

Inter City Railway Society

MINUTES OF ICRS AGM FOR THE YEAR 2023

Held on Saturday 6th April 2024, 14.00 at YMCA, Crewe

The meeting commenced at 14.00 with introduction by Simon Mutton

Members Present:

Ron Bamford, Tony Brzosko, Anthony Burnham-Bamford, Michael Clarke, Graham Colledge, Claire Cowen, Richard Cowen, Neil Dix, Steve Fryer, Keith Hawken, Paul Hazelwood, Michael Hillier, James Hlloway, Lawrence McCormick, Keith Morey, Peter Murray, Gary Mutton, Andy Scott, Les Spencer, Robert Trainor, Aidan Turner, Tony Whitehead, Paul Young + Officials - Peter Britcliffe, Christine Field, Simon Mutton, Gareth Patterson, Colin Pottle, Trevor Roots

Apologies for Absence:

Robert Boak, Paul Francis, Martin Hall, Vic Hollas, Ed Pritchard,

Matters Arising from the 2022 Minutes:

The minutes from last year's AGM were read and there were no matters arising. Approval of the minutes were proposed by Tony Whitehead and seconded by Gary Mutton.

Treasurers Report - Peter Britcliffe: *Also see attached Accounts*

All amounts shown in this report have been rounded to the nearest £100.

We showed a deficit of just under **£4,900**.

Membership: The fees in previous years have normally covered the cost of producing the posted magazine but with the renewal fees reducing each month our total income fell well short of the magazine costs as those members not wanting to move to a pdf only magazine didn't renew. The costs of printing and postage of **TRACKS** meant the final figure for membership was almost **-£5,500** but in 2024 **TRACKS** production and distribution costs will be eliminated as it becomes pdf only and available online. Membership postage will also disappear as members receive information by email.

Publications: Total sales fell for the second consecutive year but they still showed a surplus of almost **£13,300**. They more than covered the production expenditure and this surplus has financed the costs involved in running society visits, attending shows and administration costs.

The costs involved with **Visits** and **Shows** will always show a deficit, this year it was almost **-£4,500**. Travel, hotel accommodation and food cost increases are beyond our control.

The costs incurred by the **Officials** and the **Website** will always show a deficit too. This year it came to **-£2,400**. We have to maintain hardware and have up to date software to enable the society to run smoothly and efficiently.

AGM: This is another area where costs show a deficit, this year's was **-£2,100**. Our venue this year at the YMCA, Crewe, proved to be an excellent choice given its position close to the station and Basford Hall.

50th Anniversary: It seems that the enthusiasm shown by the committee in celebrating this event has not been matched by the membership. A lot of time and effort was spent, particularly by Trevor, in organising these items for sale but with very little return. To mark the event we have spent over **£3,700** on nameplates, mugs, coasters and pens all stating the society has been in operation for 50 years. Sales have been very poor to say the least, with just over **£300** coming in from members for the merchandise. Members donations for the nameplate have been much better and are held in the second bank account which totals almost **£800**.

Looking forward to 2024, the society is in a strong position financially as the list of assets show and with the removal of **TRACKS** printing costs.

