

THE RAILWAY & CANAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A company (No 922300) limited by guarantee and registered in England as a charity (No 256047)

Railway & Canal Historical Society Annual Report 2022

The Trustees, who are also the Company Directors for the purposes of the Companies Acts, present their Report for the year ended 31 December 2022.

Reference and administrative details:

Charity registration number	256047
Company registration number	00922300 (England & Wales)
Registered office	7 Grosvenor Gardens , London, SW1W 0AF
Website address	www.rchs.org.uk

1. Trustees

Grahame Boyes	David Joy (to 28 May 2022)
Gordon Biddle (to 28 May 2022)	Gerald Leach
Bob Bramson	Michael Lewis (to 28 May 2022)
Roger Brice	Philip Lloyd
Philip Brown	Michael Messenger (to 28 May 2022)
Peter Cross-Rudkin	Ian Moss (to 28 May 2022)
Tim Edmonds (to 28 May 2022)	Patrick Moss
Jane Ellis	Philip Scowcroft (to 28 May 2022)
Wendy Freer (to 28 May 2022)	Matthew Searle (to 28 May 2022)
John Gough (to 28 May 2022)	David Smith
Bob Haskins	Andrew Wager
Nicholas Higton	

2. Principal officers

President	Gerald Leach
Hon Secretary	Roger Brice
Hon Treasurer	David Smith
Managing Committee Chairman	Patrick Moss

Independent Examiner SB Audit LLP, Fitzroy House, Crown Street, Ipswich IP1 3LG

Bankers CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling
ME19 4JQ

Investment managers CCLA Investment Management Ltd, 1 Angel Lane,
London EC4R 3AB

3. Structure, governance and management

a. Governing document

The Society is a company limited by guarantee, being governed in accordance with its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 21 October 1967 (as subsequently amended). All members undertake to guarantee the liabilities to a maximum of £1 each.

b. Membership

Membership of the Society is open to anybody interested in the history of transport, on application in writing and payment of the subscription.

c. Trustees

The members of the Council are the Trustees of the Society and are Directors for the purposes of the Companies Acts.

The Council comprises the President, up to eight Vice-Presidents, Hon Secretary, Hon Treasurer, one representative from each Regional Group and not fewer than six nor more than twelve members elected at the Annual Meeting. Although the election process does not guarantee it, in practice it is found that it yields a suitable balance of academic, professional and managerial expertise. New Trustees are given copies of the constitution, notes of guidance on the Society's organisation and processes, and the Charity Commission's publication 'The Essential Trustee'.

d. Management

Policy issues are decided by the Council, subject to any decisions made at General Meetings. During 2022 the Managing Committee and Council tended to meet together to ensure maximum engagement of the latter in the strategic direction of the Society.

The Publications Committee deals with books and booklets published by the Society. Other ad hoc 'task and finish' committees are established when necessary.

e. Personnel

The Society has no employees. All activities are undertaken by volunteers who are reimbursed only for necessary approved expenses. Members of the Publications Committee each receive a copy of all books published by the Society.

f. Related parties

The Society works cooperatively with other transport and historical societies. It is a corporate member of the Inland Waterways Association and the Association for Industrial Archaeology. The Society nominates a member to be on the Council of the Canal & River Trust.

4. Risks

The Society remains solvent but certain longer-term issues, identified in the previous annual reports continue to cause concern.

- Membership fell by 3.2% due to both deaths and resignations. The 32% reduction in new members – from 69 to 47 – is a clear cause for concern, as is the tendency for new members to drop out within four years.
- Lack of volunteers for administrative positions in the local and national structure continues to be an issue.

There has been no discernible improvement in these features of the Society. Membership has declined slightly but given the estimated age profile of existing members, the possibility of an increased rate of decline in membership through natural causes is a potential risk.

5. Key Comments on 2022

- The financial stability of the Society has been maintained during 2022, building on the changes noted in the last Annual Report. During 2022 the Society resumed some aspects of the pre-pandemic delivery model, such as face to face meetings.
- The organisation and management of the media archive received significant attention during 2022 and a dedicated group was established that made substantial improvements that are reported below.
- No Young Researcher Awards were made during 2022 but the Council and Managing Committee have decided to develop more effective use of research funds, particularly related to the Media Archive.
- The necessary constitutional changes were made that amend the role of vice-presidents and enable Council and Managing Committee to work together more closely.

