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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR - Paul Russenberger

In the sweltering heat of London in July it is appropriate to congratulate the Swiss, and especially Roger Federer, on a tremendous Men's Finals win at Wimbledon. To our Australian members, I send my commiserations, but Australia has won at Wimbledon before.

WHO GOT THERE FIRST?

And so to the Society. Last time I promised to let you know which of our members reached Switzerland first and who was the youngest to do so. I sincerely thank all those who troubled to contact me, by email, telephone or letter for all they have told me about early visits. It has been a fascinating exercise and I am most grateful to all those who sent in their claims, if I may so call them. I hope I will have replied to all of them before they read this. As time went by, seeming winners emerged to be replaced by others yet earlier and younger. Delaying the closing date by three months has radically changed the result.

At one point in June it looked as though one member was going to achieve the "grand slam" of being both the youngest and earliest visitor, but he was subsequently overtaken.

The first time a current member reached Switzerland was as long ago as 1923 and she is Mrs Doreen Lowe. I had a delightful conversation with her husband, Jack, who is also a member, but he did not reach Switzerland until 1936.

Mr Lowe had hoped his wife would prove to be the youngest, but that award goes to Giles Baker who made it at 14 months in.., well, I'm not going to tell you. Giles can publish his age in *Swiss Express* if he likes. He did mention that his daughter first went at 10 months and was technically a member at the time as he then had Family Membership. However, since his daughter has since allowed her membership to lapse, I have disqualified her.

Special mention must be made of Mr John Mills who came within sight of winning on both counts. He was two years younger than Mrs Lowe when she first visited, but did not cross the border until 1931.

EISENBahn AMATEUR

If my experience is shared by others, John Stokes's approaches to the British postal authorities seem to have resolved the matter of delays to *Eisenbahn Amateur*. I am grateful to John for all that he has done. It is unlikely that we shall ever know the reason for the delays. And just in case any of you were wondering, yes, it is one of the Joint Presidents in the middle of the picture on page 405 of the July issue. The Society's representative is hidden by the small group to the right – it was a bit of a sprint, but well worth it for the photograph!

JUST A SEC - Roger Ellis

IF I SEE ANOTHER TEASPOON FULL OF BALLAST AGAIN!

Knowing that the Bristol & Bath Branch was likely to be asked to organise the 2004 AGM, I rashly said that I would build an end-to-end layout for just that occasion. I have to thank my friend Peter Over for sowing the seeds of this idea many years ago, as I helped him operate his similar layout, which he took to many local exhibitions. At some time I must show him the burns I've got from electrifying 20 plus points, 30 feeds and a good number of signals. I also have to thank my eldest son for insisting that "if you have stop blocks Dad, they must have working red lights". (Why don't family members mind their own business?)

Can I ask if other modellers would like to bring their own layouts to the AGM and put mine to shame? All I need is a brief description of the layout and in particular the size of space that would be required. Never mind what it is like, as long as it is entertaining.

Also, if any member has an appropriate Swiss related display, this too would be most welcome. Space is limited as usual, but I will try to fit everyone in.

You all have my contact details in the Diary Section and Officers of the Society but if you cannot reach me by telephone then leave a message, as I may be at work ensuring First Great Western is giving its usual excellent service to customers! I look forward to hearing from you.