

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2010)
Heft: 102

Artikel: Friho's 35th anniversary
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854428>

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FRIHO'S 35TH ANNIVERSARY

Michael Farr

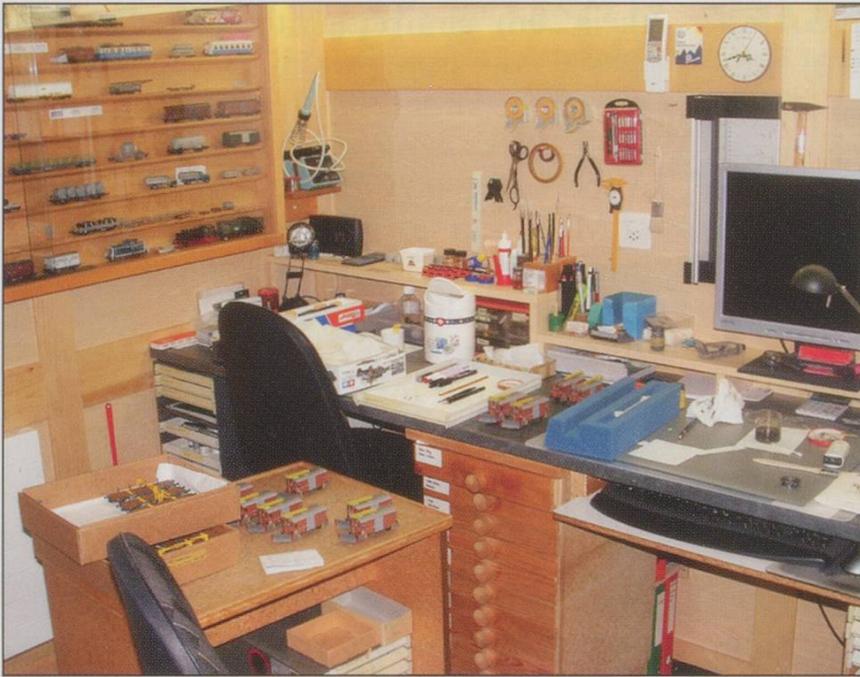
I am sure that most of our members who model Swiss metre-gauge railways in "HOM" scale begin with Bemo products but then look around for more unusual items. We are fortunate to have several small, specialised firms to meet our needs. Sometimes they adapt Bemo products but increasingly they are offering high-quality models which they design and construct themselves. Because these need a great deal of hand-work they are bound to be considerably more expensive than machine-produced products. One of these small firms, Friho of Lenk-im-Simmental, has just celebrated its 35th anniversary. The model business grew out of a family-owned shop meeting the household needs of Lenk's population. It was in 1968 that this shop in Rawylstrasse became a speciality wood-carving store; the following year Alfred Friedli senior took over from his father.

Six years later he expanded the shop floor to include toys, with a specialised model train section and in 1975 he placed his first adverts in the model press. At this time they offered their first Friho model in HO gauge using a body from Trix with Märklin mechanical parts. In those days bodies were resprayed and any lettering applied by Letraset (would that this useful commodity was available today in its many typefaces and sizes). As their expertise grew, models – now in HOM as well as H0 – became more detailed, with improvements continuing after Alfred's son, Fred Friedli junior, joined the family business in 1986. On the occasion of

their 20th anniversary they hired a special train from the MOB who provided one of the large 2000-series electric locomotives and two vintage saloon cars. A special advert was screwed to the door of MOB van Gk 554 which was offered in model form as well. The prototype van was still lurking in Chernex works in 2009; it is no longer available as a model, but watch out for a short article in a future SE about converting your own Bemo van. A major improvement came in 1996 when Friho acquired a modern pad printing machine which allowed them to produce the liveries to the highest quality. Two years later came a computerised milling machine to make special parts for vehicles and CAD systems for designing etched brass components.

The Friho model shop (which is set back from the gift shop) is a wonderland for modellers. Glass cases line the walls, their shelves displaying special models for metre-gauge stock from the MOB, MIB, MGB and Brünig line, as well as a wide range of SBB and BLS standard gauge vehicles. On his desk Fred junior usually has some models under construction to





tempt you. It is advisable to telephone before visiting the shop to ensure someone will be on hand, but if you cannot get to Lenk they are always happy to supply by mail order. Friho had intended to mark the 35th anniversary in style but sadly Fred junior has been far from well over recent months and so they chose a low-key celebration instead.

Their future models list is available at www.friholenk.ch and it offers many more temptations for us, so keep saving hard to buy that unusual wagon, van or coach which the mainstream model companies cannot justify producing. Small firms like Friho meet a need for those of us with limited modelling skills; long may they continue to flourish.

PHOTOS: *Michael Farr*

NUREMBURG TOY FAIR – 2010

John Jesson

The financial status of various model manufacturers continued as a topic of discussion at this event. It looked as though there was a buyer for Märklin although how much will survive was yet to be learned. During 2009 Faller was also in difficulty for a time; Kibri is now

part of the Viessman company; and after Modelleisenbahn (Roco) bought Fleischmann they now appear to be in trouble. What they are offering for 2010 is mostly a collection of re-releases, re-working of existing models and re-liveries.

However, not all is doom and gloom. The ability to design and produce limited runs has enabled several manufacturers to fulfil many modellers' desires. Although the process

started in the Low Countries, it has spread, with the "less popular" (in big-boy German manufacturer terms) countries now getting a wide choice of models. Switzerland may have received a fair amount of attention from the more well-known manufacturers, but we are now seeing plenty of gaps filled. Rivarossi, for example, producing some older Italian locos and BLS Re 4/4 and Ce 4/4 models. A welcome development from several manufacturers is that of producing both locomotives and coaches with different numbers, something that Bemo has been very good at for many years.

HAG were showing the GTW railcar and Hobby Trade, a Danish company, are making Die Post containers on wagons and stating the individual container numbers. Liliput have surprised everyone by venturing into N-scale with a model of the Stadler FLIRT emu. In 2009 L.S.Models announced the SBB UIC-X coaches and this year there is a detailed and very lengthy list of variations, together with a huge quantity of other Swiss models.

Editor's note. This is an abbreviated version of John's full report that is available on our website. A hard copy is available from the editor on receipt of an A4 SAE.