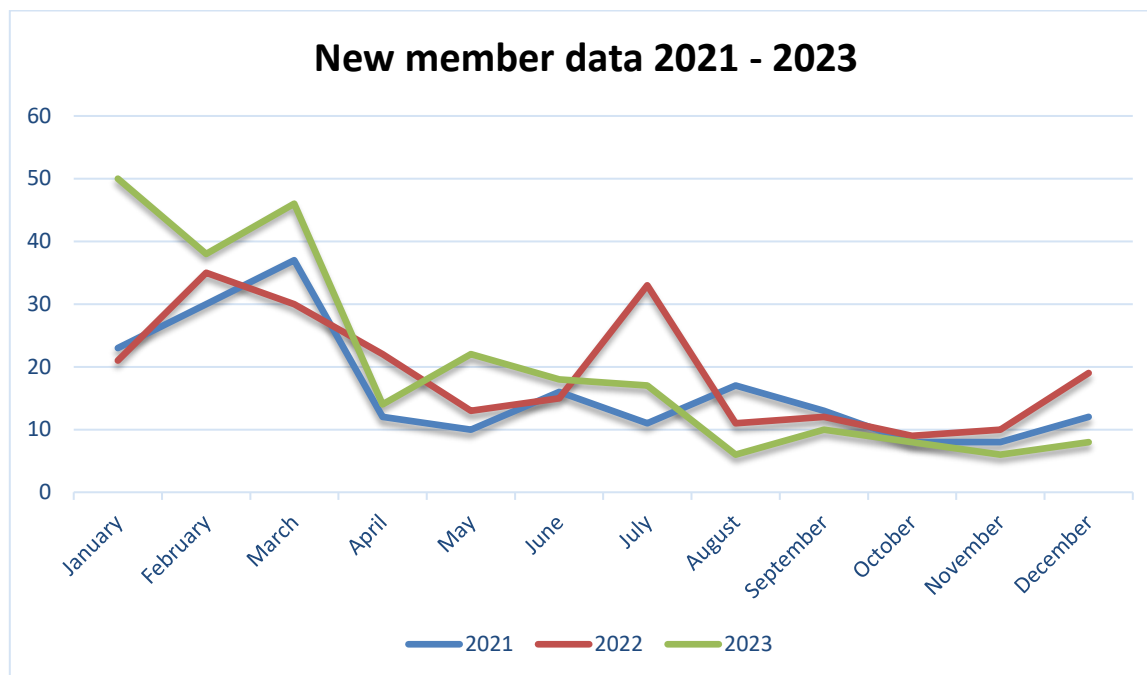
Donations as at 31/03/24 - £827.65

Discussion: It was noted that on the second half of the first page of the Accounts there was a duplication of £303 (Events Insurance) which made the rest of the figures out 1 line down.

Approval of the Treasurer's Report was proposed by Andy Scott and Seconded by Gary Mutton.

Membership Report - Colin Pottle:

2023 started incredibly well with lots of new members signing up, probably due to the incredibly low price of £12. The decision to stop printing **TRACKS** meant that throughout the year we lost members who were either unable receive a pdf, no computer or health reasons, or resigned as just not happy. We continue to have members who don't renew on time and then re-join at a later date.



The above chart shows the comparisons of new members over the last three years. As you can see, 2023 started on a high in January, then tailed off towards the end of the year. Again, the lack of a DRS open day impacted our figures negatively with no spike in the summer months.

The 'Additional Family Adult' category was gradually phased out over the year, with everyone getting their own membership. 'Additional Family Child' aged 10 - 16, now stands at 18.

To sum up 2023, we had 243 new members. People who resigned, or were resigned by myself having failed to respond to repeated requests, numbered 313 of which 72 stayed for one year only. Sadly, we also had 15 members who passed away, bringing the total who left to 328. By the end of 2023 we had 1464 members, down by 62 from the previous year, not unexpected as we knew we would lose members with the printing of **TRACKS** stopping. What was surprising was those existing eMembers resigning especially with the reduction in the fee.

Membership Cards: The decision was made at the end of the year to no longer issue membership cards as it made no sense posting out these to new members when all other welcome pack info can be emailed. Many members lose them anyway and end up emailing me to find out what their number is. It should be noted that the first two numbers relate to the month of joining, while the next two relate to the year.

As stated in last years' AGM, receipt of renewal payment can be acknowledged by email or text and if requested, this can also be done by post if accompanied by an SAE.

As always, it is important to keep your details updated, a quick email preferably, text or message left on the phone to myself is all that is required.

