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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR - Paul Russenberger

Just What is Derby Like?

Now that the crocuses are coming up in the front garden I know that the AGM cannot be far away! If you are wondering what Derby, that city which gave us the Midland Railway, the Compound 4-4-0's and the APT, is really like, you have another chance. Having served time in many railway establishments there, I got to know the place fairly well, so I will not feel deprived by being obliged to spend 29th March in the Midland Hotel, nor will I feel that I am missing out in not being able to sample a series of hostelries that evening as I enjoy the Society's Annual Dinner.

But do not let any of that put you off! The AGM and Dinner will make a fine way of celebrating the end of March and the end of the present Committee should you choose to elect a different group. Remember this is your last chance in 2003, short of calling an Extraordinary General Meeting, to do so.

Even if you cannot stay for the Dinner or even the night (so that you can see Derby on a Sunday morning), do join us to sample the layouts on display, browse the book and model stalls and give your ideas as to what the Society should be doing this year.

Who Got There First?

Travelling back from a recent Committee meeting, conversation fell to reminiscing about our first visits to Switzerland. Apart from those fortunate enough to have been born and brought up there, it would be fascinating to discover which of our **current** members made the earliest visit to Switzerland. Did any of us, I wonder, visited the place pre – World War II? There are undoubtedly members old enough to have done so. Did anyone? Talking to members, the earliest I have been able to discover is 1958, but we must be able to do better than that.

Taking a slightly different tack, who was youngest? If my elder son ever joins (unlikely – would you join a society of which your father was Chairman?) he might just be the one having been there at 3 months. Again, the youngest I have found is 8 years for the first visit. Can anyone beat that?

No prizes on offer, but I would be delighted to hear from anyone prepared to contend for “earliest” or “youngest”, either in hard copy or by email and, with your and the Editor's agreement, I will be happy to publish the “winner's” name in *Swiss Express* later this year.

In Memoriam - Mike Polglaze

It is my very sad duty to advise you, the members of the Swiss Railways Society, of the death of Mike Polglaze. Mike went into hospital in the middle of January for a minor exploratory operation. Although the operation went well, he then suffered a series of strokes, and died peacefully early on Saturday 25th January, aged 70. His series of HOm exhibition layouts, always based partly on Rhaetische Bahn practice and partly on what could have been, were well known and well received. This was not only because of the vast amount of scenic detail on the layouts, but also because of Mike's unfailing sense of humour. If there was a funny side to anything, Mike could be relied upon to find it. All through his life, Mike was involved in transport; usually that transport was railways, his deep and abiding love. His tales of happenings on the East African Railways and the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway enlivened many a long evening. I am privileged to have known Mike for many years, and have assisted at a number of exhibitions, in Britain, Belgium and Germany. Without exception, these have been great fun. Mike never passed up an opportunity to promote the SRS, urging interested spectators at exhibitions to join the Society. He will be greatly missed. Our deepest sympathies go to his wife, Mavis, and their son, David.

John Jesson