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COVER PICTURE:

A sunny scene to banish those winter blues! Morcote, on the shores of Lake Lugano, reminds us that Switzerland offers more than snow-capped mountains. And, yes, public transport is there - the Postbus waits outside the Post Office ready to take passengers into Lugano - or they could wait on the pier for the next boat.

PHOTO: Michael Farr.

EDITORIAL

Malcolm Bulpitt

Another short editorial as again there are so many interesting items that have been submitted that we need all the space we have in order to get as many as possible into this edition of the magazine. Having a choice of so many good things is an editor's dream so please keep on writing items and submitting photographs – we will attempt to publish them all if we can. In this March edition we are fortunate to have some input from four of our Swiss friends – Ernst Leutwiler, Sylvain Meillassion, Armin Schmutz and Claudia Farley, plus an article from Pierre Coester who is French. Having written an article on personal security for the December magazine it was ironic that a regrettable lapse of corporate concentration at my employer's office (whilst I was not present) resulted in my laptop computer "going missing" last month. All the data that was on it was retrieved from a backed-up source, otherwise this magazine may not have been published in this form. Unfortunately, although the machine was password-protected, some of your Email addresses may now be out in the wide world. If you start to get strange Email messages that purport to come from me, but have nothing to do with *Swiss Express* or the SRS, please delete them.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Ian Athey

It is almost 10 years since I first took any official part in the Society's Annual General Meeting. Then, at the end of my first year as Treasurer, I was more than a little apprehensive beforehand. Now, after my first year as Chairman I have the same feeling. Despite this however, I am looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at Derby on 21st March. Whilst the AGM is the formal part of the proceedings, the whole week-end, from the East Midlands' branch meeting on the Friday night through to the dinner on the following evening, is usually informal and most enjoyable. I do hope that you will be able to be there for at least part of the proceedings. During the past year, I have been fortunate to have had the support of a good team, all of whom have given their own time (often substantial amounts of it), for the benefit of the Society's members. On your behalf therefore I have no hesitation in thanking the other Officials and Committee members most sincerely for their commitment to the Society during the last 12 months. I would also like to thank all of those other members who fulfill various duties within the Society such as Branch Organisers, Librarian, Archivist, etc. Your efforts are appreciated.

In my last notes I briefly mentioned the contact that had been made with the Verkehrshaus in Luzern. In this connection, despite the current exchange rate, I am hoping to be in Switzerland on holiday at the beginning of May and

whilst there I intend to try to arrange to meet the Society's contacts at the Verkehrshaus with a view to furthering the informal arrangements that have so recently been established between us.

Many members will no doubt have noticed that "Scotland" was missing from the "Society Diary" in the last edition of *Swiss Express*: it is included in this issue. There is nothing sinister in this - just simply a shortage of space in circumstances where the new Hampshire branch had been formed and space was needed to include details of their forthcoming meetings. I informed Willie McKnight, organiser of the Scotland branch, of the situation and during our discussion, he and I agreed that we would try to arrange a lunchtime meeting, with a meal and possibly a speaker or slide show, for the Scotland branch during the forthcoming summer, probably on a Saturday, in September. Will any member who may be interested in attending such a meeting let me, or Willie, know as soon as possible please. Our phone numbers are on P. 53. However, where to hold such a meeting is the question that is taxing our brains at present. The Central Lowlands appears to be the obvious answer and already Linlithgow and Stirling have been mentioned to me. However I would like more suggestions and if any member thinks that they know of a suitable venue then please forward the details as soon as possible. Ideally, the place chosen will have good rail and bus services. I look forward to hearing from members resident in Scotland with their ideas.

JUST A SEC

David Stevenson

I did prepare a small *Just a Sec* for the last issue but it didn't make it in so, although I did wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a very prosperous New Year, you didn't know about it. I hope all went well and will this year.

The catastrophic fall in the value of sterling has made travelling to and staying in Switzerland very much more expensive than it was only a year ago and currently there seems little prospect that this will change much. To help assuage one's thirst for Switzerland though there are ways of cutting costs, using the Budget Hotel Website (www.rooms.ch), using the Bed & Breakfast website (www.bnb.ch), self-catering and even more imaginatively staying in parts of Switzerland not on the normal tourist network like Erstfeld, Apples and Herisau for example. Don't forget also our advertisers who all offer the best possible value, something I can personally vouch for.

Finally, 21st March 2009 - please try and make the AGM if you can, it's your meeting after all and the one time we can all get together and have a jolly good moan about the state of everything, knowing that it can only get better as soon as we mention Switzerland and its wonderful railways, scenery and transport system. See you there. The West Midlands Branch would also like to see members of other branches joining them on their day-trip to Geneva in June. Details on the Society News page.

Old and new on the Centovalli, 17/09/08.

See article P.19

PHOTO: John Bennett

SRS TREASURER

John Stokes has indicated that he is considering relinquishing his role at the forthcoming AGM. If any member considers that they may be prepared to take on this important task please get in touch with Ian Athey by Email, or on 01835 862 015.

