

The letters pages

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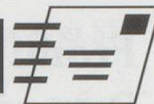
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Letters are welcomed on any relevant subject. Please ensure that when you send an email letter you include your address.

From: Canon John Edge - Burnley

Walking the Dogs

I wonder if anyone can shed light on this story. Several years ago I walked with a friend over the Strela Pass from Davos. We met no one as we descended the steep path on the far side of the Pass and as we rested a bitch and her full-grown pup appeared around the corner. We made friends with them and set off assuming that we would meet their owners around the corner. There was no sign of anyone so I thought they must have come from a farm, but, no, they followed us all the way down to Langwies. They were obviously well known in the area as the only two people we met on the two hour walk, a man in a Land Rover and an elderly lady at K upfen, both spoke to them. I became more and more concerned as they clearly did not understand my German and simply wagged their tails when told to go back. I hoped that at least I would meet a friendly policeman before we reached the Station. No such luck. We arrived at the Station and there was no sign of anyone. The train drew up and the dogs jumped on. Luckily the Guard must have been used to this happening. He quickly removed them and put them in the Station Master's Office, firmly closing the door.

I wonder if they did ever make it to Chur?

From: John Farmer - Market Harborough

War and Pace

It is always a pleasure to receive *Swiss Express*, it seems to cheer one up when our own railway news is disappointing.

Two items caught my eye. This first was Mr Frank Hornby's mention of the "Medloc" troop trains. I was part of a troop movement from Barnard Castle to the 4th Hussars at Trieste via Dover, Calais and Milan. During a stop at Lausanne, we were also warmly greeted by the local population with chocolates etc. I also remember seeing a tank engine with a pantograph on the cab, somewhere in Switzerland.

The second item was M. Kenneth Follett's letter concerning "Hotel Grischuna" at Filisur and thereby hangs a "tale". Last Spring I received a telephone call to the effect that I did not require the planned "pace-maker". My wife and I were so overjoyed and seeing the hotel advert on the back of *Swiss Express*, I immediately picked up the phone again and dialled the hotel and booked a week's holiday. I can certainly endorse Mr Follett's comments, a splendid hotel.

I noticed in the hotel office a copy of the latest *Swiss Express*. In case Mr & Mrs Uffa see this copy, perhaps I could thank them for a wonderful holiday. As I am only 74, there is a good chance I will go again.

From: Ron Fisher - St Neots

The Swiss take a Leaf out of our Book

I don't know if it is generally known but the Chur-Arosa line is currently closed for approximately half its length. The line sustained some serious damage earlier this year following heavy rainstorms and this has led to buses replacing trains from Chur to St Peter-Molinis, which I gather is about half way.

We waited in the Bahnhofplatz at Chur and I started to get suspicious when, after some 30 minutes, no trains had appeared. There were no notices anywhere that I could see so I went and enquired and was told the information given above. I asked when trains would be reinstated, as I dislike buses and was told at that time not until October.

We had seen a postbus earlier with "extrafahrt" in the destination box, but there was nothing to indicate that this was a railway substitution bus and that anyone wanting to go to Arosa ought to be on it! So much for Swiss efficiency! Oh well! We'll just have to go again - but not until after October.

From: Glyn Jones - Coalville

Down with Dragons on Lake Thun

Let me throw in my twopenn'orth on the subject. Whilst I think it is very undignified to see *Stadt Thun* in this guise it makes me smile and shows that the Swiss DO have a sense of humour, and it must "put bums on seats" which, let's face it, is what it is all about. I wouldn't, however, wish to sit at the bows of the ship having to peer between those fangs.

From: Michael Cross - Hockley

Sweet but mostly Sour

I dislike the "dragon" on Thuner See (see last month). It is either Chinese "Junk" or "The Weakest Chink". Cover picture on *Swiss Express* vol. 6/7 Sept. 2001 appears to be reversed?! I don't care for the "frog" liveried loco on SBB (Brünig) either.

EDITORS NOTE: Quite a lot of people spotted the front cover. I need to make it very clear that this was done for artistic reasons. Surely that was obvious??

From: Barrie Kelsall - Condover. On behalf of the Preda team.

Where is Filisur?

In reply to David Robinson's letter we can confirm that the layout "Filisur" is still in existence and is housed in a private collection near Stratford on Avon.

Filisur was not intended, at first, to be an exhibition layout. However, by the time it was decided this was a good idea the layout was far advanced and built like the proverbial 10 ton tank! If you had seen us trying to manoeuvre the 16ft x 4ft main section up the stairs to the first floor of the Bristol exhibition you would have realised that it was not going to have an extended exhibition life!