New members since 01/01/24 (up to 31/03/24) 63

Current Membership as at 31/03/24: Total - 1432, AFC - 18

Discussion: Good year's performance with a number of new members joining from various sources although with DRS not holding their normal charity day during the year, now only holding it every other year, this has affected the number of new members. This year there will be a DRS charity day at Carlisle Kingmoor so hopefully we will attract some new members there.

Editors Report - Trevor Roots:

So much seems to have happened in 2023 but with most of it reported in various **TRACKS** editorials I'll just precis the salient points. **TRACKS** was produced by the new printer Micropress who on the whole did a good job apart from a few hiccups and at a much lower price. Having started at just over 1300 copies in January by December we were down to just over 800. The problem was that we had to mail out 1000 issues a month, as with previous printers, to get the bulk postage rate and by October we were struggling as members renewed at the cheaper rate and switched to pdf only or resigned in larger numbers than anticipated. With hindsight we should have stuck with everyone continuing with the printed version until the end of the year. This meant we were losing money on printing and for the last few months we had the absurdity of printing nearly 200 which were posted to me and promptly binned as the extra postage to only do 800 was much dearer. However, with the December issue I could finally stop the extra work involved with printing the magazine, but not before I managed to produce the largest issue possible at 96p in Aug, Sep and Oct. It turned out that there was no price difference in doing 96p as opposed to 80p. This meant we topped 1000+ pages for the year and all for only £12.

As more switched to pdf it became technically impossible to continue to email out **TRACKS** so the current issue was made available to download from the website. The website also became the main vehicle to impart up to date info to members and will be even more vital from 2024. This did and still does cause some problems with members who will not read or are less technically able. After constantly informing members of the changes and how to access **TRACKS** many still email to enquire why they haven't had an issue, sometimes waiting several months. The fact they can email but not

think to look at the website has been a constant source of frustration and creates extra work replying. Many also do not realise they need to refresh their browser to get the up to date page on the website, if they do not have a modern device that automatically does that.

As we embark on a new era in 2024, if there is one thing I hope it is that members help me and other officials in seeing the website as their first point of reference for up to date info before they even consider emailing. In fact I would rather members called me as it is quicker, more interactive, personable and much easier to answer the query.

Discussion: We changed the printers this year and it didn't get off to a good start with them using the wrong paper but this was soon sorted out. We have some strange comments why members were resigning but members were reminded that they should refresh their website pages to ensure they are up-to-date. Looking forward, members complained that non-members could download the magazine for free but were told that we are going to make it so you will have to log in to get the magazine on the Tracks page. The whole page will then be for members only and it will be by surname and membership number, not a password as this would more than likely cause extra work if members forget what their password is.

Trevor said it was sad we have had to go to a PDF version of Tracks as we have lost long term loyal members because a lot of time they do not have the technical knowledge or the facility to be able to download the magazine. Trevor emphasised that an old laptop can be used to read Tracks once downloaded as it does not need all the up-to-date systems.

Publications Report - Trevor Roots:

Book Printing / Distribution: As mentioned last year we did move production of the four wire bound books to Micropress (MP). MP quote for wire bound books was £3891.00 compared to LVP £7394.50, however quality and delivery was awful. After many faults, mainly with binding, the final books were not delivered until the 4th April nearly 8 weeks after files first supplied. Discussions at the end of the year led me to believe this was an aberation and that MP could produce good books especially as they had a new punching machine which could do round holes, the 2023 square being problematic. As usual the spine Pocket Books from Henry Ling were good.

Book Sales: With a surplus at the end of the year we ordered less of five out of the six books but with lower sales yet again year on year we were still left with a surplus. We did however sell out of the loco book but with such a small run it is hardly profitable or worth the effort. As it turned out with wire bound books having to be reprinted and overs being added to the initial order, we had yet more surplus books to dispose of at the end of the year.

