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one occasions since 1968, and every time my first job was to seek out the nearest station clock and reset my watch, knowing that this was 'the ultimate time machine'.

From: David Gartside - by Email.

I read the articles in June's *Swiss Express* about the threatened demise of the distinctive second hand with a mixture of amusement and alarm. A solution may not be that complex. On a recent visit to Northern Spain, I noted that the newest issue RENFE clocks perceptibly pause between 00 and 01 seconds, and again between 30 and 31 seconds. Doubtless that could be tweaked. They're manufactured by Festina, who trace their origins to La Chaux des Fonds, but nowadays are based in Spain. Time to swallow a bit of Swiss horological pride perhaps?

From: Geoffrey Bryson - by Email.

I was intrigued by Boyd Misstear's article (*Swiss Express* - 118) and wondered if the group of these clocks at London's Canary Wharf also jumped 1.5 seconds – checking I found that happily they do. I think it is more important that a station clock has a second red sweep hand than Mr Hilfiker's

1.5 second jump. This is also probably cheaper to achieve. Each of the Canary Wharf clocks also has a different large number in the appropriate dial place. Perhaps SBB could use that on the platform clock to remind everyone which number platform it is on!

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Swiss Express Magazines, 3 issues of 1995, and 1999 to 2010 inclusive. Free to anyone to collect. Jack Duxbury lives about 1 mile from junction 13 of the M6. If interested, please contact Jack Tel: 01 785 713 690 or e-mail: jackduxbury@btinternet.com. 

BOOK REVIEW

Slow Train to Switzerland

Author: Diccon Bewes.

Published by Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 3-5, Spafield Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1R 4QB. Paperback, 300 pages. 9" x 6".

Over 70 vintage b&w photos. £10.99.

ISBN 978-1-85788-625-2

Available from all good book shops – use them or lose them!

This is the paperback version of Diccon Bewes highly successful book about Thomas Cook's first organised tour to Switzerland. In it Diccon, his mother, and the ghosts of Thomas Cook, John Murray and a Miss Jemima set off to travel the original route as near as possible by the original means of transport. However, donkey rides or walking over some of the passes may have been updated if more suitable modes of transport are now available. The 1863 party started off as 130 souls, but once the Alps were reached only 4 ladies and 3 gents were left – the "Junior United Alpine Club" as they labelled themselves. Starting on the ferry from Newhaven, Diccon retraced the route to Paris and then on to Geneva, before visiting many of the current favourite alpine locations. In his typical slightly humorous prose, the author describes the difference in travel between then and now, slipping the odd quote direct from Miss Jemima's diary. He starts the tour in Switzerland by giving a description of life there in the 19th century, again using quotes from English visitors at the time. There are also quotes and tips from John Murray's 1861 guide book to set the scene for the travel still to come. As Diccon says "That first Cook's Tour was noticeable for its pre-dawn starts, 18-hour days and the place-a-day itinerary." As the journey progresses around the country, each phase is accompanied by quotes from the original journal and other period publications, and explains the conditions prevailing at that time, conditions that were very different from those we are all familiar with today. This book gives an excellent history of our favourite country, not the usual "battle of this or war of that", but at the much more personal level of the common people's everyday lives. The 1860s were the birth of mass Swiss Tourism and here we learn how the Alpine visitors since then have changed the life of the locals from poverty to the country we love today. I'm certain that even those of us who think we know a lot about Switzerland will learn something new, and gain that knowledge in a very readable and entertaining way. If you enjoyed 'Swiss Watching' and 'Swisscellany', and you did not buy the hardback of this volume, then you'll need to get a copy of this new paperback edition. Highly recommended. 

Tony Bagwell

