

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2007)
Heft: [3]

Rubrik: Society news

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES Paul Russenberger

On behalf of the Society, I would like to extend to Herr Rudolf Steinmann the Society's congratulations and best wishes for his term in office on his election to the Presidency of the SVEA.

After being elected, he gave a short presentation introducing himself, and you can read about it in my report on the SVEA meeting in the December issue. He cited a matter that the SVEA should address as being the need to attract younger members. At the same meeting the Gemeinderätterin praised railway modelling as a hobby which spanned the generations and could be a grandfather and father and son thing. There are many examples of well known father-and-son railway partnerships, including at least one within this Society. My father-in-law was a railway enthusiast, but none of my children are, so it may not be genetic.*

We do not ask the age of members when they join. However, it is probable that the SRS is experiencing a rise in the average age of members. Since we are also experiencing a long term rise in the size of the membership (no remarks about obesity, please!), this is not of immediate concern. However increasing average age is a phenomenon experienced by many other organisations – the local photographic society where I'm a member is facing the same issue.

It is probably a societal trend across the UK if not Europe. Entertainment activities have altered over the years and the train set is not the universal childhood diversion it used to be. I wonder if Switzerland as a family holiday destination has maintained its relative position compared with 40 years ago. Certainly when I first went in 1958 (!) it ranked above France. In those days people took holidays which they arranged themselves or possibly used a travel agent (in the true sense) to make reservations in hotels and bookings on scheduled transport on their behalf. Package tours to Spain (or Switzerland!) were unheard of.

To be absolutely brutal, I can suggest no possible solution to a rising age profile. That does not mean that there isn't one – just that it isn't obvious to me. Your ideas on a postcard (or etc), please.

**As an aside my father-in-law took his 7-year old daughter to watch the RCTS 'Farewell to Steam' railtour pass through Skipton on 4th August 1968. What he would have said had he been told that her husband was on the train, family history does not recount!*

SOCIETY NEWS

Abergavenny Area Branch?

John Hargaden, a member living in the area of Abergavenny, has contacted the editor asking if there would be any interest from fellow Society members in exploring the possibility of setting up a Branch in the surrounding Welsh/English border country. All new branches have to be approved by the Management Committee of the Society, but if there is some interest from those readers living between Cardiff and Hereford perhaps they could get in touch with John on 01 873 852 116.

Australia

Victor Isaacs who has acted as the Australian contact member for the Society has decided that he no longer wishes to continue in this role. We have some 20 other members living in Australia, plus a further five across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand. If anyone in Australasia wishes to consider becoming a contact point for the SRS please get in touch with Roger Ellis, the Secretary, by email.

SRS Annual General Meeting

A reminder that the 2008 Swiss Railways Society AGM and Spring Meet will be held on Saturday 8th March at the Midland Hotel, Derby. As usual, the East Midlands Branch will be holding their meeting on the previous Friday evening. Please reserve this important date in your diary.