Book Title	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Order	Sold	Order	Sold	Order	Sold	Order	Sold
01 Pocket Book (spine)	250	224	250	191	250	180	200	192
01W Pocket Book	500 *	480	520 *	497	525	454	500	429
02 Combine Vol.1	736 *	721	725 *	719	775	676	700	668
03 Combine Vol.2	550 *	546	502 *	497	550	533	550	489
05 Locos	150	120	150	121	125	89	100	100
Totals	2186	2091	2147	2025	2225	1932	2050	1878

* printed to order, Sold includes complimentary etc, faulty books not included

There were no plans to produce new editions of the other three existing titles, Name Directory and USFS Vol.1 & Vol.2.

Shunter Hunter Class 08 sales dried up with only another 36 sold during the year and the book has still to break even.

As mentioned in the Social Media Report, a straw poll was conducted on proposed changes to the 2024 books. The first was to remove pool codes from the Pocket Books which was overwhelmingly supported by 84%. A separate Wagon book was proposed which drew 55% support. The most radical proposal was to introduce a single spine Combine which again drew 84% support. Though it was not likely to be introduced as there are many difficulties with protecting the data, a question was also asked on introducing a subscription for digital books which got 43% support. What wasn't asked, as too difficult to frame and get meaningful answers, was that the wire bound Pocket Book was to be split into two volumes as per the Combine and that both the spine and both Vol.2s of the PB and Combine were to include wagons so all books mirrored each other on content. This though would result in a total of eight books, the largest number yet produced.

Advertising: Full page adverts were taken out in Railways Illustrated (RI) for the Mar issue and Railway Express (REx) for the Feb and Mar issues. We also continue to get our books advertised on WNXX, which can be seen when you scroll to the bottom of the Latest News page under Members Marketing. In addition, Gareth continues to push us on social media.

Sales Stand: Apart from the DRS Open Day at Crewe we also attended the SVR Spring Diesel Gala for three days in May. We had a large market type stall on the concourse at Kidderminster Town and was an ideal location for footfall and seeing the daily action.

Sundries: Apart from stocking up, no new items were ordered other than 50th Anniversary items (see report)

Discussion: Some members asked if we could produce digital books but Trevor said we would not be doing this as it was easy to pass on and would therefore affect our income.

This year's books are better quality than last year as printers are now using a round hole punch instead of square. The new spine combine is doing well. Pocket Book ring bound version 2 not selling well so therefore need to decide whether to continue producing 5 individual Pocket Books or only produce 3 ring bound Pocket Books - Locos & Units / Wagons / small current Loco & Steam but take out industrial. Trevor emphasised that we have unique products with all the information of current locos - main line and preserve haulage.

DRS have changed their set-up so stands would have to be down at Hylle.

Website Report - Trevor Roots:

The website is now the main reference point for up to date info and is constantly updated and tweaked with info on **TRACKS** and books. More user friendly guidance has been added to help with the many error's users seem to make, but they seem of little use as It is amazing how some still do not read the guidance !! All relevant pages were amended to reflect the restructuring, with the **TRACKS** Library page now the place to download the current issue of **TRACKS**.

Gareth Patterson is doing an excellent job with Social Media, see his report below with the four advertising platforms continuing to generate new members and book sales.

The **TRACKS** photo database has still yet to be put on the website as no time to fully check it with the last few months not added due to lack of time. The monthly update probably needs someone else to take it on.

Discussion: If any member sees any errors or problems with the website to please let Trevor know so he can make the necessary amendments. Request made for anyone interested in taking on our photo database and keep it up-to-date - Tony Whitehead volunteered.

Social Media Report - Gareth Patterson:

Another great year for social media with numbers still rising, especially that of our main Facebook page. In November 2023 we ran a vote requested by Trevor regarding possible changes to our spotting books on the members only Facebook page. I'm glad to say that 90% of the group took part which was great and good feedback back for Trevor and the society. The group itself is starting to prove popular at long last and is becoming active with daily pictures being posted by members also daily questions being fired in my direction regarding society matters which is great and what the group is all about. I'm keeping members briefed on this group of future visits we have planned and book updates. Our main public domain Facebook page is proving very popular (see figures below) We are posting a picture up every single morning at 08.30 and this is proving very popular and helps keeps the page active. I'm continuing to advertise the books and also membership on not just this page but on all social media platforms.

