

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2004)
Heft: [1]

Rubrik: Thoughts from the chair

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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR - Paul Russenberger

It would be no exaggeration to state that events of the past eight months have been deeply unsatisfactory as far as the publishing of "Swiss Express" is concerned. This situation is very much regretted by the Committee. The root of the difficulty has been in unexpected and unpredictable professional demands on and serious health problems suffered by those in the production team, not least the Editor.

The Society has no paid officials and, like all similar organisations, relies totally on the efforts of members working in their spare time. Nevertheless, there is a need for the principal organ of the Society, by which members are informed of events and news, to appear reliably and regularly. This has caused the Committee, who are ultimately responsible for every aspect of the running of the Society, no little anguish and took up the greater part of the Committee Meeting in January. There was much hard talking to develop a plan firstly to get "Swiss Express" back on track and secondly to keep it there.

It was originally intended to produce a full length, albeit late, issue for December 2003. Unfortunately, an unexpected organisational problem prevented that and the December issue appeared in shortened format. In order to get the March issue out as soon as possible it was decided to publish a smaller issue, only requiring a minimum of input from the editorial team with as much assistance as possible given by committee members. This could most easily be done by making it a shortened, specifically pictorial issue. Given that the pictures were needed very rapidly, it was agreed that committee members would submit pictures on specific subjects to David Stevenson to make up pictorial articles. In the event, it has proved possible to include a much larger proportion of written material than initially anticipated.

The search for editorial assistance continues. The Society has so far been able to publish "Swiss Express" in its present format, and remain the cheapest of the specialist continental societies, through the efforts of unpaid members who undertake preparation work often done by paid printers. This can, and I most sincerely hope will, continue. No decision has been taken, but it may not, because, unfortunately, it relies on the work of members whose time is necessarily limited by professional and family commitments. This is specifically so in the matter of producing the journal. Here particularly critical reliance is placed on one individual. I firmly believe that more people each doing less could relieve this situation by reducing the pressure on any one person. Can some members assist? Are you one of them? If you think you might be able to help, please contact the Editor or myself – if you do it by email, copy me in on it.

On a happier note, I am most grateful to all those who have submitted images for the Society Calendar. Glyn Jones, Neil Wheelwright and I spent a challenging Saturday selecting the images. More about that in the next issue.

JUST A SEC - Roger Ellis

I am taking this opportunity of updating members on two projects:

- The Societies' Archivist, David Baker of Manchester Branch, has now committed to record a complete set of Swiss Railway News and Swiss Express including the two special issues namely 'The History of the Swiss Federal Railways' and the 'Vereina Tunnel'.

They have been put onto CD, which we are proposing to sell to members for £10.00 including post and packaging. Each CD contains 12 issues of the magazine. It will not be possible to send 'hard copies' for those who do not have a computer due to the inferior qual-