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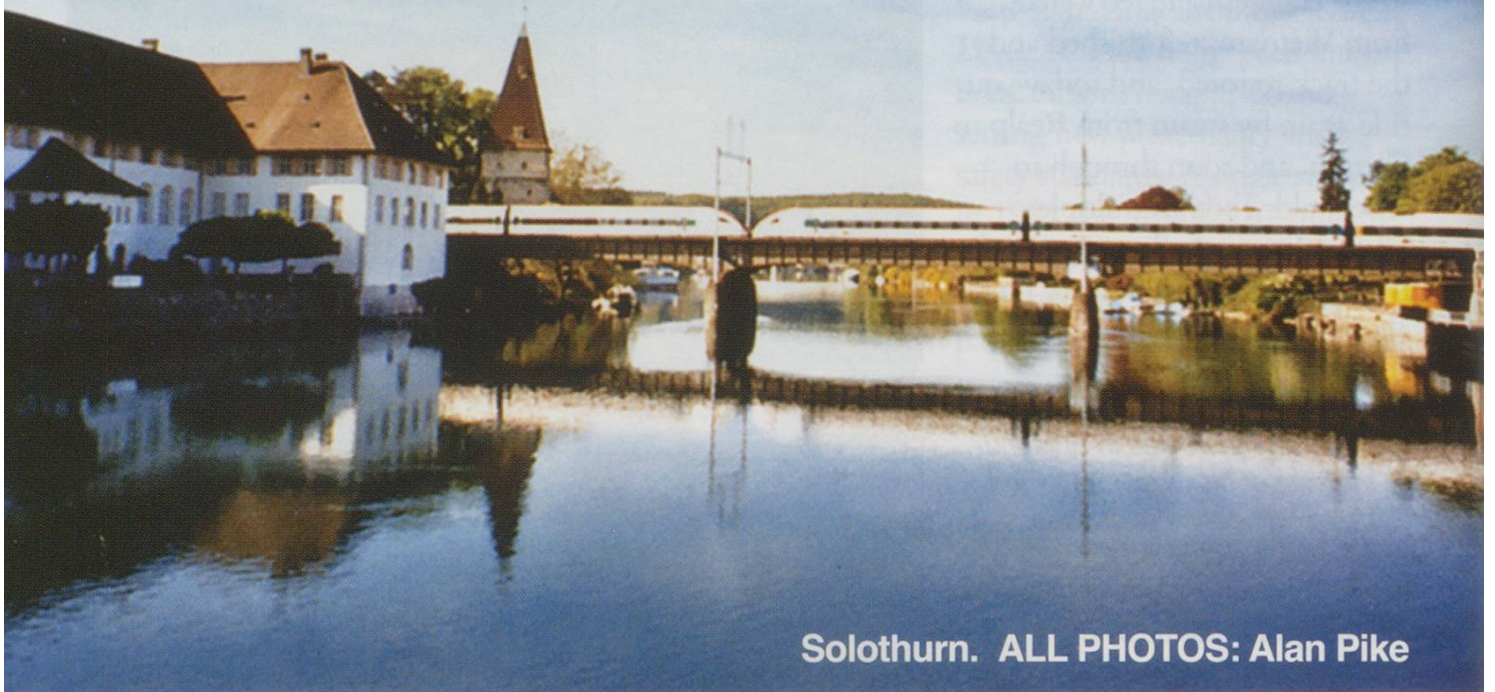
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SVEA AT SOLOTHURN

Alan Pike OBE



Solothurn. ALL PHOTOS: Alan Pike

As an associate member of the Schweizer Verband Eisenbahn Amateur (SVEA) the SRS is invited to send a representative to their two-day AGM, an event that rotates around various locations in Switzerland. This year it was held in the picturesque baroque city of Solothurn. Normally it is the Chairman who attends this function but as I had been invited as a guest I represented the SRS and brought our good wishes to those present.

Delegates representing the numerous individual societies who make up the Verband (Association) gathered in a hall that had been created in a historic warehouse alongside the River Aare. A typically Swiss brass band entertained people as they arrived, and also during the interval. Rudolph Steinmann SVEA's recently elected President, and a long-time member of the SRS, conducted the business of the meeting briskly and efficiently choosing to keep speeches to a minimum, or deferring them to the evening's formal dinner that delegates had to pay for themselves.

Although the meal was to be held in a nearby hotel the members who chose to take part were invited by the Mayor of the City for

an apéro in the riverside gardens of an old house that had once been the French Ambassador's residence. Later, during the dinner and somewhat to my alarm, I was asked to propose the toast to the SVEA - in German! Finding that a Toast was Trinkspruch I was much encouraged for by the time it came around I had imbibed sufficient Trink not to worry too much.

Unlike the warm sunshine of the first day, the weather on the second day of the event was dull and threatening rain. This was unfortunate as many of the delegates stayed-on to participate in a run on a special train; again this was at their own expense. The train comprised two balcony-ended coaches hauled by ex-SMB Be4/4 No.171. Having set-off from Solothurn, its first booked stop was between Oberdorf (SO) and Gänsbrunnen in the 3700m-long Weissenstein Tunnel - a unique location to drink the first apéro of the day.

Thus fortified, we moved-on to Gänsbrunnen, the loco ran-round, and returned us to Oberdorf where we boarded the last "side-by-side" chairlift, soon to be replaced by a Gondelbahn, on the 625m climb up to

the Weissenstein. It is in two sections with the winding gear in the middle, and although it is possible to do the whole trip without changing chairs we all disembarked there in order to hear about the history of the chairlift and the work that is to be carried-out. At this point another apéro was presented. Moving up to the top station there is a hotel which has a good dining room plus a terrace from which to enjoy superb views of the Bernese Alps. It also has an unusual 15in gauge railway where children can be pushed (or can 'skate') around on little trucks.

The whole of the two days was interesting, enjoyable and very tiring as whoever attends is there as an ambassador for the SRS and has to be able to communicate in a mixture of German, French and English. As with all meetings of this type the events outside the main venue are where networking takes place, with new contacts made, and old ties strengthened. The SVEA, its President and the Club Solothurner Eisenbahn-Amateure are to be congratulated on a successful AGM.

Editor's Note: Members should be aware that Alan Pike, one of our Joint Presidents, funded his travel, accommodation, etc out of his own pocket. The Society thanks him for attending on its behalf.

1. Chairlift Weissenstein Upper Station.
2. Gansbrunnen SVEA Special Train.
3. Oberdorf Station from Weissenstein Chairlift.
4. Push Railway - Hotel at Weissenstein.
5. Solothurn Hbf.

