

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2018)
Heft: 134

Rubrik: Society pages

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2018 AGM

Martin Fisher, the new SRS Company Secretary, reports: "The recent downward trend in numbers attending the Spring Meeting and the formal AGM continued this year with some 126 visitors, of which some 100 were entitled to attend the AGM. Unfortunately only about 65 of these did so as against some 150 last year. This shortfall was not so obvious at the time because there was less floor space at Derby's Best Western Stuart Hotel. However, most traders appeared to be doing good business during the day, including the Society's own Sales Stand. The reduced attendance on this occasion could be attributed at least in part to snow and ice in several parts of the country making travel conditions difficult. So, a big "thank you" to those who did attend, whether as members, traders and/or exhibitors.

During the AGM there was warm applause when it was announced that Roger Ellis had been made an honorary life member in recognition of his immense contribution to the Society over the years, latterly as Exhibitions and Publicity Manager as well as organiser of the Bristol and Bath Group. Roger had stood down from the SRS Board of Management at the 2017 AGM, whilst at the 2018 meeting further changes took place. David Stevenson, Society, later Company, Secretary since 2008, stood down from that role but took on a new position as Archivist and Publications Director, to pursue the initiative announced in Issue 131 of *Swiss Express*. Roger Kemp stood down as a 'Board Member - Without Portfolio' after 7 years. Unfortunately, like many, he was unable to be present due to the weather conditions. The Board welcomed back Paul Russenberger, a former Chairman of the Society, as Roger's successor. Malcolm Job has also stepped down. A former treasurer of the Society, he had remained on the Board to help guide the transition into Company status. He is now designated as an adviser and will continue to attend Board meetings as appropriate. Our thanks to David, Roger and Malcolm for their time, involvement and expertise over the years. In no time at all I have already sought David's advice as I take on his previous duties.

Another trend in recent years has been the decline in questions "from the floor", both during the formal AGM and in the Open Forum directly afterwards. Hopefully, this is proof that the membership recognises the Society is in competent hands and is providing members with what they want. At the risk of opening the proverbial can of worms however, I ought to say that if members do have practical ideas to improve the way the Society operates they should contact the relevant Board Member or, if they prefer, either John Jesson or myself and we will look into the matter(s) raised. Members, obviously, can still raise any issues at the next AGM (or do so then for the first time) if they feel wider consideration is appropriate.

One issue did generate debate this year and that was a proposal to defer the 2019 AGM to April. Experience in recent years has been that meetings convened in March have become more likely to coincide with severe winter weather conditions, as was the case this year. Unfortunately, the debate highlighted the fact that some members may not be familiar with the Society's governing statutes. Some still recall the "Old Society Constitution". Once the Society became a Company Limited

by Guarantee (as voted upon by almost 100% of the then members), the 'Constitution' was replaced by our Memorandum and Articles of Association. This includes the requirement that the first AGM had to be held within 15 months of the Company's incorporation (it was), **after which not more than 15 months must pass between one AGM and the next.** [My highlighting – MF]. Accordingly, the papers for the 2019 AGM will not include a motion to allow an interval of more than 12 months between AGMs (as this meeting had agreed would be the case) because the power to adjust the date exists already.

Members are reminded they can access the Memorandum and Articles of Association in the Members' Area of the Society's website. The current User Name required for this appears in Issue 133 of *Swiss Express*, and the password needed is on your current membership card. For those who do not have access to the website, a complete copy of the Memorandum and Articles of Association is available from the Company Secretary on receipt of an A4 stamped addressed envelope.

2019 AGM

The 2019 Society AGM and Spring Meet will return to the Hallmark Midland Hotel, Midland Road, Derby, and is to be held on Saturday 13th April. Two out of the last five AGMs have been disrupted by snow and so we are moving the AGM to April, in the hope of better weather. We are aware that our friends at the Austrian Railway Group will also be holding their AGM at an adjacent hotel in Derby on the same day. We have been in discussions with them to ensure that the formal elements of each Society's events do not clash. Our members will have free access to their exhibition and similarly their members will have free admission to our get together. Our AGM will follow the customary format with a branch meeting on the Friday evening, and a dinner on the Saturday evening. Most of the usual traders have agreed to attend and there may also be one or two new ones. We expect to have a number of Swiss layouts and offers of layouts or displays should be made to the organisers, and will be gratefully received. A contribution towards expenses is usually available. Full details will be printed in September's *Swiss Express* and the Society's website now gives details and will be updated as information becomes available. Free parking will be available at the hotel, but registration of your vehicle must be made at reception to avoid a "fine" from the parking company. If you are planning to stay at the hotel it may be beneficial to sign up to the Hallmark's email newsletter. For any queries, please contact Glyn Jones at: agm@swissrailsoc.org.uk.

SRS Website News

We hope by the time this edition of *Swiss Express* is published that our new website will be up and running. The software used to produce our old website is out of date and the programme used to support the "Members' Area" is to be withdrawn at the end of August, so changes had to be made. The new website should adapt to the device you are using - computer, tablet or smartphone, and it will be much quicker and easier to update. Our on-line shop is being expanded to include all the items we sell, and for those of you who do not want to use PayPal, there will be the ability to reserve an item and then pay by cheque. We have closed the "Members'

Forum” and replaced it with a “Members’ Blog” where you can ask questions, give information, and buy and sell Swiss Related items. Please take a look at the new website. We hope you like it.

