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I was happy to be able to attend the first meeting of the proposed Birmingham Branch organised by Steve Buck and am delighted to say that they already have a programme of events at least up to and including May 2008. Our Membership Secretary was again able to organise a special mailing to members in the Birmingham area giving details of the November meeting, and Branch information should be on the Diary Page of this edition. My thanks, and that of the SRS Committee, to John Stokes, Steve Buck and Martin Fisher, all of whom have made this part of my article a pleasure to write.

The Secretary does a "U" turn!

I have said that my Branch would have a sabbatical from organising AGM's etc, but whilst in Erstfeld I thought "why not hold the 2009 Autumn Social Event at the Hotel Frohsinn in Erstfeld?". Members could meet on the Thursday evening, have a trip out on the Friday, the Social Event on the Saturday, out again on the Sunday and depart on the Monday. Those attending would be free to come and go as they pleased and perhaps include the weekend as a part of a longer holiday.

It may be possible to obtain "party discount" on air and or rail travel, and Paul, the owner of the Frohsinn, has already offered to help arrange outings through his many contacts. At the time you read this I have one and a half years to arrange the event, and so I need your advice as to whether members would support this venture. If you are interested please get in touch with me ASAP.

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I was there - together with about 10% of the Society! Can you send to the Editor by 24th December any pictures and small articles you have on this subject as he would like to consider them for inclusion in a special feature on this event that is planned for an expanded March 2008 edition of *Swiss Express*.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES Paul Russenberger

Over the years the membership of your Committee has changed. The age profile has probably remained about constant – I think it may even be dropping! There comes a time when it is right for a change and for an individual member to leave the Committee. That is why I do not intend to put myself forward for election to the position of Chairman at the 2008 AGM. By then I shall have held the post for 9 years (it will be one third the life of the Society) and that is long enough for the Society, for the Committee, and for me!

This will cause an inevitable change in the membership of the Committee and I am letting you all know now to give the Society members time to think about whether they would like to stand for election to the Committee. There is even the precedent of being projected into the office of Chairman from being an ordinary member of the SRS, but I think I would personally recommend starting in a more straightforward position!

On another issue the late Andy Nelson, once the Society's Exhibitions Officer, left his collection of slides to the SRS absolutely in his will. These are not catalogued and are being sorted at the moment. Some will be used to provide archival images and the balance of slides will be made available to members to purchase – some as individual seen slides, others unseen in bulk at a much reduced price. The sheer volume and variation in quality of the slides makes it impossible for a catalogue to be issued, but they will be available next year.

Members may be aware that Swiss railway technology has found its way to Britain's railways over the years – SIG bogies on the Mark IV coaches and Alusuisse's pioneering work in aluminium bodied construction come to mind immediately. A less sophisticated, but equally effective item may yet appear in the form of point position indicators as a recent report by the RAIB has recommended their introduction in certain, limited circumstances.

Lastly, I must again thank all of you who have contributed to the Society over the past year. I will return to this later, but the Society is dependent on all those who take part and contribute for its well-being and continuing development. I am grateful to you all.

I wish you all a joyful Christmas and fulfilling 2008.