

# Trying out the hot seat

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*Vapeur Parc Suisse , Le Bouveret. The Shed.  
28/04/01. Photo: Paul Russenberger*

Preferring trains to buses, it was with some reluctance that I left the Brig-bound train at Aigle on the sunny last Saturday in April to join the connecting bus to Le Bouveret and the SVEA's annual meeting. I am never convinced that buses will run, let alone on time, but this was Switzerland and any fears were, of course, totally unfounded!

Once in Le Bouveret it was not difficult to find the hall where everyone was gathering. As soon as I joined the queue to enter and introduced myself to the person next to me, he asked me if I knew Alan Pike. With that I had no doubt I was in the right place! George Hoekstra soon emerged to guide me to a seat being kept for me by Alan who was relieved to see I had made it.

After being formally opened, the meeting began with short presentations from the delegates visiting from linked societies. Alan very kindly introduced me, first expressing his thanks to the SVEA for inviting us and then explaining that, much as he enjoyed this particular annual visit, he felt it appropriate to give

place to someone even younger than himself as the Society's representative. With that, I found myself at the microphone and giving a short, very short, introduction in French, which I believe was adequately intelligible. I must admit to being glad to be able to use the excuse that since the meeting was in Suisse Romande, French was in order.

The AGM continued, largely in German but occasionally in French, with the very necessary business of all AGMs, before some free time in which I was able to meet people significantly linked with the Swiss railway and model railway worlds. We then repaired to our hotels to gather later at the Vapeur Parc Suisse where drinks were served which were becoming distinctly necessary as continuously conversing in French and German was getting tiring. Among others, Alan introduced me to Rolf Hess, the treasurer of the SVEA, before dinner at a local hotel where we had taken over the whole dining room. Having seen such gatherings on other visits to Switzerland, I felt honoured to be actually part of one, not least as I was seated with one of our Swiss members, Ruedi Steinmann from Lucerne. Musical entertainment, includ-





ing the playing of a saw, followed the meal. I was amazed at the skill of the musician as he raised the tone of the saw, by what I guessed to be an octave, simply by bending it.

Next morning, the short wait for the coaches to take us to Bex enabled Alan and I to snatch some photographs of some wonderfully old signs on the station building at Le Bouveret. A similar wait at Bex provided a view of a Pendolino just as BVB number 91 arrived to take us to the depot at Villars. There at least one example of every type had been lined up very carefully for us all to photograph and every one of them was resplendently clean!

Unfortunately, like trains, aircraft wait for no man, and I was forced to leave the party there to return to Aigle for my train to Geneva Cointroin and so Gatwick. I bade a special "au revoir" rather than "goodbye" to Urban Rüegger, the President of the SVEA, who indicated how much the SVEA values the link with the Society – the SRS is a major supporter of "Eisenbahn Amateur" – and I thanked him for the SVEA's hospitality and the kindness of his wife in generously driving me to Aigle in their car.

**ABOVE:** *Le Bouveret station, toilet signs. The Hot Seat?*

**BELOW:** *Sign for Special Trains.*

*Both pictures taken 28/04/01 by Paul Russenberger. Nice to know that Paul doesn't waste his time taking pictures of trains.*

