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Around the Branches by John Stokes

With a full page of branch reports in the last issue of *Swiss Express*, there are more for you in this issue. Sadly nothing further from London but responses from Bristol & Bath (some of which arrived too late for the last issue). Please bear in mind that *Swiss Express* is international but we have nothing from our members in Australasia or the USA. This section depends very much on your Branch Organiser. So members, if your branch has not been mentioned its simply because no information has been received, a very loud word with your organiser!

BATH & BRISTOL

December. "Christmas Quiz" Twenty five plus members attended. The first half of the meeting was devoted to a quiz for all based on the tv programme 15 to 1 with prizes for the top three contestants. Your Branch Organiser was out "first round" having been able to answer other contestants questions not his own! After refreshments brought by all, the members were split into 3 teams for a game again derived by our host Roger Payne. The object was to build a Swiss railway (metre or standard gauge) between two towns. The portions of track were gained by answering questions on Swiss history, geography, culture, food and railways. Chance cards were taken and either held back or progressed the building task. No team completed their line but had a deal of fun trying. Other branches might like to borrow Roger's idea for quiz evenings.

January "None of the Other", Roger Payne, as usual, delivers an interesting and entertaining evening. He took as his theme the River Rhone and took us on a journey from its source to Lake Geneva showing slides of the delightful parts of Switzerland. Roger, although an enthusiast for Swiss railways, also has a great interest in the history and culture of the country itself. His slides shows are not devoted solely to the railways, but include the scenery and historical buildings as well. In addition to the Swiss side of Lake Geneva, we also saw slides of the villages on the French side and some of the appropriate SNCF stock.

February. "European Pot Pourri" was presented by Alan Pike. It is always a pleasure to invite Alan & Audrey to the branch and as usual Alan did not disappoint us with his talk. The theme was a journey from Ireland, via the Bath area to Switzerland along the many possible routes ending on the Austrian-Hungarian border (for a taste of a future talk to the branch). We were shown steam in Ireland circa 1930s to 1950s, Hymek's through Bradford-on-Avon in the 1970s, over to Boulogne in the 1960s, through Holland, France and Germany (both east and west) and finally a tour through Switzerland to the aforementioned end on the Austrian-Hungarian border. Even included was a slide of a Pendolino set in Brig taken a few weeks ago. Along with Alan's "guide to

café's I have known" this was a superb evening and we look forward to Alan being with us in 1998.

March. "MITV" Twenty six members attended this talk and video show given by Chris & Sue when they visited the branch for the fourth year to show us excerpts from their two new videos on the GFM Railway and RhB Engadine line. Apart from the wonderful scenery they were able to describe the making of the films, both the problems and delights, information not accessible to the ordinary public. We were also shown footage of the first rung of "Limmat" filmed during a driver training outing prior to the 150th celebrations. Chris & Sue were also able to expand on many of the local anniversary events taking place during 1997, of great interest to members. Needless to say they are returning in 1998.

MANCHESTER

February. Guests Sue & Chris Knight from MITV gave a talk and video at the evening event. Despite the enforced absence of some regular members the 28 people attended a highly entertaining evening with Chris & Sue. As well as being shown high quality video sequences, after various stories and background information, we were privileged to see the unique scene of Sue being pulled on skis in a horse race on the frozen lake at St. Moritz. More footage showed Chris descending the Cresta Run, only because women weren't allowed, otherwise it would have been down to Sue again! Our grateful thanks for another most enjoyable evening and for travelling so far to entertain us.

March. A slide show entitled "Just the Ticket" was given by Richard and Diane Combs, who won a First Class Swiss Rail Pass for two in the raffle at last year's AGM. Their excellent slides illustrated just how far it is possible to travel in 8 days and the variety of Swiss Railways which can be seen. Nineteen members struggled through an evening of traffic chaos to be richly rewarded by an entertaining and informative talk and slide show.

April Five members presented slides on narrow gauge lines, under the general title "The Straight and Narrow". The twenty members present were shown slides of Swiss, French and British narrow gauge lines and by that strange quirk of fate which seems to happen all too often, two members showed lines of the Rhone Valley, albeit in different decades.

WEST OF ENGLAND

April Twelve members were present (together with Andrew Burnham, Editor of *Continental Modeller*) for Alan Pike's slide show and talk which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.