

Chairman's notes

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Winter is now with us but, when I write these notes, I have not long returned from Switzerland, where I sampled one of the offers that Les Heath has managed to arrange for SRS members, following the request made at the 1995 AGM. This was the offer made by the Hotel Terminus Golden Pass at Montreux for 4 nights half-board for £205. I have stayed in many Hotels and guest houses in Germany and Switzerland, but I do not think I have ever stayed in one more friendly.

For a start, my booking had got lost in the post, but this was not a problem - would I like a room looking towards the lake (and the railway) or inland? This question was not daft, as Montreux station looks as though a bomb has hit it, with some rather big holes in evidence, and some rather big machines at work from quite early each morning. However, the windows are double-glazed and no sound disturbed my slumbers. The evening meal is served from 19.00, but I could start as late as 20.30, had I wished (my tummy invariably dictated otherwise) and was excellent, with the meals being as different from each other as could be. One rather nice touch - one evening I was the only "half-boarder", and the menu stated it was "Mr. Jesson's menu"! Throughout my stay, all the staff were very friendly and spoke excellent English, which saved them from my inadequate French. I would like to express my thanks to both the Hotel management and staff, and to Les, for making such a pleasant stay possible.

It was unfortunate that the September magazine contained some rather obvious mistakes. Les has explained that the reversal of the front cover picture and the lack of addresses in two of the adverts were errors in the printing process. Les has also "put his hand up" with regard to the lost photo captions, which got lost in the hurley-burley of trying to do a lot of things at the same time.

What is even more unfortunate is the response I received shortly after the magazine was posted. One member had carefully removed the address label from his envelope, stuck on another with my name and address, and mailed the magazine to me as "return to sender". The magazine was liberally daubed with red felt-tip to highlight all the

errors and contained a typed, but unsigned, note which was uncomplimentary, to say the least. Significantly, although there have been several remarks passed about the errors, this was the only complaint of this nature, out of almost a thousand members.

It seems that most members appreciate the content of our magazine more than they dislike the mistakes. Despite this, the committee are not complacent, and Les sometimes gets more hassle from the committee than he does from the rest of the membership. The bottom line, though, is this: every member of the committee is a volunteer, who fits in his SRS commitments with his work and family life. None of the committee get any privileges. Indeed, it can cost them hard cash because of travel to meetings and exhibitions, overnight stays, phone calls and postage, not all of which is claimed back as expenses. They do this willingly (usually) because of the enjoyment they get from helping to run the Swiss Railways Society. Thankfully, most of you know and appreciate this, and you have our thanks for tolerating our mistakes. Tell us of the mistakes, by all means, but please tell us who you are. At the very least, we can then reply to you.

One small tip I can pass on. When returning from a sojourn on the Gotthard, I had to change trains at Arth-Goldau to get to Luzern. When the train rolled in, it was crowded, but the buffet car was empty, so I settled there to have a coffee. The train was a Roma-Basel service, so the buffet car and crew were Italian. Surprisingly, their German was worse than mine. Even more surprisingly, the coffee (cappuccino) cost the princely sum of SF2.17, the equivalent of the advertised price of L2.500. The normal price for coffee varies between SF3.00 and SF4.00, so this was a bargain, especially on a train, with its "captive" clientele. It is also worth adding that the price had to be worked out on a calculator, and the coffee was accompanied by a bill (made out in triplicate) which probably cost the odd 17 Rappen!

John Jesson