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Around the Branches by John Stokes

The small response received from the first Branch Events listing in the December issue of Swiss Express has been encouraging. However, as always the content in this section depends very much on your branch organiser. To provide more impact we need more information on the activities of your branch. So members, if your branch has not been mentioned its simply because no information has been received, a quiet word with your organiser!

LONDON

Paul Russenberger provided this issue's Branch Events notes. He writes: "The London Branch has been going through a slightly lean period recently, largely because of members moving away and not being immediately replaced. The move of venue (from Keen House to the Fred Tallant Hall) or at least the first meeting there, went better than expected."

Nov: "But it isn't like that now" summed up the content of the presentation when Alan Snowden showed us cine film taken on Swiss Railways in the fifties and sixties. We were taken to the Gotthard, Brig, over the Furka Pass by rail, and at least one member's favourite, up the First Bahn chairlift from Grindelwald. Quite apart from the changes on the railways, we were also reminded of the difficulties of taking cine when cameras were less sophisticated and films shorter than video tapes. Alan clearly took great trouble and his efforts were much appreciated.

Dec: Nick Freezer compiled this year's brain racking quiz. Most of Switzerland was covered and questions varied from being asked to give a locomotive classification to identify what was clearly a station view taken with a long lens (which proved to be Zürich Hauptbahnhof from an unusual angle!)

Jan: "For the love of Switzerland" was the theme chosen by Paul Russenberger when he showed slides of summer and winter scenes. Members were shown places and events recalling experiences varying from the first journey on the BOB to being on a Schynige Platte Bahn train when it started rolling backwards down towards Wilderswil, spending time in Brig hospital as a result of a skiing accident and learning that it also houses the headquarter's offices of the Furka

Oberalp Bahn (what some people will do to get on the inside!)

MANCHESTER

Four short reports from the pen of Dave Howsam have been received for this issue.

Oct 2: "Slides & Humour" was the title of a talk/slide show given by Willie McKnight to the 19 members present. Willie showed a variety of slides depicting his travels around Switzerland and especially Grindelwald. Christine will be pleased to note she featured in many of them. An entertaining evening enjoyed by all.

Nov 6: Seventeen members attended this evening. At short notice Tom Hudson volunteered (only members of the Manchester branch will know the "local" definition of that word) to show slides of his visits to Switzerland and for good measure included Canada and various Canadians. Dave Howsam filled in with slides from a recent visit to Holland.

Dec. 4: The Christmas Quiz, organised this year by Dave and Jan with festive refreshments from Peter Hutchinson. Members tried to display their knowledge (or lack of it) of Switzerland and its railways.

Jan. 8: Members slide competition. Members presented 10 slides on a theme. Whilst the marking was taking place the members explained their slides. Diana Combs was 3rd with slides entitled "To the point". Dave Howsam once again was awarded the sympathy vote coming 2nd with "Useless objects". This year's winner of the imaginary champagne was Andy Micklethwaite with "Snow and Ice" (including a DB ICE train).

WEST OF ENGLAND

The branch held its first AGM on 23rd November at the Transport Club in Exeter. Geoff Thompson was elected Branch Organiser with Mervyn Kendall as Assistant Branch Organiser, and Peter Parkes as Librarian. Any members who have surplus books, magazines or videos which they would like to donate to the branch library should contact Peter direct on 01392 210119. The meeting agreed to a change of venue to the Great Western Hotel, outside Exeter St. Davids Station. Meetings are to be held every other month (15th February, 19th April, 7th June, 13th September and 8th November).