6. Objective

The Society's charitable objective is: 'To promote, encourage and co-ordinate the study of the history of railways, canals and transport.'

Currently the principal methods of achieving this objective are:

- Providing forums for discussing and furthering research into British transport history.
- Publishing quality research; and
- Organising conferences, speaker meetings and visits to places of interest.

7. Charitable activities

a. General

The Trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

b. Publications

Books: Two new titles were published in the year:

John Rennie: Engineer of many splendid and useful works by Peter Cross-Rudkin.

Railways and Canals in the Churnet Valley – Consall past and present by The Knotty Ramblers (Allan C Baker, Mike G Fell OBE and Barry Knapper).

Technology, Economics, and Canal Development – An early technical book and what it reveals by Mike Clarke has been particularly well received and another 50 copies were printed.

Philip Riden of Merton Priory Press generously donated 22 remaining copies to the Society of Reg Schofield's biography of the engineer Benjamin Outram. These were sold quickly.

The Journal: continued to be produced and distributed without any interruption to its normal schedule during 2022. The usual three issues were produced and contained 16 major articles (11 on railways, 3 on waterways and one each on roads and coastal shipping) together with obituaries, book reviews and items of correspondence. After a dip in 2021, the number of book reviews (82 over 39 pages) is similar to previous years. Beginning in November 2022, Stephen Phillips has taken over design of the covers from Malcolm Preskett.

The Bulletin: continues to be a bi-monthly publication. COVID-19 restrictions meant that notifications of Regional Group events were limited, and at present there are fewer reports from the SIGS. Fortunately, members continued to submit stories, picture and items of historical interest to sustain production and the cheerful style for the Bulletin which the editor has created.

Inland Waterways of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament: published (online) this listing identifies Parliamentary involvement with inland waterways in Great Britain and Ireland. From 1121 up to 1536, the list only covers England, then England and Wales to the Scottish union in 1707, after which Scotland is included. Ireland is covered from the early period as it was conquered by the Normans in the 12th century, but the English Crown did not take full control until 1541, with the Irish Parliament being merged with the Westminster Parliament from 1801 until partition in 1922.

Annual Bibliography: The first annual bibliography using the assistance of a wider band of contributors (covering 2021) was published online.

Canal Tunnels Database: A database of canal tunnels was published online. This is a new initiative by a member of the Society.

Transport Anniversaries: At the beginning of each year the society produces a list of transport history anniversaries. These include events from 25, 50, 75, 150, 175, 200, 250, 300 and 400 years prior to the current year. The list for anniversaries falling in 2023 was published online during December 2022.

c. Website

The website shop continues to attract trade with around 800 orders being processed during the year. These sales totalled £24K, of which £7K was related to the Society's own publications, another £7K to membership subscriptions including 46 new members, and £10K was in regard of the residential weekend based in Frome (see SW Group entry below). An additional £6K was attributable to bookings and publications on behalf of the Early Railways Conference.

A number of Society publications suitable only for online publication were added to the website – see 7b above.

Updates to arrangements for meetings and outdoor events, most necessitated by Covid-related issues and rail disruptions, were published on the website and supported by email alerts organised by the web team. This service proved to be popular and appreciated such that it has been continued beyond the ending of Covid restrictions.

The web team also reviewed available security software resulting in the installation of a new firewall.

d. Media Archive

During 2022, further significant progress has been made with the Media Archive, which now includes 80,000 photographs, maps, engineering drawings, etc. Further Collections have been added during the year, including that of Gordon Rattenbury, a former vice-President of the Society who died in 1992, and who was a well-known authority on the tramroads of South Wales. Around 25,000 of the hard-copy prints, slides, and negatives have been scanned over the past twenty or more years, but some of them are deteriorating, so the scanning process is proceeding with some urgency. Once scanned, the images are being lightly edited, and then uploaded to the Online Archive. Equally important is the task of providing the best caption we can for each image, based upon the sometimes-brief information provided by the photographer, supplemented by the expert advice of members. Once online, comments can be posted for each image to correct or enhance the caption information.

