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Bridge on the TEA model at Thun

PHOTOS: Paul Russenberger

Do you ever wish you could be anonymous? I do!!!!

Two Swiss were travelling in a train through Olten when one looked out of the window and commented to his companion "There's Paul Russenberger taking photographs." He was right, for I had broken my journey to Thun where the Thuner Eisenbahn-Amateur (TEA) was hosting the 60th Delegates' Meeting of the Schweizerischen Verbandes Eisenbahn-Amateur (SVEA).

On checking in at Thun station, we were directed to club rooms which are housed in railway premises nearby. They contain a magnificent 1/43rd scale (0-gauge) layout of which the centre piece is a massive bridge based on those on the BLS southern ramp, though the main station, loco depot and mountain railway also deserve examination.

At the subsequent formal meeting we were greeted by the Gemeinderäterin in German, French, Italian and English, who told us the history of Thun, the 11th largest town in Switzerland. She praised the model railway hobby as one which could involve grandfathers, fathers and sons. (That was certainly the case in my younger days, but I wonder how often it occurs now?) This was followed by brief greetings and reports from the visitors, including myself, before the formal business of the meeting.

The most important event for the SRS was the election as SVEA President of Herr Rudolf Steinmann who is an SRS member. On election, the new president introduces himself, and we learnt that the period of Herr Steinmann's model is, with true Swiss precision, October 1977. He also spoke of the need to attract younger members;

evidently, British societies are not alone in experiencing this as a problem. Herr Steinmann's election strengthens the link with the SVEA. I hope that this will be to the benefit of both organisations and after the meeting I passed him a list of SRS Branch contacts, this has been published in *Eisenbahn Amateur*.

After an aperitif in the Rathaus, we dined in the hotel where the meeting had taken place. With the coffee, the dancing girls were brought on to entertain us - with a display of formation dancing!

Throughout the Saturday we had experienced picture postcard skies and, despite the presence of Alan Pike, rumours of a break in the weather on Sunday proved totally unfounded as we headed for Interlaken Ost. There the BOB's HGe3/3 number 24 was waiting with three preserved coaches (with wooden seats) to take us to Grindelwald. Despite having thoroughly explored the BOB system over the years, for me this was no disappointment but a spiritual return to my first visit to Grindelwald. Then the BOB had just 3 ABDeh4/4 motor coaches and the 10 locomotives would impart a rocking motion to the train, though in 1958 we did not stop at Zweilütschinen for an apéro in the depot! Grindelwald without holiday-makers was delightful as was the return journey to Interlaken.

Once away from the train, it was goodbyes with handshakes all round as only the Swiss can manage. Suddenly, I seemed to be the only one left. There was plenty of time before the overnight train to Paris and I wandered southwards to a bridge under the BOB. After all, there was still the 17.10 Interlaken Ost – Zweilütschinen special empties to photograph.



HGe3/3 24 with ABeh4/4 305 at Interlaken Ost



HGe3/3 24 with train at Zweilütschinen



HGe3/3 24 at Grindelwald

17:10 Interlaken Ost – Zweilütschinen special empties soon after leaving Interlaken.

