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FROM THE ARCHIVES - David Baker

In my comment in the last issue I stated that I would probably be distracted by the contents of the back issues. Well, I have received fourteen copies of the Swiss Railway News for archiving and there is plenty of interesting material for a fledgling Society Magazine. The copies averaged about 24 pages and must have been typed out and run off on a Gestetner printer, or similar. Not hand driven I hope!

Being quizzically minded, one of the first things to take up my time, after copying of course, was to attempt the quizzes. The first two editions each had a twenty-question quiz, with prizes for answers. However, only one entry was received for number one and number two fared little better. So what's new?

Issues 3 to 9 carried a smaller 10-question quiz for fun only and not until the tenth issue "Summer 1983" was a prize quiz attempted again. This was set by Geoffrey Bryson and was a real brainteaser; or book-thumper? After extending the competition to six months, still only two sets of answers were received and the competition had to be declared void. A proposed second quiz was therefore also cancelled. The membership at the time was above 200 and I began to wonder how many of our, now 1000-plus, present membership would have presented an entry!

I should like to reproduce an abridged version of the 1983 item for your edification, answers to the editor, no prizes, just the glory and NO CHEATING!

1983

Swiss Rail Quiz

(by Geoffrey Bryson)

1. The Swiss Federal Railways have 3 titles and initials in 3 languages, but what was the earlier fourth title and initials in one of these 3 languages?
2. Why was the site of the 1982 Railway Exhibition at Basel Münstermesse such an appropriate choice?
3. Which Swiss railways and funiculars carry similar initials to those of European national railways?
4. Name the newest set of Swiss railway initials.
5. Which are the two longest bridges/viaducts in Switzerland?
6. Name the longest tunnel totally within Switzerland.
7. Where is there an underground "bridge", i.e. 2 tunnels crossing each other?
8. Where can 3 gauges be found and what are they?
9. Where and when were "rollbock" used for metre gauge on standard, in reverse of the usual?
10. Which line ran on accumulators?
11. Which funiculars have changed to rack railways?
12. And which have changed back again?
13. Which funicular has the strangest, i.e. unusual, cable system?
14. What are the geographical extremities of Switzerland's railways - N, S, E and W?
15. Where is the lowest point on Swiss rails?
16. What is the highest point on the standard gauge system?
17. Where is the steepest gradient on standard gauge?
18. Where was the first double track in Switzerland?
19. Where were there four single tracks running together?
20. What is the highest point on 80cm gauge and what world record does it hold?

Anyway back to the first copy of Swiss Railway News; Spring 1981. It was a very good general introduction to the Society by the founder members, as was to be expected, but the Summer 1981 issue had several items which caught my eye.

Along with an informative piece on the Appenzellerbahn by the President, there was the initial contribution from an un-named member, suggesting a change of name for the society. His proposal was to rename it "The Swiss Railway Enthusiasts Society of Great Britain", and, quote, to possibly have closer links with other Swiss societies at some future date, should also carry the name of "Schweizerische Eisenbahn Amateur Verein GB". Short and sweet! Is this member still with us? The name was changed however in 1984 to The Swiss Railways Society. The word, enthusiast was, at that time, becoming rather derogatory, following bad behaviour by certain sports enthusiasts (idiots?).

The other eye-catcher was a competition for designing a Society Tie and Badge. The results of this challenge were not resolved before the Magazine changed its form in 1985. I will keep on looking as I continue the archiving.