

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 5 (1997-1999)
Heft: 6

Rubrik: Notes by the joint presidents

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NOTES BY THE JOINT PRESIDENTS

Firstly, we should like to thank members for appointing us Joint Presidents at the A.G.M. The Society has come a long way from the meeting in 1980 held in a hall in Kingsway, now demolished, at which both of us were present. It is widely respected especially in Switzerland where our "Swiss Express" is, we understand, eagerly scanned in official circles. The Society is unique in its affiliation to the Schweizer Verband "Eisenbahn Amateur" and so long as we are Presidents we, and the Committee, will do all possible to keep that image.

We were, naturally, sorry to see the resignation of John Jesson from the office of Chairman. John had stated in the March edition of "Swiss Express" that he would not be standing again for the office of Chairman and gave reasons for this decision. Subsequently after these notes were written he and also the Secretary, Peter Dransfield, M.B.E. resigned. Peter authorised the following statement to be made at the Annual General Meeting in Stevenage on 21 March 1998:-

"Peter Dransfield, following the resignation of John Jesson, decided that it was appropriate for him to resign also and he did so in a letter to the Committee, copied to Vice-Presidents, on 11 February 1998. He does not wish to be considered for any other appointment at this stage"

The timing of these events was such that all the procedures called for in section 7 of the constitution could not be completed in time for all members to be given the opportunity to complete nomination procedures, receive information as to candidates and, if appropriate, vote either by attendance at the A.G.M. or by casting a postal vote. Members will recall that, because of timescale, the closure date for nominations published in an insert in the December 1997 "Swiss Express" was 7th February 1998

The Committee was joined in its meeting on 7 March 1998 by both Vice-Presidents. All the remaining 9 members apart from the Treasurer, who was unable to attend because of his work schedule, were present. Vice-President Alan Pike was appointed to take the Chair.

The main business was the question of the Chairmanship. It was decided that it was inappropriate in the light of the criteria above for any member of the committee to put himself forward for the positions of Chairman or Secretary.

It was agreed that Alan Pike should take the Chair at the A.G.M. and Dave Howsam agreed to act

as Secretary to the A.G.M. only. An acting Chairman, one or other of the Vice-Presidents, should chair Committee meetings until a duly elected Chairman was appointed at the 1999 A.G.M. A Secretary would be co-opted under Section 4 of the Constitution. Brian Hemming, a previous Membership Secretary was duly co-opted immediately after the A.G.M.

The incoming Committee will examine whether a workable and equitable procedure can be devised to meet the circumstances which arose earlier this year.

The A.G.M. devoted considerable time to the circumstances under which the former Chairman and Secretary had resigned largely because a few members wished to be told what had happened in committee. The Chairman stated that committee minutes were available for inspection at the A.G.M. and were public documents but that discussions in committee were privy to members of the Committee. The Society was in being to serve its 1000 members; the Society and its Committee remained strong and it was necessary to look forward, not back.

Currently, other matters being addressed in committee apart from examination of election procedures. There is a review of the "Swiss Express" following the appointment of Peter Marriott to assist the Editor (Peter is a well known contributor to the "SE" and other railway journals). Also under consideration is a simplification of accounting methods probably with notes to the accounts which will facilitate members' understanding of the figures including, for example, management expenses about which a question was asked at the A.G.M.

We welcome Paul Hannant as Exhibition and Publicity Officer (North) who will be engaged in making our presence more felt in parts hitherto not reached. We are also very pleased to welcome Co-ordinators James R. Easley for the U.S.A. and Victor Isaacs for Australia and Sean Millar for New Zealand. Our thanks go to Gary Hartman who has looked after our interests so well in the U.S.A for many years and to Darryl King who was the inspiration behind the Australasian Branch.

It is hoped to issue the Minutes of the A.G.M. and the audited accounts for 1996 and 1997 with the September "Swiss Express".

Roy Dungleison: Alan Pike OBE - Joint Presidents