

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2007)
Heft: [2]

Rubrik: Just a sec

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES Paul Russenberger

First a sincere thank you to all those who contributed to the AGM in March at Bristol. At any event like this it is the preliminary work done by the organiser, in this case Roger Ellis, which pays dividends in the faultless running of the event and also to those who carry some responsibility and go on to discharge it fully. The accompanying display of models, which was truly magnificent, must have done the Society proud in the eyes of any visitors.

The 'Open Forum' discussion after the AGM itself raised an interesting issue: "What is the limit of competence of the Committee?" To put it less formally, are there issues which are too important for the Committee to decide without reference to the Membership? While matters in connection with the size of *Swiss Express* were under discussion, a Member suggested that this was a matter which should be put to the membership by something akin to a referendum to include all members, not just the Committee and not just those who were able (or chose) to attend the AGM. Another member responded – and I would add that this was without prompting from the Committee – that the Committee were elected to manage the running of the Society and that they should be left alone to do just that.

It would be very difficult to draw the line between issues being within or outside the Committee's competence. I would suggest that in the sheer practicality of running the Society there are few things the Committee cannot decide. It would have to be a matter which would fundamentally and seriously affect the majority of members. Nobody has suggested that the Committee did not have the power to implement the recent subscription increase – there was no realistic alternative. Here I believe lies the indication of the boundary.

There can be issues where there are sound reasons for any of two or more mutually incompatible, possibly irreversible, courses of action. It is under those circumstances that the Committee could ask Members to express their opinion through a note in *Swiss Express* requesting members to advise a specified committee member by a certain date. Ideally, the matter would then be discussed at the next Committee Meeting and a note published in the following *Swiss Express*.

At the open forum Martin Fisher promised to publish a chart showing the spread of members throughout the country and you will find it in this issue. It is very interesting to compare the distribution of members with the location of branches. There is some correlation and also a surprising lack of it. While the effectiveness of local transport must be one issue, I would suggest that the statistics indicate that a well run branch will attract a following. If I am right, then the Society should be able to support several more branches. This really is a case of the Society being the local members. If there isn't a Branch near you and you would like one ...

Lastly, returning to where I started, remember that the 'Open Forum' after the AGM is an ideal venue to raise any matter. The days when the Committee required any matter not on the Agenda to be submitted in writing 14 days before the AGM are long gone, though we do know that the next AGM is planned to be in Derby on 8th March, 2008. Put it in your diaries now!

JUST A SEC Roger Ellis

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

I remember many years ago a book by Gerald Fiennes called 'I tried to run a Railway' so now it's time for a sequel 'I tried to run an AGM!'.

I am told it was a success in terms of numbers attending and the variety of layouts and stands, but my floor plan was thrown into disarray by one of our Traders only confirming on the Wednesday before that they would still like to attend. That meant 'Plan B' and the re-arranging of a few of the

exhibits. I apologise if any of you reading this were a little cramped but at least we got you all in.

The formal dinner was less of a success, in that the Novotel did not provide their usual standard of fare. I have contacted the Hotel but I am afraid that they do not consider the points that I have raised to be valid, so our fourth visit will have been our last.

Unfortunately after the dinner a few members decided to adjourn to the bar rather than stay for the entertainment which Roger Payne and Liliana had worked so hard in preparing. At least the thirty or so who stayed, including our guest of honour Alison Forster, appreciated the effort made. The 'Five Senses Quiz' was both different and fun and enjoyed by those who took part. How prophetic then, that in the September and December magazines, I stated that the quiz would be 'never to be repeated' as, at the time of writing, it is debatable if the Bristol & Bath Branch (and myself as Branch Organiser) will offer to organise another AGM Meeting.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH

The Management Committee have been approached by member Steve Buck with regard to forming a Birmingham Branch of the Society, and have been pleased to give the project their approval. As is noted in another part of the magazine their first meeting will be on Friday 28th September. I will try to attend, and I am sure other members of the Committee will do so as well. We wish Steve well with the venture and as a long-standing Branch Organiser I have written him the following open letter.

Dear Steve,

Bristol & Bath is I think one of the best supported Branches. We get between twenty and thirty plus persons to our meetings and at least one third of them are of the opposite gender to myself! How do we do it?

Firstly, although we are a Branch of the SRS I have always believed that those attending the meetings are interested in the railways of other countries and different forms of transport. To date we have had talks on the railways of France, Germany, Austria, Japan, North America and Canada, Norway, New Zealand, as well as on European Trams and Canals. This year we have talks on French Narrow Gauge, Southern Italy & Sicily and British Trams as well as on Switzerland.

Secondly, try to avoid asking someone to talk who wishes to show 150 pictures of AE6/6 locomotives. I ask those who come to my Branch to include pictures of scenery etc as well as trains and specify that variety is what we need.

Thirdly, ask other Railway Societies for help. The other European Societies have been most helpful to myself and have recommended members to come and talk to Bristol & Bath.

Roger.

PHOTO EXTRA

PHOTO:
Nigel Pocock.

A local train passing over the 210 metre long Wiesen Viaduct - 88 metres above the Landwasser.

