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CHAIRMAN'S THOUGHTS - Paul Russenberger

The Year 2000 seems to be providing good reasons for every kind of celebration. The Swiss Railways Society's celebration is that we have achieved 20 Years as a group of people with a like minded interest in railways (and more than a few other things) Swiss. This is essentially the 20th Anniversary issue of Swiss Express. We have much to celebrate having grown to a society with over 1000 members spread through most continents, with some standing in Switzerland, with active branches meeting frequently and regularly in the United Kingdom, with a magazine written by members not only enabling them to share their particular interests and expertise, but also keeping them up to date on developments in the Swiss transport scene. All this has been done by the ordinary individuals to produce a rather more than ordinary railway society. The whole is unquestionably greater than the sum of the parts.

The life of the society has seen changes in 20 years from the passing of the classic Ae4/7 (your Chairman's favourite Swiss locomotive) to the arrival of tilting trains, the introduction of three-phase drive electric locomotives, the reopening of the Furka-Bergstrecke and the return of the PS Blumlisalp to Lake Thun. One change in the overseas modelling scene in this country many of us will have noted with some sadness is the closure after many years of Victors of Islington, Bernie Victors model shop near Kings Cross. I first visited it in December 1969 in the previous premises in Chapel Market. Bernie Victor made models from Europe and America available to the British enthusiast and kindly allowed SRS Members a price concession, supporting the Society with a stand at our AGMs. He will be missed and we wish him a long and happy retirement from model retailing.

Lastly, a date for your diaries in 2001. There have been various visits to Switzerland over the years and the possibility of holding the AGM there has even been suggested. For the 21st Year of the Society, an informal gathering is being planned. An objective is to make this gathering accessible and attractive to all members and their families, young or old, single, married or parent, rich or not quite so affluent. We will meet for lunch at the Verkehrshaus in Luzern probably in the latter half of August 2001. By using the self-service restaurant, members will be able to spend as much or little as they like on the meal of their choice. After lunch we will be able to have time to look round before returning to our resorts at whatever time suits each of us. Luzern is accessible as a day trip from most of Switzerland with the probable exception of parts of the Valais or Graubünden. The Verkehrshaus provides entertainment for the family and transport enthusiast alike and no special booking will be necessary. While looking back on a summer visit to Switzerland, here is the spur to start planning the next one!

SECRETARY'S NOTES - Brian Hemming

At its most recent meeting, the Committee confirmed that the next Annual General Meeting and Spring Meet would be held on Saturday 17th March 2001 at the Cresta Court Hotel, Altrincham. As on the last occasion at this venue it will be organised for the Society by Dave Howsam with the support of members of the Manchester Branch.

The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, which was held in Derby, are now available but in the interests of economy it has been decided that they will not be circulated with Swiss Express. Any member wishing to receive a copy of these Minutes, which are in A5 format and include the Officers' Reports, should send a stamped self addressed envelope to the Secretary. Copies will, of course, be available at the next Annual General Meeting.

Discussion took place on the question of colour in Swiss Express and this will again be the main subject at the next meeting which will be held in October. A decision will then be made on the level of the 2001 Annual Subscription in the light of the outcome of these deliberations. Although the Chairman has already mentioned this matter in his note elsewhere in this issue, we cannot stress too much how much we would like to hear any views you may have on the subject.

The Society website at <http://www.srs.uk.btinternet.co.uk> continues to be updated on a regular basis and