

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

Rubrik: Secretary's notes

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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

must ensure that the Society remains solvent particularly in the light of possible cost increases. The decision was not taken lightly, but we believe this modest increase will contribute to the overall well being of the Society, Swiss Express and the services offered to the membership as a whole. We do hope the increase will not deter you from renewing your subscription.

At last we can report progress on the subject of Credit Cards. Through the kind offices of our friends at the German Railway Society we will be able to offer, as their agents, a limited credit card facility. The Committee has authorised this initially for a 12 month trial period and it will be limited to Subscriptions from Overseas Members and Society Sales via Steve Horobin (Sales Officer) or Andy Nelson (Publicity & Exhibitions Officer), It is proposed that transactions be limited to £10 minimum and £50 maximum. Further details will appear in due course, but Overseas members will find a Credit Card option with their renewal form.

We have been able to tidy up a couple of matters relating to the Society in this electronic age. At the present time four members of the Management Committee are connected to the Internet, and we have now established e-mail addresses to a common format, not only for these officers, but for those who are not yet "connected" These will be applicable to the office with safeguards being built in to ensure security when an office changes hands.

Those of us operating on the new e-mail addresses are:

Paul Russenberger (Chairman) on - srschairman@email.com
Brian Hemming (Secretary) on - srssec@email.com
Dave Howsam (Membership Secretary) on - srsmembsec@email.com
David Stevenson (Editor) on - srseditor@email.com

Please would members use these new addresses when electronically contacting the Officers concerned.

Finally, the Society web-site is up and running again and can now be found on:

<http://www.btinternet.com/~srs.uk>

The site was originally authored by Charlie Hulme and maintained on his personal web-site. This is no longer possible, so we have taken the opportunity to set up a new web-site and revise and update some of the original text. The Society is greatly indebted to Charlie, not only for setting up the original site, but also for maintaining it and allowing the continuing use of his text. Like all web-sites we are anxious to have feed back from users. Any comment, suggestions or offers of assistance in the maintenance of the site will be gladly received.

On a personal note I would like to take this opportunity to wish all members a happy Christmas and extend my good wishes for a prosperous New Year.

SPECIAL OFFER - PECO PUBLICATIONS AND CONTINENTAL MODELLER

The Society is grateful to Peco Publications & Publicity Ltd for their special offer of 14 issues for the price of 12 to new subscribers to their monthly magazines Continental Modeller and Railway Modeller. This offer is valid to the end of January 2000, and a special booking form appears with this issue.