Members Area of the Society website

The Username for 2018 to access the “Members’ Area” of the Society website is **MGB@swissrailsoc.org.uk**. The 2018 password is printed on your 2018 membership card.

Caption corrections

Mario Gavazzi has asked us to point-out that the photographer of the smaller image at the top of P9 in the March *Swiss Express* was Stephan Perrez. Mario apologises for the incorrect information.

The caption for the top photograph on P27 is incorrect. As the sharp-eyed will have realised it is not of an Ostend/Hamburg - Brig train descending the Lötschberg, but is in fact an old image of a train at the side of Le Léman near Vevey. Our apologies to Robert Foster.

MITV

It is the first time since the December 1992 issue, that there is no advertisement for MITV in *Swiss Express*. As they wrote in their advertisement in the last issue, “Sue and Chris have lowered their pantograph for the last time”. We would like to wish them a long and happy retirement and thank them for their support to the Society over all these years. Although they will no longer be selling their DVDs direct, they are still available exclusively from SRS Sales and our On-line Shop at a reduced price of £19 for a single DVD and £32 for a double, including UK postage. Incidentally, in these days of forever rising prices, I notice that a Swiss Video (VHS tape) in MITV’s first advertisement, cost £18.95 plus postage and a comparable DVD today is just 5p more expensive and includes postage. *Amazing value.*

SRS at Model Railway exhibitions

Bill Salter, who now masterminds the SRS presence at exhibitions, etc. has noted that he hopes to be at the following venues later this year. At all the events at least one Swiss-themed layout will be present.

Why not go along to enjoy the layouts and support the Society stand?

Gaugemaster Show – Ford, West Sussex, Saturday/Sunday 1st/2nd September. Confirmed.

European Railways Association – Birmingham, Saturday 29th September. Confirmed.

Tolworth Show – Tolworth, SW London, Saturday/Sunday 10th/11th November. Awaiting confirmation.

Warley Model Railway Show – NEC, Birmingham, Saturday/Sunday 24th/25th Nov. Confirmed.

SRS on Facebook

The SRS has a Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/swissrailwaysociety/>

It is hoped that being on Facebook will promote the Society and will be a vehicle where we can put announcements at short notice. We also have a Facebook group page at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/swissrailwaysociety/> Members can join, ask questions, post photos and videos. Please ‘like’ our Facebook page and join this closed group and make use of it.

Obituary-Ruth Jans-Käch 30.03.1952 – 04.03.2018

John Jesson writes: “It is with great sadness that I have to advise the membership about the death of Ruth, the wife of Paul Jans of the Frohsinn Hotel, Erstfeld, on 4th March this year, following a serious illness.

All members of the SRS who stayed with Ruth and Paul over the years will, I am sure, remember her with affection. She was always friendly and helpful. Those of you who attended the AGM will know that I advised the meeting of Ruth’s death then. My own sadness caused me to be rather emotional, but I offer no apology, as Ruth was a very dear friend. I am sure that everyone who came into contact with Ruth will be sad to hear this news, and wish Paul and their daughter, Nicole, their condolences. I have sent a letter to Paul expressing both my own sorrow and that of the SRS.”

Members’ Letters

FROM: James Russo (Florida) – By Email

Two comments in the December 2017 issue of *Swiss Express* immediately got my attention because of my 100% agreement with both subjects:

Under Swiss News it was remarked about the lack of sufficient advance notice of events organized for specific anniversaries. I have been visiting Switzerland on a regular basis since 1998. Last year I returned from my 14th visit there, a six-week holiday. Upon returning from a number of those trips, I read about special events that occurred while I was there, events that I would have loved to have attended if I had only known about them, especially if they involved steam operations. It makes it seem to me that some of these Swiss transport organizations want to keep their celebrations for the locals only. I hope that is not the case, but that is the impression I am getting.

The comment under Society Pages about the changes in the SBB website also struck home to me. I always considered that site to be superb, even better than the German one that I use for anyplace else in Europe. To call it “a retrograde step” is being too kind. The screens that pop up now after entering the route you wish to travel are more cumbersome and awkward than the previous version. That the new website also has errors in its data makes me wonder just what is going on at the SBB. It makes me think that somebody new was put in charge of the website and thought that he/she had to change something to justify their position. I emailed SBB to voice my opinion of the changes. The response I received from them thanked me for my comments and said they are always trying to improve their website. It reminded me of the old saying, “Don’t fix it if it ain’t broke.”

Member’s Advertisements

FOR SALE: Swiss Narrow Gauge South and West (2017) and Swiss Narrow Gauge North and East (2017): Softback books, A4, 36 pages, 120 colour photographs. Each book £10.00, or buy both for £18.00, including postage, direct from the author. Send to Jason Sargerson, 17 Muirfield Park, Westbourne Avenue, Hull, East Yorkshire, HU5 3JF. Contact Tel: 01482 446451 or email: Jasonsargerson88@gmail.com. Cheques payable to Jason Sargerson. Please see my website for further details: www.jasonsargerson.uk.

FOR SALE: Collection of HO-gauge railway models. Swiss Outline - Era 5/6. Mostly by Roco - boxed and unused. Please contact Philip for a sale listing at: p.shellard@sky.com or call 07876 052915. 🇨🇭