

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 5 (1997-1999)
Heft: 12

Rubrik: Chairmans thoughts

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CHAIRMANS THOUGHTS - Paul Russenberger

Wearing the Society tie in the hotel restaurant in Engelberg last summer, I was approached by a middle-aged English lady with the words "I recognise your tie - the English Speaking Swiss Alpine Club!" I am afraid I know nothing of that club and felt obliged to disillusion her, but I was glad of the opportunity to explain about our tie and our Society. The lady duly expressed kind interest without any of the condescension so often given to railway enthusiasts.

Whenever acquaintances hear about the Swiss Railways Society they usually reply with sincere and complementary remarks about the railways of Switzerland and their transport network in general. The word which always comes to my mind when Switzerland is mentioned is "quality." In that quality we have something to live up to and strive for. We owe it to the Swiss! I am grateful and thankful to all of you who are contributing to the running and wellbeing of the Society.

Your Committee has been examining various ways of enhancing the service delivered to you, the Members. Accessibility and visibility are important and in this we are increasing the use of the Internet. The Society's web site is being reworked; it may well become possible for prospective new members to download a membership application form. Permanent email addresses are being set up to enable members to send messages to the principal members of the Committee; it is intended that these addresses will not change when the committee member changes. When I visit Branches, I am often asked about using colour in "Swiss Express"; this appears to something members would like. The Committee is very concerned that this should be quality colour rather than cheap colour for colours sake, but this is being thoroughly investigated for at least one issue in celebration of 20 years of the Society.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Peaceful and Joyous Christmas followed by a Happy and Successful New Millennium.

SECRETARY'S NOTES - Brian Hemming

When one approaches the end of the year thoughts turn to the next year and what it may hold in store. As Secretary it inevitably means that attention must be paid to the procedures of the Society and in particular the Annual General Meeting. The formal notice for the AGM appears elsewhere in this issue as does a Society advertisement giving details of the various activities associated with the traditional Spring Meet.

With the support of, and in conjunction with the East Midlands Branch plans are well advanced for the weekend which is at the present time the only opportunity all the members have to attend a full Society function. Thoughts have been expressed at previous AGM's that the Society might organise functions in addition to the Spring Meet, and the matter is under active consideration by the Committee. No decision has yet been reached, but I would be very pleased to hear from any member who has any views on the subject not only for the form such a "Reunion" or "Meet" might take, but where or when it could be held.

A number of matters considered at the last two Committee meetings are dealt with elsewhere in this issue. However, the most important was the decision to increase the UK Annual Subscription to £11. We have managed to hold the subscription at £10 since 1995 but we