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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR - Paul Russenberger

There has to be something constitutionally wrong with writing this piece for the March "Swiss Express" on the afternoon following the AGM! However ...

AGMs are rarely the most entertaining of events. I have little doubt that one reason the Society achieves the attendance levels lies in the displays and sales counters provided. Credit for that has to go to the Branches that have organised the AGMs over the years. Dare I write again that the Society is grateful to them? Yes I do, because effort is involved and the results are to the benefit of the Society.

Yet there is one further, slightly intangible, feature of the whole weekend that I notice and that several people commented to me about in Derby. That is the general friendliness and good atmosphere of the event. At the moment we still have the ability to discuss issues, perhaps maintaining an unexpected approach, and remain friends afterwards. This is one of the keys to a sound organisation. It is vital that we maintain the ability to do this. Failure to do so can only spell ill for the Society.

At both the last AGMs the possibility of the setting up of new Branches was raised. This is excellent as it is bringing the Society to the members and developing local activities as part of the Society. (That, incidentally, is why the local activities are run by "Branches" rather than by organisations known by any other name because it expresses their being very much a part of the Society as a whole.) With over 1250 members there is surely the capacity to form and sustain new Branches. It would be wonderful to report to the next AGM the successful launch of another Branch of the Society.

I shall shortly be going out to Switzerland to attend the SVEA gathering, this year in Liestal. Unusually, I have booked to travel out by train and return by air – a situation which has arisen solely from travel needs irrelevant to the actual form of transport used. Given the recent controversy in "Swiss Express" on the merits of either mode of travel, it may enable me to join the debate. Interestingly, my youngsters are absolutely clear on their preference and it is for rail!

Whatever means anyone going to Switzerland uses this year, may they have a good journey, a wonderful stay and a safe return.

JUST A SEC - Roger Ellis

TIMETABLE UPDATE - The latest information on acquiring a Kursbuch.

Since I wrote on the subject of the availability of the Swiss Official Timetable in the UK from 2007 I have received a detailed reply from Swiss Tourism in London. It appears that the problem revolves around two issues.

Firstly, their move to new offices in Bedford Street is directly linked to the economic storage of these bulky items on which the profit margin is slight. This is due to the need for them to have to be sold at the equivalent sale price as they would be in Switzerland. Also Swiss Tourism are expected to pay for the cost of shipping them to the UK. Secondly they are aware of the ease of availability of this information to those connected to the internet, and the increasing number of visits to <www.rail.ch> where the information can be obtained free of charge.

Swiss Tourism point out that the timetable can still be purchased by post from Stampfli Ltd, Publications, Services & Production, P.O. Box 8326, CH-3001 Berne. They note that it can also be ordered by email at <abonnement@staempfli.com> or through the internet at <www.staempfli.com>.

A POSTSCRIPT

In the March 2006 edition of *Today's Railways – Europe* the Editor, in responding to a letter from an aggrieved reader who was bemoaning the problems associated with obtaining the Timetable, suggested that it could be obtained from: European Railway Timetables, 39, Kilton Glade, Worksop, Nottinghamshire, S81 0PX for £16.25 (including p&p). Cheques or Postal Orders being made payable to "European Rail Timetables". The timetable from this source includes a voucher for an A4 Swiss bus timetable or a Swiss bus CD-ROM.