Croydon
- 2017 Exeter
- 2018 Wrexham
- 2019 Barrow-in-Furness

The last overseas visit, to Berlin, was made in 2005. Further formal visits, at home or abroad, in addition to the AGM have not taken place, although informal groups have visited such diverse locations as New York in 2007 and Donegal in 2008.

The annual Clinker lecture has been detached from the AGM weekend and resumed its place as a standalone event, taking place often but not invariably in Birmingham, with topics varying from the lives of engineers to the Peak Forest Canal and Adrian Shooter on the creation of Chiltern Railways.

These events have been supplemented by Waterways Conferences every few years in Birmingham, supplemented by jointly organised workshops on waterways and other aspects of transport history research. The series of Early Railways Conferences for which the Society is co-sponsor and financial account manager has continued and been supplemented in interstitial years (commencing in 2014 at Caernarfon) by the inauguration of an International Early Main Line Railways Conference, covering the first few decades from 1830.

Special Interest Groups

This is another area in which information technology has brought about a major change, with most of the groups making their primary distribution of papers through e-mail. The Waterways History Research, Railway Chronology, Road and Air Transport Groups continue under these names; the Tramroad Group became the Early Railway Group in 2010 to reflect the nomenclature now understood in this area of research (and with Andy Guy replacing Michael Lewis as co-ordinator from 2016); the Pipelines and Materials Handling Group reorganised under this expanded name in 2007–09; and two new groups were launched: Modern Transport in 2008 and Railway History Research in 2012. Online activity – particularly in regard to waterways – suggests these enjoy considerable popularity.

Local Groups

Regional groups in London, the East and West Midlands, the North East and North West have continued their activities with meetings and excursions, not to mention taking turns to host the national AGM weekends. It has been remarked, particularly *à propos* the North West Group's ambitious walks programme, that in this respect the Society offers the opportunity for healthy exercise as well as the study of transport history on the ground. Mention should be made of the early death, in 2015, of Brian Slater, a stalwart of the North East Group and of the Society nationally.

Research

The changing nature of research in a digital age is reflected in the Society's decision to close down its Research Index, but to undertake the digitisation of its photographic collection. Looking to the future, the Society is planning to initiate an award for young researchers.

Administration

The administration of the Society has continued on steady lines, with the policy-making duties of Council being steadily more differentiated from the day-to-day running under the supervision of the Managing Committee. The long-desired transformation of the Society into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, which it was hoped would be in place in 2019, remains on hold for technical reasons. The principal officerships remained stable over much of the period in review, with Roger Taylor retiring as Membership Secretary in 2016 after an astonishing forty years' service, Robin Welton

serving as Treasurer from 2002 to 2017 and Matthew Searle as Secretary from 1999 to 2016 (succeeded for 2016–18 by Peter Brown). The Society has felt privileged to be able to appoint a nominee to the Canal & River Trust, a role also held by Mr Brown.

Membership of the Society reached an all-time peak of 845 at the end of 2012. It has been and remains a concern of Council to try to appeal to a younger age group than the perceived present Society age profile, not merely to ensure retaining an absolute level of membership, but to have a pool of members to take active part in its running. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to end on too pessimistic a note: the evidence suggests that the membership appreciates and enjoys what the Society does.

Principal Officers

Presidents

2004–06 Hugh Compton
2006–08 Janet Cutler
2008–10 Philip Scowcroft
2010–12 Michael Messenger
2012–14 Wendy Freer
2014–16 Graham Wild

2016–18 Mike Clarke
2018–20 Grahame Boyes

Chairmen of Managing Committee

1997–2010 Roger Davies
2011–15 Martin Barnes
2015–19 Philip Scowcroft

Vice-Presidents

1986–2007 Arthur Barnett
1991– John Gough
1992–2006 Rex Christiansen
1993– Gordon Biddle
1994–2014 Ken Seaward
1997– Grahame Boyes
2002–08 Alan A Jackson
2002– Michael J T Lewis
2007– Ian Moss
2008–14 David St John Thomas
2009–14 Hugh Compton
2015– Wendy Freer
2015– Michael Messenger

A note on Railway Ticket Agencies

Grahame Boyes

Agencies, variously known as excursion agents, tourist agents or travel agents, emerged from the 1840s onwards to promote pleasure travel on the expanding railway network for all classes of society. Beginning as ‘trips’ for the working classes, they soon developed into ‘excursions’ for the middle classes and ‘tours’ for the upper classes. The railway element could range from special excursion or holiday trains (organised by the agent or by the railway company), and excursion fares on ordinary trains, to the railway component in personal or group holiday or business itineraries. These tours often involved cross-Channel shipping and Continental destinations or ocean liners to the USA or Canada. There is a significant literature about a few of the most well-known agents and about the railway and related facilities that were arranged for the day-trippers, excursionists and tourists. But

very little has been written about the business relationship between the agents and the railway companies.¹

After the British Transport Historical Records were moved from 66 Porchester Road to the Public Record Office at Kew in 1977, the building continued in use by BR as a repository for legal and estate records and current archives (particularly those relating to the process of privatisation). However, the administrative re-organisations and the resulting rationalisation of office accommodation associated with the introduction of sector management, and then the preparations for privatisation, were continuing to generate a flow of historical records to Porchester Road where a floor was allocated for their temporary

