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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Autumn is beginning to make itself felt as I write these notes and with it, yet again, the exhibition season. I count myself very fortunate that, from time to time, I am asked by Mike Polglaze to assist him in operating one of his layouts, usually Via Mala. Although my work prevents me from accepting as many invitations as I would like, those I am able to accept have been very enjoyable and I cannot thank him enough for the hilarious times I have had. Last year the layout went abroad for the first time, to Bochum, in the Ruhr area of Germany, while this year I have just returned from Genk in Belgium, also with Mike. If all goes according to plan, next April will see it at Dortmund, and other invitations have been made. Despite the age of Via Mala, it usually works pretty well, and Mike is always making little alterations to test the powers of observation (like adding coaches to a couple of passenger trains and then finding they are too long to pass at the station).

Nor is Via Mala the only Swiss outline layout "doing the rounds" in Europe. "Oberfriedhof" went to Utrecht last year, and was also at Genk. It seems the Europeans have discovered that the British have a wide variety of layouts to exhibit,

with owners who enjoy the camaraderie of the model railway exhibition circuit. To anyone who is given the opportunity to exhibit their layout in mainland Europe, I would say have a go. There is now wide experience of taking a layout abroad, and people who are prepared to share that knowledge. Even the Customs officials are getting used to it (Q: What load do you have, sir? A: A model railway layout. Q: Oh, you're going to Genk, then - you're the fourth one this morning!).

Many SRS members attended one or more of the events in Switzerland during the summer and, hopefully, we will all hear about them through the "Swiss Express". Inevitably, though, there will be some who have been unable to visit Switzerland for one reason or another. I hope the articles in our magazine will go a little way to compensate those who have not been able to experience the fun for themselves.

The 1998 AGM is to be held in Stevenage, and I hope to see many of our Society members there. I hope you can make it. It only remains for me to wish everybody a very happy Christmas, and all the best for 1998.

John Jesson

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Committee met in Manchester on Saturday, 11th October 1997. At the Meeting as is usual, many matters were discussed in order hopefully to improve the Society and the service which it gives to its members. The first piece of good news was to learn that the paying membership at the time of the meeting was 1009. At the commencement of the year it was hoped that in this 150th Celebration Year of Railways in Switzerland this would be achieved. Another piece of good news for members is that the subscription is to remain at £10 at least for U.K. Members. Some slight adjustments have to be made for members abroad.

The Annual Subscription renewal form will be included with the next Swiss Express and members will be given the opportunity to put forward their views on a proposal to hold the A.G.M. in the year 2001 in Switzerland (this being the 20th Anniversary A.G.M. of the Society). Let the Committee have your views.

Members may well have noted the request for 3 new Co-ordinators for members in the USA.,

Australia and New Zealand as a result of the resignation of Darryl King (Australasian Co-ordinator) and Gary Hartman wishing to stand down (U.S.A. Co-ordinator). The Committee wish to record their sincere thanks to both Darryl and Gary for the stirring work which they have both carried out on behalf of the Society in these far flung parts of our world membership. Their individual contributions to the work of the Society has been much appreciated but we do require 3 volunteers to take on the positions of Co-ordinator for members in the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

Special mention must be made of the 1998 A.G.M. to be held on Saturday 21st March 1998 in Stevenage. If you have a layout and wish to exhibit it at that event please give Les Heath a ring, he would be pleased to hear from you.

As I write this report, I am preparing to visit Switzerland for one week of Railway photography, seeking out all the new liveries and the latest information.

Peter Dransfield