

Thoughts from the chair

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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR - Paul Russenberger

At the SVEA Annual Conference I was delighted to be able to report on the continuing growth in the membership of your Society. ("Our" Society if you prefer, since I am a member as well!) It gives us greater standing in the eyes of at least one group in Switzerland and that wonderful land-locked country can do us nothing but good.

The continued growth is good. While it does place an increased workload on those who distribute "Swiss Express" and on the Membership Secretary, it does not of itself impose any real strain on the running of the Society. Indeed, the economies of scale seriously assist and have enabled the Society to retain the lowest subscription rate among the international specialist railway societies, while maintaining a currently firm financial base.

Yet, there is one thing with all this that worries me.

There seems to be more and more being done by fewer and fewer. While I do not believe for one minute that the SRS is alone in this – I am sure we can all think of other organisations such as tennis clubs, photographic societies or churches where the same phenomenon occurs – I am equally convinced that it needs to be addressed for the benefit of the Society as a whole and also for those who are already giving their time and resources.

Years ago, long before I was even on the committee of the London Branch, I ran into a member who was knowledgeable, keen on Swiss railways and had ceased to come to local branch meetings. I said I was sorry not to see him. His sad response was that he had not renewed his membership because he could no longer see what he could get from the Society. It is sad because what individuals get out is totally dependant on what individuals put in.

There is at least one aspect in which members can help and volunteer their help now.

Firstly, and easily, the Society is planning a big display at the Warley Exhibition at the National Exhibition Centre on 3/4 December this year. We hope there will be **seven** Swiss layouts on show together with the stand. Help is needed and it is needed for the whole of each day. Obviously, nobody can be expected to be there for the whole of either or both days, but Paul Hannant needs to be able to organise the full staffing of the stand from the beginning to the very end of each day. (In case you were wondering, my work on-call roster has been set around it and both days are on the kitchen calendar – I must remind Judith to read it and remember to try to fix up accommodation with relations near Rugby!) Secondly, there will be other exhibitions, perhaps nearer to your home, where Paul will also be very grateful for help.

Do get in touch with Paul Hannant and have a good summer.

JUST A SEC - Roger Ellis

SPRING MEET & ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As in the June Swiss Express of last year I have taken the opportunity to set out a précis of the above meeting in order that those members who were unable to attend can update themselves on the proceedings.

Approximately 86 members were present for the formal meeting, and after an opening address by the Chairman in which he congratulated Dave Howsam on winning the 'Continental Modeller' Cup for 2004, Alan Pike for coming third and Ray Williams for an honourable mention, the minutes for the 2004 AGM were agreed with minor alterations.

There were no comments from the members on either report from the Chairman or Secretary, but members were informed that the active Branches were receiving copies of the 'packs' given to all those present at the AGM, and that the Secretary would retain further copies if any members wished to receive one.

The Membership Secretary thanked members for their prompt renewals which to date numbered 1140. Another 128 members had pre-paid for 2006, which was almost 10% of the membership. The questionnaire that was a part of the renewal form had elicited 314 responses stating that 511 visits to Switzerland had taken place by 808 visitors for a total of 4304 days. If we extrapolate this further to take into account those that did