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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.

The Society's website at <http://www.srs.uk.btinternet.co.uk> continues to be regularly updated and is creating much interest. As these notes are written (mid October) we have had over 800 visits to the site. We know some members are worried that the website will supersede Swiss Express as the voice of the Society. This is not the case as it is intended that the site shall only be a means of publicity for the Society, whilst at the same time providing some information on meetings and exhibitions for members.

It is always my pleasure at the end of the year to thank you all, on behalf of the Committee, for your support during the year. We take this opportunity to send our best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. We look forward to receiving your membership renewals and seeing you outside the VHS in Luzern at 12:00 on Wednesday 22nd August 2001.

A WORD ABOUT RENEWALS 2001 FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY DAVE HOWSAM



**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE RENEWAL FORM INCLUDED
HAS INADVERTENTLY BEEN PRINTED WITH YEAR 2000
AT THE TOP OF THE FORM. THIS FORM IS THE RIGHT ONE AND SHOULD
BE RETURNED WHEN YOU RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION.**

THANK YOU!

The renewal form for all members for 2001 subscriptions is included with this issue. All completed renewals should be forwarded directly to the membership secretary. Subscriptions for 2001 have all been held at last year's level. Following the trial period of allowing overseas members to pay by credit card this facility is now extended to all members. This scheme is operated for us by the German Railway Society and no cost is borne at all by the Swiss Railways Society but it does carry a 5% surcharge with a minimum of £1 for members. This means that UK members paying by credit card would be charged £12. All members should note that it is possible to pay for two years' subscription and this would save postage for you and slightly reduce any credit card surcharge. Members would also make a saving if subs were increased in the following year! USA members may still forward a US dollar cheque but payment for all other overseas members must now be in sterling, whether by credit card or by cheque or draft drawn on a UK bank and payable in the UK. The Australian and New Zealand bank accounts have now been closed, as reported elsewhere in this issue. Each renewal form has the appropriate subscription rate on it.

The following members have prepaid for 2001: K3, K48, OH117, OJ105, OQ42, OV46, OV62, OV68, OV74 & V70

All members receive a renewal form with Swiss Express. If you have pre-paid please ignore it.

Please note that a small stamped, unaddressed envelope would be appreciated from UK members only for the return of membership cards. All correspondence included with your renewal form, relating to the AGM and/or Dinner should be on a separate sheet from renewals and any Dinner payments must be on a separate cheque.

For your convenience a credit card payment slip for AGM Dinner payments has been included on the insert sheet. The aim is to give a speedy and efficient service and members should know their renewal has been received and processed by the return of their membership card and the encashment of their cheque. The number of renewals for 2000 is 1037 (Mid October), very slightly up on last year. I shall be present at the Mirfield exhibition on December 9th 2000 where members may renew and receive their new membership card.

Swiss Express has just received a copy of the LRTA book, Tramways and Light Railways of Switzerland and Austria, written by Richard Buckley and published by LRTA. A full review will appear in the next issue but it does look good. It costs £12.50 and is available from the LRTA at PO Box 302, Gloucester, GL4 4ZD. Postage should be added. For surfers it can be ordered direct on a secure server. <www.lrta.org>.