Collections currently being worked on include those of our late members Bertram Baxter, Hugh Compton, Ray Cook, Charles Hadfield, Dennis Hadley, Edwin Shearing, Geoffrey Spence and Rodney

Weaver. The “Zenphoto” software utilised for the Online Archive has proved to be very suitable for our needs and has undergone further development under the technical leadership of our member, Adrian Moss.

There are now 30 volunteers working on different aspects of the Media Archive project and, as of 5 March 2023, there were 7,300 images online, an increase of 2,900 over the year. New volunteers are always welcome, particularly those who feel able to help with the uploading (not difficult after a little training).

8. National Activities

- a. The *Society’s AGM* was held in Birmingham on 28th May following the presentation of the annual *RCHS Transport History Book of the Year* awards.
- b. *Clinker Memorial Lecture*: RCHS member Dr Michael Bailey MBE. delivered the lecture: “Built in Britain: the Independent Locomotive Manufacturing Industry in the Nineteenth Century”. The attendance of 47 comprised 21 members of the North West Group, 8 other RCHS members and 18 visitors. The presentation was made available to a wider audience through a recording placed on the website, attracting a total of more than 60 further viewings.

9. Regional Group Activities

- a. *East Midlands*: The Group initially held a programme of Friday evening on-line lectures using the Society’s Zoom facility. A change of venue was necessary during the year due to closure of our original meeting place. Eight meetings were held with a total attendance of 218. There were six outings and six committee meetings.
- b. *London*: Due to Covid restrictions and the difficulty of finding a suitable venue, following the closure of the Rugby Tavern, the speaker programme for 2022 was restricted to one meeting being held using Zoom. This talk explained how the First World War fleet was kept supplied with coal from the south Wales coalfield.
- c. *North East*: Six meetings were held. Three of these were held at our new regular venue of York Explore Library in the centre of York. The remaining three planned meetings were seriously impacted by rail strikes: one was postponed while the remaining two were held by Zoom.
- d. *North West*: During 2022 the North West Group held seven lecture meetings. The Group had seven walks in the area and two day-tours. We meet in the accessible Friends’ Meeting House where the staff are obliging and co-operative. The Group had 7 walks in the area of Warrington, Mow Cop, Leigh, Whelley, Leyland, and Burscough Bridge, where the Group held its traditional pre-Christmas lunch. There was a rail tour in South West Lancashire and a visit to the Foxfield Railway. The Group hosted the Clinker Lecture this year which attracted 47 attendees.
- e. *South West*: The Group is administered by a small planning team, which arranged a 2022 programme of diverse, educational and entertaining activities. Five remote access talks were organised as well as visits and one walk. A well-supported residential weekend based on Frome in Somerset included visits to the Somersetshire Coal Canal, Murtry Aqueduct and the Somerset and Dorset Railway Heritage Trust.
- f. *West Midlands*: The first three talks of 2022 were presented using the Zoom facility followed later in the year by three live talks held at the Birmingham & Midland Institute, our new venue following the closure of the Briar Rose conference room. Attendance at the live meeting was about half the numbers attending pre-covid. No outdoor or promotional events were held during the year.

10. Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

- a. *Pipelines and Materials Handling*: This Group was largely inactive during 2022 due to the retirement of the coordinators.
- b. *Road Transport*: The Group's co-ordinator, Philip Scowcroft, retired during the year; our thanks are due to him for his work on behalf of the Group. Peter Cross-Rudkin took over the role. It was decided that, whereas previously newsletters had been issued as hard copy whenever sufficient material had been amassed, in future material will be circulated electronically as soon as received. Of the previous 56 members of the group, 48 have email addresses. A decision will need to be taken at the end of the year about keeping in touch with the other eight. Three Notes & Queries were circulated in 2022.
- c. *Air Transport*: Due to changes in personnel the future of this Group will be reviewed during 2023.
- d. *Early Railways*: At the end of 2022 the Group mailing list included 201 members, 13 of whom had newly joined the Group that year. One person resigned their membership in 2022 so that the membership numbered 196. No new Occasional Papers or Circulars were distributed this year, meaning that the number of Occasional Papers remains 267. A number of members agreed to assist with the RCHS Media Archive in digitising the Bertram Baxter Collection.
- e. *Modern Transport*: For the first time the Group has produced 2 papers on specific subjects in addition to the four newsletters that appeared throughout the year. Other specific papers are in preparation. The membership of the Group has decreased slightly to 70 with members leaving the Society, or the Group, through decease, illness, or personal choice, although new members continue to join the Group. All but one now receive the email PDF version of these publications. The talk for a modern transport subject was planned for the 2022/3 season of the West Midlands Group at the BMI in Birmingham on 18 March 2023, but was postponed through threatened industrial action until the November meeting 2023/4 season.
- f. *Railway Chronology*: A reduction in contributions lead to only 2 newsletters being produced comprising 56 A4 pages; although 7 mailing were circulated with 118 copies of each delivered by email attachment during the year.
An updated version (5.04) replacing version 5.03 of Michael Quick's "Railway Passenger Stations of Great Britain" was released during September on the RCHS website containing additional updated information provided by the author. Group membership increased by 5 to a total of 122 with 11 new members, 2 deceased and 4 lapsed during the year
- g. *Railway History Research*: Group membership remained largely static with 92 members recorded at the end of the year (-2); 28 email circulars were issued during 2022, which included 11 'notes & queries' (2 of which resulted in multiple responses from group members), 3 reprinted articles, 9 'occasional papers', and 2 'works in progress'. In April and August material from previous circulars was consolidated into newsletters, which were emailed to group members and archived to the members' area of the website, along with an updated cumulative index of articles.
- h. *Waterways History Research*: There was a small increase in the Group's membership during the year; it now stands at 162. The group submitted 26 Notes & Queries, one Occasional Paper, two Photograph Queries, five Reprints and five Sources Papers. The number of Notes & Queries was less than in the last few years, probably due to the lack of facilities for original research in record offices closed by the COVID pandemic. Both photograph queries were identified successfully. At the request of the management committee, the practice of providing hard copy of the Group's transactions free to members ceased, and 82 members agreed to subscribe. On this basis, it was decided that it was financially feasible. A charge of £8 per copy was made, and the issue broke even. The transactions were also published in the SIG section of the Society's website as before, for those who did not wish to have hard copy.

- i. *Internet Discussion Group*: The Internet Discussion Group continues to be active, posting an average of 44 messages a month. Membership is 66, twelve more than 2021. This Group is sponsored by the Society but is open to, and welcomes, non-members who wish to join.

11. Other charitable activities

- a. *Research and the academic community*: The Society offers an annual award for the best paper, 4,000 to 6,000 words in length, submitted on a subject related to transport history by a person under the age of 30, with the winning paper and any others deemed worthy being published in the *Journal*. No papers were submitted during 2022.
- b. *Research grants*: No grants were made during 2022.

Developing a more effective use of the Society's research funds will be addressed during 2023.

12. Transport History Book of the Year Awards

The judges short-listed seven titles this year, drawn from the 77 publications that received reviews in the *Journal* issues of July & November 2021 and March 2022, an increase on the previous year's figure of 69 but still below pre-pandemic levels. Two books fitted the 'other modes of transport' category, one on an aviation topic and the other maritime, though with a railway connection.

The 'Other modes of transport' prize went to *Train Ferries of Europe* by Steve Barron. The prize for Popular Transport History went to *Cathedrals of Steam* by Christian Wolmar.

The Railway History prize was awarded to *The Great Central Railway: what really happened* by John Palmer which was also awarded the overall prize for 2022 RCHS Transport History Book of the Year.

John Palmer and Steve Barron attended the presentation event on 28 May 2022 in person whilst Christian Wolmar attended remotely via Zoom.

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13. Social Media and other publicity

Regular Facebook posts were made during the year. These included notification of all RCHS meetings and walks where the organisers had provided adequate descriptions of the event. Details of new Society publications were announced, together with invitations to join the Society, and various special offers.

