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LETTERS

A SHORT NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The first page I turn to in any Society Magazine, and I belong to quite a few, is always the letters page. Correspondence is the lifeblood of any Society and more than anything I would like the Journal to include more letters. Nowadays there is no excuse not to make contact. Those of you, and I know that there are a lot, who have access to a computer and email can contact me very easily indeed. I love email, it is immediate, easy and keeps people in touch in a way that has not been seen since the days of serious letter writing. You can fax a letter, use the Royal Mail (it does still exist and is very efficient contrary to general opinion) Please write in and tell me and the Society what you want, what you think, whether you like the magazine, whether you hate the magazine and don't be afraid to be controversial or disagree. Lets make the letters page a real forum.

From: Michael Farr, Hampshire.

Grockles welcome at West of England Branch meetings

I have just returned from a meeting of the West of England Branch in Exeter. They are such a welcoming group that I wonder if there are any other grockles (Cornish term for visitors) who would like to swell the numbers at these meetings and make them more viable.

It takes me just over two hours to travel by train from Andover to Exeter, a trip through most pleasant countryside. The meetings start at 12.00 noon, which means that one could catch the 08.35 from Waterloo, calling at Clapham Junction, Woking (0900), Basingstoke, Salisbury and all stations to Exeter, arriving at St Davids at 11.42. There are, of course, other services to Exeter from Bristol and beyond.

The pub used for the meetings, The Jolly Porter, adjoins the station and can provide a hot meal at reasonable cost. The meetings end in time for me to catch the 15.45 home, arriving at Basingstoke at 18.00, Woking at 18.19 and Waterloo at 18.48.

So, why not make a note in your diary to reserve the second Saturday of the month - January to May and October to December - and join us at Exeter. Full details readily available from the Branch Organiser, Geoff Thompson, address at the front of Swiss Express.

From: David Keeble, Bromley.

Forced Back on the Train

I read with interest Paul Russenberger's article on Forced Back onto the Train.

I, too, was in the Jungfrau region at the same half term time as Paul, but in Murren. This is a small Alpine village of 360 residents, whose livelihood relies upon the Summer and Winter Tourist trade. I sympathise with any family with children at that particular time. The weather was absolutely dreadful, and being confined to the hotel was extremely frustrating. I suppose that's a risk we skiers have to take. We arrived on Saturday mid-February to find the Lauterbrunnen/Gruschalp funicular closed because of a "demolished" bridge across the Murrenbahn. It was too dangerous for repairs in the current weather conditions. So the only way into Murren was by Post bus (chains on wheels) along the Trumml valley to Stechelberg, cable car to Gimmelweld, and then a second connecting cable into the back of Murren.

We were warned of the dangers of avalanche throughout our stay. Skiing conditions throughout the week gradually deteriorated, as did the temperatures. On Monday we managed to snatch a half day into Interlaken to look around the (model railway) shops. Our ski

passes covered all post buses and metre gauge railways in the area as well as the ski lifts-except the Jungfraubahn. However, mindful of the conditions we returned by 5pm. A wise move as all the cables were generally forced to shutdown by 6pm daily. On the Wednesday we were totally cut off for the whole day, as the cable cars were unable to operate. I also understand that Zürich airport was shut for part of that day. Our only other time of leaving Murren was on our return home.

The available skiing time of our main annual holiday was down to around 60%. The ski lifts were generally closed by 2pm daily, and it was not unusual to see Swiss helicopters flying around dropping charges on the upper reaches to create controlled avalanches. There was unfortunately an uncontrolled avalanche resulting in the loss of life of 2 Swiss residents near the base of the Eiger, as mentioned in Paul's article

We never met our travel representative, as he was isolated in Grindelwald. We understand that food supplies were becoming a problem for Grindelwald as it was cut off the whole time we were there. Communication with our rep was by fax and phone. There was talk of helicoptering us out on the Saturday if conditions didn't improve. No chance of a few extra days!

I don't recollect ever seeing the Schilthorn cable operating that week and the temperature at the top was minus 26°C - the temperature at which the wax on your skis and the ice weld together according to our Swiss Instructor. However whilst we were in Murren, the temperature rarely rose above minus 10°C, and on our last day, when we were leaving at 06:30 it was minus 18°C.

Our return home was uneventful other than a 2-hour delay from Geneva to Gatwick. Skiing in Switzerland- we love it and will be going again.

MEMBERS ADVERTS

FOR SALE

VST REVUE 68/10; 69/7,10,12; 70/1-3,6-11; 71-87 complete. TT Revue 88-95 complete. Der Stadtverkehr 75-95 complete exc 9/95. Modest offers accepted, but buyer to arrange collection. Roger Jones, 7 Oakhurst Mews, Leechpool Lane, Horsham, RH13 6TZ
Phone 01403 250994 - Fax 0870 054 2829 - email rnhj@grischuna.demon.co.uk

CHANGE OF GAUGE means total clearout of my HO collection. Mainly SBB/BLS, other European too. Most ready-to-run manufacturers and some Fulgurex and Metropolitan. Call for full list of several hundred items! David Howes - 01296 713251 (answer phone sometimes) or email David.Howes@ukf.net

ROCO/BEMO for sale. Many boxed as new. Tel: 0181 449 7078 for full list

WANTED

CROCODILE BE 6/8 ^{III} illustrations/drawings of cab roof details. Information needed in order to complete a Billerbahn 'O' Gauge Kit. CONTACT: Mr E B Benn Tel : 0181 467 9122

PTT BUS VIDEOS - I am interested in PTT bus operations in Switzerland and wonder if any members know of any videos on this subject. Information gratefully received by Ken Williamson, 20 Bucklee Drive, Calverton, Nottingham, NG14 6JY. Tel: 0115 965 3617