

Members' letters

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From Rob Morrey – Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire

I am writing to express my appreciation of the 2010 society calendar which I have recently received. A truly stunning set of photos – and a credit to all those involved in the production.

The 2009 edition was quite superb, too. Indeed the photo of Wasserauen inspired me to go there last summer! Perhaps next summer I will linger awhile in the idyllic Vers L'Eglise (the October 2010 picture).

I am also grateful to the Committee for not going down the road of that WI calendar with photos of nude society officers standing behind strategically placed Swiss model trains – N-Gauge probably!

From Ron Baker – Melbourne, Australia

Many years ago, as a callow youth, I bicycled through Switzerland and was captivated by the mountains and fascinated by the trains that wound their way through the Alps. Although I am not able to renew that experience first hand, I have tried to recapture the magic through my hobby of model trains. However, Switzerland is a long way from Australia and of necessity I rely on my memory, the internet, and other media, to ensure my model layout is prototypical.

It appears to me that the trend in Australia is towards the cheaper American profile and the increasing quality of Australian products. This leads me to suspect that the European modeller may become a rare species here. It is apparent to me that there may be many "closet" modellers disadvantaged by the absence of a local network, or a club specific to their interests. Which is the reason I write to you, with the hopeful expectation that amongst the SRS membership there may be some who live in Australia, who model Swiss N scale, and with whom I could interact from time to time to exchange information and advice.

I can be contacted in the first instance by email – rondiane@bigpond.com

From Lester Weeks – By email

I was surprised to see the caption to the photo of ds Uri in Michael Farr's article in the December 2009 issue of *Swiss Express* "- and so we bid farewell to DS Uri 22/09/04". This tends to give the impression that the ship was on her way to the 'breakers yard'. On my twice yearly trips to Switzerland I never fail to take at least a couple of trips aboard those grand old ships on the Vierwaldstättersee. Surely, if ds Uri had been

missing I would have noticed this. I would presume also that her disappearance would have sparked comment long before now.

Michael Farr comments: "Rest assured ds Uri is alive and well and still paddling the waters of the Vierwaldstättersee; in future I'll try to remember not to submit pictures of ships disappearing into the distance."

From Roger Ellis – By email

I was interested to read the email from David Adams regarding his unfortunate experience at Andermatt.

As many members will know I am a Train Manager with First Great Western as well as a visitor to Switzerland, so perhaps I can see the situation from both sides. In my job with FGW I have often had passengers on my train concerned about their connections especially if my train is running a little late. They have for example a "check-in" time at Gatwick Airport and have worked out the train they should catch from say Taunton which together with the connecting service at Reading will get them to Gatwick in time for that "check in". Whilst I do everything I can such as ringing the airline desk to explain the reason that Mr & Mrs X will be late, I also diplomatically suggest that next time it may be better to catch an earlier service to account for any potential delay.

As for Switzerland, I recently stayed in Spiez and was booked back to Paris (and home) on the 10.02 TGV from Basel, the connection being the 08.23 ICE from Spiez arriving at 09.55. I thought "that looks a bit tight" and so I got up a little earlier and travelled on the 07.54 arriving at Basel at 09.32. I was seated on the TGV when the ICE arrived on the adjacent line slightly late at 09.57. If I had been on that train approaching Basel I would have been apprehensive about getting off the ICE, going up the escalator and down to the other platform together with my baggage in just 5 minutes. Yes Swiss trains normally are on time but they too can suffer delays so counting on making tight connections as David did may not always be the best policy there as well as here.

If I were making a trip by car from Somerset to Yorkshire I would not assume that the journey time given by my GPS was accurate as I would assume that there may be delays due to weather conditions, traffic problems, etc. Why do we accept that these will happen on our roads, but blithely assume that they will not occur on various railway networks?

Like David we can always write and point out that something has gone wrong, and there is no excuse for the poor customer service he received from the MGB, but railway customers rarely write and thank operators and their staff when things go better than planned. For example, I recently had two minor investigations undertaken at my local hospital and I subsequently wrote to the director of the NHS Trust asking him to pass on my thanks to his staff for their excellent service. I hope when any SRS members travel with FGW, or are provided with a better than expected service from anyone in any walk of life, they won't hesitate to say so. In the United Kingdom we find it easy to complain but very difficult to praise

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SWISS NUMBERING

- Part 3 UIC Numbering & Classification Scheme (EVN numbers)

Alec Loftus and Brian Hemming

The UIC (Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer / International Union of Railways) is an organisation made up of railway companies which controls operational and technical standards and practices. The UIC agreed a common numbering scheme in 1965 to indicate ownership, use and interoperability of rolling stock ahead of companies adopting computerised schemes.

UIC numbers on standard gauge passenger coaches and freight wagons have been common for years but the scheme also covered traction rolling stock from the start. Most companies only used it internally for traction on computer schemes until recently, being free to display locomotive and unit numbers as they wished as the scheme was designed to cover this.

The most recent update of the scheme (known as leaflet 438-3) takes into account the rapid privatisation of railways and the opening up of cross border working of modern traction in Europe especially. This has led to more and more traction carrying UIC numbers, sometimes to the confusion of both the enthusiast and railway companies alike!

The way the numbering scheme works conveys a lot of information about a vehicle if you know how to read it and is designed for staff to identify things such as which vehicles can work together, for example coaches with different heating supply systems, or restrictions on routes or countries where vehicles can work.

UIC numbers are made up of 12 digits, these being broken down into 5 groups as follows:-

Exchange Code – digits 1 & 2 - identifies the basic type of vehicle and its interoperability. Ranges are:-

- 01-49 Freight wagons
- 50-79 Passenger coaches
- 80-89 Freight wagons
- 90-99 Traction & special vehicles

Codes ok for coaches and wagons are:-

- 40 - Fixed or variable gauge non-bogie service wagon
- 42 - Variable gauge non-bogie wagon, RIV railway owned
- 50 - RIC railway owned coach. Domestic traffic only
- 51 - RIC railway owned coach. International use, single gauge, not air-conditioned.
- 55 - Non RIC railway owned coach (i.e. a private owner coach)
- 60 - RIC railway undertaking. Service vehicle for domestic traffic only
- 61 - RIC Euro-City coach, fixed gauge, air-conditioned
- 70 - RIC railway owned coach, domestic traffic only,
- 80 - Fixed or variable gauge bogie service wagon
- 81 - Single gauge bogie wagon, RIV railway owned