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Just a Sec - David Stevenson

This time of year is always busy for me. 2012 has been particularly difficult with two new SRS books and the AGM brochure to produce plus my normal full time job. The AGM itself almost came as a bit of a rest to be honest. Having said that it was a busy day; lots of activity in the exhibition room; lots of stuff to buy; the new books from SRS Publications; a new SRS fleece - red of course! The most important part of the whole day though is the chance to catch up with other members, have a chit-chat and talk about the past year, moan about the exchange rate, etc, etc. Special mention therefore to Maurice Criddle, Bill Venton, John Stokes, Steve Hobbs, Rupert Dove-Meadows and the numerous others who came up and had a chat during the day.


The AGM itself was well attended, 89 members signed in for the day, a little down on last year but still very gratifying. Nothing dramatic was brought up during the meeting, Martin Fisher stood down as Membership Secretary and in his place Steve Buck from Birmingham was elected together with the existing eight members of the committee. Martin's input over the last few years was gratefully acknowledged by the meeting, as was that of David Baker who retired as the Society Archivist. Should any member wish to see the AGM programme (it includes the minutes from the 2010 AGM and the 2011 accounts) then a copy is available on the website - or by writing to me. The Open Forum at the AGM is the members chance to ask the Committee anything they like - of course you can do this at any time, but this forum is unique in that it's the only time a significant number of members are together in one place. The main question discussed concerned Branches and was posed by Phil Weaver, whose photos have so often graced Swiss Express. Branches are my remit and, as I have often said, to me are the best bit of being an SRS member. I look forward to the WM Wednesday evenings with the 'Captain Cod' fish & chip supper beforehand and the meeting itself. My general advice is to start small, a member's house is a good place, to remember that regularity is more important than frequency, do not assume that huge numbers will descend and to not be overly ambitious. Any of the Committee who do talks/slide shows will come along and help out at the start. Strangely I usually am asked only once, others are asked back, must be my aftershave rather than total lack of organisation. I digress. Phil is toying with the idea of starting a group in his locality. Watch this space for further details if he decides to give it a go.

Thanks to a number of books being given to the Society the Bring-and-Buy stand made a record profit of around £240. Following the dinner in the evening Tony Bagwell took the participants on one of his superb electronic guided tours of Switzerland followed by a Memory Quiz - which most failed! Those present generously donated over £90 to CLICK-Sargent, the children's cancer charity that Tony tirelessly raises money for. Finally, thanks to all those who came to the AGM and to those who proffered apologies, and here's to next year when the AGM will be held in the White House Hotel, Worcester on Saturday 23rd March 2013. See you there. Further details will be available in September's *Swiss Express*. 


SRS Library

Members who attended the 2011 AGM will recall that the future of the SRS Library was discussed, due to the need to relocate it from the home of Giles Della-Gana who had hosted it for many years. In a lengthy period members had not requested any books, probably due to the heavy postal charges that would have had to be levied to send out and return them. In June 2010 the collection was split between Neil Wheelwright and Malcolm Bulpitt, who agreed to hold the contents until a decision as to their future was made. Various avenues were explored and during last year an agreement was reached with the Stephenson Locomotive Society (SLS) who had kindly offered to house the collection along with their extensive library. Therefore in January 2012 the collection was moved to the Hersham, Surrey, premises of Ian Allan Publishing where the SLS Library is located. Although books are no longer available through the post SRS members now have the opportunity to personally access the collection. The site is a 15 minute walk from Hersham Station (on the South Western Main Line out of London Waterloo) and some 15-minutes driving time from Junctions 9 or 10 of the M25. The SLS Librarian is Gerry Nichols who has supplied the following information. *"Swiss Railways Society members are welcome to use the Stephenson Locomotive Society Library at Hersham on production of their current SRS membership card. Material is loaned normally for one month but longer periods can be agreed at the Librarian's discretion. The Library is open on the 2nd Monday of the month (except Bank Holidays) from 14.00 to 17.00, and the 4th Wednesday of the month from 14.00 to 17.30. Please contact myself if you have any queries. Directions to the Hersham site are on the SLS web-site <http://www.stephensonloco.org.uk/SLSLibrary.htm> as is the Accession List."* 


SRS Archive

For a considerable number of years David Baker has been quietly working away in the background as the SRS Archivist. As noted in the AGM report David has now stood down from this role and after some deliberation the Management Committee, who express their sincere thanks to David, has decided to handle the records of the Society in a different manner, rather than leave the onus on one individual, as had been the case. The advent of digital printing and storage has opened up new opportunities to look after 'historic' data, as has the link with the SLS Library that is detailed above, so the collection is being reviewed and reallocated to safe new facilities. In the past some members' photographic collections were offered to the SRS on their death and as you can read in the Editorial the Management Committee is asking for some assistance in organising this valuable archive. 


Society Web Forum

Interested in exchanging information about Swiss transport via the Internet, then why not join the SRS web forum? This is accessed via our website and is exclusively for members. To gain access email forum.admin@swissrailsoc.org.uk. 