In terms of a percentage rise, followers on Train Siding have grown the most.

	end of Dec 2022	end of Dec 2023 (approx)	Annual Gain
Facebook	4534	5644	1110
Twitter / X	2216	2452	236
Instagram	3309	3446	137
Train Siding	80	1063	983

Our photo source / drivers have been steady supplying material for the pages which are much appreciated, as have our members, with a daily picture going up every morning at 08.30.

Discussion: Up-to-date figures are Facebook 5935, Twitter/X 2527, Instagram 3448, Train Siding 1080 and the Members Only 361 so all platforms going well.

Events Report - Trevor Roots:

A comprehensive programme of 17 visits were planned but not all implemented during 2023. It was however still our largest to date in modern times with 13 visits to Crewe Basford Hall / Andrew Briddon & HST for our AGM / WCR Carnforth / Crewe Basford Hall / Scunthorpe Steelworks / Goodmans Yard Wishaw / ELR (3) / Fawley Hill Rly / Long Marston / Eastleigh Works. Sadly, there was disappointment when only the first of the planned four visits to Carnforth could be completed as WCR cancelled all remaining visits due to breach of trust over photos by another group. There is a willingness for us to be accommodated again but only when things calm down. A return to Long Marston which took over a year to plan was ruined when permission to photograph was rescinded on the day taking us by surprise and annoying several members. This soured the occasion, so we will not be returning. Having been a bit packed in on the Scunthorpe visit it was decided to ask for two visits in 2024 with a max of 24 per visit, ie 4 per veranda. The visit to Eastleigh Works worked better with money paid in advance but the handing out of tickets was time consuming and the queues in what turned out to a very hot day led to some members getting heat stroke. It was decided to try armbands for 2024 with a shorter waiting time to overcome potential heat or rain.

The DRS Open Day at Carlisle Kingmoor was postponed until 2024 with the event to be biennial.

Andy Scott stepped up to help during 2023 and will be more involved from 2024.

It is hoped most of the same visits can be replicated in 2024 and we can still try to get visits to Toton and LSL.

Discussion: WCR still not allowing visits to the site but things have moved from there. Scunthorpe Steelworks is a popular visit but we reduced the number of members on each veranda to make it easier for taking photos/numbers. It may be possible to get another van added so could be late availability. East Lancs Railway is another popular visit and these go well. We have 2 new visits this year - Hope Cement Works and Ribble Steam Railway. We will be adding some more dates for Basford Hall visits. We have tried most places but don't even get the courtesy of a reply. We have tried Toton but will keep trying. Suggested places to visit: Loughborough/ Leicester/ Nemesis Rail/ Watley & Merehead/ trams at Blackpool/ Great Central Railway/ Severn Valley Railway but we would need to supply stewards. Possibly having a stand at the following galas - Keighley & Worth/ Swanage/ East Lancs/ North York Moors/ Great Central/ Ecclesbourne.

Election of Officials:

The election of the committee en mass. Proposed by Gary Mutten and Seconded by Claire Cowen.

50th Anniversary - Trevor Roots:

Loco Nameplate: With none of the larger companies operating locos prepared to offer us a donor loco we approached Andrew Goodman who was happy to make a RSS shunter available but the size of the plate was a problem being 100mm longer than the vinyl we tried at Wishaw in May. Whilst we gratefully kept this offer in abeyance, we continued to try to find a mainline loco as was more appropriate for the plates we had made and towards the end of the year we were offered a loco but this had to hush-hush and no timescale as to its availability other than it would be a loco that was to receive a special new livery probably in the spring of 2024.

As can be seen from the accounts, the current donations total now stands at £798.34 so just over half the cost of the plate, though fitting will still need to be funded.

