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SVEA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1999

At the invitation of the SVEA Committee, I attended the meeting at Wallisellen, near Zurich, on 24 April 1999. The station master had decorated the main platform with flags which did much to brighten the scene at the end of a truly dreadful period of wet, windy and cold weather which followed the heavy snows. In the loft of a nearby building, which appeared to have been the stables for the railway carters' horses of yore, was a very large "OO" gauge tinplate electric railway with remarkable rolling stock ranging from a very good representation of a SBB 'Krokodil' to the typically stylised 4 wheel representations so familiar in the 1920s and 30s.

It was then down to business which ran very smoothly. As is the practice now, I was invited to address the meeting of some 120 delegates. I gave them the greetings of the management and members and reported that the 1998 membership had remained at over 1000 worldwide, that the 1999 AGM had elected a strong committee with a new Chairman and Secretary and that some new faces had joined the Committee which boded well for the future. This was well received and it would appear that the Society continues to be held in high regard generally by those connected with Swiss railways.

Considerable interest was expressed in the development in the privatisation of Britain's railways which is being looked upon as a pattern for Switzerland.

Unfortunately, I was unable to enjoy the museum trams of Zurich because I had to leave for the UK early in the morning having agreed to address a meeting of The Plymouth Railway Circle the next day.

Alan Pike

REVIEWS

Swiss Mountain Railways, Volume 1 - Around Luzern and Interlaken

by Philip J. Kelley and Donald Binns. Published by Trackside Publications, 50 Long Meadow, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 1BW at £12.95 + p&p £1.05. 92 pages, softback. Six colour photos on covers and numerous black and white photos, maps and diagrams.

Our member, Philip Kelley, co-operated with Donald Binns to produce a very well researched document. It was originally intended as a vehicle for Philip's photography, which is widely respected, to show the period of change in Swiss narrow gauge railways thirty or forty years ago. However, it has been developed into an interesting blend of history, technical information and statistics together with a measure of material about current developments the most notable of which is a lucid description of the H2/3 locomotives introduced first on the Brienz Rothorn Bahn.

The book is enhanced by pictures and diagrams from official sources, some of which are new to me, and I was particularly pleased to see that funiculars have not been forgotten - they are railways, as well as some of the lesser known tram routes sadly no longer extant.

Readers will also be able to learn much about the different forms of rack system which is easy to read and forms the subject of the first section of the book.

There are some inconsistencies in the balance of treatment between the systems as well as in the layout of chapter headings and in presentation, perhaps the most awkward of which is on page 78 where one has to look closely to see that the Brienz Rothorn Bahn does not

form part of a minor but charming, tramway. An index of all the systems in the book would prove useful.

It is always so easy to criticise and one must consider the overall value of the work which is, for me, both illuminating and enjoyable to read. So much information was gathered that it is proposed to use this in a second volume which I shall await with interest.

The authors have kindly offered to place a copy in the SRS library.

AJP

Aus den Anfängen der Rhätische Bahn

by Iso Camartin and Peter Pfeiffer. Large format portrait style bound with 160 pages and 138 black and white pictures. Published; AS Verlag; publicised by Schnyder . Kommunikation, Backerstrasse 52, CH 8026 Zurich, Price SFr. 88.

This is another book from the publisher who produced the official 150th Anniversary book, "Bahn Saga Schweiz" and the new "Schienennetz". It is a picture book and was deliberately designed as such although there is a small, but useful, information page at the start of each section. It covers the period from 1889 to 1922 and, consequently, three sections of the present RhB are not covered, namely the Bernina, Chur-Arosa, and the Misox which did not come under the control of the RhB until 1.1.1943 in the case of the Bernina and 1.1.1942 for the others.

An advantage for many of our members is that the pictures in the main tell the story of construction, celebration, mishaps, the effects of bad weather and above all the beauty of the countryside and the difficulty of the terrain. A feature which struck your reviewer was that there was so little development at what are now crowded places such as St. Moritz and Davos yet Bergün seemed little changed.

I suggest that the book has significant value for the model maker who might wish to create a period diorama or model railway especially as an excellent G4/5 loco is available. There are some shots which show the much simplified layouts at well known locations but possibly more important, there are plenty of illustrations of the 'bits and pieces' always to be found around railways which add authenticity to a model scene.

Although the book is a little expensive, it is well recommended.

My thanks go to our Swiss member, George Hoekstra, who arranged for this book to be sent for review. It is being placed in the Society library.

AJP

COPY DATE

THE NEXT SWISS EXPRESS WILL BE PUBLISHED IN DECEMBER 1999.
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