Soon after the York exhibition we received an offer for it to go to a permanent exhibition which was being set up privately. There it now resides, in company with David Yule's "Disentis" and many other fine layouts. The owner has a business dealing with vintage cars and, hopefully, will allow visits from societies and other small groups in the near future.

We have built another layout - "Preda" which, although built as an exhibition layout from the outset, is still large and expensive to move. We have exhibited at Warley, Manchester and London and would welcome enquiries from interested exhibition managers, although the expenses and size will put off many of the smaller venues.

From: Sydney Moorhouse - Bradford

Down With Dragons

May I congratulate you on the excellent photograph of the Dragon Boat (Vol. 6/7 September 2001)? However, it should have had a black border round it, and I would hope that the exterior panels have been buried in the deepest part of Lake Thun by the time you receive this letter.

We had the misfortune to travel from Interlaken to Oberhofen on this ill-conceived monster. Time would not allow us to catch the next boat, although, like your correspondent Deryck Featherstone, our rep. had warned us against travelling on this ship. We took a seat at the stern, but found our view of one side of the lake totally obscured by the tail of the Dragon. Some half a dozen children were having a good time crawling around inside the large structure. A stroll around the lower 2nd class deck, including the restaurant, revealed no seats which had an unrestricted view, so we returned to our seats near the tail.

However, our penance was soon to be rewarded. The view of the castle at Oberhofen, taken from the landing stage, often appears in travel brochures. The interior has rooms furnished in the style of different periods with no roped off areas, so all exhibits can be viewed closely. The top floor is in the style of a Turkish smoking room. The beautiful gardens along the lakeside provide excellent views across the lake of the Niesen and the Stockhorn. Nearby is a swimming pool with a statue of Sir Winston Churchill in the parkland.

Unlike Deryck, we decided to return to Interlaken by bus. The fare was only 5 SFr compared to 8.50 SFr by Dragon Boat, and we had excellent views across the lake for most of the journey.

A final word of warning: until quite recently, one could book a return ticket by boat and, if time was short, one could use the same ticket to go back by train. Now the boat ticket must be exchanged at the booking office for a train ticket. It probably makes sense to book single tickets for whichever form of transport chosen.

From: Harry Shipley – Letchworth

RhB saloon up the Gornergrat line

Have I missed anything in *Swiss Express* about this? The Yahoo groups BEMO site has pictures of an RhB saloon being taken up the Gornergrat line to the Riffelalp station having travelled from Tirano. I understand this trip will be repeated (Ascension, 2003). Can we at least have some pictures in *Swiss Express*, but best of all how to go on the next trip!?

Note from Editor – Over to you, has anyone any pictures?

From: John Weaver - Derbyshire

Some Suggestions and Thoughts - Including Dragons

The September issue of the *Swiss Express*, a well-produced splendid mix of topics by the way - has given rise to a few thoughts: -

1. The only Swiss railway calendar for 2002 available through the magazine is that of the RhB, courtesy of MITV. Splendid though this may be, would it not be possible, given the Society's expanding capabilities, to produce one of its own? A glance through this year's colour issues of the *Express* (for example) suggests that 12 calendar-quality photographs each year could be easily achieved. Perhaps MITV would sponsor it, or might it be developed as an excellent advertisement for the Society? The membership would also be a ready market and the photographs could be selected by competition (as per the AGM). Certainly I would like to help on such a project, although I am not sure how.

2. The Ae4/4 locomotives of the BLS: two of this small class are now 57 years old and although no longer in intensive use, I did see all of the class in traffic this summer, including when first introduced and its four members must have totalled millions of miles. Surely worthy of an article in the *Express*? I would like to try, but have only two sources at my disposal: is there a member who could help?

3. Down with dragons. Deryck Featherstone's letter in the *Express* echoed what I said at a recent meeting of the East Midland's Branch. In fairness to the BLS, there is a "Dragon" theme at locations around Lake Thun this year and if a boat had to metamorphose into a dragon, then I guess that the Swiss would do a better job than most. Just do not travel on it, and hope that Saint George turns up to dispose of it before next year!

4. Hotel Bahnhof-Terminus, Spiez. Members mourned the demolition of this building some years ago: it had long provided both a place of rest and an ideal vantage point for railway activity. The station buffet itself now provides accommodation at a reasonable price: sadly, for the present, I do not have a contact number.