Printed Merchandise: We decided to offer printed merchandise for our 50th Anniversary so by March we had 1000 pens in three colours, 250 coasters and 252 mugs delivered. Unfortunately, members have not supported this venture even with prices kept to the absolute minimum. We needed to sell 240 pens, 190 coasters and 174 mugs to at least break-even, but by the end of the year only 153 pens, 29 coasters and 50 mugs had been sold. The pens are ok as they will and can be sold over several years replacing previous stock we had run out of, but as stated in the Treasurers Report this has not been a financial success with sales of mugs and coasters woeful.

Discussion: Loco Nameplate - Carl Watson at Eastleigh says there is a loco there at the moment and is being done up. There will not be a naming ceremony as the loco will probably go straight out but could come back to Eastleigh for our visit in September. At least it is at long last going to happen.

50th Anniversary merchandise - It has been very disappointing that this has not gone well. The mugs and coasters have not sold so these will be on offer.

Any Other Business: Nothing

Presidents Closing Statement - Simon Mutton:

Once again it is my role – and privilege- to provide the closing address to the Society AGM.

2023 was certainly another year of upheaval and change within the railway industry. Unfortunately, much of the news continued to be negative, with the cancellation of HS2 beyond Birmingham, the seemingly never-ending industrial relations issues and – to the outsider at least- what appears to be the nonsensical withdrawal, storage and scrapping of perfectly good rolling stock whilst so many instances and news reports of chronic overcrowding continue. ICRS itself has also faced its own challenges again in 2023, most notably the implementation of the decision to transition the running of the society – and in particular TRACKS- online but also the loss (for now at least) of Carnforth as a place to visit due to circumstances entirely outside of our control.

However, it's also fair to say that, thanks once again to the continued hard work and dedication of the Society officials, ICRC has more than met those challenges and in so doing has, I believe, made the organisation more resilient in terms of facing the future. The major achievements of 2023 were the aforementioned implementation of the digitisation programme for TRACKS magazine, and the expansion of our publications for 2024, both in range and content. Those major achievements, together with the delivery of a varied and successful trip programme and the not insignificant workloads involved in running the various aspects of the Society (magazine, membership, finance, secretarial and website) means that the officials who have been responsible for making all this happen can again– and should again - look back over the last year with a feeling of immense pride.

However once again I urge you to remember – in fact I urge you to never forget - that this work is done on a voluntary basis, and the ongoing debt of gratitude that we owe to all the officials for making the society the success it is should never be underestimated. And its not just the practical side – as with any organisation difficult and sometimes unpalatable decisions have to be made, in the full knowledge of the negative impact those decisions may have. I know that was certainly true of the decision to digitise TRACKS. Whilst necessary, the officials were fully aware that it would impact those members who would, either because of a lack of IT hardware or the knowledge and skills to use it (which is not a criticism!) would in all likelihood leave the society. This would include some members known to us personally – known to be elderly, perhaps not in the best of health and many lifetime supporters of the society. And so it proved. So even though we know the decisions made were the best for the future of the society, making those decisions does come at a hidden emotional cost that may not always be recognised, and which I therefore think right to bring to your attention today. A lot is talked today about mental health and well -being – so we should recognise and applaud the work that the officials do and remember it is done alongside all that they have to deal with in their day to day private and professional lives.

To that end I would urge you to give serious thought to the issues that have been raised in both in Trevor's TRACKS editorial and our discussions today around how support can be provided to him in the future order processing and distribution of books, and indeed the production of TRACKS. If any of you think you may be able to assist in these, or any other ways, please do not hesitate to let us know.

However regardless of all of the above a big thank you is also due to you, the membership. Your continued support and overwhelmingly positive comments (in contrast to the very small negative ones) is what makes it all worthwhile. So thank you for attending today. Have a safe journey home, and can we once again close in the time honoured fashion of a round of applause for the officials – and indeed yourselves! Thank You.

Meeting close at 15.40