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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR - Paul Russenberger

At the SVEA Annual Conference I was delighted to be able to report on the continuing growth in the membership of your Society. ("Our" Society if you prefer, since I am a member as well!) It gives us greater standing in the eyes of at least one group in Switzerland and that wonderful land-locked country can do us nothing but good.

The continued growth is good. While it does place an increased workload on those who distribute "Swiss Express" and on the Membership Secretary, it does not of itself impose any real strain on the running of the Society. Indeed, the economies of scale seriously assist and have enabled the Society to retain the lowest subscription rate among the international specialist railway societies, while maintaining a currently firm financial base.

Yet, there is one thing with all this that worries me.

There seems to be more and more being done by fewer and fewer. While I do not believe for one minute that the SRS is alone in this – I am sure we can all think of other organisations such as tennis clubs, photographic societies or churches where the same phenomenon occurs – I am equally convinced that it needs to be addressed for the benefit of the Society as a whole and also for those who are already giving their time and resources.

Years ago, long before I was even on the committee of the London Branch, I ran into a member who was knowledgeable, keen on Swiss railways and had ceased to come to local branch meetings. I said I was sorry not to see him. His sad response was that he had not renewed his membership because he could no longer see what he could get from the Society. It is sad because what individuals get out is totally dependant on what individuals put in.

There is at least one aspect in which members can help and volunteer their help now.

Firstly, and easily, the Society is planning a big display at the Warley Exhibition at the National Exhibition Centre on 3/4 December this year. We hope there will be **seven** Swiss layouts on show together with the stand. Help is needed and it is needed for the whole of each day. Obviously, nobody can be expected to be there for the whole of either or both days, but Paul Hannant needs to be able to organise the full staffing of the stand from the beginning to the very end of each day. (In case you were wondering, my work on-call roster has been set around it and both days are on the kitchen calendar – I must remind Judith to read it and remember to try to fix up accommodation with relations near Rugby!) Secondly, there will be other exhibitions, perhaps nearer to your home, where Paul will also be very grateful for help.

Do get in touch with Paul Hannant and have a good summer.

JUST A SEC - Roger Ellis

SPRING MEET & ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As in the June Swiss Express of last year I have taken the opportunity to set out a précis of the above meeting in order that those members who were unable to attend can update themselves on the proceedings.

Approximately 86 members were present for the formal meeting, and after an opening address by the Chairman in which he congratulated Dave Howsam on winning the 'Continental Modeller' Cup for 2004, Alan Pike for coming third and Ray Williams for an honourable mention, the minutes for the 2004 AGM were agreed with minor alterations.

There were no comments from the members on either report from the Chairman or Secretary, but members were informed that the active Branches were receiving copies of the 'packs' given to all those present at the AGM, and that the Secretary would retain further copies if any members wished to receive one.

The Membership Secretary thanked members for their prompt renewals which to date numbered 1140. Another 128 members had pre-paid for 2006, which was almost 10% of the membership. The questionnaire that was a part of the renewal form had elicited 314 responses stating that 511 visits to Switzerland had taken place by 808 visitors for a total of 4304 days. If we extrapolate this further to take into account those that did

not respond and would or have been known to visit that country it can be assumed that the total was increased to about 18,000 days. This information would be passed to Swiss Tourism.

There were no additional comments on the reports by the Exhibitions & Publicity Officer or Sales Officer, except that Glyn Jones was particularly thanked for the level of service he provided to members.

The Editor was thanked for the quality of the *Swiss Express*, and reminded members that articles are always required to maintain this high standard. He briefly outlined the changes in administrative processes being undertaken to ease the amount of editorial time taken to produce the magazine.

The Treasurer mentioned that the Auditor wished the costs of the Anniversary Calendar to be a part of the 2005 accounts. This would be resisted and would be retained as an expense for 2004. He highlighted the continued reduction in subscriptions to *Eisenbahn Amateur* and members gave various reasons for this occurrence. The accounts were adopted subject to auditing.

The Management Committee was re-elected with the exception of the post of Editor due to an incorrect ballot form and therefore the position was vacant. The Secretary explained that any member would be free to contact the Committee to express their interest in the position, which would then be considered. That person, if suitable, could then be co-opted by the Committee to undertake the position of Editor. Subsequently a member expressed their interest and was duly co-opted onto the committee. The final item on the agenda was the date and location of the 2006 AGM, which will take place on 25th March 2006 in Derby.

In the open forum mention was made of the meetings that were to take place in Kingsbury Episcopi on 15/16th July and in Kidderminster on 14/15th October, details of which would be in future magazines. Also the topic of disclosure of member's addresses was keenly debated and the Committee agreed to discuss this at a future meeting and report back to the membership.

SWISS RAILWAYS SOCIETY 25TH ANNIVERSARY DISPLAY

WARLEY NATIONAL MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION 2005

Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th December 2005

The climax to our 25th Anniversary year will see an extended Society presence at the country's premier exhibition with a dedicated area given over to some of the best Swiss layouts exhibited by SRS members.

Layouts confirmed:

- “Oberfriedhof” - extensive HO/HOM gauge by Ian Edwards
- “Perrapswil” - HO gauge extended version by Dave Howsam
- “Malix” - HOM gauge by Mervyn Kendall
- “Barental” - HOM gauge by Ray Williams
- “Kleinikon” - N gauge by Peter Wurcbacher and Trevor Bottomley
- “Winter Nacht” - N gauge by Paul Hannant
- “Menziwil” - N gauge by Paul Hannant

Trade support will be provided by the SRS Sales stand and “N Scale CH”, specialising in gauges, N, Nm and Z.

Next to the “SRS enclosure” will be a large Swiss HO layout “Hombrecknikon” by Jack Eugster and his team from Zürich.

10 good reasons to attend.

Make sure this date is in your diary NOW!!!