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CHAIRMAN'S THOUGHTS - Paul Russenberger

"Come and meet my ski instructor, he knows about the Swiss Railways Society," said my wife, Judith. This was too good a chance to meet a Swiss who had heard of the Society. Unfortunately he hadn't, but it didn't matter as, like all Swiss, he was intrigued to learn that a society exists in Britain to study something Swiss. It was the looks I got from the rest of Judith's ski class that seemed to say: "Your wife has been normal company but you must be insane." Suddenly I needed to explain myself. To most people a train is a train. The intricacies of gauges, liveries, signalling, voltages and rack systems are of no interest to the passenger. So it should be because trains are a means of transport and transport is a means to an end.

One lady was fixing me with a particularly penetrating stare and I had already decided not to make a fast exit when she asked, "But what do you do?" Since I had already mentioned the Branches and *SWISS EXPRESS* I had to add something more. "Well," I said, "suppose there was a Society to study Swiss flora and fauna, that would meet to have talks and discussions on Swiss flora and fauna. We discuss Swiss trains." Honour was satisfied on both sides. It can be difficult to explain what we do. Drawing a similarity with another "conventional" hobby may be a suitable way.

Your Editor has kindly allowed me to delay writing this because of my going to be introduced by Alan Pike to the 'Schweizerischer Verband Eisenbahn-Amateur'. It was an interesting visit to Le Bouveret, which will be reported fully in the next issue, but what again struck me so strongly was the Swiss enthusiasm to encourage an interest in Switzerland in those who are not Swiss.

No doubt many of us will be visiting Switzerland in the coming months – and some of us will be meeting in Luzern (see elsewhere!) – but whatever you do, enjoy the country, its scenery, culture, museums, walking opportunities and, above all, yes, I'll write it, its railways. Let us know what you observe for *SWISS EXPRESS*, if something particularly fascinates you, find out some more and write about it.

SECRETARY'S NOTES - Brian Hemming

The Spring Meet and Annual General Meeting which was held at Altrincham on 17th March will be but a happy memory when this issue of *Swiss Express* reaches you, and for those who were unable to attend here are a few words to bring you up to date. The activities started on the Friday evening at the hotel where our members Sue Knight and Chris Harnett of MITV entertained us with a fascinating selection of archive film. On the Saturday morning it was down to business early with layouts and sales stands being erected and much activity with early arrivals catching a glimpse of the goodies on offer. The doors to the Spring Meet opened officially at 11:30 and much activity continued until the start of the AGM at 14:30.

Immediately prior to the formal proceedings of the AGM, the 21st Anniversary of the Society was celebrated by our Joint President and a founder member, Roy Dungleison, cutting a cake especially prepared and decorated by Jan Howsam. At the AGM there were no nominations for the Committee other than those for the incumbent members, and so we were re-elected enbloc for another year. As on two previous occasions all the Officers presented written reports which were available to all those present as were the Accounts for the year 2000. Minutes of the AGM are now available from me and can be sent, together with the Reports and Accounts by post on receipt of a C5 stamped addressed envelope or as an e-mail attachment by contacting me at srssec@email.com.

The activities closed with the traditional dinner on the Saturday evening where our guests were the Swiss Consul General and his wife. The after dinner entertainment was a teaser of a quiz compiled by Manchester Branch member Charlie Hulme.

The whole weekend was organised by Dave Howsam ably supported by members of the Manchester Branch which includes many wives and partners. Those of us who attended were particularly appreciative of all the hard work put in to make the weekend such a success. Thanks to all concerned.

One important note to make in your diaries is that the 2002 AGM will be held at the Midland Hotel, Derby on Saturday 23rd March 2002. It is felt that returning to this central venue will provide the best opportunity for members from all over the country to attend. Details will follow in due course, but similar

arrangements to those in 1999 are being made with the exception of the Friday evening meeting being held in the hotel.

Those of you who visit the Society's website will see that the number of visitors has now exceeded 4,000. Efforts are made to include as many links as possible which are Swiss related, and any recommendations would be gratefully received for consideration. Links can also be made on a reciprocal basis to members' own sites, providing they are Swiss related. You should however be aware that use of the Society's logo can only be made with the permission of the Management Committee, and the text on site must in no way be construed to be speaking on behalf of the Society.

The new Swiss Timetables for 2001-2 are now available in the UK from Switzerland Tourism at £8 plus £6 postage, and can be obtained personally or by written request from Switzerland Tourism, 10th Floor, Swiss Centre, 10 Wardour Street, London W1D 6QE. Telephone orders can be taken on 00800 100 200 30, and credit card payment is accepted. The price in Switzerland is SFr16 if you prefer to wait.

As we enter the summer period we all look forward to our various visits to Switzerland, and your Secretary is no exception. Already I made a visit in February to my beloved MOB where I had the pleasure of meeting and being driven by our member Beat Feller. Sadly, although there was rumour of new liveries none were evident and so another trip will have to be made, this time during a family holiday in August. Such are the penalties of being a Swiss railway enthusiast!

EXHIBITIONS REPORT - Andy Nelson

Some recent requirements on the exhibition circuit may be of interest to you. The growth of Health and Safety legislation in recent years has led to some far-reaching developments. Any exhibition at any council-owned property must have an electrical test certificate on all electrical items. It is known as a PAT (Portable Appliance Test) and includes all extension leads, transformers, lighting or indeed any electrical item such as a soldering iron and which may be plugged in.

Another venue we exhibited at several years ago now bans the carrying of all hot drinks in the exhibition hall; this was the result of a small untethered child, who knocked somebody carrying a tray of tea, which then scalded the child (luckily they were not injured too badly). I now carry a small thermos flask as part of our exhibition equipment and am wondering when I will need a test certificate for this!

Do you have a layout which you exhibit and that our members might enjoy? Or is there any item you may like from the sales list and which I can bring along to the exhibitions? Then let me know either on 01753 534313 or by letter. I do have a request for a Swiss layout for the show at Newmarket on 8 June 2002 (yes 2002). So if you have one and would like the world to see it give me a call.

The Exhibitions Stand will be attending the following venues later this year.

Sept. 22nd - Oxford, the well-known GRS Continental Show

Oct. 20th-21st - Warley National MRE at the NEC, Birmingham (to be confirmed)

Swiss layouts will also be on view at:

Oct. 27th - EXPO Narrow Gauge, Swanley, Kent. MALOJA (HOM).

The Editor can confirm that this is an excellent exhibition and worth the long drive he makes every year.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY-DAVE HOWSAM

Please can I remind members that all queries about distribution and/or non-arrival of SE should be addressed to the Membership Secretary. This is the quickest route to a satisfactory response as the Membership Secretary holds all spare copies of SE for the current year. Thank you.

