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CHAIRMAN'S THOUGHTS - Paul Russenberger

The Society is about to come of age – 21 next year. The last issue of "Swiss Express" contained a history of the first 20 years of your Society which has grown, well not quite immeasurably, but tremendously. Several people have contacted me about the history, commenting favourably, but pointing out an inevitable omission. Very little was written about the contribution made to the Society by Alan Pike. That was inevitable, since Alan wrote the article. He is far too much a gentleman to write his own praises and anyway if he were to make an objective self-assessment he would err towards an underestimation.

There is no one person who can claim to be the pillar of the Society and we are all replaceable. However, despite only having known Alan for some 13 (lucky) years, I have every confidence in suggesting that he is one without whom the Society might have taken a different shape and been less well appreciated both here and in Switzerland. His knowledge of Switzerland, not least its railways and their neighbouring restaurants, is encyclopaedic and if he doesn't know something, he probably knows where it is written down. He is also an excellent confidant and support to a still new Chairman, for which I am truly thankful.

I am also thankful to all those who have given and continue to give their support to the Society. Every contribution is of value and the sum total is what makes the Society what it is. As we move into the future – Silver Jubilee in 4 years' time – my hope is that the Society will continue to develop and to grow. If it continues to have the support it has had during the first 21 Years, I have no doubt that it will! Thank you all very much.

On behalf of the Committee and all the Officers of the Society, I wish you all a restful and enjoyable Christmas followed by a wonderful 2001.

SECRETARY'S NOTES - Brian Hemming

At the last meeting of this year, held on 14th October, the Committee considered two very important topics and made decisions that will, we hope, have beneficial effects on the success of the Society. Colour in future issues of Swiss Express was considered in depth and the outcome of our deliberations are discussed in the Chairman's notes. Suffice it to say that there will be two issues containing colour in 2001, and there will be no increase in the subscription. This has been made possible by careful management of the Society's finances by our Treasurer, Ian Athey, and stringent cost control in the production of Swiss Express by David Stevenson, the Editor.

After a trial period of a year on sales and overseas subscriptions it had been decided that credit card facilities will be now offered for all subscriptions, and at the same time the upper limit for transactions has been increased to £100 (the minimum transaction of £10 will still apply). The use of credit card facilities does incur a cost to the Society which we feel is not appropriate should be borne by those not using the facility, and therefore a surcharge of 5% (minimum £1) will continue to be applied to each transaction.

The increased use of credit card facilities has brought about a significant change in the manner in which we will in future handle subscriptions from Australia and New Zealand. For two years we have had a system whereby each of those countries has had a Coordinator to deal with subscriptions paid in local currency. Unfortunately disadvantageous exchange rates and bank charges for the transfer of funds to the UK have made this a costly exercise for the Society. The Committee has therefore decided to revert to the previous requirement that subscriptions from Australia and New Zealand, as with the rest of the world except the USA, be paid in pounds sterling by cheque drawn on a UK Bank. However, there is now the opportunity to pay by credit card, and although, as mentioned previously, this will incur a surcharge the overall cost will most likely be lower than obtaining a bank draft. We would particularly like to take this opportunity to thank both Victor Isaacs (Australia) and Sean Millar (New Zealand) for the efficient manner in which they have operated as Coordinators for the overall benefit of our relatively small, but valued, Australasian membership.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find details of the next Annual General Meeting and Spring Meet which will be taking place at the Cresta Court Hotel, Altrincham. Please would you take particular note of the deadlines for motions for the AGM and nominations for the Committee.