“Transports romands”

This is a quarterly, subscription-only, French-language magazine founded in 2008 that deals, as its name suggests, with public transport issues (mainly rail) in southwest Switzerland. We have seen edition No. 11 - October 2011, which is printed in full colour and comprises 20 A4-sized pages. This has concentrated on Canton Fribourg and extensively covers the reconstruction of the Romont-Bulle line of the TPF and the introduction of the Regional Express service from Fribourg with new FLIRT stock. If you have a working knowledge of French and an interest in this part of the country this is a publication that you will find interesting. For more details you can contact the editorial team at Case Postale 349, CH-250 Saignelégier. Or email philippe.claude@net2000.ch. It is understood that the magazine costs CHF25 to Swiss subscribers. UK price on application. 

Sales Ideas

The income derived from the sale of SRS items (as advertised on the inside back cover of the magazine), helps to defray the ever-increasing costs of running the Society. Sales of the majority of the items we stock are quite successful, but we are always looking for ideas of new items to stock. Can you think of anything that will be a new best-seller? Is there an item that you think our members, and visitors to our stand at exhibitions, etc., would love to part with their hard earned cash for? Ideas please to sales@swissrailsoc.org.uk or write to Glyn Jones with them. 


Members' Letters

From David Hitchin – Bolton-le- Sands, Lancashire

On P37 of SE109 there is a SwissTip regarding the very short Marzilibahn funicular near to the Parliament Building in Bern. When I visited this curious line in the mid-1990s I stumbled across one of the original cars a few metres away when turning right from the lower terminus. It had been ‘plinthed’ on a sloping section of track, but it was in-need of some loving care and protection. I have not been back but I hope that this relic has subsequently been restored. Perhaps a member visiting Bern could report back on this. In my trips to Switzerland over the years I have sadly noted that a number of funiculars have been closed so it is good that this little line is still in operation. A definitive list of open and closed operations would be useful. *Editor's Note. One of our Swiss correspondents, Ernst B. Leutwiler, has published the definitive book on this form of transport in Switzerland - 'Standseilbahn-Lexicon Schweiz'. It comes complete with a*

46min. DVD featuring various operations. Details of how to obtain this excellent book were in SE 106.

From Geoffrey Bryson – by email


I refer to the article in SE109 regarding Swiss politicians having special trains to party home after being elected to high office. This contrasts with a previous President (many years ago) who when asked why he travelled 3rd Class on the train allegedly replied, "Because there is no 4th Class." Now all the Members of both chambers of the Swiss parliament have a 1st Class General Abonnement - so there can be no expenses scandals in Bern (!). Of course Parliamentary Trains have a new meaning on post-privatization British railways – something The Marmot, our Swiss railwayman correspondent, may not be aware of. They are a single train in the timetable that runs just once a week, normally in one direction only, to legally keep open a line (or stations) that the Train Operating Company would like to close for lack of support or operational reasons. It is cheaper to run that train than go to the expense, and the drawn-out procedure of a Public Enquiry before the Rail Passengers Council, prior to going to the Department of Transport for a ruling. 

Members' Advertisements

For sale: “Serene Switzerland” is a 64-page pocket format book that was published some 15 years ago. It is written and illustrated by Rod Britton one of our members who is half-Swiss. In it he describes four distinct areas of the country (Appenzell, Val Bregaglia, Val Verzasca and the Lötschental) and takes readers through some walks in those locations. Originally retailing at £6.99 Rod has a number of remaining copies that he is offering to fellow members of the SRS at just £2.99 (plus £1 p&p) with payment only by cheque. He can be contacted at: 4, Fairfield Lane, Farnham Royal, Bucks., SL2 3BX, or by email at rod@brittonsol.co.uk

For sale: Bemo HOm RhB 1255 Ge 6/6 No.413 & RhB 1265 ABe 4/4 No.502. Both models are in ‘as new’ condition and good runners. £110 each model. Payment by cheque please. Rupert Dove-Medows, “Lyntor”, The Tors, Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot, Devon.TQ12 5DR. Tel: 01 803 872 575. Price includes p&p.

E-mail: rupert.dovemedows@btinternet.com

For sale: Bemo HOm, MOB “Golden Pass Panoramic”. 1 Ge4/4 8002 “Golden Pass”, 2 driving trailers, 2 coaches, 2 drivers, 1 bar staff & 80 passengers. £475.00. Not sold separately. Gerald Savine, The Studio, Bridge House, Waterside, Upton-upon-Severn, Worcs. WR8 0HG. Tel: 01684 591122 E-mail: geraldsavine@btconnect.com. 

SwissTip Good ideas and information about Switzerland from travellers.

Looking for lunch in Luzern? Tavolago, the catering arm of the SGV, who operate the ships on the Vierwaldstättersee, have developed the Seebistro Luz in one of the pavilions on the quayside opposite the main station. The food and drink are good, the prices are reasonable given the location, and it is well used by locals which is in-itself a recommendation. There are big shared tables and in good weather seats on a terrace next to the ships. 