Transport history news items from external sources were also occasionally posted so that, in total, over 100 illustrated posts were made in 2022, reaching a worldwide audience of 1,100 "followers" including in the USA, Australia, India, and Egypt. Our most-viewed posts were seen by over 3,200 people, thus increasing the visibility of the Society to existing and potential members.

The Clinker Memorial Lecture was advertised in *Railway Magazine*.

14. Membership

Membership fell by 3.2% during 2022. New memberships decreased and both lapsed memberships and resignations increased.

Total memberships on 31 December 2022

Category	At End 2022	At End 2021	Change during 2022
Individual memberships	693	714	-21
Joint Memberships	50	51	-1
Student memberships	20	11	9
Institute of Railway Studies ¹	-	14	-14
Complimentary memberships	2	3	-1
Total Memberships	765	793	-28

Changes During 2013-22

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Beginning of Year	793	776	795	795	795	799	824	825	831	845
New memberships	47	69	54	63	48	43	43	50	-	40
Less deceased members	-13	-15	-16	-18	-16	-14	-6	-14	-	-15
Less resignations	-27	-18	-28	-29	-15	-24	-36	-18	-	-39
Less lapsed excluding those who subsequently paid	-35	-19	-27	-20	-20	-9	-25	-19	-	
Individual to Double & <i>vice versa</i>	-	-	-2	4	3	-	-1	-	-	-
End of Year	765	793	776	795	795	795	799	824	825	831

¹ IRS no longer provide the MA in Railways Studies and RCHS now offers free membership to all postgraduate students.

15. Financial review

The greatest effect on General Fund income and expenditure in the year ended 31st December 2022, has been caused by gradually coming out of the Covid restrictions.

The greatest financial change shown in the Accounts, is the fall in the market value of our Investments, but those values inevitably go up and down day by day. During 2022 the values went down by £ 8,688, but in 2021 the values went up by £6,802. We bought the investments for £50,000 towards the end of 2016, so even at 31st December 2022 they were worth £9,886 more than the cost, and we are receiving about 3% income each year.

Subscription income for 2022 was £20,076 and Income Tax recovered under the Gift Aid scheme was £4,616, both figures being very similar to the previous year

Our other sources of income are mainly from Events, including meetings arranged by the Regions, and sales of Books. These items of income generally give rise to associated costs, and although the figures vary from year to year, they do not have a great effect on the excess of income over expenditure shown in the Accounts

A number of Members are pleased that we have been able to return to physical meetings, as well as continuing to use Zoom and recording arrangements. Donations at meetings during 2022 were £333, but the room and speaker travel costs were £1,382, leaving a net expense of ££1,049. In the year ended 31st December 2019, the last year before Covid, Donations at meetings were £1,713, compared with meeting costs of £1,721. leaving a net cost of £8. I pointed out last year, that lectures reach a wider audience using electronic means, which helps with our Charitable objects, but it is financially expensive.

Bulletin costs were £905 less in 2022 than in the previous year, and should continue to fall because nearly all members now accept e-mail copies

A cost which has grown in recent years is Bank Charges, which totalled £805 in 2022, including costs associated with Book sales. Bank transfers are a convenient way of receiving income and are cheaper to handling cheques, but until quite recently, the Banks were much more helpful to charities. We use the Charities Aid Foundation bank, but even their arrangements are similar to other banks

Work on achieving the Photo Collection cost £357 in 2022, which is so low because of the generosity of volunteers who are doing the work

The Society is financially well able to carry out the purposes for which it exists, but it is dependent on members being willing to arrange its activities, and the recruitment of new members

16. Plans for 2023.

Among the priorities for action in 2023 are:

- Developing more effective use of the Society's research funds.
- Encouraging more research with a particular focus on the period since 1990.
- Progressing the Media Archive.
- Improving the communication of the Society beyond its members, including but not restricted to its social media presence.
- Consolidating the progress made in managing costs while delivering our charitable aim.

The report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

Approved by the Council,

Roger Brice (Hon Secretary)