FROM THE DRAGONS MOUTH - Note from the Editor

I spoke to Hansueli Kunz from the BLS about the Dragon Boat at some length at a recent exhibition who agreed that it was not to everyone's taste. He did however make the very valid point that it was incredibly popular with children and that patronage increased very sharply when the boat was used. It is much the same as Thomas the Tank Engine. To the purist not so good but the general public love it. Most importantly they come back. In the long run this is very positive.

SWISS EXPRESS

The next edition of *Swiss Express* will be published prior to the AGM in March. Press date is January 20th. Please keep the contributions coming in. We need some good cover pictures so search out those files and don't forget that some covers are "portrait" and not "landscape" format.

From: Trevor Sprott - by email **Barcelona to Geneva & other routes.**

A short query about the "Spanish - Switzerland" train: I wonder if any of the "Swiss Railways Society" members could tell me something about this train and where, besides "Barcelona & Geneva" it travels to. I was in Switzerland this autumn for a holiday, crossing the Alps in the "Glacier & Bernina Express" trains when I later saw the "Electrotren - Talgo Pendular 200" set of carriages in a model shop in Luzern.

I was amazed by them and in particular the coupling that links them together. I immediately bought the set and wondered which locomotive pulled these from "Barcelona to Geneva" etc and back again? The "Electrotren Instructions" sets out in table form a list of "Spanish, French, Italian and Swiss locomotives - both Electric & Diesel - which are said to do this. This is all very well, I have the SBB CFF FFS versions - Re 4/4 & 6/6, but only know one of the Spanish locomotives, the "Renfe Loco - Series 252 which I believe is made by "Arnold - A.2393, p.140 in their 2001 Catalogue." Unfortunately this seems to be unavailable as "Arnold" are having troubles of their own at present - I have no idea how to get copies of the SNCF models *CC 65 & 7200, BB 72 to 9300 or the Italian model FS E656 "Caimano" or indeed the Spanish "Maniobras - 276 model.

I know nothing about the diesel models quoted, "RENFE - 333 to 354" the "Maniobras - 311" or the "SNCF - BB 67300 or 400" or indeed who to approach to get these models. I would be grateful if any member knows about any of these locomotives and was prepared to Telephone, Fax or email me. I would particularly be interested in the "Arnold RENFE - a.2393" model?

As I have just begun modelling again, now that I have retired, and am searching around for a scenic track on which trains of many of the countries of Europe can be seen running, I would be particularly be interested if someone who knows the railway lines in central Europe, better than myself, could possibly enlighten me as to where to look?

This is the basic reason why I have asked the first part of this question, the route of the "Barcelona to Geneva etc " train. I would certainly be prepared to look carefully at such routes with a view to choosing one or a variety and making it the centre of a future model.

My Tel/Fax numbers and email address are as follows:

Tel: 01224.868592 / Fax: 01224.868985 / email address: t.f.s@btinternet.com

THE CLASSIFIED SECTION - Members Adverts

HELP REQUIRED: 1) What is the identity of the steam loco dumped alongside the Bern-Belp-Thun line in a car scrap yard at Kaufdorf? 2) Is any member aware of anyone that produces a video of the spectacular routes of the PTT post buses? I have asked MITV but they do not know of any
E. D. Hitchin, 51 Church Brow, Bolton-le-Sands, Carnforth, Lancs, LA5 8DZ

FOR SALE: H0: Roco 63730.2 Re6/6 11665 Ziegelbrücke, as new: £120. Lima 208446 Re4/4' 10026, green: £45. Postage extra or buyer collects. John Atkinson 36 Barley Ponds Road, Ware, Herts. SG12 7EZ. Tel. 01920 420954. email: jhmatkinson@yahoo.co.uk

LOOKING FOR: Hag No. 187 Bodensee-Toggenburg Re4/4s Wittenbach/Degersheim/Watwill. Must be in original green/cream with no horrible adverts, overall or otherwise. Contact the editor at any of his addresses or telephone numbers on the contents page.

HELP REQUIRED: Can anyone in the SRS help with track layouts for the Meiringen-Innertkirchen Bahn stations at Meiringen and Innertkirchen? I have general photos of both locations but am missing the track configurations. The best way to send them would be by e-mail as I live in Canada. (And for the benefit of the Editor, I was born and raised in Worcester!).

Keith Ballinger, OW107, NEPEAN, Ontario, Canada. email. kballinger@polyphaser.com